

## Is. 63:7-14 (WCF 2:1) "Without Body, Parts or Passions"

**For the Children:** Have you ever seen someone lose their temper? Or become suddenly sad? When our feelings go up and down, we sometimes act badly. The false gods of the nations are like that: they lose their tempers and act badly. Thankfully, we have a God who never changes who He is. So He never loses His temper or acts badly. When the Bible speaks of God as having feelings that change, it is just speaking in a way that helps us to understand His unchanging character. **Questions:** Why does the Bible speak of God "being sorry" and "changing His mind"? Why do we say that God does not have changing feelings? How does it help us to know that God does not have changing feelings?

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### Introduction:

#### First Point: The Expression of God's 'Emotions'

- 1) The Expression of Love: God's (abundant) lovingkindness is mentioned in v7. A more general word for love appears in v. 9. The Lord Jesus "felt love" (Mk. 10:21). We tend to view love in an emotional sense, but is that what is meant here?
- 2) The Expression of Compassion: God's "compassion" for His people (v. 7) is a clear example of emotional language. The word normally refers to a deep, intense feeling of pity when we see others suffering. The Lord Jesus also felt compassion for others (Mt. 9:36).
- 3) The Expression of Suffering: Because God is the Saviour of His people (v. 8), He is said to suffer, to be "afflicted" in all their afflictions (v. 9). Christ obviously suffered extremely for and in place of His people.
- 4) The Expression of Grief: The rebellion of God's people "grieved" the Holy Spirit (v. 10, with Eph. 4:30). The Lord Jesus also wept over the apostasy of Israel and the misery caused by sin (Lk. 19:41; Jn. 11:35). God was "sorry" He had made man (Gen. 6:5) and grieved by Israel in the wilderness (Ps. 78:40).
- 5) The Expression of Wrath: God's wrath and anger are directed against the nations (Is. 63:1-6) and His people (v. 10). Ps. 2:12 warns the nations against causing the Son to become angry.
- 6) The Changing of Emotions: Sometimes Scripture describes these "emotions" of God as changing: He *becomes* angry, His wrath is *kindled*. He *turns* to become Israel's enemy (v. 10). He "regrets," "repents," "relents," or "changes His mind" (Gen. 6:7; 1 Sam. 15:1; Jer. 18:8, 42:10; Jon. 3:9 etc. All this may lead us to conclude that God is changeable and emotional.

#### Second Point: What These Expressions Mean

- 1) Expressed in a Human Way: We are, however, assured that God is NOT a man that He should change His mind or have regret (Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29). Therefore, these expressions of emotion must be anthropomorphisms (describing God as if He were like a man). For His own glory, and in His grace, He explains Himself in such terms so that finite humans can gain some understanding of His character. Of course, the Lord Jesus is human as well as divine: He did suffer and feel emotions in a human way.
- 2) The Infinite and Unchangeable God: God is infinite, eternal, perfect, and unchangeable. See Ps. 102:27, Mal. 3:6 and WCF 2:1. He is not dependent on His creation. Therefore, we must say that He does not have changeable passions like we do: He is "impassible."
- 3) Expressing His Character and Attitudes: However, applying emotions to God teaches us about His unchanging character: "love" shows us His total commitment to saving us; "compassion" speaks of His care for our predicament and willingness to forgive; "grief" shows His how seriously He is opposed to our attacks on His love; and "wrath" shows how strongly He opposes sin. The absence of "passions" does not imply that God is uncaring or inactive; in fact, it guarantees unchanging love and mercy for the elect
- 4) Expressing the Covenant-Relationship: These expressions also help us to respond to God's Self-

revelation, with obedience, in a covenant-relationship. He also responds to us, according to His unchanging character, along with His covenant promises and warnings.

**Conclusion:**