

GOD!

Message 12

Scripture: Immutable: James 1:12-18 esp. 17;

Infinite: Ps. 145:1-3

Song: Abide with Me

INTRO: For those of you familiar with the Catechism, you will know that it begins with the doctrine of God. It begins with the most important subject there is. I trust you will not get tired of learning about God. There is no more important topic. The Catechism asks questions like who is God, how can we know there is a God and how is God revealed and so on. Then it asks this question: "What do the Scriptures say that God is?" and the answer is simply that He is a Spirit, and of course, this is correct. And then it asks this question: "What additional testimony does it give of God?" And here is the answer given: *That He is the One living God, eternal and unchangeable in His being; that He is unfathomable, all-seeing, all-knowing, omnipotent and omnipresent; that He is perfect in love, wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness and truth, and that He is most gracious, benevolent, merciful and longsuffering.* This is followed by a host of references and then this next question: Is this all the Scriptures have to say about God? And the answer is: "They say a great deal more as anyone can find for himself."

Now the Catechism's answer as to the testimony of Scripture regarding God begins like this: He is the One living God, eternal, unchangeable in His being..." There we have four attributes, and the fourth is that He is unchangeable in His being. That is our first subject this morning. Our second topic is God's infinitude. God cannot be measured or compared, because He is so far beyond all there is.

This past week as I did some reading on the Emerging Church it dawned on me that if one's view of God is right, one will never fall for these teachings.

Now I remind you that we are in the first section of two regarding His attributes and that is His impersonal attributes. Later we will look at His personal attributes.

8. Immutability

So we begin our subject with this question: What does immutable mean? Well, in our scientific day we hear a lot about mutation. To mutate is to change. We have diseases and cells that mutate

and that causes us a lot of trouble. So if mutation is to change, immutable is to be unchangeable.

Turn to Malachi 3:6 (read). Now in the context, Israel has been wicked. They have lived in sin and God, it seems has changed and let them get away with sin. Now in the chapter, we have a prophecy pointing to John the Baptist and in the chapter the Jews who lived in the time of Christ are referred to, I think. And the Lord is promising that the time will come that judgment will come though it seems they long get away with their sin. So let us read verses 4-5 (read). Israel may think they are getting away with sin, but judgment is coming! Why? Verse 6, "For I am the LORD, I do not change!" You say, "Wow, I have lived in sin for some time. I thought something bad would happen but it hasn't. I wonder if there really is a God? Mark God's word here, and mark it well, judgment is coming, "For I am the Lord, I do not change."

Now notice the last part of this verse. "Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob." Let me say this, because God does not change, you and I are not yet consumed. You see, He is merciful, and He does not change or He would have cut us off and sent us to hell long ago. He loves us and He does not change, therefore we are not consumed. Oh, we live, moment by moment because God does not change!

Turn with me to James 1:17 (read). With God, there is no variation or shadow of turning. There is in God an unchanging consistency. You can count on Him. But this is not true for almost everything else in life. So the song writer has said:

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day.
Earth's joys grow dim; its glories pass away.
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou that changest not, abide with me.

It seems the song writer has experienced what we experience and tired of change, change, change,

and then cried out to God, "O Thou that changest not, abide with me." We buy a new car and it changes. We buy a house and it changes. We buy clothes and they change. We get used to a new teacher, and we change teachers. We get used to a new place, and it changes. We make friends and we or they change. We got used to church in one way and it has changed. We used to have one or two Bible versions but all has changed. We got to know some preachers, but everything has changed. We learned to like a certain music but the singers changed. Change, change, change. Oh Thou that changest not, abide with me!

The Bible says God does not change. With him there is no variation or shadow of turning. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever. But all around us there is change. And today change is occurring so fast we are seemingly used to change. Someone said to me recently that it seems we are addicted to change.

Now Let me address a problem with regard to God not changing. It is a question that comes to the Bible teacher again and again. Let us first read Genesis 6:1-7 (read). The NKJV says God was sorry He had made man. The KJV says, "...it repented the Lord that He had made man..." Can God repent, or be sorry for something He did? Can He have a change of mind if He is immutable?

Well, let me put it like this, from my own perspective. In order for God to remain unchanging, He has to be able to change. As I see it, immutability has to do with God's character, not with how He does things. How God deals with man has to be able to change if His character is to remain the same. For example, God hears us when we pray. He is delighted to answer our prayers. But Psalm 66:18 says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." God's receptivity to me changes when I regard iniquity in my heart. So if God's receptivity towards me changes, has He changed? Well, His relationship with me has changed, but His character has not. If he listened to me and

answered my prayers when I regard iniquity in my heart, then He would change in character.

God may deal gently with a believer and guide them into right paths, but if that believer begins to live in sin, He will have to change the way He deals with them. In the end, if they do not change, He must judge them or change in His character. We see this all through the OT between God's dealings with His people Israel. In Judges we have seven cycles from blessing to judgment. When Israel repented, God repented and changed His ways of dealing with them. When Israel lived in sin, again God's ways of dealing with them changed.

So, as I see it, God's immutability has to do with His character. God's character, or His attributes never change. Though His administration or ways of dealing with man is ever changing, God remains forever unchanged.

Let me address yet another problem regarding God's immutability. It is with regard to idolatry and how man changes God. I would not have seen this unless one of our folk had not talked to me about this. I will share that yet. But consider this: The second of the ten commandments says, "You shall not make for yourself any carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love me and keep My commandments."

Now you see, we are not even to make an image of anything in heaven above. We are not to even make an image of God! Why not? Because there is nothing to liken Him to! A. W. Tozer says, "I'm always horrified when I see Michelangelo's picture of the creation. God Almighty is portrayed as an old, bald headed man lying on a cloud, pointing His fiery finger down at Adam, as

Adam comes to life. Can you imagine conceiving of God as a bald-headed old man? I think the artist would have done us a wonderful favor if he had reverently laid down his brushes and never tried to paint the figure of God."

Tozer then goes on to say this, "We don't know what God is like. If you can think it, it isn't God. If you can think it, it is an idol of your own imagination." Then a little later he says, "God is unimaginable, inconceivable; you cannot get into your head what God is like, or visualize God's being. The rule is, if you can think it, God isn't like that" (2:108-109).

So, when we make any kind of image of God, we have changed Him from our perspective. One of our folk asked the other day if the book, "The Shack" does not liken God to man? Well, without question it does. Then this brother pointed out this verse in the first chapter of Romans, "Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of God into an image made like corruptible man..." Now notice what is done to God. His glory is changed! And what is His glory? Just simply what He is! And when you change His glory, you no longer have the right God and when you don't have the right God, you have a false god and you are into idolatry!

And what happens when we reach the state described in Romans 1? God gives man up to every kind of uncleanness and vile passions (Romans 1:24-32). So horrendous does the state of man then become that it is shameful beyond all description. So listen to Tozer's rule, "The rule is, if you can think it, God isn't like that." Of course then, you should make nothing to represent Him, because you will be wrong.

So let us conclude on God's immutability with this application: Because God cannot change, He is immutable, you can count on the Word of God! It is inspired by God. My wife read to me the other day that the emerging church embraces the amillennial view of eschatology. I am not in the least surprised. Why? Because the emerging church

is not concerned with truth. It is not concerned with the Bible. It is not concerned with objectivity, it is concerned with subjectivity; how I feel, what's in it for me.

But in the Bible we are given minutely detailed information about the future called prophecy. And when you read the Bible you can count on one thing, God will do what He said He would do. When He said that whosoever believes on Jesus should not perish but have everlasting life, you can count on it! God cannot change. When He says there will be a new heaven and a new earth, you can count on it. It will happen. When he has foretold that antichrist is coming, you can count on it, it will happen. God could not write something that was not quite correct and then come back later to change it.

Now if God changed, you would no longer be able to count on His promises or His prophecies, or anything else for that matter. God's immutability is of utmost importance to us!

9. Infinitude

Now we have considered some incredible things about God, but this one may excel them all. My mind seems to hit a solid block when I come to the subject of God's infinitude. So, we ask, what does this word 'infinitude' mean? Well, the word 'infinity' means, having no bounds or limits. Let me put this before you in A.W. Tozer's words, "God is infinite! That's the hardest thought I will ask you to grasp. You cannot understand what infinite means, but don't let it bother you -I don't understand it and I'm trying to explain it! 'Infinite means so much that nobody can grasp it but reason nevertheless kneels and acknowledges that God is infinite. We mean by infinite that God knows no limits, no bounds and no end. What God is, He is without boundaries. All that God is, He is without bounds or limits."

After I became a Christian, I had a desire to learn Grammar. The other day, in preparing Plautdietchu messages I had trouble translating

the English participle. It is called a 'meddolwuut' in Plautdietch. And I have come to the conclusion that Plautdietch does not have a participle. Now I learned some very interesting things from that with regard to the Greek NT text. But in both English and Plautdietch we have what we call in English an infinitive. An infinitive is so named because it is not limited by a subject. So it is infinite, or an infinitive. But the facts are it is not infinite. In cases it is still limited by a subject.

Listen to and ponder these verses with regard to God's infinity: Psalm 145:3 *Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; And His greatness is unsearchable.* God's greatness is unsearchable, that is it has no limits or boundaries. You cannot compare Him to anyone or anything. Among people we always have comparisons, like great, greater or greatest; or less, lesser or least; For example, in Matthew 11:11 Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." Notice the comparison word 'greater' and 'least' in this text.

Now what does this verse mean? If I am the least in the kingdom of heaven, am I greater than John the Baptist? Well, from Luke 7:28 we learn that the comparison is that between prophets. The least prophet in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John the Baptist as a prophet. Yet John the Baptist was greater than any OT prophet. How can this be?

Well, how do you compare prophets? How do you compare farmers? You compare them by how much land they farm and what and how much equipment they have. So we call some 'unn groot Forma', a big farmer. You can do that in any occupation such as logging or mechanical shops and so on. So what makes one prophet greater than another? His message! What made John the Baptist greater than any prophet before Him? His message! The prophets before him said, "Christ is coming!" That was a

big message. John pointed to Christ and said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" He did not say, "He is coming" he said, "He is here!"

Now what message does the least prophet in the kingdom of God have today? It is not only that He is coming. It is not only that He came. It is that He has come, has died, was buried, has ascended back to heaven and is coming again soon!

So you see, prophets can be compared. The point? God has no comparison. There is no limit and no boundary so that you cannot say anyone is as great or greater than He. God is always beyond everyone and everything. He cannot be compared to anything or any one because there is nothing or no other comparable. He is infinite.

Consider Job 11:7-9 *Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than heaven--what can you do? Deeper than Sheol--what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth And broader than the sea.* We talk about deep thinkers, or simply thinkers, or intelligence or unintelligence. Man has developed a way of measuring human intelligence. We call it I.Q. which stands for intelligence quotient. My I.Q. is so low that I do not even know what 'quotient' means, but I do know that they have a means to measure intelligence. I have heard the IQ number for Prime Minister Harper and that of Obama and they are much the same.

A.W. Tozer said when he was in the army he had to take this test and he was in the top 2 or 4, and he said he wished he had never done that because he had been fighting pride ever since. Well, the Bible does say that knowledge puffs up. But what we learn is that knowledge is measurable. Some people have a higher I.Q. than others. But Job 11:7 asks, "Who can search out the deep things of God?" You see, for man it is infinite. There is no I.Q. test man could give that God would not achieve the highest number possible and then go so far beyond that man could search it out. So Romans 11:33 says, *Oh, the depth of the riches*

both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

But the verse also says, *Can you find out the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than heaven--what can you do? Deeper than Sheol--what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth And broader than the sea.* In other words, there are no limits and no boundaries. God is infinite in any way He can be described.

With regard to His immanence, listen to Isaiah 66:1 *Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? Then listen to 1 Kings 8:27, But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built! How do you like that for size? He is infinite in size, and therefore knows no bounds or limits.*

Is there any practical application to be drawn from God's infinitude? Well, yes. Don't read the book that is now making inroads into the Christian community, 'The Shack'! It pictures God as a woman and so horribly distorts who He is that you have a totally false god! Do not make God like anything else! If you do, you destroy His immutability! And if you do, you destroy His infinitude! Do not make any graven image or any likeness to God at all! If you do, you are an idolater!

Furthermore, we can learn from this that we can trust Him in absolutely everything He says and asks us to do. You can argue with Him over all kinds of things in the Bible. Why should I dress modestly? Why should I not be a workaholic? Why should I obey the law? and on and on. Why would I question Him when my knowledge is measurable and His is immeasurable?

CONCL: So we conclude and say, "Yes God is immutable, and yes God is infinite!" In His immutability we see that He will never change, He remains forever the same. From this

we learn that He will remain true to His word and He is trustworthy. We can entrust the eternal well-being of our souls entirely to Him. We can study in prophecy what is to come, and where our interpretation is right, we can be assured nothing will change that. All over North America, prophecy is being put down. The seeker friendly church is not interested! The emergent church is not interested! But God never changes! He has revealed incredible things for the future, and we are in such exciting days prophetically, and yet it is a forgotten topic.

Let me give one word on prophecy this morning, because God is an unchanging God. People say, "Oh, prophecy is so difficult. It is shrouded in such mystery. There are so many thousands of opinions. I believe it is best to leave it out because it causes such disagreements. So I believe the best motto is it is all going to pan out in the end, and the key thing is to be ready."

Now I want to tell you something, and listen carefully: Prophecy is not so difficult. Computers are more difficult! Nor are there thousands of opinions. There are basically three views, one you can throw out without question. That leaves two. Of those two, all you have to do is to determine whether to interpret prophecy literally or whether you should spiritualize prophetic writings. That is not that hard and then you are left with one, which is called premillennialism. Now pre mid and post trib are all premillennial in view. This is more difficult but when you are down to this, by far the most prophetic passages are not affected. So, it simply is not that difficult. It simply needs to be taught. God does not change and His prophecies will stand.

Furthermore, God is infinite. It just dawned on me that the question of God is on the theological chopping block today. If ever there was a day when a solid view of God was important it is today. I have been simply appalled by those who profess to be believers who have read the book 'The Shack' and they hardly bat an eye! God is under horrendous attack in that book, and Evangelicals don't seem to mind. It is a horrible crime! You see, God is infinite. If you believe that you would never write a book like 'The Shack'. There probably never has been a day when we needed to preach on the God of the Bible like there is today.

Then we learn one more important thing from the two attributes we have covered this morning, and that is that we should trust in Him and not lean on our own understanding.