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18510 Branders Bridge Rd., Colonial Heights, VA 23834  
Sunday, August 20, 2017

## Matthew 5:48 “Our Perfect, Unchanging God”

Intro. In the Old Testament we read of God’s dealings with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God revealed Himself to them as He set out to establish a holy nation through whom He would save us from the curse of sin. Yet that was about 4,000 years ago. God revealed Himself to Moses and the people of Israel over 3500 years ago. Even the time of Jesus was about 2000 years ago. What does all of that have to do with us today? It seems that some view the 1990’s as out of date and to be rejected. It seems that things are changing so fast. What does an ancient book like the Bible have to do with life today?

Well, the link between the past and the present is God Himself. What God did in the past and what God revealed in the past is relevant today because of the truth that I will talk about today, and that is the biblical truth that God does not change. God *cannot* change. He does not change with the times. He doesn’t change to adjust to unforeseen circumstances, partly because in Isa. 46:10 God says He declares “the end from the beginning.” The God to whom we are accountable is the same God that revealed Himself to Adam, Noah, Abraham and Moses. We change, the world is constantly changing, but God never changes.

So this morning I am going to present biblical and logical evidence that God never changes. Yet how comforting it is that in a world of constant change there is a God in heaven who never changes!

Now I want to begin with the basis of the truth that God does not change, nor can He change, for:

### I. GOD IS PERFECT

Jesus affirmed this attribute of God when He said in Mt. 5:48, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

Since God is perfect, then it follows that:

A. His Being Is Perfect - His attributes are not lacking in any respect. As we have already discussed, He is omnipotent; He has *all* power. He is omniscient; He possesses *all* knowledge. He is full of grace and mercy. He has no flaws. He is complete, lacking nothing.

One application of this truth is given by Jesus Himself. Again, He said in Mt. 5:48, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” Though we cannot achieve perfection in this life, we should nevertheless strive toward that goal. Likewise, in Gen. 17:1 God said to Abram, “I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.” Since God is indeed Almighty, He can enable us to live far closer to perfection than would otherwise be possible. In Deut. 18:13 God said to His people, “You shall be blameless before the LORD your God.” James 1:4 says, “But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” Yes, God even uses trials in our lives to mature us, and make us stronger.

Yet the reality is in this life, and until we are perfected in heaven, we will always fall short. If anyone could have achieved perfection it would have been the apostle Paul. Yet he said

in Php. 3:12, “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.” That’s all we can be expected to do: strive for the goal of perfection, or at least full Christian maturity. In Col. 1:28 the Apostle Paul said, “Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” So trusting in God’s enabling grace, let us strive to become more and more like God in full Christian maturity.

B. His Works Are Perfect - Deut. 32:4 says, “He is the Rock, His work is perfect....” He gave His law to Israel. Was it flawed in any way? No! Psa. 19:7 says, “The law of the LORD is perfect....”

Since God is perfect, we should expect His Son to be perfect. In Mark 7:37 the people said of Jesus, “He has done all things well.”

May God help us to be more like Him, and do all things well, reflecting His glory.

C. His Ways Are Perfect - 2 Sam. 22:31 says, “As for God, His way is perfect....” (stated also in Ps 18:30)

Therefore, let us not question the ways of God. I can assure you there is no flaw with God.

Now because God is perfect, it follows that:

## II. GOD DOES NOT CHANGE

This is called the immutability of God. It is that perfection of God by which He is devoid of all change. Immutability refers to the self-consistency that pervades all that God is or does. This immutability of God is clearly taught in such passages of Scripture as Malachi 3:6, where God says, “For I am the LORD, I do not change....” Then Ex. 3:14, where God says His name is “I AM WHO I AM.” He is the eternal, ever present God. The same God of today is the same God of eternal past, and will be the same God in the eternal future. James 1:17 says, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.” What is true of God the Father is true of God the Son. Therefore, Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

The concept of an evolving or developing God is not found in the Scriptures. Even reason teaches us that no change is possible in God, since a change is either for better or for worse. God cannot change for the better. Since He is perfectly holy, He has never been less holy than He is now and can never be holier than He is and has always been. Neither can God change for the worse. Any deterioration within the unspeakably holy nature of God is impossible. Why would a perfect God have to change?

A. W. Tozer said, “As gold is an element in itself and can never change nor compromise but is gold wherever it is found, so God is God, always, only, fully God, and can never be other than He is.”

What a contrast this is to the gods of the nations, who were typically created in the image of man. They were believed to act capriciously, depending on whatever was their mood at the time. You couldn’t count on them to be the same, and to act with any consistency.

The immutability of God is also in stark contrast with man. Man is in constant flux. Each man appears for a little while to laugh and weep, to work and play in a never-ending cycle. The

law of mutation belongs to a fallen world, but God is immutable, and in Him men of faith find at last eternal permanence.

God is perfect. We are fallen creatures. Therefore, *we* are the ones who need to change, and God is the only one who can enable us to change for the better. To change from one sort of person to another is the essence of repentance: the liar becomes truthful, the thief honest, the lewd becomes pure, the drunk becomes sober, and the proud becomes humble. The whole moral texture of the life is altered. The thoughts, the desires, the affections can be transformed by God. So radical is this change that in Col. 3:9-10 the apostle calls the man that used to be “the old man,” and the man that now is “the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” 2 Corinthians 3:18 describes the process, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” The old man, even at his best, possesses only the life of Adam: the new man has the life of God. When God infuses eternal life into the spirit of a man, the man becomes a member of a new and higher order of being.

In this world where men change their attitude toward us as their private interests dictate, and revise their opinion of us for the slightest cause, is it not a source of wondrous strength to know that the God with whom we have to do changes not? What peace it brings to the Christian’s heart to realize that our Heavenly Father never differs. His attitude toward us now is the same as it was in eternity past and will be in eternity to come? His attitude toward the sinner is the same as when Jesus stretched forth His hands and cried in Mt. 11:28, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” God never changes!

Now because of this Biblical truth that God does not change, the following is true:

A. His Being Does Not Change – In Rom. 1:23 Paul calls God “the incorruptible God.” We change as we grow old, and when death comes, our bodies change rapidly. Yet God is incorruptible. He never changes. Ps. 102:26-27 says, “They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will change them, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will have no end.” [This is quoted in Heb. 1:11-12]. He does not grow older. He does not gain new powers, nor lose those that He once had. He does not mature or develop. He does not get stronger, or weaker, or wiser, as time goes by.

Oh, what a day it will be when we become like God, free from sin and flaws. Romans 8:29 says that we are “predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son....”

B. His Character Does Not Change – In other words His attributes do not change. A good king may turn bitter and cranky. A man of good-will may grow cynical and callous. Yet the character of God is today, and always will be, exactly what it was in Bible times. In Exodus 34 God revealed His character to Moses. He said in vv.6-7, “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty....” God hasn’t changed in the least. He is still the same God. As the scripture says many times, “His mercy endures forever.” Likewise, God’s love does not change.

What a blessing it is to know that God is the same when you go to Him in prayer. He always cares for you no matter how circumstances change.

C His Will Does Not Change - Nothing the inspired prophets and apostles have said about Him will be rescinded. His immutability guarantees this. His attitude toward sin is now the

same as it was when He drove out the sinful man from the garden. What was God's will 2000 years ago is still God's will today! Times may have changed, but God hasn't! I'm a conservative because God is quite conservative! He never changes. God does not have a new morality that changes with each generation. The so-called new morality is actually the old immorality. Adultery, lying, stealing, and murder are just as sinful today as when God gave His 10 commandments 3500 years ago. That's because the will of God is rooted in the never changing nature of God.

I can tell you something else. God's will concerning marriage has not changed with the times. When they asked Jesus regarding divorce, He pointed back to the creation story and said in Mt. 19:4, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female.'" Then He quoted more of the Genesis account, "the two shall become one flesh." Based on God's revealed will, Jesus said, "Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." God's will and God's plan has not changed. His will for marriage is for one man and one woman to be joined together in holy matrimony for life.

D. His Purposes and Plans Do Not Change – Heb. 6:17 speaks of "the immutability of His counsel." The prophet Samuel said in 1 Samuel 15:29, "the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent." Likewise, Num. 23:19 says, "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" The purpose to create was eternal with Him. He will move this world toward the destiny He planned for it before the beginning of time. What He does in time, He planned from eternity. For example, Rev. 13:8 speaks of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

This also does not mean that God cannot vary His methods in carrying out His purposes and plans. There was progression in His dealings with man from the Old Testament to the New Testament. But this was all part of His plan from eternity.

Yet there are times when it *seems* that the Bible says that God does change His mind. At least fifteen times the Old Testament pictures God as changing His mind (Gen. 6:6ff; Ex. 32:14; Deut. 9:19; 1 Sam. 15:11; 2 Sam. 24:16; 1 Kings 21:29; 1 Chron. 21:15; Ps 106:45; Jer. 18:8; 26:3, 19; Amos 7:3, 6; Jonah 3:10; Joel 2:13ff.). Yet all of these texts describe God as changing His course of action *in response* to the changing attitudes or actions of people. In reality the change is not in God but in man and in man's relations to God. No change in His eternal purpose is implied when He begins to deal with a man in a new way. In fact, we can have confidence in God because He will, for example, withhold promised judgment if people repent.<sup>1</sup>

E His Truth Does Not Change – Sometimes we have to eat our words, because hard facts refute them. The words of men are unstable things. But not so the words of God. Isa. 40:8 says, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever." Ps. 119:89 says, "Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven." God does not change and His Word does not change. We should, therefore, give heed to the warnings of Scripture. We should heed the demands of God's Word and obey Him.

Since He never changes, He can also be counted on to do what He says He will do. He is dependable. God's immutability guarantees that He will do as He promised He would. When God says in Romans 10:13, "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved," you can

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to maintain the immutability of God over against the Pelagian and Arminian doctrine so that His decisions are to a great extent dependent on the actions of man.

be sure He will save you. Yet apart from repentance, you can be sure that He will punish sin as He promised He would.

He has given many promises regarding prayer. James 1:17 says, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.” In coming to Him at any time we need not wonder whether we shall find Him in a receptive mood.

Conclusion: If our God is the same as the God of New Testament believers, how can we justify ourselves in resting content with an experience of communion with Him, and a level of Christian conduct, that falls so far below theirs?

Sources: Roy T. Edgemon, *The Doctrines Baptists Believe* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1999); Millard J. Erickson, Ed., *The Living God: Readings in Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), Stephen F. Felker, *Basic Bible Doctrine* (Training Course); J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 4:23] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2012); William Wilson Stevens, *Doctrines of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967); A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (Lincoln, NE: Back to the Bible Broadcast, 1971). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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