



Calvary Chapel  
Palos Verdes

02

# Foundations Of Faith

An Introduction to the Attributes of God

# Foundations of Faith 02

## *Contents*

Intro	3 - 4
The Holiness of God	5 - 17
The Love of God	18 - 30
The Sovereignty of God	31 - 40
The Immutability of God	41 - 50



Calvary Chapel  
Palos Verdes

**[calvarypalosverdes.com](http://calvarypalosverdes.com)**

Prepared by Calvary Chapel Palos Verdes  
Written by Rob Orr 2026 v5

The Christian life is a life-long process of walking with Jesus so as to be more like Him, whom Hebrews 12:2 says is the author and perfecter of our faith. Rom. 8:29 tells us that if you are a Christian, God has chosen you to be conformed to the image of His Son. Through some of the things you studied in Vol. 1 of Foundations of Faith, such as God's Word, an understanding of Sin & Salvation, the Holy Spirit, and Prayer, God is always at work in the life of a believer to mature us and make us more like Jesus. In this Booklet, we will examine some of God's character attributes which should enlighten us as to the true nature of God, and motivate us to pursue Him more, and to grow deeper in our faith.

God has numerous attributes, all of which tell us something about His character. Knowing them and becoming familiar with them will help us grow in our understanding of God and our faith in Him. Some of His attributes are what are called "communicable", which means that to some degree they can be learned, developed, and put into practice by us as His children. Some examples of the communicable attributes of God would be Holiness and Love, which His Word clearly calls us to pursue and live out. In Leviticus 11:44-45, as well as several other places in the Old Testament, and in 1 Pet. 1:16, we are told to be Holy, because God is Holy. Heb. 12:14 tells us to strive for or pursue holiness. In John 13:34, Jesus tells us to love one another, as He has loved us, and that this is one of the ways that people will know that we are His followers.

Other attributes of God, such as His omniscience and omnipotence are reserved for Him alone and are thus referred to as "incommunicable" attributes of His. Deut. 29:29 tells us that there are certain things that are secret to God, and that rather

than concern ourselves with them, we should focus on doing or living out the things about Him which we do understand. Many verses in Scripture speak of God's immense power. Ps. 145:3 says, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable", and Ps. 145:5 says, "Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; His understanding is beyond measure." Our strength and our knowledge will be increased in Him and by Him, but we will never be all-powerful or all-knowledgeable like Him. Those are attributes reserved for Him alone.

Yet even though some of God's attributes are incommunicable, knowing of them will still help build our faith. His omniscience, or ability to know all things, enables and encourages us to turn to him for counsel and wisdom. His omnipotence, which tells us that He is all powerful, enables and encourages us to trust in Him no matter in what circumstance or difficulty we find ourselves. Col. 2:3 tells us that **"all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"** are found in Christ. Is 9:6 tells us that He is our **"Wonderful Counselor"** and **"Mighty God."** Part of why He is our Wonderful Counselor is that He is also our Mighty God, so that unlike any human counselor, He has the power and ability to do something about the problems and issues in our lives when we seek counsel from Him about them. The best thing, therefore, that any human counselor can do for us, is to bring us to Jesus who is the One in whom all wisdom and knowledge is found and who is our Wonderful Counselor and Mighty God. That is the intent and goal of this booklet.

With these thoughts in mind, we will now examine and reflect upon God's Holiness, His Love, His Sovereignty, and His Immutability. In each section, we will 1st learn something from Scripture about each of these attributes of God, and then will explore how it should affect us.

## LESSON 1

# THE HOLINESS OF GOD



All of God's character attributes are of equal importance, and they all exist in Him in full measure, so we can't say that one is more important than another, or that He is more of one than another. Yet, there is one attribute of God's that we must start with in order to be able to truly appreciate and fully understand many of the others, and that is His holiness. God is worshipped in heaven for His holiness, and His holiness is the 1st attribute of God that is mentioned in the Lord's Prayer.

When God first introduced Himself to Moses in the burning bush in Ex. 3:5-6, He made it clear to Moses that even the ground around Him was holy because of His presence there. Moses was so overwhelmed by God's holy presence that he hid his face and could not look upon God. God told His people in Lev. 11:45 to **"be holy, for I am holy."** In 1 John 1:5, as the Apostle John introduces his readers to Jesus, he says **"This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."** The reference to God as light, in which there is no

darkness, speaks of His holiness.

Holiness refers to God being separate and apart from creation, which has been polluted by sin. We see this in how Jesus taught us to address God in prayer as **“Our Father, who is in Heaven.”**

While God can be anywhere in His creation at any time, and is thus omnipresent, He does not inhabit all the things of His creation as pagan gods allegedly do. The Bible speaks of a coming time when God will dwell in the redeemed and new creation (Rev. 21:1–3), but until then, His dwelling place is in Heaven. Holiness also refers to God’s absolute moral perfection, and the fact that He always does the right thing for the right reason, in the right way, and at the right time.

There is no sin in God, and He cannot have any fellowship with sin. Holiness and sin simply do not mix. They are like oil and water. In fact, God hates sin. In Prov. 6:16, we are told of God’s hatred of sin where it says this, **“There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.”**

While that does not cover all of the possible things that are sinful, it is a pretty complete list of the categories of sin, and it is clear that God hates them.

Because God is holy, sin is abhorrent to Him, and He must judge and punish it. To not do so would compromise His holiness. Rom. 3:23 says that all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory (or holiness) of God. Unless our sin is somehow dealt with, we can never have any fellowship with God, whether now or in eternity. Is. 59:2 says, **“But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God.”** Accordingly, the famous preacher of the 19th

Century, Charles Spurgeon, said “You and your sins must separate, or you and your God will never come together.”

If we begin our understanding of God as being holy, as He is presented in the Bible, then His other attributes such as love, grace, and mercy shine with so much more brilliance and glory. Just as a jeweler does not present a diamond for examination by a customer on top of a white cloth, but rather does so against a dark velvet backdrop so that all of the beauty and luster of the diamond can be clearly seen, so God’s love, grace, and mercy can be more clearly seen, appreciated, and understood when we look at them against the dark backdrop of the holiness of God which requires Him to judge and punish sin.

Also, if we begin our understanding of God with Him being holy, then Hell makes perfect sense, and Heaven is seen as an absolute miracle & blessing. However, if we begin our understanding of God with love, grace, or mercy, then Hell makes no sense, and Heaven seems like something that we naturally deserve. Starting with an understanding of God as being holy is so important that the famous theologian, R.C. Sproul, said that any understanding of God that does not begin with his holiness is idolatry, because you will end up with the wrong God. So, as we begin this study of God’s attributes, we are going to begin with his holiness.

To get a glimpse of God’s holiness, and what its effect should be upon us, let’s consider an experience that the prophet Isaiah had about 700 years before Christ. Isaiah was called by God to go and preach repentance to God’s people who had turned against Him and were living in a lifestyle of indulgent sin. In order to prepare Isaiah for this mission and to keep him humble and from thinking that he was something, God greatly humbled him by allowing him to have a glimpse into the holiness of God, seen in His throne room

in Heaven. This event is recorded in Isaiah 6:1-8. Read through it and then consider the following.

Notice the description of this place that is given in Vs. 1-4. God is on a throne, which signifies that He is King. He is high and lifted up, which signifies that He is above all and in control or sovereign over all things. Just the train of His robe fills the entire place, which speaks to the immenseness of God and that He can't be contained. There are angelic beings there who are so overwhelmed by God's holiness that, like Moses, they can't look upon Him and must cover their eyes and their feet. They are also continuously worshipping God for His holiness. And then, as if that wasn't enough, the foundations of the place are shaking at the sound of God's voice, and the place was filled with smoke.

**1. If you were there with Isaiah, what would your reaction be?**

In Vs. 3, the angelic beings are praising God for His holiness, and they repeat the word "holy" three times as they do it. The same thing is seen in Rev. 4: 8. While this may in part be because of God's triune nature as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there is no other attribute of God's mentioned in Scripture that is repeated three times when we see it.

**2. What does this tell you about the importance of God's holiness?**



In the presence of God's holiness, something profound happens to Isaiah. We see in Vs. 5 that he is broken and humbled and realizes his own sinfulness. Not only that but notice the specific part of his body that he realizes is actually sinful. It is his lips, which is the very part of his body that he would be using to go proclaim repentance to God's people. Isaiah also tells us what has caused him to be so humbled and broken, and to realize his own sinfulness in that part of his body that God was going to use for ministry. He says that it is the fact that his eyes have seen God.

**3. Why would looking upon God's holiness have caused Isaiah to be so humbled and broken, and to realize his own sinfulness?**

**4. What does this tell us about how we can find humility?**

After being exposed to the holiness of God in Vs. 1-5, we see in Vs. 6-7, something about the love, grace, and mercy of God. Without any request from Isaiah, one of the angelic beings comes down with a piece of burning coal from the altar that is in the Throne Room of God and touches it to Isaiah's lips to purge him of his sin. Since this is not initiated by Isaiah, the clear implication is that it was initiated by God, who most likely told the angelic being to do that.

**5. What does this tell you about what must be done with our sin in order for us to be in God's presence?**

**6. What does this tell us about the love, grace, and mercy of God?**

**7. How does this give us a picture of salvation through Jesus?**

Finally, in Vs. 8, we see that Isaiah is ready and prepared for the ministry to which God had called him. But note that Isaiah does not yet have any idea of all that this ministry is going to entail or of what it is going to require of him. Yet, his response is an unquestioning surrender to the will of God, for he says, "Here I am, send me."

**8. So, what is it about this whole experience that causes Isaiah to have such an unquestioning surrender to the will of God in his life?**

When other men of God whom we might look up to as being so close to God have a similar encounter with God and His holiness, they have a similar response of humility and brokenness, and a realization of their own sin, as Isaiah did here. Look at Job 42:5-6 to see the response of Job to his encounter with God in Chapters 38-41, as well as Luke 5:8 to see Peter's response to an amazing display of the deity of Christ, and then John's response in Rev. 1:17 when he encounters Jesus in Heaven and sees Him as He is described in Vs. 12-17.

**9. In view of how all these men responded, what is your response to God's holiness?**

As an encounter with God's holiness did for Isaiah, Job, Peter, and John, our encounter with this most fundamental attribute of God should also drive us to see even deeper our own need for a Savior. This is one of the main points of the Sermon on the Mount which is recorded for us in Chapter 5-7 of Matthew. As it begins, we see in Matt. 5:1 that there are great crowds of people there to hear Jesus speak. The end of Chapter 4 tells us that they had come to Him from a much larger surrounding area. If you were in the crowd that day, you most likely would have been Jewish. Your religion was at that time very much based on doing good works in the belief that they would commend you to God and make you acceptable or righteous in His sight and able to enter heaven. The men who had achieved the pinnacle of success in your religion were the scribes and Pharisees. To become a Pharisee, one had to be found to be keeping, externally at least, all of the laws and

commands of the Jewish religion. Out of a nation of several million people, there were only about 6,000 Pharisees at the time of Christ. So, if you were a devout Jew, you would have looked up to them and would have believed that if you could only become like one of them, then you and God would be on good terms and you would be on your way to heaven.

The people there in the crowd that day would not yet have believed that Jesus was the Son of God, but they knew of His great fame. The end of Chapter 4 tells us that the news of the many healings that Jesus had done, along with His preaching of the Gospel, had spread throughout the region. So, if you were in that crowd, you would have been excited and looking forward to hearing from Him. In the opening verses of His message, it is evident that He is going to be talking about how to enter the kingdom of heaven, for He mentions this in Matt. 5: 3, 10, 12, and 18-19. Then, He says this in Matt. 5:20, **“For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”**

Imagine what your reaction would have been upon hearing this statement. If you were a devout Jew, and you were looking up to these Pharisees, hoping that one day you would be like them, and would then be found acceptable in God’s sight and able to enter heaven, you most certainly would have been devastated to hear these words. For this One who seemed to have a lot of power and authority from God to heal and preach had just said that for you to go to heaven, you had to be more righteous than those whom you looked up to as being the most righteous in your entire religious system. Your dreams and hopes for one day being in a right relationship with God would have crumbled, and you would have been devastated.

Then as if that wasn't enough, a few verses later in Matt. 5:48, Jesus said, **"You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."**

In essence, what Jesus was doing here was raising the crowd's understanding of the level of holiness that had to be obtained in order to enter heaven to the perfection of God Himself. This was completely consistent with what the law said in Lev. 11:45, referenced earlier, that we are to be holy because God is holy. Like the official at a pole vault event who keeps raising the bar that must be vaulted over until there is only one person who can pass it to become the winner of the event, Jesus was raising the bar of holiness required to enter heaven up to its rightful place at the level of the holiness of God Himself. The intended effect was to get everyone to see that there was no way that they could pass that bar on their own, and thus prepare their hearts to hear the message of the Gospel so that in Him who was alone able to pass that bar, they could have salvation.

In the face of God's holiness, we realize how miserably short we all fall from God's standard. Throughout the rest of the sermon, Jesus showed His audience the extent and frequency of their sin, by reminding them of their lust, anger, lying, and greed, as well even their hypocrisy when it came to their acts of righteousness such as giving, fasting and prayer. The point was to get them to realize the truth that Paul declared in Rom. 3:10 that **"None is righteous, no, not one."** It has been said that technically speaking, there are two ways to get into heaven. One is to live a perfect life with absolutely no sin whatsoever. The other is to realize that you cannot possibly do that, and then to place your trust and confidence for your salvation in the One and only person who did, Jesus, so that you can enter heaven through faith in Him. He is the narrow gate and the narrow way mentioned in Matt. 7:13-14.

**10. How does understanding God's holiness affect your understanding of your own sin?**

**11. How does understanding God's holiness affect your understanding of your own salvation?**

There is one more point to consider before we leave the subject of God's holiness. As we saw in Is. 6:3, it is the attribute of God for which He is worshipped in heaven. Before Jesus came to earth approximately 2,000 years ago, He was there in that throne room as a member of the triune God to receive that worship. That would have been all he had ever heard there for all of eternity, up until a point in time approximately 2,000 years ago, when in fulfillment of God's plan for our salvation which Eph. 1:4 tells us was decided upon before the foundation of the world, Jesus left the throne room of God to come to earth as a human being. Contemplating all that this entailed should help us grow in our understanding of His love for us and of the lengths to which He will go to reach us.

Imagine what it was like for Jesus to go from Heaven, a place of absolute perfection where He was the object of endless continual worship to this earth, to a place polluted by sin and its effects where He would be rejected by those whom He loved.

Theologically, His act of doing this is referred to as the “condescension of Christ” and it is beautifully described in Phil. 2:3-8. Read that now, and then consider these points and how they should affect us.

The beginning of Vs. 5 tells us to have the same mind in us that was in Jesus when He left Heaven to come to earth. We see what His mind was in both Vs. 3-4 and in Vs. 6-8. In Vs. 3, we see that He was not motivated by any selfish ambition or conceit (which is another word for pride). In keeping with the definition of the moral purity aspect of His holiness, He did this for the right motive, which was to obey and glorify His heavenly Father, as well as to reach out to and save us. In fact, Heb. 12:2 tells us that it was for the joy set before Him in doing this that He was able to endure the horror of the cross. We also see in Vs. 3 that Jesus acted out of humility in seeing us as fallen humanity as more important than Himself. His love for the Father and for us enabled Him to step out of what was comfortable and familiar in Heaven and into the hurt, pain, and sorrow of this fallen world. Vs. 4 describes this as not looking out for His own interests, but instead looking out for our interests, which was as fallen sinners in desperate need of redemption through Him as our Savior.

We see in Vs. 5 that it is God’s heart that this selfless, other-centered, and sacrificial mindset is something that God expects will be manifest in us as followers of Jesus. So, it is a communicable aspect of God’s character. In fact, in John 13:34, Jesus spoke these words to His disciples: **“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”** There will be much more said about this in the next Lesson on God’s Love, but

for now we must note that Jesus would not have said this unless this was a communicable aspect of His character.

Vs. 6-7 tell us that although Jesus was fully God, He did not hold onto all that came with that, such as the continual worship for His Holiness that we saw in Is. 6:1-8. Rather, He let go of it to become a man. He remained Holy and He lived a perfect life, but He voluntarily let go of the perks that came with being Holy. The fact that God became man should not be brushed over quickly because it deserves considerable contemplation. All that this entailed, as Jesus moved from a place of Holiness and perfection to live amongst the fallenness of our human condition, should make us love and honor Him all the more.

Think of what it was like for the eternal God of the Universe to condescend to helplessly float around in the amniotic fluid of a fallen woman's womb for (9) months, and to be totally dependent upon the nourishment and blood that came to Him through her umbilical cord. He did that for us. Think about what it was like for Jesus to go through the human birthing process, which is not very pleasant for either the mother or the baby, and then when He emerged from His mother's womb to be placed in one of the lowest of all places in that culture, a cattle feeding trough which we euphemistically dress up and call a manger. He did that for us.

Not only that, but Jesus then grew up poor and had to learn a trade of being a carpenter in order to support his family and Himself. He did that for us. The Scriptures tell us that He not only experienced poverty, but also knew what it was like to be tired and thirsty. He did that for us. We know from Matt. 8:20 that during His years of ministry, He was essentially homeless, for Jesus said there that, **"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of**



**Man has nowhere to lay His head.”** He did that for us. Throughout His life, He was, as Vs, 7 says “a servant. In fact, He said in Matt. 20:28 that He **“came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”**

Then, as if all of that was not enough, He was rejected by most everyone He came to save. This rejection was manifested in how He was treated in His final week, in how He was unjustly treated by the authorities who denied Him all of His rights under both the Jewish and Roman legal systems, beat Him, whipped Him, and then executed Him by means of the worst and most painful form of death ever conceived, death on a cross. But, as Vs. 8 says, He did this out of obedience to God’s plan to rescue fallen humanity.

**12. How does it affect you to contemplate the fact that Jesus willingly left the throne room of God where He was worshiped for His Holiness in order to live and die as a man, in order to save you?**

**13. When you consider all that Jesus went through to reach you and save you, how does that affect your view of others who may not yet know Jesus as their Lord and Savior?**

LESSON 2

# THE LOVE OF GOD



In addition to being Holy, the Bible tells us that another one of God's attributes is love. 1 John 4:8 & 16, both say that **"God is love."** Ps. 36:7 says, **"How precious is your steadfast love, O God!"** And Rom. 5:8 says, **"But God shows us His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."** So, God both is love and He manifests love. The fact that a perfect and Holy God loves us as fallen sinners should overwhelm us.

One of the most well-known verses in the Bible is John 3:16, and it speaks of the love of God. It says this, **"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."** This verse tells us so much about God's love. First, this is a unique kind of love in that it is God's love. Its uniqueness is further seen in the Greek word that is translated there as love. It is the word "agape." In the Greek language, there were (4) different words used for love, each for a different type of love. There was the word "phileo", which spoke of a brotherly kind of love, from which we get the name for the City of Philadelphia or

the City of Brotherly Love. Phileo love was a reciprocal “quid pro quo” kind of love. A person loved their brother, and they received back an equal measure of love. There was the word “eros”, which spoke of a love based on attraction, and from which we get the word “erotic.” There was also the word “storge”, which spoke of a familial type of love, whereby a person had to love a family member because they were in the same family, even if they didn’t really like them that much. This was sort of like the love we are expected to have for someone like that distant and different relative who shows up for a family holiday gathering.

Then, in contrast to these other types of love, there was the word “agape”, which spoke of an unconditional, other centered, selfless, and sacrificial kind of love. This was a non-object dependent love, which means that it was not based on there being anything attractive or appealing in the object of the love. This is seen in Rom. 5:8 which tells us that **“God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”** Agape love was not based on what a person could get in return for it. It was not a quid pro quo or transactional type of love. Rather, the giver of agape love always sought to do what was best for the object of this love. In fact, Eph. 5:25-27 tells us that this kind of love always sought to purify its object. Agape love was so foreign to the human experience that word was not really used much until Jesus appeared and He and Christians after Him started manifesting this kind of love.

Notice in John 3:16 that this kind of love led God to do something, which was to give us His only Son, and that in Rom. 5:8 it led Christ to die for us. So, agape love was much more than just an emotion or a feeling. It was an action and involved a decision of the will. This is the kind of love that God has for us.

God's love is also a pursuing kind of love. In Gen. 3:9, after Adam and Eve had sinned and while they were hiding themselves from God, we see that God pursued after them and called out to them "**Where are you.**" God knew full well where they were, so He wasn't asking that question so that He could locate them. Rather, He wanted them to know that although their sin had separated them from Him, He was still pursuing after them. God had created them to be in a relationship with Him, and He was not content to leave them off on their own outside of that relationship. He was going to pursue them and give them a way back to a right relationship with Him. He began to reveal in Gen. 3:15 what this way would be when He cursed the serpent and said that one day the seed of the Woman would crush the head or deal a death blow to the seed of the serpent. At the end of Chapter 3, God also gave Adam and Eve a new set of clothes, made from the shed blood of an innocent animal, as an acceptable covering for their sin, in place of their self-made clothes fashioned from fig leaves.

As Christians, we need to grow in our understanding and appreciation of God's agape love for us. Too many believers have an image of God as if He were some kind of traffic cop with a radar gun in a speed trap, just waiting to zap us and write us a ticket when we sin. This is not how Jesus portrays God for us in the Bible. Rather, He gives us a picture of God as being like the father in the story of the Prodigal Son. Remember, that father was looking down the road waiting for any sign of his son's return, and the moment he saw his son starting to come home, he ran down the road to hug him and kiss him, put a new robe on him, give him a ring, and throw a party for him. When we sin, God is not waiting to zap us or punish us. The punishment for our sin was already fully meted out on His Son. What God wants when

we sin is that, just like the Prodigal son we would turn around and head home to Him, and then He will embrace us again. James 4:8 reflects this type of God when it says, “**Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.**”

As the recipients of this amazing agape love from God, He expects us to manifest it to others. It clearly is one of His communicable attributes. Although none of us can ever love as perfectly and fully as He does, we should nonetheless always be growing in our capacity and ability to love others in this way. This is not a love which we can work ourselves up into by the strength of our own flesh. However, it is part of the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Gal. 5:22-23 that will flow out of us as we learn to submit to and live by the power of the Holy Spirit within us.

If we don't have this agape love, then no matter what spiritual gifts we have, or Bible knowledge we have, or faith we have, or how much we give to God & others, the Bible says in 1 Cor. 13:1-3 that we are nothing. Paul says in 1 Timothy 1:5 that the aim or goal of all of his teaching and ministry is love. 1 John 4:7 calls us to love one another with this agape love and says that it comes from God. It also says that having this love is evidence of the fact that we are children of God and that we know Him. Jesus calls His followers in John 13:34 to love one another with the same agape love with which He has loved them, and then goes on to say in Vs. 35 that having this kind of love for each other is a witness to the rest of the world that we are His disciples.

Since this amazing type of love comes from God, it is no wonder then that 1 John 4:19 says, “**We love because He first loved us.**” We can't give away this type of love to others unless we have 1st received it ourselves from God. To grow in showing this love to others, it often helps to take time to think about and grow in our

understanding of God's love for us. 1 Cor. 13:4 to the 1st part of Vs. 8 gives a beautiful picture of what this love looks like in action. It says this, **"Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends."**

As we consider all these descriptions of love, keep in mind that this is how God loves us, and it is also how He calls us to love others. However, we cannot give away to others that which we do not have. So, in order to be able to manifest these things toward others, we first have to have received them from God. These are not things that we, on our own and of our own strength and ability, would ever be able to do or show.

In the English language translation of these verses, all of these descriptions of love appear as adjectives modifying the subject of love. However, in Greek each concept itself appears as a verb. In other words, it says that love is being patient, being kind, etc. This reminds us that true Christian love or agape love is an action, not just a feeling or an emotion. True love does things and refrains from doing things for the object of the love. The action nature of this love is seen in John 3:16 where we are told that God's love of the world led Him to do something, namely give His only begotten Son, and in Rom. 5:8 where we are told that God showed us His love by sending Jesus to die for us.

In our often too shallow understanding of love, we tend to wait until we have loving feelings before we take loving actions. But often we wait and wonder why those loving feelings won't come, and so we never move to taking loving actions. Yet, the truth is that loving feelings will generally follow loving actions. As God sees us taking

loving actions, He generally seems to then flood our heart with loving feelings. So, it is important to cultivate those loving feelings by taking loving actions towards others. We are not to follow our heart, but rather need to lead it, and we do that with loving actions.

Another foundational thing to see about this kind of love that God has towards us is that it is not transactional. It is not a quid pro quo type of love. As can be seen in 1 John 4:19, God loved us before we ever loved Him.

The 1st thing we are told about this love is that it is patient. This means that it does not easily get riled up or irritated. The Greek word used there for patient is “makrothumia” which literally means “long-fused.” In other words, this type of love is long suffering and can put up with a lot without blowing up, boiling over, or exploding. Just think about how patient God has been with you in your life. He is the God of a thousand second chances. Patience is incredibly important in relationships because none of us is perfect, and we are going to make mistakes and do things that others may have done differently or that may offend them. Patience also will keep hurtful things from being said or done that may be regretted and have long term consequences.

Love is also kind. Since this too is an action, not a feeling, it is more than just having kind thoughts or even kind words about someone. It is doing kind things for them. The Greek word for it literally meant to be full of service for others. God has blessed us with life, and breath, not to mention salvation and eternal life through Jesus. It is important to think about how you can be a blessing to others in some area of their life, and then take steps to actually do that. Kindness often tends to beget more kindness, and you will be surprised at how far a little kindness can go.

Next, we see that love does not envy. To envy means to begrudge the fact that someone else has been blessed in some way that you have not been blessed. It is jealousy to the point of wanting to take something away from the other person so that you can have what they have. There is no other centered good in envy. Christlike other centeredness would instead rejoice at the blessing that someone else has received. Envy of the talents, gifts, or abilities of others can be destructive and hurtful to them and can only make them feel bad instead of blessed. Rather than do that, we should celebrate and rejoice at the gifts that God has given others in our life.

Boasting and arrogance are related because they each are a form of pride. Boasting calls attention to yourself, and often leads to exaggeration in order to make yourself look better. Arrogance makes you look down on others as beneath you or of lesser stature, value, or importance than yourself. Rather than look down at others, instead try to find something to look up to them or admire them about, and then marvel that God blessed you with someone like them in your life. Rudeness involves disrespect, being impolite and inconsiderate, and it often flows from pride. Instead of being rude, love seeks to bless and build up.

To not insist on your own way means to be willing to give in to the preferences, not the principles, of others in the choices and options we have in living with them. Too many times we make moral issues out of things that have nothing to do with morality, all in a seemingly pious effort to have things our way. Learn to be comfortable with and even enjoy doing things that others in your life may want to do or the way they want to do them, even if it would not be your preference or to your liking. You will be surprised. The things that you like and enjoy may expand considerably.



Irritability is a form of anger that starts in a slow, simmering, and pervasive way, such that it affects a person's entire personality so that they boil over at the slightest issue. This is not a Christlike attribute. God may be from time-to-time be disappointed in us, but He does not get angry at us. His anger at us, which was deserved because of our sin, was fully satisfied by Jesus on the cross. No one wants to be around an irritable person, so don't impose that burden on others in your life. Ask God to help you change your perspective on the things that may tend to make you irritable, and if you can learn to see things in a new light, then maybe they won't make you so irritable.

The next item mentioned here is resentment. Resentment comes from offenses committed against us, or in some cases that we may perceive, albeit wrongly, have been committed against us, and that we can't let go of. It can lead to bitterness, and bitterness can be toxic to a relationship as well as to the person who has it. Bitterness does no good. It actually only affects us, not the other person. As has been said, holding on to bitterness is like drinking poison and then waiting for the other person to die.

All of our sin was offensive to God, and yet in Christ, He has forgiven it all. Heb. 12:15 tells us to not let any root of bitterness spring up in our lives or in the church. The Greek meaning of the word used here for resentment was to not keep a list of wrongs suffered, and some translations of the Bible render it that way. In contrast with keeping a list of wrongs suffered, Eph. 4:2 and Col. 3:13 call us to bear with one another, which means to be forbearing. This is a concept that in our rights-oriented culture which takes offense at even "microaggressions", is quite foreign to most people. Essentially, it means to let offenses roll off your back like water off the back of a duck. In other words, you cut people a lot of slack, are

full of grace, and generally don't take offense at too many things. The reason water can run off the back of a duck is because the duck is full of oil. In like manner, when we are full of the love and grace of Christ, offenses will also run off our backs.

Not keeping a list of wrongs suffered also prevents something else from happening in a relationship. When there is a current problem to be dealt with, it enables us to keep the problem limited to just the problem at hand. Too many times, our sinful tendency is to go far beyond and behind whatever the conflict at hand is that may need resolving, and to bring up all kinds of real or imagined past offenses which should have been dealt with and let go of a long time ago. True love does not hold on to those kinds of things as some sort of ammunition to be used at a future time. It lets go of them.

To rejoice at wrongdoing is the nasty habit of gloating when something bad happens to someone else. It is that belief that they deserved it and got what was coming to them. For some reason, we often want forgiveness for ourselves, but justice for others. We ought not to be that way. Not only does true love not do this, but as the verse also says, it rejoices with the truth. In other words, it celebrates when others live out and do what is true and right. Being this way toward others is a great way to show them that you love them.

One of the most significant aspects of true love is that it bears all things. The Greek word that is used here for "bear" went beyond even the concept of forbearance. It literally meant to put a tight covering over something, so that water and other things could not intrude on it. It was the same word used for "roof." In fact, it is the same word used in Mark 2:4, when we are told of the four men who let their paralyzed friend down through the "roof" covering

the house where Jesus was teaching so that Jesus could heal him. So, true love puts a covering over the character faults and issues of others and keeps them confidential and does not use them to demean others in public. Think how much gossip, slander, hurt, and pain could be avoided if we all practiced this more. Proverbs 10:12 says that love covers all offenses. We all have shortcomings, blind spots, and areas of life that we are not so good at living out. But the job of a Christian brother or sister is not to go around shining a spotlight on those in others, but rather to come alongside and help the other person with those things. Rather than highlighting the shortcomings of others, a Christian should try to help fill in for their shortcomings.

Next, we are told that love believes all things. The type of belief being referred to here is trust and confidence. It means that wherever and whenever possible to assume the best about others. We want others to do that with us, and we need to learn to do that for them. Besides, we cannot see someone else's heart, so we should be slow to attribute improper or evil motives to their behavior.

Love goes even beyond belief to also hope all things. This means to never give up expecting the best from the other person. Parents do this with their children, and coaches do this with their players. A good way to think of love being the act of believing and hoping all things with respect to others is to always keep on assuming the best about them until and unless there is overwhelming irrefutable evidence to the contrary.

For love to endure all things means that it perseveres, and that it never gives up. Perseverance is the ability to hang in there even when the going gets tough and there is no way out. God

perseveres with us all the time, so this is a Godly virtue that we should endeavor to show towards others, especially those with whom we are in a close relationship. The Greek word used here is the same one used in the last part of 1 Cor. 10:13 where we are told that God will enable us to endure our trials and temptations. Since God is the giver of perseverance, we should ask Him for it in our relationships with others.

This beautiful description of love ends with the fact that love is unending. That means that it is eternal. As 1 Cor. 13 goes on, it tells us that many things that we consider wonderful things to have are going to pass away, and that what is perfect will endure. It ends by saying in Vs. 13 that love is greater than even faith and hope. You see, we will not need faith when we are in eternity in Heaven because we will finally see Jesus face-to-face, and we will not need hope any longer because we will actually be there with Him. But we will still need love because we will never stop loving Him and He will never stop loving us. In short, love is the currency of Heaven, and we will be using it, giving it, and receiving it all the time. So, of course it never ends. If it is the currency of Heaven, then we ought to get used to using it now, especially in our dealings with others.

In closing, note the close correlation between many of the aspects of love that have been spoken of here, and the fruit of the Spirit described in Gal. 5:22-23 as being **“Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”** There is no way that we ever can, in the strength of our own flesh, love others in the way that has been described here. But the good news is that the power of the Holy Spirit living in us can do so, and when He does, it is a beautiful and God glorifying thing.

## Application Questions

**1. To grow in your understanding of how Jesus loves you, take a look at the passage of Scripture which we just examined, 1 Cor. 13:4-8, and everywhere you see the word “love” or “it” insert the word Jesus, and then ponder the fact that this is how Jesus loves you and then write those things down and describe how they make you feel.**

**2. Take some time to pray and ask God to show you where you might need to grow in your understanding and appreciation of the ways in which He loves you and write them out below.**

**3. Do the same thing as in #1 above, only instead of Jesus, try putting your own name in there and see how well it does or does not fit, and then use that to take an inventory of some areas in your life and in how you treat others that God may want to change.**

**4. Take some time to pray and ask God to show you who some others may be in your life that you need to love more in the way described in 1 Cor. 13:4-8 and write them out below.**

## LESSON 3

# THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD



The sovereignty of God is one of the most comforting of His attributes. Charles Spurgeon described the sovereignty of God “as the pillow of peace upon which the child of God rests his head at night, giving him perfect peace.” To say that God is sovereign means that He is above all things and in control of all things. According to John Piper, this attribute of God means that “He is powerful and authoritative to the extent of being able to override all other powers and authorities.”

Job 42:2 tells us that no purpose of God’s can be thwarted, and Daniel 4:35 says that **“He does according to His will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.”** In other words, we can be sure that God’s will is always going to be done. We should be glad that the Holy and loving God we have read about already is the One who is supreme and in control of everything.

In the Bible we see that God is sovereign in creation, the circumstances of life, and in salvation. God has always been sovereign and always will be sovereign. There has never been a time when He was not in control. Yet, as we will see, God's sovereignty does not mean that human beings do not have a measure of free will, and it does not mean that we are exempt from personal responsibility.

We see in Gen. 1 that all of creation came into being by the command of God. He said and determined what there would be and then brought it into existence. Heb. 11:3 says, **"By faith we understand that the universe was created by the Word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible."** By God's sovereignty, He is able to call into existence things which did not previously exist (Rom. 4:17). Chapters 38 through 41 of the book of Job give us a beautiful account, from God Himself, of how He exercised His sovereign will in creation, by doing things such as telling the oceans how far they could go up on the land, commanding the morning to begin, creating storehouses for snow and hail, directing the light where to go, numbering the clouds, giving might to horses, and causing the hawk to soar and spread its wings. In response Job says in Job 42:2, **"I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted."** The sovereign will of God in creation is such an important part of His nature that He is worshiped for it in Heaven. Rev. 4:11 says that around His throne in Heaven, the twenty-four elders cast down their crowns and say **"Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."**

God's sovereignty, in the sense that He is in control of all things, does not end with creation. He did not just create everything and



then turn His back on it. He is also sovereign over the affairs of His creation. God did not bring all things into existence, and then turn His back on them. To this day, He has remained actively involved in the affairs of His creation. Nothing in creation is outside of God's control. In Job 1 & 2, we see that even the evil one, Satan, is restricted in what He can do by the limits that God places on Him. In the Gospels, we see that Jesus could heal people, raise them from the dead, cast demons out of them, and calm storms. God is also in control over the hearts of the rulers of nations. In Ezra 6:22, we see that God made His people joyful and turned the heart of the King of Assyria towards them. Proverbs 21:1 says that **“The king's heart is like a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He will.”** If God deems it necessary, He can work through a donkey to carry out His will and even make the donkey talk as He did with Balaam's donkey in Numbers 22:21-39.

Yet, despite the extent and reach of God's sovereignty, it does not negate or eliminate our free will or our responsibility to act or our responsibility for our actions. God gave the Garden of Eden to Adam and Eve to live in and provided all the plants to them that they needed for food, but they were still responsible for tending to the Garden. In Exodus 14, God parted the Red Sea so that His people could escape from Pharaoh's army, but Moses and the people still had to go through it. Likewise, in Joshua 3, God parted the waters of the Jordan River so that His people could cross it into the Promised Land, but they first had to step into the water before the waters would dry up. God gave the Promised Land to the people of Israel, but they still had to take it. As followers of Jesus, He has made us righteous in God's sight by giving us the righteousness of His Son, but we still must choose to live and act righteously. This is why Rom. 6:12-14 tells us to not let sin reign in our mortal bodies but to instead present our bodies as instruments of righteousness.

Even though God has given us a measure of free will and the ability to make choices, He will not allow the choices we make and the responsibilities we have to thwart the ultimate accomplishment of His will. No matter what, God's will always prevails and will be accomplished. This is because He is able to work through all the events that happen in His creation, even through the sinful choices and acts of human beings, to bring about His will. Eph. 1:11 tells us that God **"works all things according to the counsel of His will."** Perhaps the most well known and even treasured statement of this truth is found in Rom. 8:28 which states **"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose."** This verse gives us so much comfort and assurance that many people have said that it is probably the most underlined or highlighted verse in the Bible. To understand it and benefit from it more fully, consider the following.

First, the promise of Rom. 8:28 does not apply to all people, and it does not mean that everything is going to be OK for all people. This is a special promise for the benefit of believers only, for it says that it applies only to those who love God and are called by Him. So, if you are a Christian and you are reading this, this promise applies to you, was meant for you, and God wants you to know about it.

Rom. 8:28 does not say or even imply that all things are good. There clearly are many sinful and evil things in this world, and people make unwise, sinful, and even hurtful choices and decisions. Yet the sense here is that God is still able to work through all of these in order to bring about good for His people. That is a concept of sovereignty that is far beyond any human conception of sovereignty. If you or I were trying to be sovereign, we would orchestrate everyone's behavior as if they were puppets

on strings so that we could make them do as we wished. But God is so sovereign that He grants us a measure of free will in which we can make our own decisions, even unwise and bad ones, and then He is still somehow able to work through all of them to bring about good.

This principle is seen in the account of Joseph and His brothers in the book of Genesis. Joseph's brothers were jealous of him and of his father's love for him, so they plotted and carried out a plan to kill him, and then at the last minute decided to instead sell him off into slavery. After going through years of ups and downs, including a long stint in jail based on the false accusation of his master's wife, he eventually ends up as the right-hand man to the Pharaoh of Egypt. In that position, he is able to interpret one of Pharaoh's dreams as a sign that a (7) year famine was coming upon that region of the world and caused grain to be stored up beforehand so that there was food for the people of Egypt when the famine came. Then, when the people of Israel were starving during the famine, Joseph's brothers went down to Egypt looking for food, and Joseph was able to provide it to them. At first, they didn't recognize him but once they did, they were quite afraid because of what they had done to him. Yet, Joseph saw that God had used all of this to save his own family and people from death due to the famine. Even beyond that, we can see that God had used it to also preserve the line of Messiah, since Jesus was in the line of Joseph's father Jacob. So, it is quite fitting that Joseph declared this to his brothers in Gen. 50:20, **"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today."**

The truth of what Joseph declared about God's sovereignty is seen to its greatest extent in what happened when Jesus died on the

cross. Evil men, in both the Roman government and the religious establishment of Israel, worked together to do the most horrible thing imaginable – kill the Son of God. Yet, God worked through that to bring about the greatest good ever done – the salvation of all who would put their faith and trust and confidence in Jesus and His death on the cross to pay the price they owed for their sin. In Isaiah 53:10, Isaiah the prophet foresaw 700 years before this happened that **“it was the will of the Lord to crush Him.”**

The meaning of Rom. 8:28 really comes to life when we realize that what we call good is often very different from what God calls good. We tend to think that good is when everything is peacefully going our way and we are enjoying the presence of pleasure and the absence of pain or difficulty. However, God defines good quite differently. In the words of Ps. 73, we see that the psalm writer starts out bemoaning the fact that things in life are not going as well for him as they are for the wicked (which was an Old Testament way of referring to a non-believer). Then, in the middle of the Psalm we see that the psalm writer goes into the sanctuary of God to pray and while he is there, God reveals to him the end destination of the wicked (which is judgment) and his own end destination in Heaven in the presence of God. At the end of the Psalm, he finally realizes that the ultimate good is to be near to God, and he declares in Vs. 28, **“But for me it is good to be near God.”** Similarly, David says in Psalm 16:2 that he has no good apart from God. So, God sees good as being nearness to Him, which makes sense because He is perfect goodness, and James 1:17 tells us that only good things come from Him.

Our understanding of what is meant by good in Rom. 8:28 is further enhanced when we look at the next verse (Vs. 29) where we see that God’s plan in working all things together for good for us is to

carry out His will that we be conformed to the image of His Son. So, in addition to good being nearness to God, God also sees good as being anything that will make us more like Jesus. If we then plug these two understandings of what is good in God's mind back into Rom. 8:28, we see that it is telling us that God will work all things together in our lives to bring us nearer to Him and to make us more Christlike.

Besides being sovereign in creation and in the affairs of this world, God is also sovereign in salvation. Yet, that does not eliminate human responsibility for choosing to believe the Gospel of salvation through grace alone by faith alone in Christ alone. These two truths are seen side-by-side in John 1:11-13 which says, **“He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”** In the first part of that statement, we see that people have the freedom to either choose to receive Jesus or to not receive Him, but in the second part we see that those who receive Him do not actually do so of their own will but by the will of God. In John Chapter 6, Jesus makes several statements about how one comes to salvation that to our limited human minds may seem contradictory, unless we can by faith see them as a matter of “both/and” and not “either/or” explanations of how salvation occurs. In John 6:44 Jesus says, **“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws Him,** and in John 6:65, Jesus says, **“no one can come to Me unless it is granted him by the Father.”** Yet, in John 6:37 He says that, **“whoever comes to Me I will never cast out.”** So, while God is sovereign in salvation, we are still responsible to come to Him, and no one who comes to Him will ever be cast out as one not sovereignly destined to come to Him.

Despite the awesome nature of God's sovereignty, it does not render him unable, unavailable, or unwilling to care about us individually and to walk with us through life. Rather, it enhances it. Because God is sovereign, His knowledge of us and of what goes on in our lives is intimate and personal. When He created us, Ps. 139:13 tells us that He **"formed our inward parts"** and knitted us together in our mother's womb. The same Psalm also tells us in Vs. 1-4 that God knows our thoughts, is acquainted with all our ways, and knows what we are going to say before we say it. Jesus said in Matt. 10:30 that God has numbered the hairs on our head, and Ps. 56:8 says that He numbers our tears and even saves them in a bottle. God not only knows all about us, but He wants fellowship with us. We see this in Mark 3:14 where we are told that one of the reasons that Jesus chose His disciples was so that they **"might be with Him."** You see, God wants fellowship with us as much or more than we know that we need it with Him.

In the Gospels, we see that Jesus was intimately involved in the lives of His disciples. He called them, led them, taught them, fed them, and protected them. He helped people all the time by healing them, raising them from the dead, casting out their demons, and calming the storms they were in. In the Garden of Eden, we see in Gen. 3:8-13 that Adam and Eve were able to walk and talk with God in the cool of the day. When God called Moses to go set His people free from slavery and oppression in Egypt, He made a promise to Moses to be with him in Ex. 3:12. When Moses passed the mantle of leadership on to Joshua, he said in Deut. 31:8, **"It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you; He will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."** God said basically the same thing directly to Joshua in Deut. 31:23. God is also with His people in difficult times. Is. 43:2 says, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you." The presence of the Lord is

there to comfort the believer even in death, for David declared in Ps. 23:4, **“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”**

So, God’s high and exalted sovereignty in all things does not detract from Him caring about the details of our lives, or from His ability to work in and through them. Sometimes, we can have a view of God’s sovereignty that makes Him too big in our minds to care or be bothered by the intimate details of our lives. Other times, we can have a view of God that says He is too small to be able to do anything about what is going on in our lives. Neither of those views give an accurate picture of God’s sovereignty. God’s sovereignty is both intimate enough to care about and want to be involved in the everyday details of our lives, and at the same time big and powerful enough so that He actually can do something to help us through the trials and issue of our lives. No wonder Jesus is described in Is. 9:6 as being both our Wonderful Counselor and our Mighty God. Above and beyond the ability of any human counselor, He can both listen to us and counsel us as our Wonderful Counselor, and also actually do something about our situation as our Mighty God.

## Application Questions

**1. What is your reaction or response when you contemplate the sovereignty of God in creation?**

**2. How does God's sovereignty in the affairs of life give you comfort and peace?**

**3. What are some ways that you have seen the sovereignty of God at work in your life?**

**4. How does God's sovereignty in salvation affect your love for Him and desire to serve and obey Him?**

**5. Spend some time in prayer contemplating the fact that the sovereign God of creation cares about you intimately, and then describe how that affects your understanding of His love for you.**



## LESSON 4

# THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD



From the standpoint of our faith, the immutability of God is probably one of His greatest attributes. To be immutable means to never change. Things that change mutate. Things that do not change are immutable. God's will, His nature, and His character are immovable and steadfast. They cannot be and do not ever need to be improved upon, added to, or subtracted from because they are and always have been absolutely perfect and complete. As a result, we can always count on God to be God and to do what He says He will do. Unlike us, He is not fickle and subject to ups and downs or variations. The reason we can count on all of His other attributes is because He is immutable.

In Malachi 3:6, God, in speaking to His people as to why He will chastise them but not destroy them, says this, **"For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed."** Way back in Gen. 12:1-3, God had made a promise to Abraham (who was Jacob's grandfather) that he would be the father of a great nation and that through His offspring (who ultimately was

Jesus) all the nations of the world would be blessed. God was not going to break that promise, no matter what His people did. And the reason He would not and could not break that promise was that it would go against His character which is immutable. God's complete honesty and absolute faithfulness is rooted in His immutability.

Numbers 23:19 says, **“God is not a man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind.”** People often lie to cover up mistakes they made or bad things they have done. God not only would never lie, but He never has any reason to be tempted to lie because He doesn't make mistakes, and He never does bad things. People often change their minds because they were wrong or didn't have all the facts or fully understand something. God never has to change His mind because He is never wrong, always has all the facts and understands everything fully from beginning to end. Sometimes people change because they mature or seek to improve by doing better or being better. God never changes because He needs no maturing and needs no improvement because He is and always has been absolutely Holy and perfect. People may change out of fear of others or because of new or difficult circumstances. God never changes because He fears no one and nothing, and no circumstance is ever a surprise to Him.

Mortal things, both animate and inanimate are ever changing. They either grow or they wind down and decay. Snow falls and then melts, seeds turn into flowers which then fade, iron is extracted from rocks and fashioned into all kinds of usable things and then rusts, and living beings are conceived, born, grow and then age and die. But God, as an eternal and immortal being does not grow up, fade, age, mature, wither, decay, or die. He remains the same as He always has been.

As Christians we are supposed to be led to change through repentance over what we have done and who we have become, and that kind of change is good and right for us. One of the best definitions of repentance is that it is sorrow which leads to a change in behavior. Yet, God never regrets, and indeed never has any reason to regret anything He has done. 1 Sam. 15:29 says, **“And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for He is not a man, that He should have regret.”** God never wishes He had done something differently. His purposes, intent, and will never change. He always gets it right the first time. Heb. 6:17 refers to the **“unchangeable character of His purpose.”** James 1:17 says that God has **“no variation or shadow due to change.”** As a result, we can always count on Him.

Not only can we count on God now, but we will be able to do so for all of eternity. Listen to the words of Heb. 1:10–12 as they describe His eternal unchanging nature, **“You Lord, laid the foundations of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years have no end.”** We also see in these verses that while everything in all of creation will be changed, including the things we often see as most permanent, like the earth, moon, sun, and stars, the One who created all of that will never change. He is the only truly permanent and unchanging thing.

Perhaps the simplest reminder of the immutability of God is set forth in Heb. 13:8 which says, **“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”** Jesus is God and a member of the Triune God. If He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, then that means that God, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

If God were not immutable, then we could not be certain that when we confess and repent of our sins and trust in Jesus as our Lord and Savior that our sins are forgiven, and that we are saved. We could not be certain that God loves us and gave His only begotten Son to us so that if we believe in Him, we will not perish but will have eternal life. We could not be certain that God will work all things together for good for us as believers. We could not be certain that the Holy Spirit dwells inside of us. We could not be certain that Jesus will be with us in the storms of life, in death, and that He will never leave us or forsake us. And we could not be certain that we are going to Heaven. You see, without God's immutability, most of our faith would fall apart and would be no more than hopeful speculation, because God could always change His mind.

Yet, because God is immutable in His character and will, He is also immutable in His promises. He does not change them. His promise of salvation through faith in Jesus is immutable. His forgiveness of us is immutable. His love for us is immutable. His action to work all things together for our good is immutable. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is immutable. The unending fellowship of Jesus in our lives is immutable. And our eternal presence in glory with Him in Heaven is immutable. The immutability of God is what gives backbone to our faith.

The Bible repeatedly tells us that God is faithful. Deut. 7:9 says, **"Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love Him and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations."**

1 Cor. 1:9 says, **"God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."** 1 Thess. 5:24 puts it very simply by saying, **"He who calls you is faithful; He will surely bring it to pass."**

Yet, if God was not immutable, then there would be reason to lose hope in His faithfulness.

1 Cor. 10:13 says that **“God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”**

1 John 1:9 tells us that if we confess our sins, God **“is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”**

Because God is immutable, we can count on Him to always be faithful to do the things described in these two verses, as well as everything else that Scripture says that He will do. So, God's inherent immutable nature is what undergirds His attribute of faithfulness.

While the immutability of God is very clear from so many verses in Scripture, Exodus 32:9–14 gives rise to an often-asked question about how the immutability of God is affected by our prayers. Immediately preceding that section of Scripture, we are told that the people of Israel had made a golden calf to worship while Moses was up on Mt. Sinai receiving the 10 Commandments from God. God tells Moses in Vs. 10 of His anger at the people and of His desire to destroy them. In response, Moses pleads with God to turn away from His anger and to spare them from judgment. Then, in Vs. 14, we see that God did, in fact, “relent” from destroying them. So, at 1st blush this seems like God may have changed His mind based on the pleading of Moses. This is the perception that may come from looking at this event from our human perspective. Yet, the text does not expressly say that. God may very well have never really intended to destroy His people but might have just wanted Moses to cry out to Him for deliverance for the people. God had promised that He would give the Promised Land to the people and make a great nation out of them, and so it is most likely that He

was intending on fulfilling this promise all along, but just wanted to have Moses intercede for them. Moreover, we know from the model of the Lord's Prayer that the purpose of prayer is to line our will up with God's will, not the other way around. We know from Vs. 19 that Moses was actually angry at the people over this event too. So, the most likely scenario here is that God intended all along to spare the people from judgment but wanted Moses to come to that same view as well. Finally, what a good picture this whole account gives us of how God can be righteously angry at our sin, and still at the same time save us as sinners.

While these are all comforting aspects of God's immutability, there is a sobering aspect to it as well. And that is the unchanging fact that all who refuse to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior are headed to eternal judgment. Sin brings the righteous judgment of the Holy God upon us. God is a God of justice, and we need Him to be that way. All people, whether believers or unbelievers, generally have some kind of innate hope that somehow, somewhere, and in some way all the wrongs of the world will be righted. Unless God judges and punishes wrongdoing there is no real hope for justice. So, in saving us, He cannot eliminate or even compromise His justice. As believers we do not get salvation, eternal life, and a home in Heaven because God somehow pretended that our sin did not exist. Rather, we get all of those things and more precisely because He judged that sin, but did so upon His Son, not us. All that we must do is accept the free gift of salvation that comes through faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. Accordingly, Rom. 6:23 tells us that **"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."**

As 2 Cor. 5:21 says, **“For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”** Jesus was Himself Holy and did not sin. Therefore, He had the ability to be a perfect sacrifice for us because our sin could be put on Him and then judged in Him. If Jesus was not Holy and sinless, then His death could not atone for our sins, let alone His own sin. But, because He was sinless, our sin could be placed upon Him at the cross so that he could receive on Himself the judgment that we deserved for our sin. As a substitute sacrifice in our place, He atoned for our sin and satisfied the righteous judgment of God that we deserved for our sin. In this way, God could both save us and yet keep His justice fully intact. Rom. 3:26 tells us that through the death of Jesus for us on the cross, God could **“be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”**

However, those who fail to accept God’s free gift of salvation in Jesus Christ, must pay the wage of death for their sin, and that death is an eternal death or separation from God, who is life. In fact, the failure to receive the salvation offered in Jesus is the only reason a person ends up going to Hell. All other sin is forgiven when we accept Jesus, but if a person dies without having accepted Him, they are condemned to an eternity apart from God. Right after the well-known Gospel verse of John 3:16, the Bible says this in John 3:17-18, **“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”** Because God is immutable, this truth cannot be altered. Hence, there is an urgency for us as believers to share the Gospel, and for unbelievers to receive it so that more people may join in the chorus in Heaven worshiping the One True and Immutable God.

Finally, there is only one way to be saved, and that is through faith in Jesus as Lord & Savior; Acts 4:12. God's immutable plan for salvation runs through the entire Bible. It is progressively revealed through the Old Testament, finally completed and accomplished in the Gospels, and explained in the New Testament epistles. What theologians call the "Scarlet Thread of Redemption" knits together all (66) Books of the Bible. It begins in Gen. 3:15 where we see that there is a coming seed of the woman who will crush the head of the serpent. This is a reference to Jesus & to His virgin birth. On the cross, Jesus gave us victory over sin, Satan, & death. In Gen. 3:21, God gave Adam & Eve a new set of clothing, made of animal skins, which would have required the shed blood of an innocent animal which had done nothing wrong. This was to replace the clothing made of fig leaves that Adam & Eve had made for themselves after they sinned. In Gen. 4:1-6, the idea that the only acceptable way to approach God was through the shed blood of an innocent sacrifice was reinforced in the account of Cain & Abel.

In the account of Abraham & Isaac that we have in Gen. 22, we see that on a hill in a land called Moriah (which later was where Jerusalem would be), Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his only son until God provided a substitute sacrifice for him in the form of an innocent ram, caught by its head in a thorn bush. In like manner, Jesus wore a crown of thorns and went to a hill called Calvary as our substitute sacrifice for our sin. In Exodus 12, we have the account of the 1st Passover, where the shed blood of an unblemished lamb was painted, using a bunch of hyssop, over the doorway to the homes of the faithful Jews in Egypt to spare them from death. In like manner, the blood of Jesus covers our hearts in faith and spares us from eternal death. And, hyssop was thereafter used in many of the sacrifices specified in the Mosaic sacrificial system, as well as used by the Roman soldiers in



John 19:29 to lift the sour wine up to the Jesus on the cross.

In Joshua 2:18 and 6:23, we see that Rahab and her family were spared from judgment in the fall of Jericho through the hanging of a scarlet (as in the color of blood) rope out of her window, which is where the phrase the “Scarlet Thread of Redemption” comes from. Then, in Is. 53, written approximately 700 years before Christ, we have some of the clearest details in the entire Old Testament of what was to later happen at the cross, as God the Father placed the iniquities of us all on His Son and He was pierced through for our transgressions.

There are many other important additional details in the above verses and other sections of the Old Testament where we see the same immutable redemptive theme about salvation through the shed blood of an innocent one which is ultimately and finally fulfilled in Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah. No wonder that when John the Baptist first laid eyes upon Jesus, he declared in John 1:29, **“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”**

God’s immutable plan of salvation is stated in 1 John 5:12 as this, **“Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”** The life being referred to there is eternal life, and the Son is Jesus. Either you have Him or you don’t, and that will determine your eternal destiny.

## Application Questions

**1. How does the immutability of God affect the strength of your faith in Him?**

**2. How does the immutability of God comfort you and give you peace?**

**3. Spend some time in prayer asking God to show you some ways that you are blessed by His immutability, and then write them down and give Him thanks for them.**

**4. As you contemplate God's immutability, what changes does it make you want to see in your life and walk with Jesus?**



And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only  
true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

*John 17:3*



Calvary Chapel  
Palos Verdes