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Grace Evangelical Church
Sunday, October 11, 2009
"God – Unchanging"
Malachi 3:6; James 1:17; Hebrews 13:8

As I started to prepare this message for today, my mind began to go down memory lane.

I remember the fun times my sister and I had at our grandmother Price's farm, my mother's home place northwest of Barneveld, Wisconsin. We use to come there at different times with some of our relatives for special meals and fellowship. I also remember the fun times that we had at my father's home place near Arena, Wisconsin. I enjoyed working there for my uncle George during the summers when I was in high school.

When I was in college I began painting some barns and houses with my dad, even doing painting in the summers while in seminary. It was during that time that I met Ferra. We were married before my last year in seminary. God has blessed us during our 44 years of marriage, along with being able to serve the Lord together in ministry for some 43 years, and some of those years has been the privilege to serve with you in the Grace family. God has also blessed us with three lovely daughters, a great son-in-law, and 3 wonderful grandchildren.

Now that we are back in the area where I spent a considerable amount of time growing up near Arena and Ridgeway, it has been of interest to go back to those areas where I once lived.

Changes are remarkable. My grandmother Price's farm is no longer in the family. In fact, the farm house has been added unto. The big red old barn burned down some time ago. In the little unincorporated berg called Hyde where we once lived, is still there, but the old country store where we used to get our soda, is now a tavern. The house we lived in can hardly be seen from the road. We used to climb the hill near the house, take rounded stones and see how far we could get them to roll down the hill. In the winter, we used to go up the hill near our house and sled down. How fun that was.

Hyde's mill, an active saw mill making ties and other lumber is now silent. Water flows over the little dam that's there. It's a very picturesque area. You may find it on a postcard in some card shops. Perhaps you have visited there.

The country school I went to for a few years is now a house. The High School I went to is now just an elementary school.

Down the road 15-20 minutes is my Dad's home place. The land which was once farmed by my uncle, who is in heaven, is now rented out to a neighbor. The beautiful farm house has been kept up by my cousin who is a Psychiatrist in the Chicago area. The barn which was once filled with cows, needs repair. The chicken house needs some repair as well. The neighbors who once farmed the neighboring farms are gone. Some come into the area who have no appreciation for the value of the property. My dad's place has been broken into in the past.

In fact that whole valley between Arena and Ridgeway has changed. The years have slipped by. Everyone has gotten older. Many have gone into eternity, including my Dad and members of his family and my Mom's family. We're grateful that many of them had faith in the Lord.

Yes, life is full of changes isn't it? The years slip by like sands through the hour glass.

I'm sure all of us here could spend some time sharing with each other our memory lane. Perhaps you were thinking through some of the experiences you have had on your memory lane as I have shared a few things on mine.

In the midst of the many changes we all experience, this question can only be asked, **“In the midst of our many changes from birth to when we leave this planet, is there that which is unchanging?”**

Put more succinctly, “In life, is there the immutable, that which is the same yesterday, today, and forever?”

Obviously, not among humans. No matter how great or important one is in the eyes of the world, or how insignificant one is in the eyes of the world, no human is immutable. We are here on this earth for awhile and then we are gone.

In fact the created world is not immutable.

The writer of Hebrews tells us in the first chapter verses 10-12,
“And You, LORD in the beginning laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; and they will become old like a garment, and like a mantle You will roll them up; like a garment they will also be changed, but you are the same and your years will not come to an end.”

Of course that’s what the **second law of thermodynamics** says that the **original creation is decreasing in organization and complexity. Yes, it is wearing out.**

Who, then, is the immutable one in the midst of our changing lives and our changing world?

Of course the biblical God! There is no comparison to Him with any other god concocted by man. The passage we just read in Hebrews tells us that **‘HE IS THE SAME.’**

That being true let’s look first at

I. The biblical God’s person is immutable.

1. The scripture.

Malachi 3:6 reads as God talks to Israel through the prophet Malachi:
 “For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

Numbers 23:19 – Balaam speaking to Balak. . .
 “God is not a man that He should lie, not a son of man that He should repent...”

I Samuel 15:29 – Samuel’s words to King Saul from whom the kingdom was being torn:
 “Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for he is not a man that He should change His mind.”

James 1:17 –
 “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.”

Hebrews 13:8-
 “Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever.”

Those are amazing Scriptures, no matter how many times you read them or hear them.

The biblical God does not change. Whether we look at the Old Testament or the New Testament, the biblical God is immutable.

This tells us something very directly about the biblical God's character.

2. The biblical God's character.

That God is immutable means

(1) Negatively.

God is not in the process of becoming something other than what He is. He is not getting worse, or going from fair, to good, to better, to best.

God is not growing in regard to His character. He is not getting wiser. He is not getting older. In fact, God does not age. Which means that God does not wear out. He does not get gray hair. He will never need a knee or hip replacement. He never deteriorates in any way.

God, then, can't change from within and nothing from without can change Him.

That God is immutable means. . . .

(2) Positively.

God is the always the same in His character, which means

- The biblical God is always truthful – He can not lie.
- The biblical God is always dependable, always reliable. Never have to worry that God will go back on what He said.
- The biblical God's love is always the same. His love does not fluctuate back and forth, or love one day and not the next.
- The biblical God's holiness is always transcendent moral purity. God can not sin nor does He tempt anyone to sin.
- The biblical God's justice is always the same, showing no partiality.
- The biblical God's knowledge is always the same. He knows all that is actual and possible past, present, and future – From all eternity.
- The biblical God's power is always the same. That being true His power never needs to be replaced and His power doesn't need to be added to.
- The biblical God's presence is always the same. He may manifest His presence in different ways and in different places, or take away His presence as He pleases, but His presence is always the same.
- The biblical God's grace and mercy are always the same. He doesn't have a little grace here and a little grace there, or a little mercy here and a little mercy there.
- The biblical God's righteousness is always the same. He always does what is right, according to His character. God never contradicts Himself.
- The biblical God's goodness is always the same. He always does all things according to His will, which is God's goodness.
- The biblical God's peace is always the same.
- The biblical God's forgiveness is always the same.

No matter which attribute or characteristic or expression of that attribute you think of concerning the biblical God, each attribute remains the same because the biblical God is the same, He is immutable.

That's what makes Him the true living eternal God.

And why He said through Isaiah the prophet, **"I am the LORD, and there is no other: Besides Me there is no God" (Isa. 45:5a).**

Again in Isaiah 46:9, **"Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God and there is no one like Me."**

Since the biblical God is the same in His person, in all of His attributes, that affects directly His Word.

II. The biblical God's Word is immutable.

1. The written Word of God is always the same- is immutable.

Psalm 12: 6:

"The words of the LORD are pure words; As silver tried in a furnace on earth, refined seven times."

Isaiah 40:7-8:

"The grass withers, the flower fades. When the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever"

Isaiah 55:11:

"So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it"

The words of Christ about God's Word.

- **John 10:35** - "The scripture can not be broken."
- **In Matthew 5:17-18** – Jesus said that He came not to abolish the Law and Prophets, but to fulfill. Then he added that until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

Peter quoting from the passage we just referred to in Isaiah 40:7-8 penned **I Peter 1:24-25,**

"For all flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers and the flower falls off, but the Word of the LORD endures forever."

From these various verses, it is obvious that God's word that we have in the Bible is immutable. It does not change. It is always the same. Of course, that is what we would expect from the biblical God who is immutable in His person. The immutable God gives us the immutable WORD from Himself. Yes, He used man who changes to record His Word for us, but the miracle is that in so doing God gave us His unchanging, yes, immutable WORD. When we pick up the Bible and read it, we can count on it always being the same Word of God.

Along with the God's immutable written word, there is the immutable living Word of God, Jesus Christ, who is always the same.

2. The Living Word of God, Jesus Christ is always the same - immutable (Hebrews 13:8).

"Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, and forever. He is immutable."

(1) The written immutable Word of God foretells the immutable Christ's first coming as well as His second coming.

Some 300 prophecies from Genesis 3:15 on foretell that the Living Word, the Messiah, the Savior of the world is coming that first time. He would be the immutable God in flesh, Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23).

(2) The immutable Christ took upon Himself sinless humanity.

John wrote that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. Then the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (John 1:1, 14).

Now there is the immutable God living on planet earth among people who change and have all kinds of challenges and problems, the basic one being separated spiritually from the true and living heavenly Father God who lives in heaven. What a miracle is that. The grand one says C.S. Lewis. The immutable God in flesh.

And the immutable Jesus Christ declared to be God – to be immutable when He said that before Abraham was born, “I AM.” (John 8:58). He also claimed to be God, immutable when He said that He and His Father were one, of the same substance – God (John 10:30).

The biblical God who is immutable in His person and Word, then is involved in immutable action.

III. The biblical God displays immutable action.

1. Creation

The immutable God created the world and man and woman in 6 days. He said that it was good, meaning that it was all in accord with His immutable will, His immutable person.

1. Choice

What He did, though, was to give Adam and Eve a choice regarding their relationship with Him. They were not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The fact that God made Adam and Eve with the ability to make choices shows us that the immutable God is a person who makes choices as well. This shows us the kind of God the immutable God is. He doesn't create robots. He creates people with the ability to follow Him or not to follow Him.

3. Consequence.

At the same time, the immutable God told Adam and Eve that if they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they would surely die.

Of course living in a perfect world, in fellowship with their Creator, while tending the Garden of Eden, this may have not really registered with them. At the same time, **God told them that disobedience to him would result in a severe consequence – death, which of course as we know, spiritual separation from God and eventually physical death.**

Adam and Eve created to enjoy the Lord, to fellowship with Him and to serve HIM made the wrong choice when tempted by Satan. They chose to follow him rather than their Creator, the immutable God.

Consequences came immediately. They felt guilty and fled from the LORD. He came after them confronting them. Adam blame Eve. Eve blamed the serpent. God told them the consequences of their action for Satan and for them. God sacrificed animals for them, blood was shed, using their skin for a covering for them physically. They were ejected from the Garden. As sinful people, they could no longer stay in the paradise God had created for them.

But in the pronouncement of judgments upon Satan, Adam and Eve, and the earth, the immutable God made that phenomenal promise of the coming Redeemer (Genesis 3:15).

4. Cross.

The seed of the woman would come and defeat the seed of Satan. That would take place at the cross many years later. The tabernacle and the entire worship system of Israel looked forward to the cross of Christ.

Yes, as mentioned above, the immutable seed of the woman, Christ came. He lived among men, women, boys, and girls to show us how the immutable God acts in a body. He performed all kinds of miracles demonstrating that He was the immutable God.

But His ultimate purpose in coming was to go to old Golgotha's Hill to pay the penalty for our breaking God's law in Adam, which is death. That He did. He died as He was made sin for us. He was buried and on the third day He rose bodily from the grave. He is alive in heaven today, offering us what?

He is offering us His eternal life and forgiveness.

That why He told us while on earth that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life (John 3:16)

Why Paul tells us that the one who believes on Jesus Christ as personal Savior is saved, is no longer under the condemnation of God's judgment (Romans 10:9-13; Ephesians 2:8-9).

5. Commitment.

Each person, then, needs to see his or her need of the Savior, and make that decision to accept Him by faith, by admitting that one has sinned against Him and asking Him into one's life.

But something happens to the individual who takes that step of faith to make that decision that commitment to Christ.

6. Change

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, old things have passed away. Behold all things have become new (II Corinthians 5:17).

Don't miss what is being said here. The immutable Christ through His immutable work on the cross and through His open tomb, provides for the believer who changes himself, and lives in a changing deteriorating world, to be in possession of God's immutable life – eternal life. He is a new creation in Christ Jesus.

That is why we who are changing every day, have the confidence in God's immutable word, and His immutable work for us in Christ, that the **IMMUTABLE GOD IS OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH, A VERY PRESENT HELP IN TROUBLE.**

We can know that though the outward person is perishing the inward person is renewed day by day – because the immutable God lives in the believer in Jesus Christ.

In the challenging times, we can know that God is our ROCK, and will never let us go. His Love is immutable. That's why when I pray with people in the hospital or in other settings that are not easy, **I mention that God is our ROCK, our FORTRESS, our SHIELD, yes, our STRENGTH.**

Why in this hopeless world when we see the confusion of men trying to make some kind of decisions, **we can be confident that the immutable God is our HOPE.**

Why are followers of Christ willing to be martyrs for the cause of Jesus Christ? They have their faith in the immutable God who has given them His immutable HOPE in Jesus Christ.

We stand confident on God's unchanging person and word that He is working out all things after the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11).

That means that God's announced intentions do not change. There are some Scriptures (Gen. 6:6-8; 1 Sam. 15:11; 2 Sam. 24:16; Joel 2:13-14; Jon. 3:10) which speak of God as repenting.

James Packer comments this way.

"The reference in each case is to a reversal of God's previous treatment of particular men, consequent upon their reaction to that treatment. But there is no suggestion that this reaction was

not foreseen, or that it took God by surprise, and was not provided for in his eternal plan. No change in his eternal purpose is implied when he begins to deal with a person in a new way.

God never changes His plan of action. God never does this; he never needs to, for his plans are made on the basis of a complete knowledge and control which extends to all things past, present, and future, so that there can be no sudden emergencies or unlooked-for developments to take him by surprise.

The counsel of the Lord stands for ever. The thoughts of His heart to all generations" (Psalm 33:11).

James Packer, Your Father Loves You, Harold Shaw Publishers, 1986.

Friends, I trust that you know personally the immutable God through faith in His immutable Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

Knowing the immutable God through faith, You always take Him at His immutable Word and step out to serve Him in the power of the Holy Spirit.

When Lloyd C. Douglas, author of The Robe and other novels, was a university student, he lived in a boarding house.

Downstairs on the first floor was an elderly, retired music teacher, who was infirm and unable to leave the apartment.

Douglas said that every morning they had a ritual they would go through together. He would come down the steps, open the old man's door, and ask, "Well, what's the good news?"

The old man would pick up his tuning fork, tap it on the side of his wheelchair and say, "That's middle C! It was middle C yesterday; it will be middle C tomorrow; it will be middle C a thousand years from now. The tenor upstairs sings flat, the piano across the hall is out of tune, but, my friend, THAT is middle C!"

The old man had discovered one thing upon which he could depend, one constant reality in his life, one **"still point in a turning world."**

Yes, for us who know Jesus Christ as personal Savior, the "still point in a turning world," the one absolute of which there is no shadow of turning, is the immutable Jesus Christ. And along with God's immutable WORD!

Praise His Name!!