# Russell Kelfer Because He Is... Immutable

#1240-A

**Series: The Character of God** 



What a world we live in! Drawn to greed and fame Every day the rules are new Nothing's quite the same!

What used to be taboo to do Is now the only game What used to be, no longer is Nothing's quite the same!

Words your parents never said Because they brought such shame Now blare across your living room Nothing's quite the same!

Things they used to jail you for Now bring man acclaim What a world to live in! Nothing's quite the same!

"Is there nothing stable, then?"
We hear man exclaim
"Is there nothing constant?
Nothing that's the same?"

There's one thing...and only one That's always just the same... A person who is constant... Jesus is His Name!

Oh, Beloved, shout it out! To the world proclaim Everything is changing, But Jesus is the same!

Yesterday He was. Today He is. Tomorrow He will be, but all that He will be will be the same. God never changes. He is eternal. He is immutable. He is constant. He is God. Were He to change,

He could not be God. Were He to be bound by time, He could not be God. The very essence of His being demands that He be eternal and immutable. Understanding what that means to us can literally transform our lives.

Thus we come to the fifth in our series on the character of God. We have determined that our God is supreme; He is omnipotent; He is omniscient. Today we come to see two aspects of His nature that in one sense amplify and verify all the others, while at the same time standing alone as attributes that only God possesses.

# THE ETERNAL ONE

God has always been. There never has been a time when there was no God. Listen to what God Himself says about Himself and eternity past:

Indeed before the day was, I am He; (Isaiah 43:13a NKJV)

I have been established from everlasting, From the beginning, before there was ever an earth.

When there were no depths I was brought forth, When there were no fountains abounding with water.

Before the mountains were settled, Before the hills, I was brought forth;

While as yet He had not made the earth or the fields, Or the primal dust of the world.

When He prepared the heavens, I was there,

(Proverbs 8:23-27a NKJV)

Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting. (Psalm 93:2 NKJV)

Before anything was, He is. As the Creator God, nothing could have existed before He existed. He, then, has always existed. But that's not all. Not only has God always been, He always will be. He says of Himself:

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel From everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen. (Psalm 41:13 NKJV)

You, O Lord, remain forever; Your throne from generation to generation. (Lamentations 5:19 NKJV)

The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven

and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things

that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer,

(Revelation 10:5,6 NKJV)

Time will end when God speaks it so, but God will live forever and ever. God is eternal. He had no beginning. He will have no ending. And while He created time, He is unaffected by time. Listen:

But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

(II Peter 3:8 NKJV)

Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.

Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it is past, And like a watch in the night.

(Psalm 90:1.2.4 NKJV)

God sees time, not as we do, for God is not bound by time as we are. He sees yesterday as though it were today. He sees tomorrow as though it were happening. He sees the millennium as though it were present tense. He has always been, and always will be, eternal. That means that what He wills, He wills with eternity in view. His eyesight is not limited to the here and now or the physical realm. A thousand years are as a day to Him, and time is not a foe to Him. So if He knows that by causing us to wait for what we so long for, He will produce in us spiritual fruit, there is no choice. Short-term benefits are not His objective. Long-term transformation is His business. So death is not the end; it is the beginning. Pain is not an enemy, but an ally. Weakness is not to be feared, but treasured. For out of death comes life; out of pain comes character; out of weakness comes strength. Those things are eternal. It is not as difficult for some to think of God as eternal as it is to realize that God's plan is eternal. His fortunes do not rise or fall on creature comforts or numbers or programs or things.

His heart leaps for joy when one person repents of sin and gives his heart to Jesus. We think He's counting heads like we are on Sunday morning, trying to see if we have more in church than we did the week before. We think He's impressed with our buildings, our plans, our performances, our messages. He is only impressed to the degree that what we are doing is transforming lives and laying up treasures in heaven. God is eternal, and all that He does is eternal as well.

### THE IMMUTABLE ONE

The fact that God is eternal needs another quality to amplify its meaning to us. Stephen Charnock wrote these words:

"God is unchangeable in His essence, nature, and perfections. Immutability and eternity are linked together; and indeed true eternity is true immutability, whence eternity is defined the possession of an immutable life. Yet immutability differs from eternity in our conception. Immutability respects the essence or existence of a thing, eternity respects the duration of a being in that state; or rather, immutability is the state itself; eternity is the measure of that state."

In modern language, what Mr. Charnock was saying is that while you cannot totally separate the eternal aspects of God's nature from His immutability, they are, in essence, different reflections of the same diamond. God could not be eternal were He to be changeable. Likewise, He could not be immutable were He temporal in nature. To be one, He must be the other, but while one captures the scope of His being, the other captures the stability of His being. And just as the fact that He is eternal gives us a new perspective of time and priorities, so His immutability gives us a totally different perspective of the constancy of our hope and the resting place of our faith.

So just what does immutability mean? Two things: It means that God is not changing, and it means that God cannot change. He is both unchanging and unchangeable. Therefore, whatever was true a thousand years ago, is true today. Whatever He promised in eternity past will come to pass. He cannot change His standards, His principles, His character, or His plan. He cannot age or diminish in any aspect of His being. He cannot alter His counsel or vary His absolutes. Everything and everyone else in this world is changing. Only God is immutable. Malachi 3:6 is the verse most commonly quoted in this regard. It says:

For I am the LORD, I do not change; (Malachi 3:6a NKJV)

He will not diminish or decay.

First of all, God's perfections are permanent. He will not age or change through the cycles of time. He transcends time. Psalm 102 gives us a picture:

My days are like a shadow that lengthens, And I wither away like grass.

But You, O Lord, shall endure forever, And the remembrance of Your name to all generations. (Psalm 102:11,12 NKJV)

I said, "O my God, Do not take me away in the midst of my days; Your years are throughout all generations.

Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands.

They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will change them, And they will be changed.

But You are the same, And Your years will have no end.
(Psalm 102:24-27 NKJV)

There you have the blending of the immutability and eternity of God. "Thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." God will endure when all else is gone, and God will not change though all else decay. Everything else will perish, but He shall endure. Everything else will change, but God will remain the same. Were God not immutable as well as eternal, you and I would have no anchor in this world with all its changes. We, like all others, would have nothing to hold on to except the "latest" morals or the "current" scientific findings of the day.

# He will not vary His absolutes

Not only will God not decline or decay, His absolutes, which are based on His nature, will not even change their shades of meaning. We live in a world that is trying to redefine the basic truths of Scripture to accommodate a declining society. By twisting and ignoring Scripture, there is a "new theology" sweeping the world that is nothing more than an affront to the immutability of God. In James we read this amazing account of the stability of God's thoughts:

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. (James 1:17 NKJV)

Charnock reports that the ancients had a symbol of God that was represented by a cube, because every side was exactly the same in dimension and shape. No matter which way you turned it, it always looked the same. He goes on to remind us that the sun, with all its power, varies in intensity as it turns; and as things come between us and it, it casts shadows, and in those shadows things look different. Differing amounts of light allow us to see the same things from opposing perspectives. But God is the "Father

of Lights". He is the Light "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world". And with Him there "is no variableness neither shadow of turning." Whenever you call upon Him, He is the same. Whenever you respond to His Word, He will react in exactly the same manner, because there is no variableness with Him.

God hasn't "slightly altered" His concepts of marriage or holiness or morality or honesty to accommodate the shadows of this world. He Is the LORD. He changes not. In Him is no variableness. What He said four thousand years ago, He means today. And if the church will only keep that in mind, it will keep its power. The minute we try to slightly alter God's principles to accommodate those we want to reach, we accuse God of variableness. With Him there is no shadow of turning. He is the same, yesterday, today, and forever.

# His nature cannot change.

And, of course, His nature cannot change, either. Praise God, what a relief that He will always be what He's always been. The Scriptures are so clear on this:

Trust in the Lord forever, For in Yah [Jehovah], the Lord, is everlasting strength. (Isaiah 26:4 NKJV)

The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you. (Jeremiah 31:3 NKJV)

May the glory of the LORD endure forever;

(Psalm 104:31a NKJV)

His work is honorable and glorious, And His righteousness endures forever. (Psalm 111:3 NKJV)

For the mountains shall depart And the hills be removed, But My kindness shall not depart from you, Nor shall My covenant of peace be removed," Says the LORD, who has mercy on you.

(Isaiah 54:10 NKJV)

For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations. (Psalm 100:5 NKJV)

The strength of God is everlasting. The love of God is everlasting. The righteousness of God is everlasting. The kindness of God is everlasting. The mercy of God is everlasting. The truth of God is everlasting. Each of God's attributes and all of God's attributes are unchanging and unchangeable. What His mercy was, it is. What His holiness was, it ever shall be. He in us cannot change His

standards, because He in Himself cannot change His character.

### *He will not rescind His Word.*

Therefore, if God cannot change, even in degrees, He cannot rescind or change what He has spoken.

"God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

Behold, I have received a command to bless; He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it. (Numbers 23:19,20 NKJV)

## HIS IMMUTABLE WORD

God cannot change His mind and cannot change His nature; therefore, He cannot change His Word. As He is immutable, so is His Word. What a relief. Listen to what the writer of Hebrews had to say:

Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath,

that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, (Hebrews 6:17-19a NKJV)

# Kenneth Taylor paraphrases that passage this way:

God also bound himself with an oath, so that those he promised to help would be perfectly sure and never need to wonder whether he might change his plans.

He has given us both his promise and his oath, two things we can completely count on, for it is impossible for God to tell a lie. Now all those who flee to him to save them can take new courage when they hear such assurances from God; now they can know without doubt that he will give them the salvation He has promised them.

This certain hope of being saved is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls, (Hebrews 6:17-19a TLB)

Our salvation and our assurance of God's deliverance and His protection and His fulfillment of all He has promised rests totally on whether or not His Word is true. If it can change, it cannot be true to His nature and thus cannot be true. So all of our hope rests on the immutability of His Word.

God will not change His mind and alter that which has gone forth out of His lips. We have that assurance. But even beyond that, we have the assurance that His Word will never diminish in power or in truth or in holiness. It will not become weak with age or one iota less effective with the changing of times or the declining of moral values on planet earth. Man will change. The church will change. Theology will change, but it shouldn't. The Word of God, which is our only foundation for theology, can never change. Here are our promises:

# Man cannot change God's Word.

Consider the work of God; For who can make straight what He has made crooked? (Ecclesiastes 7:13 NKJV)

# Man's justifying evil cannot change God's Word.

There are many plans in a man's heart, Nevertheless the LORD's counsel—that will stand. (Proverbs 19:21 NKJV)

# The passing of time cannot change God's Word.

The counsel of the Lord stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations. (Psalm 33:11 NKJV)

# Nothing transpiring in heaven can change God's Word.

Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.

Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides. (Psalm 119:89,90 NKJV)

# The elements that decay cannot change God's Word.

having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,

because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away,

But the word of the Lord endures forever." Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.

(I Peter 1:23-25 NKJV)

# The Word can have nothing added to it or taken from it.

I know that whatever God does, It shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, And nothing taken from it. God does it, that men should fear before Him. (Ecclesiastes 3:14 NKJV)

# God Himself will not rescind it.

Yet He [the Lord] also is wise and will bring disaster, And will

not call back His words...

(Isaiah 31:2 NKJV)

God's immutable Word. It is eternal. It is complete. It is infallible. It is wonderful. Heaven and earth will pass away. His Word will not. When the pages of eternity have long covered over the vestiges of time, His Word will still remain. It is steadfast. It is certain. It is absolute. It is finished. And it's ours! A personal, perfect word from a holy, omnipotent God written to you and to me to reveal who He is, and to demonstrate what He wants to be in us.

# THE ETERNAL TRUTH

The eternal truth of God is the rock upon which we stand. Because He is eternal and because He is immutable, what He has said will never go out of date, never be changed, never be changeable. Heaven and earth will pass away. We can count on that. But not His Word. We can count on that, too.

Therefore, we can and must draw some practical conclusions from these aspects of God's nature, or we will have increased knowledge about His Word, but not increased wisdom from His Word. Let us look, in closing, at two specific personal areas of application:

- A- The Unchangeable World in a Changeable World
- B- Time, Timing, and a Timeless God

We must remember, as we do, that understanding the nature of God is not an intellectual pursuit. It is a spiritual pilgrimage, the purpose of which is to teach us to worship, to transform us into His likeness, to give us a basis for obedience, and to teach us to rest in the midst of a changing, decaying, sinful world. God is. Therefore, He in us demonstrates eternal truth when we'll let Him.

# The Unchangeable Word in a Changeable World.

The first great truth to emerge from this attribute of God is that we have an unchanging, unchangeable Word in a changeable world. Therefore, we must never forget that our testimony to the world is not how quickly we can change to conform to its standards, but rather how faithfully we can demonstrate the unchanging absolutes of an unchanging God. If God hated lying centuries ago, He still does. He has not softened His convictions because the world has come to accept the truth as relative. He is perfect truth. Therefore, He cannot change where the truth is concerned. If God hated immorality centuries ago, He still does. He despises marital

infidelity today as much as He did then. Yes, society has come to "accept" it as normal, but not God. He is perfect holiness. Therefore, His position on holiness can never change. And His word to us is as applicable today as it was generations ago. If God despised idolatry then, He still does. He is a jealous God. His jealousy is a mark of ownership in our lives. He is supreme. Therefore, anytime anything in our lives shares the place in our hearts designed in eternity past for God to fill, God hates it. Because He will always be supreme, He will always hate it.

The absolutes of God cannot ever change, because each absolute represents an aspect of God's nature which can never change. This brings about constancy in Biblical ethics and morality that have spanned generation after generation, society after society, era after era. In our generation, however, we are seeing a decline in the church's convictions where basic moral issues are concerned. Standards of dress and language are changing. Convictions are being "rethought" in order to be "relevant to the changes in our society". Throughout what were once the bastions of conservative theology, seminaries and churches and authors are "making new Scriptural discoveries" which render many of the great truths which have stood for thousands of years suddenly obsolete.

Because of a changing society, the church's positions on marriage, divorce, infidelity, homosexuality, authority, sobriety, and responsibility are being questioned and set aside. The basic teachings on the roles of men and women in the church are suddenly considered unacceptable in our modern world. And with the erosion of those primary doctrines, all of which have their roots in the character of God, man finds himself all the more confused about what God is really like. In the name of "love", men are saying that what the Scripture says is incidental; that a "loving God" could not have meant that...when in reality a loving God could have meant nothing else without violating His character. We often don't say it; but we live as though we believe that God has finally come around to seeing how harsh His commandments were, and He has changed His position on certain irrevocable truths so that His gospel would not get out of date. Has not the father of lies sold us the lie that God is not immutable? Has he not convinced us, ever so subtly, that "God didn't really mean that"? And was not his lie to Eve exactly the same? When confronted with an absolute which God had spoken, Satan just whispered, "hath God said?" "How could a loving God restrict you so?" Finally, after the

lie had time to soak in, he added, "God didn't say that. Here's a new interpretation of what God meant all along." Beloved, beware of "new interpretations" of what were once considered infallible truths. Beware of modern definitions of holiness and godliness that defy the nature of God.

Yes, we live in a changing world...a world where technology and communication and education have made it possible for man to feel as though he is God. And so man has usurped the role of His Creator and taken control of his own destiny, redefining what is right and wrong, what is good and evil, what is holy and acceptable. He has produced a world filled with educated, advanced, intelligent fools. Man has successfully taken all of his knowledge and used it to create moral and spiritual anarchy. Whatever feels right is all right. Whatever everybody else does is the new standard. And as morals crumble, homes dissolve and diseases run rampant in the midst of all our advanced medical technology and scientific genius, we are proving ourselves to be what every society has been that has ignored God's absolutes...affluent fools on our way to self-destruction.

Never has the church had a greater chance to have an impact. But the emphasis today is not on personal purity, but on mass approval. It is not on personal discipleship, but numeric superiority. Instead of pointing to the basics of our faith that have never changed, Christians have adopted a "let's make it weak so they'll feel at home" gospel that is so unlike what Jesus preached 2,000 years ago, I don't think He would even recognize it as the gospel. Picture Jesus on that hillside, as He looked right into the disciples' eyes and said, "He who would save His life will lose it." Listen as the people left in droves, and He turned to the twelve and asked "Will ye also go away?" There was His chance to soften the message. He simply made it stronger, so there would be no doubt.

If the church is going to impact our world permanently in these last days, then thousands of churches are going to have to rethink their philosophy of reaching a lost world. It will not come from a lukewarm message that gives no real distinction between the saved and the lost and imagines everyone a child of God who remotely acts religious. It will not come from a pulpit that minimizes the cost of commitment and overlooks the absolutes in order to be heard. If you must eliminate truth to be heard, what has man heard? The power of the gospel came not in its likeness to the words of the world, but in the fact that there were no similarities to the world.

So as you read the latest books in the Christian marketplace, even the bestsellers, be careful. Test their doctrine against that of men whose words have stood the test of time. Ten years from now this new theology may have proved to be pure heresy, and you will have given your life to something that was less than God's best. Why not go back and read the writings of the men whose lives changed the course of history and whose doctrines stood in perfect line with those who had walked through the fires of generations past and proved to be more than conquerors. You say, "But the world has changed." Yes, Beloved, but man hasn't. And God hasn't. Those are the only two ingredients that matter.

# Time, Timing and a Timeless God

God is immutable. His Word is timeless and changeless. So we can stop vacillating and begin to treat it so. Secondly, God is eternal. As such, He owns the clock. He is not bound by the pressures of last-minute decisions and overcrowded schedules. He has time to do everything He needs to do, and everything He needs to do has eternal consequences. Three points of application beckon:

- 1- Christians need to slow down and smell the flowers. If ever there were a crowd of overwrought, frustrated, hurried men and women, it is in the evangelical world of today. We are so caught up in scurrying from one event to another, from one activity to another and from one service to another that we walk (no make that run) by the very people we are here to minister to. No one seems to have time to simply stop and meditate on God's Word, worship God's nature, and praise God's name. We awaken in the morning with lists of the things we have to do, and even 48-hour days would not suffice. Parents are often so caught up in carpooling and seeing that their children get to piano lessons and soccer practice and band practice and swimming practice that they don't have time to practice being quiet. So we who belong to a God who created time become a slave to time. Yes, we are to "redeem the time" and use it wisely. But that simply means we are to control it, not let it control us. If God is eternal, and He lives in us, then we can relax; and by choosing wisely what has eternal significance, we will have time to do what is primary and leave the results to God. If we "don't have time to be with God", we're not doing what is primary.
- <u>2- If God is eternal, then His objectives are eternal</u>. That means whenever there is a choice between investing time in things or in people, we ought to remember people live forever; things don't. And

may we never forget that all the activities and all the programs and all the procedures we go through today to be spiritual are really for only two reasons: that people come to know Christ personally and that they grow into His likeness. As our priorities drift farther and farther from those purposes, we need to stop, wipe the slate clean and begin again. We may need to skip some of those committee meetings and board meetings and fellowships and just invest our time in people...meeting one on one, sharing our faith, helping them grow. We only have so much time, and eternity is what time is all about.

3- We need to remember that God's timing is not the same as ours. He is eternal. He moves slowly, producing character. We move quickly, producing experience. One takes longer and lasts forever. The other is quick and dissipates just as quickly. If God is taking what seems like forever to answer your prayer, it may well be because what He has in mind is eternal and takes forever to do. Until we begin to see life from His perspective and learn to relax, we'll keep on running right past Him, wondering where He is.

Oh, the joy of belonging to an eternal, immutable God. Because He is timeless, we can enjoy time and concentrate on eternity. Because He is changeless, we can stop and stand on His precious, priceless Word and know that it is forever settled in heaven. We have the anchor all men dream of...something that will not move though the tides of history beat against it, and the winds of adversity challenge its power. It will stand. God is eternal, and we are eternally His. God is immutable; He changes not. Therefore, He will never change His mind about us, about His plan, about His promises, or about His standards.

So what a world we live in Goes the old refrain; Moving, changing as it is Nothing's quite the same.

But what a God we worship He sets our soul aflame Knowing that no matter what... He will be the same!

Let's pray.

Father,

We pray as we conclude this morning that Your Spirit would touch our live in the sensitive areas. Draw our hearts back to the basic absolutes of Scripture that never change. Cause us to fall on our faces before You in utter awe that there are truths that stand all of the onslaughts of time and Satan and that will not vary one iota.

We worship You this morning, Father, that You are immutable, that there is no variableness, not even a shadow of turning. What You were You are. What You are You forever shall be. You have no beginning, You have no ending. You ever shall be.

Some of us here this morning, Father, need to take a deep breath and get off the roller-coaster of activities that we are on and slow down, focus our eyes, once again, on You and people. Help us to know that many of the activities we engage in, take so much of our energy and time and they do not produce spiritual truth and need not be done. And some of us, Father, need to realize that if it needs to be done and we are not to do it, a sovereign God will raise up stones if need be.

Some of us just need to take a deep breath for the first time in a long time and relax and realize an eternal God has placed His children in time to prepare them for eternity. May we not run so fast in time that we forget eternity.

Thank You, Father, that You never change. Rivet that in our minds this week, Father, as the onslaughts of the world attacks on every side. May we not apologize for Your Word but simply rest in it.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

# A Challenge to Further Study

- 1- Meditate on Proverbs 8, reflecting on the fact that God had no beginning. Meditate on Revelation 10, reflecting on the fact that God will have no ending. What does that mean to you?
- 2- Practically speaking, what does II Peter 3:8 mean when it says "a thousand years is as a day"?
- 3- What does the word "immutable" mean to you? Memorize Malachi 3:6
- 4- Memorize James 1:17. Explain "variableness". Explain "shadow of turning".
- 5- Name four of God's attributes that can never change. Use Scriptures to substantiate your statements. How can that fact change your life?
- 6- Paraphrase Hebrews 6:17-19. Worship God for the anchor He has given us in a shifting, changing world.

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