

How To Seek God's Face - Immutable & Eternal

REVIEW: We have been seeking God's face through this series, which we will conclude today, by seeking to know who God really is, and how that affects our lives; the benefits that we can derive from knowing God as He is. We have seen that God is a personal God, and we should think and treat Him as a Person. We have seen that God is present in all places, that He is all powerful, and that He is all knowing, that He is holy and sovereign.

We continue to introduce a theological attribute of who God is, but then we seek to explore the practical implications for our lives. I hate to look at this from a benefit side, because that seems to cheapen our desire to follow God. Instead, I view it as seeing who the real God is, seeing all the ways I can trust Him with my life because of who He is, and falling deeper in love with God.

INTRO: This morning we are going to look at two attributes of God that complement one another. We are going to start with God's immutability and move on to His eternal nature.

- I. Don't be scared of big term like immutability
 - A. It simply means that God does not change - ever
 1. And that is an amazing truth!
 2. We do not have a temperamental God that we have to worry about what kind of a mood we might catch Him in that day
 - a) Did He wake up on the wrong side of the bed?
 - b) Did He just get fired from His job and might take His frustration out on us - we don't have to worry about that
 3. God is consistent in who He is, and we can trust that how God deals with us today, is how He deals with us each and every day
 - B. God's unchangeable nature should be a great comfort in a world that changes at near record pace
 1. A professor of mine told the story of a student that transferred into the seminary where my professor was studying
 2. This student had been going to a liberal seminary where he learned all kinds of liberal theology
 - a) The problem was that by the time this student graduated from his previous seminary, even the professors didn't believe the theology they taught him
 - (1) Four short years and they changed what they believed about God
 - (2) The reason is because it was not based on the unchanging nature of God
 - b) This student did come to know Christ and that is why he transferred to the same seminary as my professor

How To Seek God's Face - Immutable & Eternal

C. Turn to Psalm 102:25-28 (p. 598)

1. The Psalmist is comparing God's nature to the one thing, the earth and the universe, we think has and will last forever (even though even science knows it is not true that the earth and the universe will last forever)
2. Even though they wear out, God remains
3. God is the same and He will never come to an end
 - a) Remember, this is God revealing Himself to us
 - b) This is how we know that God does not change because it is as if someone is asking the get to know you questions
 - (1) These questions are far deeper than "What's your favorite color?"
 - (2) These questions reveal the nature of our Creator to us so we understand Him
 - (3) And these are not things we can debate
 - (a) If I am getting to know someone
 - (b) And they tell me their height and weight, it's not like I can say, "No. That's not how tall you are."
 - (c) Even in more significant things, I can't argue with the person telling me, because they know themselves better than I know them
 - (4) So we can't argue with God about who He reveals Himself to be

D. A couple more quick verses

1. James 1:17 "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."
2. Malachi 3:6 "I the Lord do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed."

II. So what difference does God's immutability or unchangingness mean for us here on planet earth?

A. First it is a comfort for all of God's other attributes

1. Think about the attributes of God that we focus on most frequently
 - a) God is loving, gracious, merciful
 - b) God is sovereign, or holy
2. If God was changeable what would that mean to these other attributes?
 - a) You could approach God one day to ask forgiveness for your weakness and sins and God would respond, "Sorry, mercy was yesterday dear child, today is wrath day!"
 - b) Or could God ever have even a moment where He stopped being sovereign over all of creation.
 - (1) Maybe He takes a short nap (Psalm 121:1-4)

How To Seek God's Face - Immutable & Eternal

- (2) Maybe He takes a weeks vacation
- (3) What kind of havoc might ensue if God did that?
- c) What about God's holiness? What if there was a moment in which He ceased being holy? Or drifted in and out of holiness? What would we called that?
 - (1) Humanity
- 3. Do you see how important God's unchanging nature is to us His children?
- B. Second, because God is unchanging, He does not have to learn or grow in anything, nor does He run out of anything
 - 1. So it is not like God has an encounter with you and thinks, "Oh, if only I understood that, I would have reacted better. Something to remember for the future."
 - a) We do that folks - we fail to respond well in moments like that
 - b) But God never does - He does not need to learn or grow like us
 - 2. God does not grow in His attributes because God is complete in all of His attributes - growth implies a lack, and God lacks nothing
 - 3. Also, God cannot run out of something
 - a) So God does some amazing things in your life and you are so excited
 - b) It is not like you have to worry about God being tired from the venture
 - (1) He is not like us
 - (2) He does not get tired, or have less energy to lend aid for humanity when He works on our behalf
 - c) Nor, when you see God bless someone else do you have to worry or be jealous because perhaps God has overspent His kindness budget on someone else
 - (1) God still has the same amount of kindness to be spent
- C. This brings us to a third thing which I think is significant
 - 1. How many have every felt at any point in your life, maybe at multiple points a strong sense of God's love?
 - a) That is awesome!
 - b) In a way, I am going to burst your bubble, ready: God always feels that way toward you.
 - (1) Here is the problem, too often we interpret God's love for us based on our emotional state
 - (a) So when we have a day when we just rocked it!
 - (b) You are on a mission trip and God gives you a sweet, beautiful experience

How To Seek God's Face - Immutable & Eternal

- (c) Whatever the case may be, we base His love for us on the circumstances at hand
- (2) And yet, because God is unchanging, His love for us is ALWAYS that way
- 2. See how awesome it is to better understand the nature of the God we love and serve?
- D. Finally, an unchanging God brings security
 - 1. Too often we try to meet our need for security in people, positions, possessions, or practices
 - a) People change - because they change, they will disappoint, and our security will be shaken
 - b) Positions change - circumstances change - what was ideal may be inconvenient in the future
 - c) Possessions - we have talked about this in the past - today's treasures are tomorrow's rummage sale items
 - d) Practices disappoint - if you base your security on what you do rather than on what God has done for you, you are in shifting sand - you are trusting yourself rather than God
 - 2. All four of these bases of security are unreliable - Only God alone is unchanging and completely reliable
- III. God is also eternal
 - A. Most of us understand the concept of eternity
 - 1. We see movies and TV shows where people talk of living forever - they seek immortality
 - a) That is because we can conceive eternity in the future
 - b) And God certainly will be in eternity future
 - 2. However, most of us struggle with the idea that God has always been
 - a) He existed before there was time
 - b) He created the idea and the reality of time
 - c) Psalm 90:2 "Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God."
 - (1) From everlasting (or eternity past) to everlasting (or eternity future) God has always been God
 - B. What might be more exciting, God gave us the desire for eternity
 - 1. Ecclesiastes 3:11 "He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end."
 - 2. God has given this understanding and desire in our hearts
 - 3. The thing is, if we are honest with ourselves this desire for eternity crashes hard into our understanding that we are temporary here on earth

How To Seek God's Face - Immutable & Eternal

- a) Its like realizing our lives are like sandcastles that will be washed away with the next high waves that come to shore
 - b) Too many people believe the lies of our culture and trust in the temporary things this world has to offer with the illusion that they will last forever
 - (1) We even pay big money to entertain ourselves with experiences and things to forget the eternal and focus on the temporary
 - (a) It has been said that you will never see a U-haul behind a hearse
 - (b) It won't go with you
 - (2) All because the reality is we don't want to face our mortality, and the system that this world has built is built on a lie
- C. A true perspective on life lives with a focus on eternity
- 1. It is difficult to look beyond the present day to eternity, but it is essential to have an eternal view
 - 2. When you focus on eternity you will understand four things
 - a) First, eternal gain is better than temporary gains
 - (1) Matthew 6:19-20 (p. 971)
 - (2) Our treasure should be heavenly, not earthly
 - b) Second, a temporary loss is better than an eternal loss
 - (1) Matthew 5:29-30 (p. 969)
 - (2) It is better to lose out on things here on earth, than to miss the boat eternally
 - c) Third, sacrifices you make for Christ will be rewarded eternally
 - (1) Matthew 19:29 (p. 986)
 - (2) Imagine receiving 100 times what you gave up for Christ
 - d) Last, if you want to have eternal significance, abide in Christ
 - (1) John 15:5 (p. 1082)
 - (2) Apart from Christ, we can do nothing of eternal significance
- D. When we foster an eternal perspective, we better understand who we are
- 1. How many of you like to travel?
 - a) Shout out some places that you have been that were great trips
 - b) How many of you, regardless of how great the trip is, look forward to sleeping in your own bed?
 - 2. When we have an eternal perspective it is much the same thing
 - a) We are here on earth, and no matter how great the journey is overall, we know that something is not quite right
 - b) We know that there is a bed with our name on it and we look forward to getting there

How To Seek God's Face - Immutable & Eternal

3. In other words, with an eternal perspective, we understand that we are not really at home in this world
 - a) There is a world waiting for us, and that we are waiting for
 - b) And until we arrive there, we are never quite at home
- E. When we know the eternal God, and have an eternal perspective, we have a better understanding of time
 1. Turn to Psalm 90:12 (p. 592) "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."
 - a) This is Moses telling us that wisdom is found in understanding our limited time on earth
 - b) It gives us a heart of wisdom meaning a correct perspective on life
 2. One of my professors took these verses to heart
 - a) He took verse 10 and 12 and worked out a simple formula
 - b) If you figure 70 years - $70 \times 365.25 = 25567.50$ days
 - c) If you figure 80 years - $80 \times 365.25 = 29220$ days
 - d) He subtracted the number of days he already lived from these numbers
 - (1) For me at 70 years I have 8,859.25 days left
 - (2) At 80 years I have 12511.75 days left
 - e) Now this may sound morbid but stick with me here for a second
 - (1) This professor counts down the days in his calendar
 - (2) What this has taught him is how to spend his time better
 - (a) He lives with a perspective on eternity
 - (b) What is he doing that day that will last eternally?
 - (c) How is he investing his time so it makes an impact for the kingdom of God?
 - (d) Perhaps he has the chance to do several great things that day, but with his perspective on eternity, he seeks out the thing that will make the greatest impact for Christ and the coming kingdom
- F. Having an eternal perspective because of our eternal God also gives us a great perspective on trials
 1. A man named Walter Petherick took his four kids to church during the plague of 1665 in London
 - a) The minister read Habakkuk 3:17-18 "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior."
 - b) The widower returned from church and sent his kids to bed

How To Seek God's Face - Immutable & Eternal

- c) He cried in repentance for being more concerned about the figs, olives, and cattle than with God his Savior. That night his spirit found peace with God.
 - d) The following year as the great fire of London burned, it threatened Petherick's warehouse. He met the trial with peace and trust in God.
 - e) He submitted all things to the Lord and resolved to rejoice in the Lord regardless what may come
 - f) His family, and warehouse were mercifully spared
2. We can't trust God with our trials unless we place those trials in light of eternity
- a) Romans 8:18
 - (1) The glory that is coming is far greater than any trial that may come our way
 - b) 2 Corinthians 4:17-18
 - (1) Again, the trial is light, it is momentary
 - (2) The things that will come far outweigh the trials
 - c) This video we are about to watch has three of the most respected evangelicals having a discussion about suffering: John Piper, David Platt, and Matt Chandler
 - (1) It will start with David Platt and I want you to notice where he begins this discussion
 - (2) Then, notice how Matt Chandler uses these verses we have quoted in relation to his own life
 - (a) For those who do not know, Matt Chandler was diagnosed with a rare brain cancer that like 90% of people die from
 - (b) So when he talks about suffering, and some of his experiences, he has lived it
 - d) Do you see how eternity gives us perspective that we would never have otherwise?
 - (1) When we have a view to what God has promised us in the gospel we can say this stuff is light and momentary
 - (2) When I got a phone call driving to church to teach the adult Sunday School class on, of all things, the Fatherhood of God that my father had died suddenly in the night
 - (a) The only way to view that event as "light and momentary" is to view what God has promised
 - (b) My dad was not gone, he just moved - and one day, because of the gospel, dad and I will be chillin' for all eternity WITH JESUS!

How To Seek God's Face - Immutable & Eternal

- (c) The sorrow was real, but it was light, it was momentary because God made a much bigger promise
- e) Florence Chadwick was the first woman to swim the English Channel both ways
 - (1) She attempted to swim from Catalina Island off the FL coast to the mainland
 - (2) The weather was foggy and chilly, which made for much discouragement
 - (3) Even though she could hardly see the boats with her, she continued the 15 hour swim
 - (4) The fog and weather took their toll until Florence begged to be taken out of the water
 - (5) With much regret the people on the boat did so
 - (6) It wasn't until Florence was on the boat that she saw she was only a half a mile from shore
 - (7) The fog made it impossible for her to see beyond the pain and difficulties of the swim in the cold water and see her destination
- f) When we trust our eternal God, and trust the promises He has made to us, the fog of life, the light and momentary trials are just that
- g) We see the glory that God has promised and put these difficulties into perspective
 - (1) It then gives you the ability to experience God's peace
 - (2) You can better experience Christ's joy
 - (3) You will know the God of all comfort in a way that is so personal and so intimate
 - (4) And you will be able to minister to others out of your experience of pain
- h) All of this happens when we look beyond these trials to the glory that has been promised to us by our eternal God and Father, through Jesus Christ