

Institutes of Theology | Session 24
The Incommunicable Attributes of God - Part 2
March 10, 2026
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All right, grateful to be with you guys tonight as we continue our study of Theology proper, the doctrine of God, and particularly focused on the attributes of God and the incommunicable attributes. Tom introduced this semester a month or so ago on the existence and nature of God. Brandon introduced this topic of God's perfections or His attributes.

You know, for a lot of years, I remember back in high school reading a book by A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*. And this quote has stood with me for decades of my Christian life, a common one that you probably have heard where Tozer writes in the beginning of that book, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. For this reason, the gravest question before the church is always God Himself. And the most portentous fact about any man is what, not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in His deep heart conceives God to be like.” The most important thing about you, he says, is how you think about God. And not just what you would say you think about God, but the reality of what you truly believe about Him.

You know, God cares that we think rightly about Him. He's given His revelation through creation and through His Word and through His Son to do what? To reveal, to make clear the truth and chiefly the truth about Him, to put Himself on display. You think of the commands that He gave in the Old Testament, like the 10 Commandments. You shall not worship any other God. You shall not make any images. This is why, because God is to be worshiped, and He is only worshiped rightly when we think accurately about Him. That's why no images, no idols, nothing that would distract or distort from the reality of who God is. God desires that we think rightly about Him because He knows that impacts how we respond to Him. As Lance prayed, this is not just for our head, this is for our hearts and our life, that we would respond in worship and obedience.

And the reality is sinful mankind suppresses the truth about God. Rather than wanting to think rightly about God, rather than wanting to receive the revelation that God has given about Himself, Romans 1 reminds us that we suppress the truth and unrighteousness. Why? Because we know if we think rightly about God, the only right response to that is obedience and submission and worship, and yet we want to elevate self, and so we downplay the character of God, and we reject the revelation that He has given.

Tonight, we want to think clearly and rightly and deeply about God. We want to be amazed at the reality of who He is. We're going to talk about some things tonight that we really cannot fully wrap our minds around. And that's okay, because we're talking about God, the infinite, eternal, almighty, all-powerful One. But we want to think carefully, and we want to think accurately about these things. Again, not just so you can use big theological terms, not just so that you could pass a test about these truths, but so that our hearts are drawn to devotion and to worship, that in our deep heart, we rightly conceive God, and that right conception of God fuels our love and devotion and worship and obedience.

So as Brandon introduced last time, we are thinking about the attributes or the perfections of God. He quoted J.I. Packer that our aim in studying the Godhead must be to know God Himself better. Our concern must be to enlarge our acquaintance, not simply with the doctrine of God's attributes, but with the living God whose attributes they are. You know, this is not like a geology class where you're looking for the attributes of different kinds of rocks or substances in just kind of a cold way. This is getting to know the person of God. We are not simply learning these so we can list them, but so that we know God rightly. What are these attributes or perfections?

MacArthur and Mayhew write, "A general definition of perfections is as follows: God's perfections are the essential characteristics of His nature." Those characteristics that make Him God. He says, "Because these characteristics are necessary to His nature, all His attributes are absolutely perfect and thus rightly called perfections." We have attributes, we have things that characterize us. You cannot say that all of your attributes are perfections, right? There are things about me that are true of me, that at least my children would say are not perfections. You know, that comes out in different ways. But for God, His attributes are perfect, they are perfections.

Further he writes, "Since these perfections are essential to God's nature, if any one of them were denied, God would no longer be God." But as we think about individual attributes, it's important

that we recognize as they continue, that “God's essence is one indivisible whole, so that each of all of His perfections actively characterize God's entire being. God's perfections must be thought of as always actively present together and mutually influencing each other without any hierarchy, even when they're not mentioned in a given passage of Scripture. God and His essential nature is truly beyond human understanding, and the only appropriate responses to studying even the fringes of His ways are awe-filled reverence, worship, adoration, trust, and service.”

So don't think of studying God's attributes like you might think of like ordering toppings on a pizza, where it's like, okay, there's all these options, and you can put them all on there, and then depending on the particular bite, you might get more or less of one of those attributes. Certainly, there are times where more or less of one of God's attributes are on display, but in His person, in His nature, all of these attributes characterize all of the reality of God. God is not sometimes love and sometimes wrath. No, God is love. That is always true. You know, think of it maybe more like a cake where all the ingredients have been mixed together and baked in, and there's nothing a part of that cake that does not have all of those ingredients.

Kevin Zuber in his helpful book, *The Essential Scriptures*, uses this analogy to help us think about it. He says, “What Scripture actually reveals is the interrelatedness of God's attributes or perfections.” He says, “Perhaps an illustration will help. If we look at a diamond, what do we see? We see one thing made up of one substance with a number of facets, and each facet, each little cut of that diamond is identifiable on its own, but each facet is still the diamond.” But he says, “Actually, we can never really see one facet, because to see one facet is to see it in relation to the facets next to it, and we see those facets in relation to the facets next to those facets. Indeed, to see any facet, we really see it only in relation to all the facets, even if we can only concentrate on one facet at a time. Furthermore,” he writes, “the several facets that are visible as such, only because of the light that comes into the diamond through all the other facets. And so as with the facets on the diamond, so each attribute of God is what it is only in relation to other attributes related to it and in relation to all the attributes and in relation to God as He is in Himself.”

So these attributes all relate together, and all are to be understood in connection to one another. You know, we'll see tonight a lot of overlap in what we are thinking about with the particular

attributes that we will study focused on the incommunicable or as Brandon described, really the less communicable attributes of God. When we categorize the attributes as communicable or incommunicable, we are referring to those which, which to some degree we imitate, or we can demonstrate in our lives versus those that we cannot. The incommunicable attributes are those that really remind us of how God is unlike us. There's little analogy to us. There may be some point of connection we can relate to, but He is categorically different than us. The communicable or more communicable attributes are those having more analogy in human beings.

Think of it this way. If we were to say we should reflect God's character in how we live, what are some of the things you should display in your life? You're going to think of the communicable attributes, those attributes that you can reflect, love and grace and mercy and patience. When we think of the incommunicable attributes, those are not attributes that you can reflect. MacArthur writes this, "The incommunicable perfections are those characteristics unique to God, things like His self-existence, His simplicity, His immensity, whereas the communicable perfections are those characteristics transferable in part to humans, His goodness, righteousness and love."

Last time, Brandon began introducing the incommunicable attributes. And I think it's helpful again as we think of these to view them not as entirely separate, but really related to the category of God that we see in the Westminster Catechism, where it says, "What is God?" The answer is "God is a spirit in and of Himself, infinite in being, glory, blessedness and perfection." The incommunicable attributes are those attributes which reflect the fact that God is infinite. You and I are very much finite. And so what distinguishes us from God are these realities. Last time, Brandon began with God's holiness. Holiness is one of those attributes that to a degree is incommunicable when we speak of His transcendence, His otherness. He is unlike us, separate from us, distinct from us. There's an aspect of God's holiness, His purity, that is communicable, that we ought to imitate.

Incommunicable attributes include things like God's independence or His aseity, as we will talk about tonight, God's immutability, the fact that He does not change, the eternity of God, the sovereignty of God, God's omnipotence, God's omnipresence, God's omniscience. If you think of those things, they reflect God's, the fact that He is infinite. He's independent. He's infinite with respect to His own being. He's eternal. He's infinite with respect to time. He's sovereign. He's

infinite with respect to authority. He's omnipotent. He's infinite with respect to power. He's omnipresent. He's infinite with respect to space. He's omniscient. He's infinite with respect to knowledge or wisdom. We are going to consider tonight the fact that God is an infinite being in His perfections. Tonight, we're going to look at three of these attributes, independence, immutability, and eternity. Let's begin by thinking of God's independence.

You know, when we think of independence, we might think of something like Independence Day, July 4th, where we celebrate as a nation when we became independent from Great Britain, where we are now our own sovereign nation, able to make decisions for ourselves and able to govern ourselves. We had an Independence Day. You know, with our church plants, we talk about when they will become an independent church, when they are financially independent, no longer connected to countryside financially, when they have sufficient leadership, a plurality of elders to be able to provide the leadership and shepherding, they become independent. When we speak of God's independence, we are not talking about that God became independent. We are acknowledging the reality that God has always existed in independence, never depending on or needing or relying on anyone other than Himself.

The Westminster Confession of Faith puts it this way. It says, "God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness in and of Himself." Think about that. God has all life, glory, goodness, blessedness in and of Himself. It continues, "and is alone, in and unto Himself, all-sufficient. Not standing in need of any creatures which He hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting His own glory in by unto and upon them. He is the alone fountain of all beings, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things, and hath most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever Himself pleaseth." This is the independence of God.

As we unpack this, there's really two components to God's independence. We could treat them as separate attributes or perfections, if you like. But I think they're connected under this umbrella of God's independence. The first that you see in what is written there is the self-existence of God. Tom talked some about the existence of God the first week. And one of the characteristics of God is that He is self-existent. A word that's often used of this is the word aseity. It comes from two Latin words which is from and say for self which means that God exists from Himself. That

confession of faith said God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness in and of Himself. Again, this is categorically different than everything else in the universe. God alone is self-existent.

Beeke and Smalley in their reform systematic theology, put it this way, “Aseity means that God has no cause, needs none, and is the first cause of all. All Scripture teaches God is the first and the last, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end, the source from which all creatures exist and for whom they all exist.” God has no cause. He has always existed exactly as He does.

Where do we see this in Scripture?

We see it in places like Exodus 3:14, when God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” Moses said, who should I tell the people sent me? What is your name? God says, My name is Yahweh. It is I AM WHO I AM. The be verb that's just stated personally for Him, He is. What an interesting name. He says, I AM, I exist. Who should you say I AM sent to you? I AM, the one who has always and will always be. This is a remarkable thought. Augustine said, “God is the supreme existence. That is to say, supremely is.” We'll talk about this more in the context of God's immutability. We are as creatures, we became. God simply is. We are becoming something. God simply is. He is being in Himself. John 5 says for verse 26, for just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself. Isaiah 45:22, this is only true of God. “Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth, for I AM God and there is no other.” What makes God God? It's that He is the self-existent one. But it's not only the fact that God is self-existent that we see in His independence.

I want us to unpack more fully the self-sufficiency of God. See, most of what that Westminster Confession of Faith spoke of was not simply God's self-existence, but the self-sufficiency that characterizes God in that existence. That He alone, in and unto Himself, is all-sufficient. That is what we mean by the self-sufficiency of God. Again, we see this in Scripture. Acts 17 is one of the clearest places where this is fleshed out by Paul about God. You remember Paul is on Mars Hill in Athens, and he sees a statue for an altar to the unknown God, and he says, “I will proclaim to you this God whom you do not know.” He says in verse 24 that the “God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.” He says this true God is the God who made the world. He's the creator, the only one who existed in and of Himself apart from all that was made. And He is Lord of heaven and earth. He's the one who rules and reigns overall. And He doesn't dwell in temples made with

hands. Verse 25, “Nor is He served by human hands as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things. And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on the face of the earth, having determined beforehand their appointed times and the boundaries of their inhabitation.” And in verse 28, he says that “In Him, we live and move and exist.” You see, from God flows everything, because God is sufficient in and of Himself.

You see this in David's words in 1 Chronicles 29, when it says, “David blessed the Lord in the sight of all the assembly. And David said, “Blessed are you, O Lord God of Israel, our Father forever and ever.” Listen to all that is true of Him. “Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty and indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth. Yours is the dominion, O Lord, and you exalt yourself as head overall.” All of that is in God Himself. “Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule overall, and in your hand is power and might, and it lies in your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone.” God possesses everything in and of Himself. Apart from sin, everything comes from Him. He is the self-sufficient one.

What are some implications of this reality? One is that God is perfectly satisfied within Himself. You know, we tend to think of God in a way that He has some need for us, for our worship, or for our service, that God was, you know, some people will say, you know, God was lonely, so that's why He created. That could not be further from the truth. God was perfectly satisfied within Himself. Job 35 says, “Look at the heavens and see, behold, the clouds, they are higher than you. If you sinned, what do you accomplish against Him? If your transgressions are many, what do you do to Him? If you are righteous, what do you give Him? Or what does He receive from your hand?” So it doesn't matter if we sin, it doesn't matter if we obey, we are giving nothing to God because He is perfectly satisfied within Himself. Well, what Jesus prayed in John 17:5, “Now, Father, glorify me together with yourself with the glory which I had with you before the world was.”

It's interesting, Jesus is praying, He's come to earth as a man, He is going to the cross, redeeming a people for Himself, and He prays, and He doesn't say, glorify me with more glory than I had before the world was made, because now we made the world and we've redeemed all these

people, and so there's more glory now. No, He simply says glorify me with that which I had with you before the world was. God doesn't need His creation. It was not some deficiency in God that led Him to create. He is perfectly satisfied with it Himself. As Grudem writes in his Systematic Theology, "Among the persons of the Trinity, there has been perfect love and fellowship and communication for all eternity. The fact that God is three persons yet one God means there was no loneliness or lack of personal fellowship on God's part before creation. In fact, the love and interpersonal fellowship and the sharing of glory have always been, and it will always be far more perfect than any communion we as finite human beings will ever have with God." God was doing just fine without us.

He was God, perfectly satisfied in and of Himself because He is self-sufficient. It also means that God does not need His creation. We saw that in Job 35 a little bit. We see that in Job 41:11, where God says, "Who has given to me that I should repay Him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine." He says, it's all mine. I don't need something from you. Psalm 50:10, "Every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. If I know every bird of the mountains and everything that moves in the field is mine, if I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world is mine and all it contains." God has all that He needs. Again, Acts 17, we read earlier, He's not served by human hands as though He needed anything since He's the one who gives to all people life and breath. God does not need His creation. And because God is self-sufficient, God alone is the giver of good gifts. Every good thing resides in God. Bruce Ware says, "He has everything, yes, everything that really is good. And He has all of this within His own life as God. There's not a single good quality that is not contained within God's own life as God. Everything you can think of that really is good, all truth, all wisdom, all power, all kindness, all love, all righteousness, and every other good thing is in the very life of God.

And it always has been this way. God has everything good in and of Himself, and because of that, He alone is the fountain from which good gifts flow. James 1:17, "Every good thing given, and every perfect gift coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." There is no good thing given that has not come from God, because He alone possesses all that is good in and of Himself. Because of this, our existence is entirely dependent on God. God is the one who Isaiah 44:24 says, "Who formed you from the womb." He's the maker of all things, "stretching out the heavens by myself and spreading out the earth all alone."

Romans 11:36, “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to Him be the glory forever and ever.” First Corinthians 8:6, “Yet there is but one God, the Father from whom are all things, and we exist for Him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.” We are entirely dependent. God is totally self-sufficient. He is utterly independent, relying on, needing no one. We are entirely dependent. All that we are, all that we have, all that we need comes solely from Him. Our existence is entirely dependent on God.

Also reminds us that the Gospel is all of God's grace. We won't take the time to look there, but Ephesians chapter 1 highlights the blessings that are ours in Christ, that have come because of the glories of God's mercy and grace, His love that He lavished upon us in Christ, culminating in the fact that He made us alive together with Him, that we are saved by grace. Why can we offer nothing to God to merit our salvation? Certainly part of it is because we are sinful people who deserve God's judgment, but we also have nothing good in and of ourselves. All that we are comes from Him, and salvation, the gospel, is a picture of the all-sufficient God, fully meeting the need that we have as sinful people to be made right with Him. It's all of Him. And this is true not only in our salvation, but in all of life, our sufficiency comes from Him. Second Corinthians 3:5, “Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God.” Second Corinthians 9:8, “And God is able to make all grace abound to you so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed.”

Why are we able to live in a way that would please the Lord? Why are we able to serve in a way that is faithful? It is solely because of the adequacy that God has given us, the sufficiency that God in His grace has given us. God alone is the self-sufficient one, completely satisfied within Himself, not needing creation, but creating out of love and desire to do so in a way that brings Him glory. He delights in giving good gifts out of His abundance to us as sinful people, the gospel and all that we are. Significant implications of God's self-sufficiency.

Just a couple of clarifications about God's self-sufficiency. When we think of God as self-sufficient, as not needing creation, as not being dependent on creation, as that not meeting any need or craving that He had in and of Himself of inadequacy, it is important that we recognize that the Bible does teach that God does relate to His creation. The fact that He is self-sufficient

does not keep Him from relating to us. God is one who rejoices. He's grieved. His wrath burns against enemies. He pities His children. He loves. God does relate to us. Erickson writes, "While God is independent in the sense of not needing anything else for His existence, that is not to say that He is not aloof, indifferent, or unconcerned. God relates to us, but by His choice, not because He is compelled by some need, that He does so relate to us is therefore so much the more a cause for glorifying Him. He has acted and continues to act out of agape, unselfish love, rather than out of need."

You see, when God sets His love on us, it is not because He wants to get some love in return. That's how human love typically works, right? People love and they love those who will love them in return. There's something they're getting back. I'll scratch your back, you scratch mine. God doesn't say, I'll scratch your back, you scratch mine. God doesn't need His back scratched. God is able to give freely and generously as an act of selfless love out of the abundance of all that fills Himself, having no need for anything in return. But He does choose to do that because of His nature and because of the perfections that we will see. It also doesn't mean, or a clarification, God also does delight in His creation. The fact that God doesn't need us, the fact that He's perfectly satisfied within Himself doesn't mean that He does not delight in His creation. You think of things like in Genesis 1, when God created and He made the universe, and what's His response? It was good, and He made mankind, and it was very good. God was pleased. He was excited about what He made.

Even when it comes to things like worship, we'll talk more about that in a second, but in 1 Samuel 15:22, Samuel said, "Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, to give heed than the fat of rams." Samuel didn't say, God couldn't care less what you do. No, he said, God delights in the right response to Him, which is not going through the motions of sacrifice. It's a life of humble obedience. Isaiah 62:5 says, "For as the young man marries a virgin, so your sons will marry you. And as a bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so your God will rejoice over you." God doesn't need us, but He rejoices over us. There's a delight. Zephaniah 3:17, "The Lord your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior." He will exalt over you with joy. He will be quiet in His love. He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy. Those verses mean so much more when you

recognize that God is self-sufficient in and of Himself. He does not need us, and yet He chooses to delight in to rejoice over us.

God's self-sufficiency also does not mean that God's creation can't glorify Him. It is true that God's creation can glorify Him and bring Him joy, to quote Wayne Grudem. "The fact that we cannot add to God's glory, we do not give Him anything that He does not have in and of Himself, doesn't mean that we cannot glorify Him and that He is not pleased with our worship." Isaiah 43:7 says, "Everyone who is called by My name, whom I created for My glory." Or Isaiah 43:1, "The people whom I formed for myself will declare My praise." You see, again, we don't add to the glory. Christ didn't say, I look forward to when I'll have a whole lot more glory than I used to have now that all the redeemed are praising me. No, He has all glory. But we can praise Him in a way that brings Him joy, not because of a lack in Him, but because we are delighting in Him.

You know, I think back to when I was a child, and we used to go to my grandma's house for Christmas, and so I would buy her something for Christmas every year. You know, she didn't need anything from me, right? You know, if there was something she needed, she did what? She went and bought it herself, or she'd had 70 years of life to accumulate it. Or maybe my parents who had more money would give her something helpful. But for me, it was like, I guess I'll give her a dishcloth every year, whatever. You know, she didn't need it. She was doing just fine without it. But when she would open that, did she say, why are you giving me a dishcloth? I got 20 of them, including all the ones that you gave me the last several years. No, she delighted in the fact that while she didn't need it, while there was nothing that was meeting any aspect of want in her life, she delighted in the gift that was given. You know, or you might think of like when your kids, especially if they're younger, they want to take you out for your birthday, your Father's day or something. We want to honor you, dad, and so we're going to go out for dinner after church on Sunday or something. And so they hop in your car, and you drive them with the gas that you bought to a meal that you pay for in celebration of you. Again, do you say, well, what kind of celebration was that? I did it all. No, you know, you are grateful for the expression. Well, you did not need it, while it did not in those ways.

Again, those are far cry from the reality of God. My grandma still had need. I, as a father, am impacted by my children in a way that is different from God. But you get the idea. The fact that

God doesn't need anything doesn't mean that God doesn't delight in our response to Him. Beeke and Smalley put it this way. "God always operates from a position of wealth, not need. Yet God freely chose to live in covenant relationship with finite sinful people. Thus, His sufficiency does not negate His love for us but magnifies it. God's love is fulfilled without us, for God enjoys His eternal beloved in the uncreated, triune relationships of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. All His love for His creatures is freely given. However, God uses His absolute freedom to serve the needy and to save sinners. He bears patiently with us. He walks with us through our sorrows and dwells with us in time and in space."

How should we respond to God's self-sufficiency? Turn to Acts 17, the passage we read earlier. You know, the first response to God's self-sufficiency is that of repentance. We are to repent of our sin, our pride, the reality that we desire to live independent of God. We want to be the one who is viewed as having something in and of ourselves when in reality all that we are and all that we have has come from Him. Paul, as he's describing this self-sufficient God, culminating in verse 28, he says, verse 29, "Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man." Verse 30, "Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent. Because He's fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

When we recognize God is self-existent, God is self-sufficient, every good thing, including all of creation, is dependent on Him and comes from Him. And yet we have sought to live independent of Him. We've sought to go our own way. We've wanted to be in charge. We've wanted to take credit. We've lived in pride. The right response is to repent. Second response is that of humility, of humility. Look over at Isaiah 66. Isaiah 66:1. God describes His transcendent majesty, the fact that He needs nothing from us, in verse 1, He says, "Thus says the Lord, 'Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for me? And where is a place that I may rest?'" He says, I don't need your temple. I don't need anything from you. All of it is mine. He says, verse 2, "For My hand made all these things, thus all these things came into being, declares the Lord." It's all Mine. It all came from Me. I made it all. I don't need anything.

But He says, “But to this one, I will look to him who is humble and contrite of spirit and who trembles at My Word.”

What is humility? It's the recognition that God is entirely sufficient in and of Himself, and we are entirely dependent in and of ourselves. And so we're going to think rightly about us, and we're going to think rightly about God. That's going to produce a number of things in us. It's the fruit of saving faith, really, as we see in Luke 18:9, that we cry out to God, be merciful to me, a sinner, in humility. But it also produces gratitude. Look at Psalm 50. Psalm 50, another Psalm that highlights the fact that God doesn't need His creation, that there's nothing we can offer to Him. Pick up in verse 7 of Psalm 50. God says, “Hear, O My people, and I will speak. O Israel, I will testify against you. I AM God your God. I do not reprove you for your sacrifices, and your burnt offerings are continually before me. I shall take no young bull out of your house, no male goat out of your folds, for every beast of the forest is mine. The cattle on a thousand hills, I know every bird of the mountains, and everything that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world is mine and all it contains. Shall I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of male goats?”

Now, what does He say? He says, here's what I want from you. As the God who made it all, who owns it all, it's all mine. Verse 14, offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving. How do we respond to the God who is self-sufficient and out of that self-sufficiency has given lavishly to us? We respond with a sacrifice of thanksgiving. Thank you. Of gratitude for all that He is and all that He has done. And we respond with dependence. Notice, verse 14 continues, “and pay your vows to the most high.” View Him as God, respond to Him as God. And verse 15, “Call upon me in the day of trouble. I shall rescue you and you will honor me.” How do you honor a God who is entirely self-sufficient, who needs nothing from you? You recognize that you need everything from Him, and you call out to Him for help. You humbly live in dependence on Him. And you respond by delighting in Him.

God is the self-sufficient one. He is perfectly satisfied in Himself. And the reality is that we can only be satisfied in Him. Psalm 73:25-26. “Whom have I in heaven but you? And beside you I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” What do you need? What do you need to be satisfied? What is the chief

delight that you are created to find joy in? It is God Himself, the fountain of all good things. We are to delight in God. Brakel, in his book *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, says, "God, with His all sufficiency, can fill and saturate the soul to such an overflowing measure that it has need of nothing else but to have God as its portion.

I appreciate what John Piper has written by way of analogy. He says, "God is a mountain spring, not a watering trough. A mountain spring is self-replenishing. It constantly overflows and supplies others. But a watering trough needs to be filled with a pump or a bucket brigade. So if you want to glorify the worth of a watering trough, you work hard to keep it full and useful. But if you want to glorify the worth of a spring, you do it by getting down on your hands and knees and drinking to your heart's satisfaction until you have the refreshment and strength to go back down in the valley and tell people what you found. Therefore, the way to please God is to come to Him to get and not to give." It doesn't mean demanding of Him what you want but coming to receive from Him all that He is. "To drink and not to water." You come to God, you glorify God when you drink of Him, not when you come thinking, I've got to do this for you.

Again, is the right response to God, worship and obedience and service? Absolutely, it is. But we come to Him humbly, dependent on Him. God is the kind of God who will be pleased with the one thing I have to offer, He says, my thirst. God is the self-sufficient one. He is the self-existent one. He is entirely independent in and of Himself. He is infinite with respect to His being. We, on the other hand, are entirely dependent. And God is glorified when we recognize that reality, when in our deep hearts we conceive God that way. He is the fountain of all that is good, entirely sufficient in Himself. And so we humble ourselves and we rely on Him and we're grateful for Him. And we cling to Him and find our joy in Him because He is the self-sufficient one.

We're going to see another attribute. We'll take a moment to begin and then we'll take a break here in a couple of minutes.

Related to this is God's immutability. God's immutability. The fact that God is self-existent, that He has always existed, that He is I AM, is related to the fact that God is immutable. He does not change. Herman Bavinck puts it this way. He says, "The doctrine of God's immutability is of the highest significance for religion. The contrast between being and becoming marks the difference between the creator and the creature." Think about this. "Every creature is continually becoming.

It is changeable, constantly striving, seeks rest and satisfaction, and finds this rest in God, in Him alone, for only He is pure being and no becoming.” As the self-existent one, the one who has always existed, the one who has always been—I AM—He is not becoming anything other than what He's always been. And so there is no change in Him. We, on the other hand, we had a starting point, and we are becoming something else. We change all the time, but God does not.

When we think of God's immutability, where do we see this in Scripture? We saw some of it already even in some of the overlap between God's self-sufficiency and God's eternity and God's immutability oftentimes are woven together in the Bible. Psalm 102 says this, “Of old you founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. Even they will perish, but you endure and all of them will wear out like garments, like clothing, you will change them, and they will be changed.” The most dependable, reliable, stable things on this earth, the earth itself, the heavens, the stars, the mountains, all these things that seem stable. He says, nope, all of them will wear out like a garment, you will change them, and they will be changed, but you are the same. Literally, he says, You are He. You are just as You always have been, and “Your years will not come to an end.”

Malachi 3:6 says, “For I, the Lord, I Yahweh.” Again, playing off that name, I AM. The fact that I AM means I do not change. I AM today. I AM tomorrow. I will always be. Deuteronomy 32:4 uses the analogy of a rock. “[He is] the Rock. His work is perfect, for all His ways are just. A God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He.” Why that analogy of a rock? Because that's what is stable. We have in our backyard a lot of wind come through. There's not a lot of trees and we have two really big rocks that are our landscape rocks. I struggle to grow plants. And so rocks are good things for me to put in my yard. And sometimes we've left things out in the backyard. When the winds come, whether that's an inflatable thing or whether that's a chair that blows away, you know what hasn't ever moved or changed? Those rocks. If those rocks ever move, I know we got a problem. Maybe tonight will be the night, who knows? The tornado comes or whatever. You know, a rock, it's a picture of stability. Says God is the rock. He is the one who does not change. Hebrews 13:8, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” James 1:7, “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.” God doesn't

change. There's no shifting in God. He is the same. Hodge writes, "As an infinite and absolute Being, self-existent and absolutely independent, God is exalted above all the causes of and even the possibility of change. God is absolutely immutable in His essence and attributes. He can neither increase nor decrease. He is subject to no process of development or of self-evolution. His knowledge and power can never be greater or less. He can never be wiser or holier or more righteous or more merciful than He ever has been and ever must be. He is no less immutable in His plans or purposes, infinite in wisdom. There can be no error in their conception, infinite in power. There can be no failure in their accomplishment."

Nothing can bring about change in God. Berkoff writes, "In virtue of this attribute, He is exalted above all becoming and is free from all accession or diminution. He doesn't diminish. He doesn't ascend in any way. And from all growth or decay in His being or perfections, His knowledge and plans, His moral principles and volitions remain forever the same. Even reason [he writes] teaches us that no change is possible in God since a change is either what, for better or for worse. But in God, as the absolute perfection, improvement and deterioration are both equally impossible." The change is to improve or get worse. God is perfect, infinite in His perfection, so He can do neither.

Pink puts it more simply, "Immutability is one of the excellencies of the Creator, which distinguishes Him from all His creatures. God is perpetually the same. Subject to no change in His being, attributes, or determinations." God does not change. And when we say that we really mean a number of things about God that do not change. The first is the unchangeable persons of God. In His essence, as God, the infinite being existing eternally as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that does not change. Again, Exodus 3:14, "I AM," that's how He is. Psalm 102, we looked at Malachi 3.

You say, well, what about Christ? What about Jesus becoming a man that seems like a fairly significant change? Well, that was not a change in the divine nature of Christ. It was Christ being fully divine and yet taking to Himself full and complete humanity, as Beeke and Smalley write, (and this is a little bit of a longer quote, but I think it's helpful.) It says,

"God's immutability entered our mutable world when the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The incarnate Lord Jesus has an unchangeable divine nature and a changeable human nature.

As to His humanity in His youth, He increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man. He modeled change for us in a positive direction, developing His human capacities to love God and to love his neighbor. He never sinned, but through all the changes of His horrible sufferings and profound temptations, He matured in Son-like obedience to God. In this manner, He became our forerunner and captain of our faith who blazed the trail ahead of us.

“However, God's incarnate Son was and continues to be eternal God. Though a relatively young man, He astonished His fellow Jews by declaring, “Before Abraham was, I AM.” He claimed continuity with God through the ages, both in His person and His work. “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” When He died, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, He returned to the glory that He had with the Father “before the world was.” In His eternal divine nature, Christ never changes.

“Christ incarnation also did not change God, for His divine nature and human nature were joined without mixture or confusion. Christ is not a demigod, but fully God and fully human. Watson says, “If the divine nature had been converted into the human, or the human into the divine, there had been a change, but they were not so.” This is not an essential union, but a personal hypostatic union. Christ is one person with two distinct natures, divine and human, and the union between God and man in Christ's unique person is everlasting.”

When we speak of the immutability of God, we mean, or we speak of the unchangeable persons of God, but also the unchangeable perfections of God. All the things that we are thinking about, which the Bible reveals are true of God, all the facets of the diamond that is God, all of those are unchangeable. Exodus 34, where God gives, as Tom has preached and written a book, a sermon on His name, what is true because He is the I AM. Exodus 34:6. “Then the Lord passed in front of Moses and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord God, the I AM.” The I AM God. And what is true of Him, “compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in loving kindness and truth, who keeps loving kindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin, yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.” When God says, I AM, He means I exist, I have always existed and always will exist in perfection. And I am all of these things; all of these perfections are true of me.

Lamentations 3:23-24, “The Lord's loving kindnesses indeed never cease for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning. Great is thy faithfulness.” You don't have to wonder what side of the bed is God going to wake up on today. Will He be compassionate and display steadfast love today? What kind of mood is He going to be in? No, His perfections are unchanging. Again, no variation or shifting shadow. You know, as we are studying God's perfections, there's no need, as it were, for a revised edition of the book, *The Attributes of God*. That doesn't mean an author couldn't revise it. But what was true of God's attributes thousands of years ago is true of God's attributes today. Why? Because He doesn't change. His perfections do not change.

You know, this is not true with people. Even the most stable people, the most reliable, to a degree, you still don't know what you're going to get. You don't know how they're going to respond, whether that's a boss or a spouse or a child or somebody interacting with you. You may have a great measure of constancy in your character at this point of your spiritual maturity, but you still change. God, we always know. God's immutability relates to the unchangeable persons of God, the unchangeable perfections of God, and the unchangeable purposes or plans of God. Psalm 33:11 says, “The Council of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation.” God's plans and purposes, they stand. There's no change in them. Romans 11:29, “The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.” Hebrews 6:17, “In the same way, God desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise, the unchangeableness of His purpose interposed with an oath.”

God's eternal purposes, God's plan are not subject to change. You know, you think about, why do we change our plans? Why do we redirect our purposes? You know, I don't know how many in this room started college with one major and changed partway through to go a different direction. Why do our plans change all the time? William Plummer writes this. He says, “Many causes make human plans and purposes feeble and uncertain; infinite perfection make God's plans and councils immovable and infallible.” Pink writes, “One of two things causes a man to change His mind and reverse His plans: want of foresight to anticipate everything.” We didn't think through it all or we didn't know all the data. And so partway through, something changes. And so now we alter our course. You know, we were planning to drive this direction, but we didn't know that there was a detour. And now our plans change and we go that direction. Or he says, “lack of

power to execute them.” Sometimes we want to do what we planned, but we don't have the resources to do it, to pull it off. But he says, “But as God is both omniscient and omnipotent, there is never any need for Him to revise His decrees.”

Beeke writes, “God's immutable plans display His absolute consistency and unity in Himself. For God to change His decree would not reflect divine liberty, the freedom to change, but a wavering due to divine limitation, for He could not do what He planned to do.” God's immutability relates to the unchangeable purposes and plans of God, and also the unchangeable promises of God. Numbers 23:19 says, “God is not a man that He should lie, nor a Son of man that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?” God's Word is reliable, because God does not change. He doesn't go back on His word. He is fully capable of fulfilling His word. And so we can cling to the reality that His promises will not change. Psalm 89:34 and following says, “My covenant I will not violate, nor will I alter the utterance of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness, I will not lie to David. His descendants shall endure forever, and His throne is the sun before me. It shall be established forever, like the moon and the witness in the sky is faithful. Those if I've sworn it, if I've promised it, if I've made My covenant, it will be fulfilled.”

Micah 7:19-20 says, “[He] will again have compassion on us. [He] will tread our iniquities underfoot. [Yes, you] will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob and unchanging love to Abraham, which you swore to our forefathers from the days of old.” All of God's promises are good and will be fulfilled. There's never a doubt that He will come through on His word.

I've used the example before of a credit score. You know, when you go to borrow money, you're making a promise that you're going to pay that back. And so creditors will run a report, and they'll give you a score of how likely you are to fulfill that promise to pay back. God has an infinite credit score. He's always going to pay what He says. And this is true not only of His promise to bless and to save, but it's true of His promise to bring judgment. John Dick writes this. He says, “The Divine immutability, like the cloud which interposed between the Israelites and the Egyptian army, has a dark as well as a light side. It ensures the execution of His threatenings as well as the performance of His promises, and destroys the hope which the guilty

fondly cherish, that He will be all lenient to the frail and erring creatures, and that they will be much more lightly dealt with than the declaration of His own word would lead us to expect. We oppose to these deceitful and presumptuous speculations, the solemn truth that God is unchanging in veracity and purpose, both in faithfulness and justice.”

God has said He will save sinners who repent. He has said He will judge. He will destroy the wicked. And God will fulfill those promises. God is immutable in His person, in His perfections, in His plans and purposes, and in His promises.

All right, so the Scripture is clear, as we have seen, that God does not change. But there are a couple of legitimate questions as we read the Bible that we need to think about, relative to God's phrases and wording that the Scriptures use. There's also a couple of heretical views of God that I just want to mention, not to talk in great detail about.

But Process Theology and Open Theism. Process Theology really rejects the, both of these, reject the immutability of God, the sovereignty of God. Process Theology says part of being a being is that you process and change as one who exists over time. And so they say God therefore must be changing over time. A man named Charles Hartshorne was the father of this and says that God is continually adding to Himself all the experiences that happen anywhere in the universe and therefore God is constantly changing. We'll see that that really denies the immutability of God, also the eternity of God, and so it is a heretical view of God.

Open Theism is really based off of seeing the responsiveness of God to His creatures and creature, the world that He has made as necessary for God to be loving. So they really minimize God's sovereignty, God's immutability, God's foreknowledge in a way that elevates how they would define His love. Obviously, God says, I am all of those things. And so they say God must be responsive to creatures if He is to truly love them. Again, this is not at all what the Bible teaches and is rejected in those things. But part of these ideas flow from a couple of questions that are legitimately raised in the Bible.

You know, what about when the Bible speaks of God repenting or changing His mind? That's the way that some of these errant views latch on to this and say, okay, this must be true, ignoring the rest of what Scripture teaches. Or what about God's emotional responses to His creation? And so let's think just briefly about the question, does God repent or change His mind? You know, the

passages that this comes up in are texts like Exodus 32:9-14. You may remember God was, the people had disobeyed. Moses was interceding on their behalf. And it says this, “So the Lord changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.” Or Isaiah 38:1-6, Hezekiah is praying and asking, and God hears his prayer and He says, “I heard your prayer, I've seen your tears. Behold, I will add 15 years to your life.” Did God change His mind? Was He, He'd numbered His days and He said, okay, we can change and we can go up by 15.

Jonah, when God saw their deeds in verse, well, in verse four, 40 days, yet Nineveh will be overthrown, verse 10. “When God saw their deeds that they had turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.” Did God change His mind?

You know, Numbers 23:9 that we read earlier says, “God is not a man that He should lie, nor a Son of man that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do it, or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?” Well, did that happen with the Ninevites, when God said, 40 days and judgment is coming, and then God relented and said, no, actually, I'm not going to bring judgment. Was that God repenting or lying or not making good on what He said? The answer is no. I think what you see in the Bible is very clear that God Himself, as we have seen, does not change. Therefore, the manner in which He relates to His creation is utterly consistent. So, to simplify it, you know, unrepentant sinners face what? God's judgment, God's wrath. God is angry at those who rebel against Him. What is true of repentant sinners, they find mercy and compassion, and that is always the case, because God does not change. God's perfections do not change.

God's Word and His promises do not change. And so, if you repent of your sin, God will always be merciful and compassionate. There will never be a time where a repentant sinner comes to God and says, never mind, I've had enough. I'm not going to respond that way. No, He's always the same. And yet, the reality is the manner in which He relates to His creation, in specific instances, may and does appropriately change given the changes in His creation. So a sinner repents, and thereby God's disposition changes from judgment to mercy and compassion. But this is not a change in God. God's character is the same. It is entirely unchanged. God's disposition towards a sinner who has repented is now different, but it's consistent with His

character. So the reality is God never repents in the sense of acknowledging wrong because He was never wrong.

God never changes His mind to something better or wiser, but He does act consistently with His character, and therefore He does act differently towards people in different contexts and circumstances. Grudem writes of these examples, “These instances should all be understood as true expressions of God's present attitude or intention with respect to the situation as it exists at that moment. If the situation changes, then of course, God's attitude or expression of intention will also change.” This is just saying that God responds differently to different situations. That's the reality. And how God responds in those situations is consistent with His character.

What about God's emotional responses about how He responds in situations like Genesis 6:6 where it says, “The Lord was sorry that He made man on the earth and was grieved in His heart as He saw the wickedness of man”? Or 1 Samuel 15:10-11, where it says, “Then the Word of the Lord came to Samuel, saying, I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me, and he has carried out My commands. And Samuel was distressed and cried out to the Lord all night.” Does the fact that God was sorry that He had made man or that that language is used, that He was grieved, that He regretted making Saul king, are these realities of God either regretting a purpose and plan that He had in place in the past, or God somehow emotionally responding to His creatures in a way that is contrary to what we saw about His self-sufficiency? I think Berkof puts it helpfully in this way. He says, “The divine immutability should not be understood as implying immobility, as if there were no movement in God. It is even customary in theology to speak of God as *actus purus*, a God who is always in action. The Bible teaches us that God enters into manifold relations with man, and, as it were, lives their life with them. There is change round about Him, change in the relations of men to Him. But there is no change in His being, His attributes, His purpose, His motives of action or His promises.”

This really relates to an issue in theology that is referred to as the impassibility of God. Does God have passions or emotions? Impassible, no passions. It really comes or is seen in the Westminster Confession of Faith where it says, “There is but one only living and true God who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body parts or passions.” And so God is without passions. He is impassible. And some say, well, that means He is without

any emotions or there can be no real relationship with people. This phrase, “without passions,” is connected in the Westminster Confession to Acts 14:15, which says, “and saying, men, why are you doing these things, worshiping men when they should only worship God? And we are also men of the same nature [or some translation, same passions] as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these things to a living God.” So, mankind has one nature that distinguishes us as people from God. Well, when we speak of the impassibility of God, God is without passions. I think the Westminster Confession is connecting that to what comes right before it, without body, parts, or passions. Some of our passions, our cravings, our desires, our emotions, reside in our physical body or are fueled by that. God has no body. He is spirit. And so, He has no passions in that sense. And God does not respond emotionally in the sense of being carried along by emotion and passion the way that we as people might.

You know, you on the highway in traffic might respond more passionately than you ought to. God doesn't do that. God is impassable in the sense that He never expresses passions that are really being stirred in Him by external things. He responds always consistent with His own character and nature. So, we read in Scripture things like God rejoices, God is grieved, all of God pities, God loves, there are real realities to God's relationship with His creatures, with us, with creation. The Bible is clear, but He is a God whose passions are always flowing from His perfect character and nature.

MacArthur writes this, “Immutability does not mean that God is static or inert, nor does it mean that He does not act distinctly in time or possess true affections. God is impassable, not in the sense that He is devoid of true feeling or has no affections, but in the sense that His emotions are active and deliberate expressions of His holy dispositions, not, as is often the case with human emotions, involuntary passions by which He is driven.” So God is always consistent with Himself and His nature and character, His perfections, but He does really relate to people. He does have affections, and to some degree, you could even say of emotions. His emotions and affections flow not out of His physical body that is stirring those things up, or out of external pressures or forces that stir those things up, but purely from His own nature and character.

How do we apply the immutability of God? We've talked some about these things already, but the reality is because God does not change, we can have first confidence in His character. As I

mentioned, “His lovingkindness and compassion are new every morning.” You know that tomorrow. Regardless of what comes in your life, God will be the same. You can trust His character. You can know what is true, and this is true of His Word as well.

Psalms 119:89 describes the Word of God in this way. It says, “Forever, O Lord, your Word is settled in heaven. There is no change or shift in God's Word.” 1 Peter 1:25, “The grass withers, the flowers fall off, but the Word of the Lord endures forever.” You know, with you and I, we can say something to somebody, we can write something to somebody, maybe you've sent an email to somebody months ago, and you go back and you read it, and you're like, oh, I wouldn't say that now. Or I didn't, that's something I spoke too definitively about in that way. God doesn't do that. God's Word is fixed; it is sure. We can have confidence in His Word, confidence in His promises, as we saw in Numbers 23:19, that has He said and will He not do it? Whatever God has said, we know He will in fact bring it to pass.

And really, this gives us confidence in our salvation. The promises that God has made, the fact that He says it is finished, that He says we are now His children, there is no going back on those things. Love Isaiah 54:10, which says, “‘For the mountains may be removed, and the hills may shake [everything around us may tremble and quake and go away], but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken,’ says the Lord, who has compassion on you.” Our salvation is secure because the character of God is immutable. He will not change.

So we've seen God's independence. He is self-existent. He is the self-sufficient one, possessing all good things in and of Himself for eternity. And because of that, He is immutable. He cannot change because He always has been in perfection, and any change would be for the worse, and He cannot change. And this relates, thirdly, to God's eternity.

If God cannot change, obviously one of the most significant changes possible is to come into existence or to come out of existence. We change, that change started when we were born or when we were conceived, when we came to be. God, who never changes, is eternal, God's infinity with respect to time. Again, the fact that God does not change means He must be eternal, for going from not existing to existing is a significant change. What do we mean by God's eternity? Where do we see this in the Bible? You know, it's clear in many places. Genesis

21:33, "Abraham called on the name of the Lord the everlasting God." Deuteronomy 33:27, "The eternal God is a dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Job 36:26, "Behold, God is exalted, and we do not know Him. The number of His years is unsearchable." This is not somebody who's going to play college basketball, who doesn't have a birth certificate, and you don't know how old He is. No, this is: "God's years are unsearchable." Why? It's not just a really big number. It's because there is no number. Psalm 90:2, "Before the mountains were born, or you gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, you are God." Psalm 102:12 and 27, "But you, O Lord, abide forever, and your name to all generations... but you are the same, and your years will not come to an end."

Isaiah 41[:4] "For who has performed and accomplished it, calling forth the generations from the beginning, I, the Lord, am the first and with the last, I AM He." He's the one who always has and always will exist. Isaiah 43:10, "You are My witnesses, declares the Lord, and My servant whom I've chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I AM He. Before Me, there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me. Even from eternity, I AM He, and there is none who can deliver out of My hand. First Timothy 1:17, "Now to the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

Biblical Doctrine defines God's eternity this way. "God perfectly transcends all limitations of time, so that He is without beginning, without ending, and without succession of moments in the experience of His being and in His consciousness of all other reality." The first two of those points are probably simpler for us to comprehend. The third requires a little more thought and will still blow our minds. But let's think about those components of the Biblical definition of God's eternity. It means God is without beginning. We read verses of, "from everlasting, He is God." We think of Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Was that really the beginning? No, it was the beginning of time and space. We'll talk about that in a moment. But God was without beginning. Psalm 93:2, "Your throne is established from of old. You are from everlasting." Habakkuk 1:12, "Are you not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, the Holy One? God has no beginning and God has no end." Psalm 97, "But the Lord abides forever." Psalm 48.14, "For such is God, our God, forever and ever." Again, Psalm 102. 27 "Your years will not come to an end."

But God's eternality is not simply that He had no beginning and no end. It also refers to the fact that He is without succession of moments. He exists and has existed outside of time. Now, for us, this is impossible, really, to fully understand or appreciate because we exist only within time. And so all of our experience is in a succession of moments. There's no going back. And you live where you are now. You cannot go forward or back other than where we are. You may wish you could fast forward 23 minutes and we would be done, and you could be out of here with another Snickers bar or something, but we are stuck where we are.

God, on the other hand, is distinct. MacArthur writes this in biblical doctrine, God is in time since He interacts with His creation and His creatures from moment to moment, but God must transcend time or He is limited by another entity, time. In other words, God's eternity means that He is distinct from time. Nevertheless, He is not completely separate from it, rather He is present or immanent in every moment, controlling every moment for His purposes and glory. Think about it, if God was limited by time, He would be limited in a variety of ways. Would He really be all-powerful if it's like, well, I can only function in this moment? And would He really be omniscient if all He's experiencing at the time is right now? God is not limited in any way, and He is not limited by time. We'll learn in the coming sessions about God's omnipresence. He's not limited by space, although He operates within space as well. God created time, but He Himself is removed from it. This is a graph or a chart from Wayne Grudem's systematic theology that makes a feeble effort to reflect these realities that God exists outside of time, and yet He sees all time equally vividly and does relate to us within time.

You know, 2 Peter 3:18 speaks of how with God, “one day is a thousand years, a thousand years as one day.” That's not just because God has existed for so long that it doesn't matter if you're talking one day or a thousand years, it's just a little blip in the radar for God. No, it's with God a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like a day, because He exists outside of time, and yet He sees it equally in that way. And so we affirm that God has no succession of moments in His own being and sees history equally vividly, and yet He also does create and operate within time. God created an ax in time. When it says in the beginning, God created, it was the beginning, because God so created it to be that way. God established the beginning of time. Acts 17, God acts in time. It says in Acts 17:30, “He fixed a day in which He will judge the world.”

Galatians 4:4, “When the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son.” So the coming of Christ in His first advent, the coming of Christ in judgment will happen at the proper time, at the time that God has designated. He is operating within time, but He Himself is not limited by time.

Grudem writes, “We must therefore affirm both that God has no succession of moments in His own being and sees all history equally vividly, and that in His creation, He sees the progress of events over time and acts differently at different points in time. In short, He is the Lord who created time and who rules over it and uses it for His own purposes. God can act in time because He is Lord of time. He uses it to display His glory. In fact, it is often God's good pleasure to fulfill His promises and carry out His works of redemption over a period of time so that we might more readily see and appreciate His great wisdom, His patience, His faithfulness, His lordship over all events, and even His unchangeableness and eternity. When we think of God as being separate from or distinct from time and having no beginning and no end of being eternal. Again, this is one of those ways in which there is a stark contrast between us and God. We are not eternal. We were created. We began to exist, and we live constrained by time. But because God is eternal, we will eternally exist into the future. This is a sobering reality. This is a fact that should really transform how we think and how we live in the time that we have now.

You know, one of the Psalms that highlights God's eternity and our lack thereof is Psalm 90, where it says in verse 2, “Before the mountains were born, or you gave birth to the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.” And one of the messages of that Psalm is the reality that in contrast to God who is everlasting, we are finite, we are temporal, and particularly in this life, our days are numbered. And so we should live in our numbered days with a recognition that God is everlasting, and our days lived in this life are to be done with an eye to eternity. What does that mean for us? How do we live in that manner? Well, one is that we live with an eternal perspective as we think of God's eternity applied.

Look at 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. Says this, “Therefore, we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day, for momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory, far beyond all comparison. While we look not at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” It's so easy, men, isn't it, to live with a

focus on the here and the now, on all that is happening in our little sphere of the world right here, and in this moment in time, and to live solely for this life and these moments. We can spend our efforts pursuing all the things of this, and when this moment and this time is hard, we can easily become weary. We can easily lose heart. Paul says, we do not lose heart, though. Though this moment, these moments, are not all that we wish they were, though our outer man is decaying, that we face momentary light affliction, even though we wouldn't always define it that way in the moment, because it feels a lot worse than that. He says, when we keep an eternal perspective, and we recognize, this is not all there is, God is eternal, and there's an eternity that we look forward to, it utterly changes everything about our perspective. God is eternal, and so we should live with an eternal perspective.

And part of that is turning from the passing pleasures of sin. You know, it's so easy to live for the here and now in the sense of pursuing the sin that seems to satisfy us in the moment, rather than thinking about what is the, in wisdom lived now, how do we prepare for the future, and what is it that's going to lead to the greatest joy and delight for eternity, we can live for the moment. Moses set an example for us, who, in Hebrews chapter 11 where it says this of Moses, "By faith, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to endure ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. Considering the reproach of Christ's greater riches in the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward." Moses lived with an eye to the future, and not the temporal future, but the eternal future. And so he chose to live now, not for the passing pleasures of sin, but in faithfulness and obedience to the Lord.

How do we do that? Chapter 12, verse 1, "Since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every encumbrance and run, and the sin which so easily entangles, and run with endurance the race set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." God's eternality, the fact that He will always exist, and that there is an eternity, not just this temporal life, should cause us to turn from the passing pleasures of sin. And it should, third, cause us to strive for that which endures. What are we going to live for? Matthew chapter six speaks of this reality that we can store up treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, or we can store up treasures in heaven. What are we going

to seek first? Are we going to seek first Christ's kingdom or this one? Are we going to hoard and build our barns for this life, or are we going to invest in that which is eternal? Are we going to seek the things of Christ? What is it that endures? It's the Word of God, spending our time knowing the Lord through His Word.

It's ministry to people. It's being faithful to use our gifts to serve others in the body of Christ, preparing the bride of Christ to see Christ in glory. It's proclaiming the Gospel to others. It's living, again, not neglecting the mundane of this life. God has put us here and intends for us to live and work and serve and go about all the details of life, but in a way that is investing for eternity. I love what John Calvin wrote in His commentary on Psalm 90 about numbering our days in light of the eternity of God. He says, "Men are so dull as to think that 30 years or even a smaller number as it were an eternity." We can think that way, can't we? You know, maybe we don't use that language anymore, when you were a child. Maybe you did, you know, oh, it just feels like an eternity to get to whatever it is that's coming. It's not an eternity. There is an eternity, but that's not it.

But we can think 30 years or less as if that were. And he says, "nor are they impressed with the brevity of their life, so long as this world keeps possession of their thoughts. This is the reason why Moses awakens us by elevating our minds to the eternity of God without the consideration of which we perceive, not how speedily our life vanishes away. The imagination that we shall have a long life resembles a profound sleep in which we are all benumbed until meditation upon the heavenly life swallow up this foolish fancy, respecting the length of our continuance upon earth." See, the reality is our life is incredibly brief. Our life is but a vapor that appears and then vanishes away.

And yet we can be so focused on all that comes in all that is available in this life alone, neglecting the fact that there is an eternity and an eternal God that we should live in light of. So men, this is why these perfections of God, what we believe about God is the most important thing about us. These are not simply intellectual truths to believe or not. They are deep truths to think carefully about. And there's weighty things that we can spend the rest of our life thinking about to plumb the depths of what is true about God. But these are truths that matter for how we live. Do not live tomorrow as though you are independent. Live tomorrow and tonight humbly in

dependence on the Lord being satisfied in Him and giving Him glory as the self-existent, self-sufficient one, the one from whom all blessings flow. Do not live as though you are independent when you are wholly dependent on Him.

Have confidence that this God, the God of the Bible, is unchanging. His character, His promises, His Word is sure and true. You know what God is like because He's revealed that. You can have confidence that He is these things. And as the unchanging one, He is eternally the same. And so live your life tonight and tomorrow and the next day, not simply for this moment. Live your life for eternity, knowing that God is the eternal King. And by His grace, we have the joy and privilege, as those who have come to know Him through Christ, of living with Him for eternity.

So as Ephesians 5 says, make the most of your time. You have limited days. How will you use the limited days He has given you, in preparation for eternity, with Him? We may not be so dull in our thinking, as Calvin says, to simply be focused on this life, and to forget the glorious realities of all that God has revealed.

I hope our time tonight has been helpful and instructive in understanding these things, in shaping our hearts to worship, to be devoted to the Lord. Next time, as Lance mentioned on the 31st, we'll continue in our study, Lance will teach through the rest of these incommunicable attributes of God, as we strive to think rightly of Him. Let's pray together as we conclude.

Our Father, we thank You for the opportunity to be gathered together tonight to think of these deep and rich truths. Lord, You have revealed Yourself to us, not fully, we cannot know everything that is true about You, but we can know You truly and accurately. And Lord, I pray that we would think rightly of You and that those right thoughts and right thinking would fuel right living and devotion and worship to You.

Help us to trust You, help us to rely on You. You are the rock, the unchanging and eternal one, the self-sufficient one from whom all blessings flow, Lord. And might we live in humble dependence, in faithful obedience and zealous worship before You.

We thank You in Christ's name. Amen.