

**PP God's (un)Secret Identity: Our God is Unchanging**

**Part 4 Our God is Unchanging, so let us have confidence James 1:17 7/11-12/2020**

**PP** *"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."* A.W. Tozer, The Knowledge of the Holy,

We are in a summer series where we are learning to move from knowing God's Word, to knowing the God of the Word

There is an attribute of God, a quality He infinitely possesses, that hardly anyone talks about

It is His unchanging nature, or put technically, the immutability of God, which means **PP** *God is true to Himself, never changing in His nature, His attributes, or His purposes*

I distinctly remember when I went away to college, that I both loved and dreaded to come home on break and the reason was the same for each

Nothing, and nobody at home seemed to ever change

On one hand, with all the fast-paced change that was happening in my college life, coming home was safe, predictable, constant

On the other hand, all the same frustrating family, friend, and life issues were just waiting for me

When I would return to college, I would experience the same two feelings of sadness, and relief

Everything that is of this world changes, but God does not, and that can fill us with confidence

James opens chapter 1 talking about trials, difficulties, hard times that no one enjoys

**"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds" James 1:2**

He continues this theme to encourage the Christians who were suffering because of their faith

**"Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him."** James 1:12

Let's include one more verse that James wrote: **"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one."**

**James 1:13**

Now, some of you are going to be surprised to learn that the words 'trial' and 'tempt' are the same root Greek word which means to prove, either negatively or positively

The bible emphatically says God cannot tempt but He will test

**PP** When God is the One behind a **trial** we are experiencing, His purpose is to prove our faith genuine and help us gain perseverance and maturity into Christlikeness

**PP** When Satan is the one behind a **temptation**, his purpose is to cause us to fall and our faith to fail

Neither God or Satan will deviate from this: God's purpose is to strengthen, Satan's is to weaken

While that is consistently true, when we are hurting and suffering, it is not always enough, so

James goes on and he'll drive us right into the character of God's unchanging nature

Before we see it, let me remind you of something I have often said before

You may or may not be old enough to have experienced this, but the Christian life consists of

facing trials and difficulties, storms in life and they come in all sizes and from all sources

**PP** *I have found that we are in a life storm, or have recently come out of one, but it won't be long until another one blows into our lives*

They are God's means to prove our faith, to strengthen it, but the devil will try and use them to destroy our faith

When trials come...we must be anchored in our faith, and James shows us how in verse 2

***“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds” James 1:2***

The word to understand is the word ‘*count*’, which means to make up your mind now, ahead of time to face trials with joy

I teach couples that it is better to resolve differences in peace time than in the midst of a fight

It is better to prepare ahead of time rather than in the middle of an emergency

I once went on an epic mountain bike ride in the mountains of Jim Thorpe with no spare tube, no water and no familiarity with the trail I was on, and it was late in the day

I got lost, had a flat, sucked on rocks to desperately try and get saliva, ended up dehydrated

So preparation is key and James tells us we can right now, before the next trial comes, fix our minds on truth that joy can be ours even in the storm

**PP** Joy is a deep sense of decisive, emotional well-being because God’s on the throne and He cannot be anything but perfectly good to us

Did you hear those two critical parts of biblical joy?: *God’s sovereignty and God’s goodness*

And that is precisely where James drives us as he uncovers the attribute of God’s immutability

***“Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above” James 1:16***

James isn’t talking about birthday gifts, or Christmas gifts, or salary raises, or winning a lottery

The context is trials, and our sovereign God Who is *from above*, is on His throne ruling over all things, bringing all things into conformity to His will, allows only good for His children

God cannot give an evil gift to His children, He cannot bring something into our lives for the purpose of causing us to fall, or making our faith fail

No blessing of God has a downside to it: **PP** *“The blessing of the LORD makes rich, and He adds no sorrow with it.” Proverbs 10:22*

God is good all the time, and all the time God is good, He is unchanging in all of Who He is

If a storm is blowing into your life, then know that God is using this in your life for your good, even if that storm is coming by your own foolishness, or the devil’s intention

When you see it the way God sees it, that storm is customized for you, and God would not allow it or send it if it wasn’t

Before that next trial comes, anchor it in your mind that God is immovably on His throne, and He is unchangeably good to you

He will not allow the trial to linger one second beyond that which it needs to be for His purposes

If He permits the devil to come at you, He will precisely control what Satan is allowed to do

It will not be one degree more severe than He has decreed, and He’ll supply the grace to endure

He won’t be distant while you suffer the trial, but will never leave or forsaking you

The only one of His children that He has ever forsaken in the midst of a trial was His own Son

He had to and it isn’t just because the sins of believers in all times and places were poured out on His Son, and Jesus became the object of His Holy and Just wrath

It is because the worst part of God’s holy and just wrath is His utter, complete abandonment

The deepest part of the suffering of hell is the total vacuum of the presence of God, He will not be there, and there will be no trace of His love, mercy, grace, kindness and presence

And this is the frightening side of God’s unchanging nature and purposes

If you are an unrepentant person, unwilling to turn in trust to Jesus Christ, you will fall into

the hands of a holy God Who will never change His mind  
 He doesn't exercise presidential pardons where every few years He releases a person from hell  
 His judgment is eternal, why, because He is immutable and unchanging

God is both sovereign and good in all that He does, and to show us how unchangeable His nature is, James tells us all good and perfect gifts are ***"coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."*** 1:17

Depending on where the sun is, shadows change, lengthening and shortening through the day  
 But God is constant, immovably unchanging, fixed, He does not change, ever!

Think for a moment on this year, and all the changes that have been occurring in our country  
 The seas are storming, and one moment we were on a crest, the next plunged down into a trough  
 But in the midst of these violent waters is a lighthouse on a rock that has stood the test of time

When I lived in Virginia, a group of us would often tube our way down the James River  
 At the launch spot, the river immediately narrowed into a fairly dangerous section of rapids  
 forming a funnel that had a large boulder right in the middle  
 An aluminum canoe unfortunately hit it broadside, and that powerful current wrapped it right  
 around the boulder, leaving it there for months

If you want a metaphor of God's immutability, then the Bible offers this one:

**PP** ***"The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge"*** 2 Samuel 22:2-3

**PP** ***"He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken."***  
**Psalm 62:2**

Church, I truly believe we are heading into a storm, and we are only now in the outer fringes of it  
 Do you see how the unchangeable nature and purposes of God is a rock and a refuge for you?  
 Are you anchoring that in your mind now, before the storm gets even worse?

This is why we are urgently asking you to join a Life Group, so we can remind each other:

**PP** ***"The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations."***

**Psalm 33:11**

In the middle of a storm, we lose sight of land, our anchor can snap, and we need each other  
 That storm may be an attack on your marriage, or your health, or your possessions or your job  
 Whatever it is, there is a Rock upon Whom all trials will break apart  
 He is your refuge, because He is both sovereign and good, and that will never, ever change!  
 Do you believe that?  
 Are you leading your mind into that truth now, anchoring your hope to that anchor?

The writer of Hebrews knew how important God's unchangeable nature was to his church  
 Some were in prison because of their faith, others had their homes taken away, others beaten  
 But through it all, Hebrews anchored their faith with the promise of **PP** ***"the unchangeable character of His purpose [which] He guaranteed with an oath."*** Hebrews 6:17

And at the end of his letter, he bursts out in confident praise, **PP** ***"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."*** Hebrews 13:8

God is always immovably on His throne and always unchangeably good!

Let's pray

