



The Majesty of God: His Immutability

Study 4

To all, life Thou givest, to both great and small,
In all life Thou livest, the true life of all;
We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
And wither and perish - but naught changeth Thee.

Memory Verse

"For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."
(Malachi 3:6)

Homework

Monday = (1) Read Questions I and II. (2) Memorize Hymn and Verse.

Tuesday = (1) Read Introduction and Malachi 3:6. (2) Memorize Hymn and Verse.

Wednesday = (1) Read Question III. (2) Memorize Hymn and Verse.

Thursday = (1) Read Question IV, points 1 and 2. (2) Memorize Hymn and Verse.

Friday = (1) Read Question IV, points 3 and 4. (2) Memorize Hymn and Verse.

Saturday = (1) Read Question V. (2) Complete the Activity. (3) Memorize Hymn and Verse.

Activity

1. Explain the two ways in which the LORD is unchanging?

2. How is the LORD connected to every subject you learn at school?

3. What does the name "LORD" mean?

4. Who are the "sons of Jacob"?

5. What four truths do we learn from the title "sons of Jacob"?

6. Can the "sons of Jacob" lose their relationship with God? Explain.

I. What Does the "Immutability of God" Mean?

The Immutability of God means that God does not change. (1) He does not change in Who He Is. All created life is governed by growth and decay. For example, a human being passes through a gradual and continual process of growth as he develops from a baby to a man. His body matures, his mind develops, his emotions ripen, etc. Likewise, there remains a constant state of decay as the body ages and declines. However, the Creator does not grow or decay. He requires no addition and suffers no subtraction to His Being. He is perfect. (2) He does not change in what He chooses to do. All created life is subject to time and limited in knowledge. For this reason, when we make a decision, we must process our thoughts through successive stages of past, present and future. Since it is impossible for us to completely know everything from the past

and all things that will happen in the future, our knowledge is not perfect and our decisions often change. However, the Creator does not process His thought through successive stages of past, present and future, because He is eternal (outside of time). His knowledge is complete of all things and His decisions are therefore perfect. He never makes a mistake or regrets a choice that has been made. The Apostle Paul said, "we know all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." All things work together for good because He has a perfect plan for all things, even if we cannot understand it. As someone once said, "The Christian is not required to understand what God does, he is only responsible to stand on Who God Is."

II. What is the Meaning of the Words in the Stanza of the Hymn?

First Line: "To all, life Thou givest, to both great and small" means that every creature which has life is a recipient from the Creator Who is life. All creation is derived from the Creator.

Second Line: "In all life Thou livest, the true life of all" means that every creature which has life is reliant on the Creator Who is life. All creation is dependent on the Creator.

Third Line: "We blossom and flourish as

leaves on the tree" means that every person is subject to the gradual change of growth, even as the leaves on the tree grow in the Spring.

Fourth Line: (1) "And wither and perish" means that every person is subject to the gradual change of decay, even as the leaves on the tree die in the Fall. (2) "But naught changeth Thee" means that nothing (naught) changes God.

Our Relationship with the LORD

(Malachi 3:6)

Introduction: Most of our lives between the ages of five and twenty-two are taken up with a formal education in school and college. Our teachers instruct us on subjects such as history, science, mathematics, health, literature and the arts. However, most of the time, these subjects are studied without any reference to how God is related to them. The great truth of the Bible is that God not only created every subject of education, He also governs all subjects by His sovereign rule and therefore gives true meaning to each subject in accordance with His purpose and plan. With this in mind, it is important that we devote ourselves to understanding Who God is, especially with reference to how He relates to everything in this world. We may be sure, when God is the focus of our learning, the knowledge we receive will not cause us to be lifted up with pride, but will greatly humble us before our Creator and Redeemer; we may be sure, when God is the focus of our learning, the knowledge we receive will be much greater than those who only see this world through the narrow vision of themselves; we may be sure, when God is the focus of our learning, the knowledge we receive will provide the most powerful comfort in our time of need. For what good does a knowledge of history, science, mathematics and literature do us if we never understand how God is part of these subjects? On the other hand, when we know God through all of these subjects and understand how He governs them, upholds them, works through them and accomplishes His purpose by them, then we are given a wonderful foundation on how God governs us, upholds us, works through us and accomplishes His purpose by us during all experiences of our lives. The little Scripture chosen for our study on the Immutability of God demonstrates how such a knowledge of God sustains the Christian in his everyday life. Read carefully the verse and study the notes.

*The Character of the Relationship: Sovereign Creator - establishing covenant with man
(Name - "LORD")*

For I am the LORD,

The Security of the Relationship: Immutability of the LORD - "change not"

I change not;

*The Character of the Relationship: Subjected Creature - entering covenant with LORD
(Name - "sons of Jacob")*

therefore ye sons of Jacob

The Security of the Relationship: Indestructibility of the Saints - "not consumed"
are not consumed.

III. Who is the "LORD"?

The English word "LORD" in Malachi 3:6 is a translation of the Hebrew name "Jehovah". Jehovah is a name God has given to Himself which means "the Eternal One, or the Immutable One; He Who Was, and Is, and Is to come." The name is especially associated with God's covenant relationship He has established with His people. The word "covenant" means "agreement" and it is on the basis of a covenant (agreement) that God entered into a relationship with man. The first agreement God made with Adam was conditional on Adam's obedience to God, but broken by him when he rebelled against God by eating the forbidden fruit. The second agreement God made with Adam was conditioned on Christ's obedience to the Father in keeping the commandments and yielding his life in death as an atonement for sin, freely saving the elect of God by grace. It is on the basis of this second agreement that you and I have a

relationship with God. The Apostle Paul said, "As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." As a result of Adam's sin, we are all sinners by nature and therefore under the judgment and condemnation of God. However, as a result of Jesus Christ's obedience (to the commandments as well as giving His life as a substitute for sinners), we who believe on Him are given a new nature of righteousness and therefore under the grace and justification of God. Every time we think of the name "Jehovah", we must remember that God is not only our Sovereign Creator that has given to us physical life; He is also our Sovereign Redeemer that has given to us spiritual life. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

IV. Who are the "sons of Jacob"??

The "sons of Jacob" is a title used to describe the nation of Israel as a whole. However, not every person in the nation of Israel was a true believer in Christ. The Apostle Paul tells us that "they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." This means that only those persons who received spiritual life were true believers in Christ and therefore children of God. (See Romans 9 for a full account). The description, "sons of Jacob", bears special testimony to four outstanding truths with reference to those who are truly saved.

(1) They were sons of God's election. The

Lord had said, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." In the fulness of God's grace, He chose to save Jacob, but not his brother Esau. For the Lord also said, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." It is the sovereign grace of God which is responsible for saving sinners, so that salvation is not based on the sinner's will or works, but on God that shows mercy. Of course, thinking on God's electing grace can cause us to question the fairness of God in not choosing everyone to be saved. But we must remember that God is the Creator and Redeemer and we are not only His creatures, but creatures who have rebelled against Him. He retains the right to do with us as He

pleases and none of us deserve to be saved. Instead of asking why God has not chosen everyone to be saved, it is more profitable to ask why God chose us to be saved instead of someone who is not chosen. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved." (Eph. 1:3-6)

(2) They were sons of spiritual blessings. Jacob had received the divine blessing from his father Isaac that had been promised by God to his grandfather Abraham. This blessing included several distinctive features, the greatest of which was the promise of Christ who would redeem His people from their sins. The promise of that blessing is an inheritance that continues to be shared by all of God's elect people today. For "as many as received [Christ], to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe of His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:12,13)

(3) They were sons of peculiar trials. For Jacob himself is an example on how all of God's people conduct themselves in the world. Although he was a believer, he nevertheless struggled with his sin and often distrusted God in his daily life. As a result, God chastened him as a father would correct a rebellious child. Often, the chastening of the Lord came in the form of trials, wherein God purposed to teach Jacob the lessons of discipline and godly living.

This is a common experience for every Christian, and wise is the child of God who yields to the chastening of the Lord. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: for whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth...now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Heb. 12:5-11)

(4) They were sons of an unchanging God. The name Jacob means "self-governed", which is an excellent description on how he lived his life. Instead of yielding himself to the sovereign rule of God, he attempted to control his own destiny by manipulating and cheating the people around him in order to gain position and wealth. He was exceedingly successful in accomplishing his purposes, until he was confronted by an angel of the LORD in a wrestling match. While Jacob struggled with the LORD and tried with all his power to gain the advantage, the LORD reached down and simply touched Jacob's leg. Immediately, his leg was disjointed from the bone and Jacob found himself clinging to the LORD for support instead of fighting against the LORD in rebellion. As a result of the LORD's victory over Jacob, his name was changed to Israel which means "God-governed". From that point forward, Jacob was called Israel and his children were called the children of Israel. Why then, are they called the "sons of Jacob" in Malachi 3:6? They are called the "sons of Jacob" in order to remind the people that their lives are governed by the unchanging God. If ever we try to manipulate our circumstances or the people around us in order to advance in life, we may be sure that we are failing to trust in the unchanging God who alone controls our destiny.

V. How is the relationship between the LORD and the sons of Jacob Secured?

The relationship between the LORD and the "sons of Jacob" is secured by the immutability of who God is and what He chooses to accomplish. When we are told the "sons of Jacob" are not "consumed", this means that God's people are not destroyed in judgment. Since the LORD has chosen His people to salvation before the world was created, His unchanging choice guarantees their eternal salvation in Christ. Although Christians are enabled to live godly in Christ Jesus through the New Birth, they are nevertheless confronted with daily sin which sometimes causes them to be unfaithful to the LORD. However, even when God's people are unfaithful to Him, He is never unfaithful to them, for He is unchanging in His faithfulness - "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 Jn. 1:9) This is what the Apostle Paul was referring to when he said, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8:28-39)