

How Firm is Your Foundation?



September 20, 2022

Lesson Three

C. H. Spurgeon:

“There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. . . No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God. . . But while the subject humbles the mind, it also expands it. . . I know nothing which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of grief and sorrow; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead.”

Theology: The study, thought, and analysis of God, his attributes and his relationship to the universe

What does it take to be a theologian?

- A degree from a Bible school
- An MDiv degree from a seminary
- The ability to read Hebrew and Greek
- A full-time job in a teaching ministry
- Teaching a Bible class regularly
- A life-time pursuit of knowing God

What is the purpose of knowing theology?

- To know God is eternal life (John 17:3)
- God takes delight in us knowing him (Jeremiah 9:23 – 24)
- Our greatest need is to know God
- If we don't know God, we won't trust him
- Without faith it's impossible to please God – and we must know him to have faith in him
- Our ability to “cope with life” depends on how well we know God

Who is qualified to be a theologian?

- Men only
- Men who have completed their religious education
- Women who have completed their religious education
- Any born-again child of God who regularly, sincerely and correctly pursues a knowledge of God

From A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, p. 39

“Because we are the handiwork of God, it follows that all our problems and their solutions are theological. Some knowledge of what kind of God it is that operates the universe is indispensable to a sound philosophy of life and a sane outlook on the world scene.”

“We can never know who or what we are till we know at least something of what God is.”

(Tozer)



How do we know God?

- Through his Word
- Through his Spirit
- Through his creation
- By getting to know Jesus Christ

Here is the first theological conversation in the Bible:

Genesis 3:1- 5 – Between the serpent and Eve (a woman)

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’”² The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,³ but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”⁴ “You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman.⁵ “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Why is this a theological discussion?

Because it’s about God, about whether God can be trusted or not, about whether it’s important to obey God or not, about God’s nature and character.

This illustrates how important it is for all of us—including women—to know our theology and to have a firm foundation of trust in who God is.

Ephesians 6:13: Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Psalms 40:2: He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.

1 Corinthians 15:58a: Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you.

What caused Eve to fail this theological test?

How should she have responded to the serpent when the serpent (Satan) said:

- Did God really say?
- You will not surely die.

In what ways does Satan try to destroy your faith in God or cause you to doubt God’s nature?

Case study #1:

You are in the midst of a very normal day—work, etc.—when you get this text from a family member: “Your sister was just rushed to the hospital. Come quickly.” Your heart almost stops beating; fear grips your mind. What can this possibly be? The drive to the hospital seems to take forever. What do you need to remember about God at this moment? What about God’s nature do you need to dwell on as you drive to the hospital? How do you bring your fearful thoughts into captivity and make them obey Christ?

Case study #2:

Your grown child has just graduated from college and has landed a very good job. She comes home for a few weeks before the job begins, and very casually announces to you that she has become an atheist. She respects your belief but wants to make sure you understand that she no longer shares it. What attribute(s) of God will give you the strength you need for this shocking news?

So far we've studied that:

- God is solitary
- God is infinite
- God is omniscient

The Supremacy of God

What does this mean?

We have seen that God is infinite—every characteristic of God is infinite. But everything about God is also supreme—he is above all in authority, in majesty, in power. He is the ultimate.

Psalms 50:21 (ESV): These things you have done, and I have been silent; you thought that I was one like yourself. But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you.

1 Chronicles 29:11 – 12 (ESV): (David's prayer) Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.

2 Chronicles 20:6 (ESV): O Lord, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you.

Job 42:2 (ESV): I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

Psalms 115:3 (ESV): Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.

Why did God allow this rebellion by Pharaoh to go on for so long? Look for the familiar repeated reason in all these passages:

Exodus 6:6 – 7 (ESV): Say therefore to the people of Israel, "I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

Exodus 7:4 – 5 (ESV): Pharaoh will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and bring my hosts, my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great acts of judgment. The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them.

Exodus 8:9 – 10 (ESV): Moses said to Pharaoh, "Be pleased to command me when I am to plead for you and for your servants and for your people, that the frogs be cut off from you and your houses and be left only in the Nile." And he said, "Tomorrow." Moses said, "Be it as you say, so that you may know that there is no one like the Lord our God."

Exodus 9:15 – 16 (ESV): For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth. But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.

Exodus 9:29 (ESV): Moses said to him, "As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will stretch out my hands to the Lord. The thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, so that you may know that the earth is the Lord's."

Exodus 10:1-2 (ESV): Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them, and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and of your grandson how I have dealt harshly with the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them, that you may know that I am the Lord.”

Exodus 14:3 – 4 (ESV): For Pharaoh will say of the People of Israel, ‘They are wandering in the land; the wilderness has shut them in.’ And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord.” And they did so.

- He is the God of his people, Israel, supreme over Israel.
- He is Lord supreme over the Egyptians.
- He is supreme over all the universe—frogs and gnats and hail and locusts and livestock and flies and water.
- He is supreme over all the earth.
- He is supreme over coming generations.
- He is supreme over all powers.

You will find this phrase many times throughout the Old Testament: *That they (or you) may know that I am the Lord.*

Isaiah 45:6: ...so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting people may know there is none besides me. *I am the LORD*, and there is no other.

Jeremiah 24:7: I will give them a heart to know me, that *I am the LORD*. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart.

Ezekiel 6:14: And I will stretch out my hand against them and make the land a desolate waste from the desert to Diblah—wherever they live. Then they will know that *I am the LORD*.”

Ezekiel 11:10, 12: You will fall by the sword, and I will execute judgment on you at the borders of Israel. Then you will know that *I am the LORD*. And you will know that I am the LORD, for you have not followed my decrees or kept my laws but have conformed to the standards of the nations around you.”

“We get anesthetized to the unspeakable and appalling insult rendered to God day in and day out by his being ignored. It starts to feel normal—the way it’s normal not to think about air or a solid earth under our feet.” (Piper)

“Were all the citizens of heaven and all the inhabitants of the earth to combine in revolt against him (God), it would occasion him no uneasiness, and would have less effect upon his eternal and unassailable throne than has the spray of Mediterranean’s waves upon the towering rocks of Gibraltar.” (Piper)

Psalms 2:4: The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.

Look at the entire passage:

Psalms 2:2 – 4: Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? ²The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying, ³“Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles.” ⁴The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.

Who does God laugh at?

When was the last time you “laughed” at the raging going on around us? At the people in authority who are “banding together” against the Lord and against his people? Do you “laugh” at all the nonsense and ungodliness in the world, or do you despair? Are you intimidated or are you fearful? Are you angry? Are you belligerent?

God is supreme over the works of his hands:

- At his pleasure the Red Sea divided and its waters stood up as walls (Exodus 14)
- When he ordered, the sun stood still (Joshua 10)
- He made ravens carry food to Elijah (1 Kings 17)
- He made iron to swim on top of the waters (2 Kings 6:5)
- He made lions to be tame when Daniel was cast into their den (Daniel 6:21)
- He made fire not to burn when the three Hebrews were flung into its flames (Daniel 3:25)

Psalm 135:6 (ESV): Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.

God is supreme in his perfect rule over the wills of men.

Exodus 34:23 – 24: Three times a year all your men are to appear before the Sovereign LORD, the God of Israel. I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your territory, and no one will covet your land when you go up three times each year to appear before the LORD your God.

Proverbs 21:1 (ESV): The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will.

James 4:13 – 15 (ESV): Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that."

What does the supremacy of God mean to you—in your life?

"Our lives are neither the product of blind fate nor the result of capricious chance, but every detail of them was ordained from all eternity, and is now ordered by the living and reigning God. Not a hair of our heads can be touched without his permission" (A. W. Pink, *The Attributes of God*, p. 39).

Proverbs 16:9: In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps.

Psalm 31:14 – 15: But I trust in you, LORD; I say, "You are my God." My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me.

Psalm 139:16: Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

The Immutability of God

How would you define God's immutability?

Psalm 102:25 – 27: In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end.

Malachi 3:6: "I the LORD do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed."

Malachi is warning the nation Israel of the coming wrath of God. He speaks of the Messiah:

Malachi 3:1: "I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty.

In the midst of these words of warning and comfort, the Lord speaks of his immutability as the reason Israel is not totally consumed in divine judgment.

God will follow through on his judgment on unbelievers, and he will follow through on his promise of salvation to those who believe—those he chose. He cannot change!

"The immutability of God is a significant part of our hope, for he who has promised to judge sin is the same God who has promised to save us from our sins by judging sin in the person and work of Jesus Christ, his Son" (bible.org – Bob Deffinbaugh).

Hebrews 13:8: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

This is proof again of the deity of Jesus Christ, because only God is the same yesterday, today and forever.

James 1:17: Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadow.

God is immutable in his essence.

C. H. Spurgeon:

"He sees ages pass, but with him it is ever now. Mark you, his essence did not undergo a change when it became united with manhood. When Christ in past years did gird himself with mortal clay, the essence of his divinity was not changed; flesh did not become God, nor did God become flesh by a real actual change of nature; the two were united, but the God head was still the same. It was the same when he was a babe in the manger, as it was when he stretched the curtains of heaven; it was the same God that hung upon the cross. . . He never has changed in his essence, not even by his incarnation."

God is immutable in his characteristics and his attributes.

His attributes are the same today as they were before the world began. They will never change.

- His power is unabated
- His wisdom is undiminished.
- His holiness is never compromised.
- His word is forever settled in heaven – Psalm 119:89: Your word, LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.
- His love is eternal – Jeremiah 31:3: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.

"His strong love stands like a granite rock, unmoved by the hurricanes of our iniquity." (Spurgeon)

- His mercy is everlasting – Psalm 100:5
- His justice is unchanged.
- His truth is unchanged.
- His goodness is unchanged.

God's purposes and promises are immutable.

His will never varies. What he has purposed to do, what he has promised to do, will never change.

Romans 11:29: ...for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.

Peter said to Jesus: “ Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God” (John 16:30).

Isaiah 46:10: I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say, ‘My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.’

God’s plans are immutable.

Isaiah 14:24: The LORD Almighty has sworn: “Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will happen.”

Psalms 33:10 – 11: The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.

The Unchangeable Changer

And yet, there are scriptural instances where it appears that God changes his mind.

Genesis 6:6: The LORD regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled.

Does God actually have regrets? Can God take a line of action without knowing or correctly anticipating the consequences beforehand?

The answer is “No!” God is fundamentally different from man:

Numbers 23:19: God is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

God knew beforehand that man would sin.

1 Peter 1:20: He (Jesus Christ) was chosen before the creation of the world but was revealed in these last times for your sake.

Revelation 13:8: All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb’s book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.

God does not change, but there is change and development in God’s relationship with his repentant creation. Thus, we who were once his enemies are now his friends.

God in his word often speaks of himself in terms that we can understand. When he institutes a change in his dealing with men, he describes that as “repenting” or “relenting.”

Jeremiah 18:7-8: If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned.

Jeremiah 26:13: Now reform your ways and your actions and obey the LORD your God. Then the LORD will relent and not bring the disaster he has pronounced against you.

1 Chronicles 21:15: And God sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem. But as the angel was doing so, the LORD saw it and relented concerning the disaster and said to the angel who was destroying the people, “Enough! Withdraw your hand.”

Joel 2:13: Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

Does prayer change God's mind?

God doesn't have a plan B. But, since God knows all things, the beginning from the end, it is not possible for him to improve upon any plan that he has made.

Does prayer change things?

Prayer does not change God's mind, but prayer does change things—circumstances, outcomes, etc. God delights in changing our circumstances in response to our prayers of faith.

Luke 18:1: Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

1 John 5:14 – 15: This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

The key phrase is “according to his will.” That will also includes his timing.

Our prayers help to align our hearts with his heart until his will is our highest goal. He promises to listen and grant the desires of our hearts when our hearts are wholly his.

Psalm 37:4: Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

James 5:16b (NKJV): The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Closing: God is the Ancient of Days

The Ancient of Days: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PPpGphzScjA>