

"Change and decay all around I see, O Thou who changest not, abide with me." (Lyte, 1793-1847) The changes we see in our lifetime are too many to count. Powers rise and fall. Wealth comes and goes. Friends are there and then gone. Family passes into eternity. The instability of life is so unsettling that we'd rather not think about it (Proverbs 27:1). We seek the security of an unchanging place where friends will never leave, provision is always consistent, and where tomorrow will be much like today but with a little more joy. We don't mind a *little* change, for that adds spice to life. In fact, life without change would become monotonous. We just want everything that brings stability to remain unchanged. This world and the things that we depend on it will always be changing. The psalmist declared that even the heavens would change. *²⁶ They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, ²⁷ but you are the same, and your years have no end.* Psalm 102:26-27

There is an unchanging source that can bring stability to our soul. The eternal God of Israel spoke to Malachi and said, *⁶ "For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed.* Malachi 3:6 In the middle of the LORD'S rebuke to Israel for her sins and warnings of the consequences, God let them know that it was only because He never changes that they weren't utterly wiped out. God's mercy triumphs over His justice (James 2:13). His steadfast love for His covenant people will bring discipline, but will never change (Psalm 89:30-33).

God is the *only* thing that will never change (John 1:1-2). That can be good news or bad news depending on your relationship with Him. For those who are in relationship with Him, who know His goodness, mercy, and grace in Christ Jesus, it is great news. His steadfast love will never change. We even appreciate the discipline it brings because we have found that His way is the best way. What He asks of us is for our good (Deuteronomy 4:40). If His love were not steadfast, we'd wonder when we were about to cross the final line between steadfast love and justice. We'd be living in fear of impending judgment. Instead, we live in the peace of knowing His steadfast love is unshakable (Romans 8:15).

While everything else in life changes, we have the confidence that the Author of it all will remain the same. What He has promised us is certain. That is because of three other attributes: **omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience**. These supreme attributes of God guarantee that nothing can change Him and that His word is sure.

God is ever omnipresent. He is at all times in all places. He was and is and is to come (Revelation 4:8) That is because He is a spirit (John 4:24). He is not confined to one location. He is not only not confined to a specific location, but He is not confined to a specific time. He lives in the eternal now. He sees the end from the beginning. He will never be surprised by some secret plot to overthrow Him in any age or place. He is

Commented [PW1]: Proverbs 27:1 (ESV)
¹ Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.

Commented [PW2]: James 2:13 (ESV)
¹³ For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

Commented [notes3]: Psalm 89:30-33 (ESV)
³⁰ If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my rules,
³¹ if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments,
³² then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes,
³³ but I will not remove from him my steadfast love or be false to my faithfulness.

Commented [PW4]: John 1:1-2 (ESV)
¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
² He was in the beginning with God.

Commented [notes5]: Deuteronomy 4:40 (ESV)
⁴⁰ Therefore you shall keep his statutes and his commandments, which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for all time."

Commented [notes6]: Romans 8:15 (ESV)
¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

Commented [notes7]: Revelation 4:8 (ESV)
⁸ And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!"

Commented [PW8]: John 4:24 (ESV)
²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

there. He is here with us now. Nothing escapes Him. Nothing is hidden from Him including our hearts (Hebrews 4:13).

The person who trusts in Christ can always be assured of God's presence. While He is present with every one, He is present to guide and bless those who have repented of their sins and received the righteousness of Christ. You may feel like He is absent, but that can never be. Our rebellion may make His voice difficult to hear, but He is still with us. In the passage from Malachi, the next verse promised that if we will return to Him, He will return to us (Malachi 3:7). It is not that He was ever absent, but the sense of His presence was withheld because of our sin. There is no place that you can go that He will not be there with you. There is no time in life when He is not there, from birth to death and beyond. Our God is omnipresent.

God is omnipotent. He has all power. *11 Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God,* Psalm 62:11 All power that exists is His and will return to Him. He gives it and takes at His pleasure. To resist Him is foolishness. The fact that He is omnipotent will never change. That means so much to the believer. It means He can heal, if He so chooses, any and all affliction. It is so amazing to read the accounts in the Bible of people born blind or lame being healed and instantly using those abilities. When sight is restored it takes people months to understand and make sense of the light coming in their optic nerves. When Jesus heals people, there is no time necessary for the brain to comprehend what it senses. The understanding comes with the healing. The same is true with the lame walking. The balance that must be learned takes a baby a year. Even those who have been bed ridden for a long time have difficulty walking again. When Jesus heals the lame, the person can jump and leap for joy (Acts 3:8). That's power!

His word is so powerful that it creates things from nothing (Genesis 1:3). The universe came into existence by the word of God. That's unlimited power! God packed such power into a tiny hydrogen atom that we make devastating bombs with it. All that power means that there is nothing that threatens Him. And when it comes to caring for His children, Abba Father is our protector. He will only let happen to us that which is for our good (Romans 8:28). We may not understand. We may think things are out of control, but sometimes He shows the greatness of His power by helping us endure the difficulties of life. I think of Job and all that he endured, the loss of all his children, his wealth stolen, and his health gone. He questioned God, but God helped him endure even the taunts of his friends in the midst of all his pain. And God had the power to restore everything to Job (Job 42:10).

When the Day of the Lord comes, the armies of the earth will be gathered to fight Jesus. Man will most likely have a nuclear arsenal and laser beams, but the Scriptures say the sword that comes from Jesus' mouth will annihilate them all (Revelation 19:15). I believe that means His word. He only needs to utter His voice and it's over. In

Commented [PW9]: Hebrews 4:13 (ESV)

¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Commented [PW10]: Malachi 3:7 (ESV)

⁷ From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. But you say, 'How shall we return?'

Commented [notes11]: Acts 3:8 (ESV)

⁸ And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

Commented [notes12]: Genesis 1:3 (ESV)

³ And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

Commented [notes13]: Romans 8:28 (ESV)

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

Commented [notes14]: Job 42:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends. And the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.

Commented [notes15]: Revelation 19:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

Revelation 19 the saints sing about the victory before the battle begins (Revelation 19:6). That's because we know there is no contest. Jesus shows up and it's all over before it begins. How could man stand before the all-powerful God?

Why would man resist an ever-present, all-powerful God? We may not like His decisions, though in the end we will recognize they were good and just. We may desire to go our own way to our detriment, but when we know we will one day face this all powerful God who is holy, why would we not take refuge in Jesus' grace and mercy offered to us on the cross?

God is omniscient. That means that He knows everything that can be known. God asked Job, *¹⁶ Do you know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him who is perfect in knowledge,* Job 37:16. There is no information of any kind that He is unaware of. Many of the scientists that founded the main branches of science said they desired to think God's thoughts after Him. They wanted to discover a little of the mind of God in creation. The more we discover, the more amazing we find creation is. There are fewer and fewer atheists in astronomy departments. The marvel of space is just too much to deny a designer of all the beauty and symmetry. Microbiology is just as incredible. We are learning how little we understand of the mysteries of nature. Nature's complexity, information systems, and design are vastly superior to anything man can invent. Our greatest hope in future technology is to mimic God's created things.

The omniscience of God is inevitable because He created all things and is always present. He knows every trial you endure. He knows the limits of your endurance. He knows every influence on your life, every pain and sorrow, every joy and comfort (Exodus 3:7). He knows what it will take for you to believe, and He even knows whether you will choose to believe or reject Him. He knows every scheme of Satan and man. He knows it all. That is why we have prophecy in Scripture. God is already there. He revealed a bit of it to the prophets.

For those who believe, this attribute is a great comfort. We know that He understands what we face. We know He can strengthen us to endure. We can trust that He can prepare us for every trial and see us through. We are assured that His promises are true because God already knows their fulfillment.

These three attributes of omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience are all unchanging. God will always have these qualities. Their very existence assures that they will not change. Because God is perfect, any change would make Him imperfect, so His perfection means He can't change. We don't ever need to worry when we have placed our lives in the hands of such an amazing God.

But for those who resist Him, these attributes assure eventual judgment (Romans 2:3). There is no escape. To resist Him is to resist goodness and love. It is to declare your

Commented [notes16]: Revelation 19:6 (ESV)

⁶ Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

Commented [notes17]: Exodus 3:7 (ESV)

⁷ Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings,

Commented [notes18]: Romans 2:3 (ESV)

³ Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God?

desire to replace God. For those who do so, these qualities of God are either ignored or rejected as untrue because their existence leads to an inevitable conclusion.

There is no stability for the unbeliever, because everything they trust in is changing. I've watched as people held out in their self-reliance, and little by little the things they trust in let them down. I've also watched as believers rested in the assurance of the unchanging ability of God to see them through the storms of life and even the final victory over death. That is the certainty that comes from faith in a God who is unchanging, always present, all-powerful, and all-knowing.

Let's look and see if these qualities are true of Jesus. While He emptied Himself to become a man (Philippians 2:7), He temporarily set aside some of these attributes. That is because these specific attributes are unattainable by man. Jesus had to physically be at a point in space and time, and yet the author of Hebrews wrote, ⁸ *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever*. Hebrews 13:8 John tells us that Jesus is the Word of God who was always with God (John 1:1, 14). Jesus demonstrated for us the attributes we can receive by the presence of His Spirit within us. We can grow in love, holiness, mercy, grace, gentleness, kindness and all the fruits of the Spirit which are attributes of God. But we will never be ever-present, all-powerful, or know all things.

We do see hints of those qualities that God alone possesses because Jesus is the God/man. When the sick came to Him, He had the power to heal them all (Luke 6:19). There has never been anyone that could back up such a claim other than Jesus. He could rebuke the wind and command the waves to be still (Mark 4:39). He only needed to speak a word to heal (Matthew 8:14). He could even command the dead to live (John 11:43-44).

While Jesus set aside His omniscience, He still revealed an amazing knowledge of things only God could know. He saw Philip under the fig tree (John 1:48). He knew what was in men's hearts (John 2:25). He knew what his adversaries were thinking (Luke 6:8). He knew the future, for He predicted the destruction of the Temple, a prediction most Jews thought would never come to pass (Matthew 24:2). He knew He would be killed and rise on the third day (Mark 8:31). No one ever demonstrated power and knowledge to the extent that Jesus did. In regards to the omnipresence of Jesus, just before Jesus ascended, He told His disciples that He would be with them wherever they went (Matthew 28:20).

While the world floats on a sea of uncertainty and constant change with no anchor to cling to (Isaiah 57:20), the child of God has the anchor of an unchanging God (Hebrews 6:19). We have an island in the midst of the storm of life. We have a place to flee when we are overwhelmed by change. We run to our unchanging God, our Rock. We rest in the fact that He knows exactly what is happening and why. We know He is never caught off guard, for He knows all. We are assured by His power that He can see us

Commented [PW19]: Philippians 2:7 (ESV)

⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

Commented [PW20]: John 1:1 (ESV)

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Commented [PW21]: John 1:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Commented [PW22]: Luke 6:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.

Commented [PW23]: Luke 6:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.

Commented [PW24]: Matthew 8:13 (ESV)

¹³ And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed at that very moment.

Commented [PW25]: John 11:43-44 (ESV)

⁴³ When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out."

⁴⁴ The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

Commented [PW26]: John 1:48 (ESV)

⁴⁸ Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

Commented [PW27]: John 2:25 (ESV)

²⁵ and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

Commented [PW28]: John 2:25 (ESV)

²⁵ and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

Commented [PW29]: Matthew 24:2 (ESV)

² But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

Commented [PW30]: Mark 8:31 (ESV)

³¹ And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again.

Commented [notes31]: Matthew 28:20 (NIV)

²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have comm... [1]

Commented [notes32]: Isaiah 57:20 (ESV)

²⁰ But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt.

Commented [notes33]: Hebrews 6:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain,

through and change us in the process. While our hope is that we change to be more like Jesus, our trust is also in the fact that He never changes.

The end of the journey for the believer is Christ likeness (1 John 3:2). We look at our ups and downs and all the weaknesses that remain, and if we fix our eyes on those weaknesses, we would have no hope. But then we turn our eyes to our unchanging God (Hebrews 12:2). We see His power to bring victory out of what appeared to be defeat on the cross. Then we find hope in His words, "Is anything too hard for me?" (Jeremiah 32:27; Genesis 18:14) Can He make you and me into the bride of Christ? Of course He can. He is all-powerful. He knows all, and He wouldn't have begun a work in us He could not complete (Philippians 1:6). Hallelujah!

Abide With Me by Henry Lyte

Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide. When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim; its glories pass away; Change and decay in all around I see; O
Thou who changest not, abide with me.

Not a brief glance I beg, a passing word,
But as Thou dwell'st with Thy disciples, Lord, Familiar, condescending, patient, free.
Come not to sojourn, but abide with me.

Come not in terrors, as the King of kings,
But kind and good, with healing in Thy wings; Tears for all woes, a heart for every plea.
Come, Friend of sinners, thus abide with me.

Thou on my head in early youth didst smile, And though rebellious and perverse
meanwhile, Thou hast not left me, oft as I left Thee. On to the close, O Lord, abide
with me.

I need Thy presence every passing hour.
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power? Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay
can be? Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me.

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness. Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy
victory? I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.

Commented [PW34]: 1 John 3:2 (ESV)

² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

Commented [PW35]: Hebrews 12:2 (ESV)

² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Commented [notes36]: Jeremiah 32:27 (ESV)

²⁷ ¶ "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me?"

Commented [notes37]: Genesis 18:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ ¶ Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son."

Commented [notes38]: Philippians 1:6 (ESV)

⁶ ¶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes; Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies. Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee; In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

What more could we ask in this world of uncertainty than that the unchanging God who is all-powerful, always present, and all-knowing abide with us? His presence changes everything.

As I worked on this message, I had a splitting headache, my laptop quit working, and I got some horrible news. All the while I'm pleading with God that this series about the attributes of God be His work and not my own. The testing was to be expected. For if I'm going to preach it, I have to live it. I have to ask myself if I really believe it. Do I believe the God that is described by these supreme attributes is with me in spite of all I experience? Absolutely! What say you?

Questions

- 1 How stable is life in this world?
- 2 How do we know God never changes?
- 3 Why is it important for God to be omnipresent?
- 4 Why is it important for God to be omniscient?
- 5 Why is it important for God to be omnipotent?
- 6 What should these truths mean to the believer?
- 7 What should these truths mean to the unbeliever?
- 8 How are these qualities glimpsed in Jesus?
- 9 How should these attributes change the way you think about life?
- 10 Review the hymn. How did it speak to your heart?

Matthew 28:20 (NIV)

²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."