

Does God change?

- On the surface, the answer is obviously yes!
 - 1 Sam 15:11 God regrets he made Saul king, reverses his intention for him to rule
 - Jer 18:1–10 God says he can intend blessing or disaster for a nation, but then reverse his intention based on their actions.
 - Eph 2:3–7 in the gospel, God changes in his attitude toward us from wrath to pleasure
- But do these passages show us God's *being*? Or are they part of his condescension?
- Turretin: God is immutable both in *essence* and in *will*
 - Ps 102:27; Mal 3:6; Jam 1:17; Ps 33:11; 1 Sam 15:29; Num 23:19
 - Important clarification: by immutable we do not mean “immobile” as though God were a frozen statue. There is infinite life and activity in the being of God (John 15:9).
- But what is changing in Eph 2:3–7; 1 Sam 15:11; etc.?
 - We must conclude: God changes in his contingent attributes (his relationship to his creation). But he does not change in his being.

God is impassible

- We can go even further. Not only does God not change in his essence, but this means he is never changed *by someone or something*.
- For this reason we speak of God as “impassible”: he cannot experience pain, and more broadly, he is never moved, changed, or affected by anything.
- He is always “above the fray”:
 - Ps 62.6 “He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.”
 - He is not a needy God
- Yet in his condescension he is also passionately involved in the fray:
 - Jer 31:20 [God speaking] “Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he my darling child? For as often as I speak against him, I do remember him still. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, declares the LORD.”
 - Cf. these pathos-laden passages: Luke 13:34; 15:20; Jer 9:10; 12:8; 44:4

Holding things together

- On the one hand, theological chaos results when we do not distinguish 1. who God is in his being from all eternity from 2. who God is in his condescension to relate to us.
- But we must be careful not to drive a wedge between God-in-his-being and God-in-his-relationship-to-creation: these are one, the same God.
- Ultimate example of this: God the unchangeable, impassible Son becoming a changeable, passible man.