

# The Unchanging, Dynamic God

## Introduction to the life of David Pt.8: The 2<sup>nd</sup> Rejection of Saul

### 1 Samuel 15

Summary: Introduction: The difficulty – God changes/does not change  
 The solution – The unchanging dynamic God (nature does not change and so emotions  
 have to if God is going to move with us through time)  
 Saul tried out four versions of unrepentance (sought a kind of forgiveness that would require God's nature to  
 change – did not care about His emotions). Conclusion: Seek to change God's emotions toward you, not His  
 nature

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**<sup>10</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel: <sup>11</sup> "I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions." Samuel was troubled, and he cried out to the LORD all that night. <sup>19</sup> Why did you not obey the LORD? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the LORD?" <sup>20</sup> "But I did obey the LORD," Saul said. "I went on the mission the LORD assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. <sup>21</sup> The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the LORD your God at Gilgal." <sup>22</sup> But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. <sup>23</sup> For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. <sup>28</sup> Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to one of your neighbors-- to one better than you. <sup>29</sup> He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or grieve; for he is not a man, that he should grieve." <sup>35</sup> Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him. And the LORD was grieved that he had made Saul king over Israel.**

# Introduction: The Problem

## **1 Samuel 15:11 "I am grieved that I have made Saul king**

The word translated **grieved** is NACHAM (נָחַם), which can mean either to grieve<sup>1</sup> or to change your mind.<sup>2</sup> So God is either grieving about His decision to make Saul king, or He is changing His mind. God's attitude toward Saul is NACHAM. Now look at verse 29.

## **29 He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or NACHAM; for he is not a man, that he should NACHAM.**

God does not ever do that because He is not a man. So the word NACHAM does not describe what God is like. Now look at the end of verse 35.

## **35 ... the LORD was NACHAM that he had made Saul king over Israel.**

How can we explain that? Is that not a flat out contradiction? God did that with Saul; He never does that; God did that with Saul.

Most people just write off verses 11 and 35 as anthropomorphism. (Anthropomorphism is a description of God in human terms to make Him more understandable – like talking about His hands or feet or tears or wings). The problem is, the purpose of anthropomorphism is to take something true about God and explain it in a way that makes it easier to understand. So if God never grieves over a past decision, how does saying that He did in Saul's case help me more easily understand that He never does it?

Let's see if we can figure out the answer. We will start by looking at the context. God rejected Saul's line back in chapter 13, now in chapter 15 we see a second, more forceful rejection of Saul himself as king. And again, it is not just Saul committing and act of disobedience and God punishing him. If that is all there were to it we would not need a whole chapter. If we want to understand the vast difference between Saul and the man after God's own heart (David), we are not going to find it in the nature of their sins. We find it in their hearts, which can be seen in their reaction to their own sins.

And when we see what Saul tries to do in this chapter in response to his own sin, we not only see into Saul's heart, but we learn something very important about the nature of God. Something surprising. This passage opened my eyes to some truths about God that I had never understood very well before – regarding God's emotions.

## **Saul's Unrepentance**

### **1. The sin**

Chapter 15 begins by describing Saul's act of disobedience. God gives Saul some very clear, very easy to understand instructions. He tells Saul to go completely destroy the Amalekites.

### **3 ...totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.'"**

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<sup>1</sup> Gn.38:12. In some contexts the word can also mean "to be comforted" (Gn.24:67)

<sup>2</sup> Ex.13:17.

All the people, all the animals, and all the possessions. And Saul just flat out disobeys. He keeps Agag (their king) alive and lets the soldiers keep the best of the animals. What was supposed to be a holy war Saul turns into just another slaughter of one people by another to get all their stuff. He turns what was to be a perfect act of judgment by a holy God into an ugly act of aggression by Saul.

So Saul sinned, but the main burden of the writer in this chapter is not so much to establish that Saul sinned - everybody sins; even people like David. The point the writer labors to make in this chapter is that Saul's repentance was really unrepentance.

## **2. Refusal to admit sin**

To begin with, Saul had deceived himself into thinking it was not even sin. It is like pulling teeth for Samuel to even get Saul to acknowledge that he had sinned at all. Samuel goes to rebuke him, cannot find him at first because Saul is off building a monument to himself. (Not exactly the action of a repentant sinner!) And when Samuel does finally catch up to him...

**13 When Samuel reached him, Saul said, "The LORD bless you! I have carried out the LORD's instructions."<sup>3</sup>**

You know you are dealing with someone who is fighting a guilty conscience when you go to see someone and he is defending himself before you even say a word. All you do is say, "Hello" and they say, "I *have too* obeyed God!!!"

**Pr.28:1 The wicked man flees though no one pursues**

That is a sign of a guilty conscience.

**<sup>14</sup> But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?"**

Saul says, "Oh that. Well..." and then he commences with his three excuses.

**<sup>15</sup> Saul answered, "The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites..."**

I am not at fault because it was the soldiers who did it, not me.

**...they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the LORD your God,**

Keeping the king and the good animals alive was okay because he planned on offering some of them as sacrifices to God. Again, it is obvious this is a man fighting against his conscience. If what he did was okay because he was going to honor the Lord with the sacrifices – it is such a noble, Godly action, why pass responsibility off to the soldiers? Then he comes up with a third justification.

**but we totally destroyed the rest."**

Everything he did not want to keep he went ahead and utterly destroyed. That is kind of like what God commanded. (Sometimes a thief thinks he is a good guy because of all the things he did not steal. Saul thinks he deserves some credit for a partial carrying out of God's Word.)

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<sup>3</sup> Notice the exact wording God uses: "[Saul] has not carried out my instructions." (KUM DAVAR). Saul uses the exact same words in verse 13. God tells Samuel, "God see Saul. He hasn't carried out My instructions." And when Saul sees Samuel the first words out of his mouth are, "Hey, I followed God's instructions."

But again, if Saul really believes that constituted obedience to God's command, why does he need the other two excuses? The piling up of different excuses shows his conscience is not clear. Each one of these excuses shows that deep down he knows the other two are not valid. People who are self-deceived are willfully self-deceived. Deep down they know the truth. Any time you are self-deceived, if you are willing to see the truth you can see it.

So after the third lame excuse Samuel cannot stand it anymore.

**<sup>16</sup> "Stop!" Samuel said to Saul. "Let me tell you what the LORD said to me last night."**

And in verse 18 Samuel goes on to repeat the command God had given. Samuel makes it as clear as day: "God said to do X, and you did non-X. That is disobedience."

**<sup>18</sup> he sent you on a mission, saying, 'Go and completely destroy those wicked people, the Amalekites; make war on them until you have wiped them out.' <sup>19</sup> Why did you not obey the LORD? Why did you pounce on the plunder and do evil in the eyes of the LORD?"**

**<sup>20</sup> "But I did obey the LORD," Saul said.**

... and he goes on to repeat those same three excuses. And the one he is leaning on the most seems to be that second one – about the sacrifice.

### **3. Attempt to make up for his sin**

Saul thinks he can make up for his sin through sacrifice. His attitude was, *Instead of repenting of my sin and forsaking it, I will just make up for it through sacrifice.* He was like those people who live however they want and then just come to confession and do penance, or they live like they want and then try to make up for their sin by doing a lot of good works, reading their Bible, coming to church, giving to the poor, so any time their conscience accuses them they just point to all their good works or religious commitments. People like this are the types that go out and find a church where the preaching makes them feel good about themselves even though their lives are not devoted to the Lord. They go from place to place until they can find a pastor who will sooth their nagging conscience and make them feel like they are OK with God.

Samuel rebukes that kind of approach for the wickedness that it is.

**<sup>22</sup> But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. <sup>23</sup> For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king."**

He compares it to idolatry or occultist practices of divination. (And you know that got Saul's attention, because he put people to death for that. 1 Sam.28:9) Making adjustments to God's Word to accommodate behavior you do not want to change amounts to the same thing as idolatry and divination because whether you worship an idol or consult a demon, or just follow your own wisdom and fulfill your own will, either way you are putting some other authority above God. Idolatry is just as wicked if the false god is a statue or if it is yourself.

You can never do anything to make up for your sin. When you sin against God that puts you in debt to God.<sup>4</sup> And when you give something to God or serve Him or do some righteous thing, that puts you

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<sup>4</sup> What Samuel is saying here was revolutionary for that culture. The idea that there was any significant distinction between obedience and sacrifice would have been a foreign concept for people in the ancient near east. If a god told his people to attack another people, it was for the purpose of supplying his temple with the booty from the victory. Sacrifices were thought of as ways to supply the gods with food and other things. So the prevailing idea was that you are enriching the god when you offer a sacrifice. And that seemed to be Saul's perspective. How

even further in debt to God, because you have to borrow grace from Him to do it. So there is no way you can make up for anything. And attempting to do so blasphemes God and belittles Jesus Christ and His work on the cross.

So Saul's denial and rationalization did not fly, so he tried making up for his sin through religion, and that did not fly either. So in verse 24 he tries a third tactic.

#### **4. Repentanceless confession of sin**

**<sup>24</sup> Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned. I violated the LORD's command and your instructions. I was afraid of the people and so I gave in to them. <sup>25</sup> Now I beg you, forgive my sin and come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD."**

That sounds pretty good, doesn't it? He does not blame anyone else, he admits his sin, and his motive is to seek to worship God. It does sound good. Too bad it is not genuine. Samuel does not fall for it, and for good reason – just a couple verses later we see the real motive.

**<sup>30</sup> Saul replied, "I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel"**

When Saul said, "I want to worship the LORD" what he meant was he wanted to go through the external ritual with Samuel at his side so he could win back the honor that he once had in the eyes of the people. If his motive were simply to seek to be reconciled to God, he could have done that in the privacy of his own heart. But he does not seem to care about reconciliation with God - probably because he knows that would mean giving up his sin. And that is one thing he is not willing to do. Notice, after all this apparent contrition and repentance in chapter 15 he never does obey God. He does not destroy all those animals, and he does not kill Agag. He is doing everything he can to get out of the punishment without giving up his sin. He likes being the final editor of God's Word in his life, and he is not willing to give that up and just accept God's Word in the form it comes. So he tries to get Samuel to come with him so he will not be humiliated in front of the elders.

**<sup>26</sup> But Samuel said to him, "I will not go back with you. You have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you as king over Israel!" <sup>27</sup> As Samuel turned to leave, Saul caught hold of the hem of his robe, and it tore.**

This is not a small matter for Saul. When a person rejects the will of God like Saul did, that does not mean they want nothing to do with God. They do not want to give their whole heart to God. They do not want to give up certain things that are precious to them. (In Saul's case it was the freedom to adjust God's Word to his own human wisdom. For other people it is things like entertainment, or various indulgences of the flesh, or certain friends – a boyfriend, or a certain crowd, maybe a political ideology, or a hobby, or the respect of the world - something they regard as a great treasure that they are not willing to give up.) However, they still want some connection with God. They still want God's blessing and God's favor, and they want to be Christians and to be part of the Church. They want to go to heaven and to be thought of as righteous and godly. They really, really want God's stamp of approval on their lives. If you tell them, "No – either accept all of God's Word or you can have none of His

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could Yahweh possibly be upset with me when I'm giving Him something of value? People think like that today too. They think that when they serve God they are giving God something of value – enriching Him. But when we give to God we are not enriching Him; we are borrowing from Him. We are like two-year-olds who give a gift to their parents. The parents actually have to be the ones to buy their own gift from the store so the 2 year old can have the joy of giving it. We do not have anything to offer God except that which God supplies. So the more we give to God, and the more we serve Him, and the more we do things for Him, the further in debt we are to Him.

favor, they will be like Saul, desperately clinging to whatever aspect of Christianity they want to hold on to.

But like the fabric of Samuel's robe, it will tear off in their hands, and they will be left to themselves.

**<sup>28</sup> Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to one of your neighbors-- to one better than you. <sup>29</sup> He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind." <sup>30</sup> Saul replied, "I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel; come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD your God."**

Three times in this chapter Saul refers to God, and all three times he is speaking to Samuel and says, "The LORD your God." (verses 15,21,30) He is so estranged from God that he refers to Him as Samuel's God (instead of our God or my God).

**<sup>31</sup> So Samuel went back with Saul**

At first it looks here like Samuel is falling for Saul's bogus repentance. In the next verse (v.32) we see that he did not fall for anything. He is not coming back with Saul so that Saul can be honored – he is coming back to take care of the business that Saul left undone. The old prophet takes a sword and kills Agag. And after that, instead of going with Saul or staying with him he leaves him for good.

**<sup>35</sup> Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him. And the LORD was grieved (NACHAM) that he had made Saul king over Israel.**

And so here we are with this difficulty with this word NACHAM. So how are we going to reconcile that and verse 11 with verse 29?

## The Unchangeable Dynamic God

### Obviously not a contradiction – intentional

First of all, even if you did not believe in the inspiration of Scripture, and you thought 1 Samuel was just a fallible, human book with lots of mistakes, even then it would be quite a stretch to imagine the writer could be so absent minded as to make a strong statement about God doing something, then a few verses later make a big point about the fact that God never does that thing, then draw the conclusion six verses later that God did indeed do that thing. A person with an IQ that low could not have written the rest of this book.

The writer of 1 Samuel is obviously making a purposeful attempt to draw our attention to the fact that there is one sense in which the word NACHAM does not describe God, and another sense in which it does.

Suppose a person were offered an alcoholic drink and said, "No thanks, I don't drink. But I would like a drink of water or soda if you have it." We would not take the statements, "I don't drink" and "I would like a drink of water" to be a contradiction. It is simply two different uses of the word "drink."

And if we pay attention to the context and discover in which sense NACHAM does describe God and which sense it does not, we will learn some very thrilling truths about the nature of God and what it means to interact with Him. So let's start with verse 29. In what sense does the word NACHAM not describe God?

### God is Unchangeable

## **Tied to God's (self-existent) eternity**

**29 He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind."**

God is called here the "glory" (NETSACH) of Israel. This is not the normal word for "glory," and "glory" is probably not the best translation. The most common meaning of this word is *eternal*. It is a word that points to the splendor, supremacy and preeminence that are God's because of His eternity. The fact that He is eternal places Him in a position of reigning gloriously supreme over all. So the verse is saying that the God who is eternal, and who is therefore splendorous and preeminent, does not lie or change His mind.

And in all this, God is contrasted with man. God is everlasting and constant in a way that makes Him supreme and splendorous, and that separates Him from man, who, in contrast to God, lies and changes his mind. At first that's a little hard to understand because men and women live forever. You and I have eternal life, right? And yet the fact that you and I will live eternally does not prevent us from lying or changing. So in what way does God's everlastingness make Him so unlike man when it comes to lying and changing? How is it that God's eternity keeps Him from lying and changing, and our eternity does not keep us from lying or changing?

The answer is God's everlastingness is of a completely different kind than our everlastingness. Ours is an existence of eternal dependence. God is eternally self-existent. My existence comes from another source. God is the only thing there is whose existence comes from Himself – not from any other source. My existence and life derives from God's, so that if not for Him, I would not be able to exist. But His existence derives from no one. He alone possesses the power to exist in and of Himself. He can cause Himself to continue to exist without any help. I cannot.

And that is why we can change and God cannot. Our existence is not ultimate, and so we are capable of getting better or worse. God is not. There is no better state for God to change into, because He is already perfect. And since He is perfect, for Him to change for the worse is simply a misuse of language – nonsense (like speaking of a square circle or a married bachelor). So God cannot change for the better or for the worse.

### ***Why does God's nature prevent Him from forgiving Saul here?***

Now, let's think through why that is significant in this context. For a while this really had me stumped. Because the context is Saul requesting forgiveness. He is asking for God to reverse His decision about the punishment. God said the kingdom would be ripped away from Saul, but Saul wants to continue to be honored in that role before the elders. And Samuel responds by saying that cannot happen because of God's unchangeable nature.

And so the question that brought up in my mind was this: If God cannot commute Saul's sentence and overlook the offence and cancel the judgment that He had announced because of His eternal nature, then why is it that God is so frequently willing to forgive in other contexts? God said to the people of Nineveh, "40 days and you will be destroyed." And they repented, and God reversed His decision and had mercy on them and they were not destroyed. His eternity and unchangeable nature did not prevent Him from changing course on that judgment. God's eternity and unchangeable nature did not prevent Him from forgiving my sins. So why does Samuel point to the eternity of God's nature as the reason why God will not forgive Saul?

As I kept re-reading the chapter and meditating on the context, I finally saw that the answer to that question was right there staring me in the face. And it is a very helpful and profound truth.

## ***Because Saul was unrepentant***

Here it is: If it is possible for God to reverse His decision to punish a person and forgive in some cases, but in the case of Saul that was not possible because of God's eternal nature, then it must be that the particular kind of forgiveness Saul was requesting would have required a change in God's nature. What Samuel is saying is, "Saul, God cannot grant the kind of forgiveness you are requesting because in order to do so He would have to change His nature." So what was it about the kind of repentance Saul was requesting that would have required a change in God's nature?

Saul was unrepentant. He was asking for forgiveness apart from repentance. And for God to forgive an unrepentant sinner would require that God change His nature. When someone repents and turns back to God, God can forgive that person in a way that is perfectly consistent with His nature – He does not have to change who He is. He remains holy because through repentance that sin is actually done away with. The sin is done away with because it is covered by the means God has provided for our sin to be atoned for. But when someone sins and then seeks forgiveness *apart from repentance*, in order to forgive *that* sin and restore intimacy with an unrepentant person – that would require God to change His very nature. The sin would not be done away with, and so to forgive it God would have to be transformed into a god who is not holy, and who is pleased to coexist with sin in a personal relationship.

God has promised not to forgive unrepentant sinners. And so if God did forgive an unrepentant sinner, it would require unfaithfulness on God's part. He would have to deny His own nature.

### **Ro.3:3-4 What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness?**

God has made promises to Israel, and so someone might argue that if God sends an unbelieving Jew to hell He is not being faithful.

**<sup>4</sup> Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar. As it is written: "So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge."**

Paul argues that it is God's very faithfulness that *requires* Him to send any unbeliever to hell – Jew or Gentile. God's refusal to forgive unrepentant sinners is an expression of His faithfulness to His own nature. And since God's nature is absolutely unchanging and immutable, in order for God to remain faithful to Himself, and not deny or disown His own nature, He must *not* forgive the unrepentant sinner.

### **2 Tim.2:12-13 if we endure, we will also reign with him. If we disown him, he will also disown us;**

Why? Why can't He forgive us even while we are disowning Him? Paul explains:

**<sup>13</sup> if we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.**

He has promised to disown anyone who disowns Him (Matthew 10:33), and so to fail to do so would be to be unfaithful to His own promise. It would be a denial of His own nature. God cannot disown His own nature, and so He must punish the unrepentant sinner.

And we know from Peter's example that this speaks only about *unrepentant* disowning. Peter disowned Jesus three times, but he repented and so his sin was wiped away and God could forgive Him without disowning Himself or being unfaithful to His promise to judge unrepentant sinners.

## **God is Dynamic**

So all that explains what verse 29 means when it says God is never NACHAM. He does not ever change His nature like human beings do. He always acts perfectly consistently with His nature, which is

immutable and unchangeable because of the fact that God is eternally self-existent. So that takes care of the sense in which NACHAM does *not* describe God. Now what about verses 11 and 35? In what sense is it that NACHAM *does* accurately describe God?

### ***God grieves over past decisions***

Let's look back at verse 11.

#### **<sup>11</sup> I am grieved that I have made Saul king**

First of all, I think the NIV gets the translation exactly right. The word NACHAM here means “grieve” not “change my mind.” We know that because of the way this same, unique grammatical structure is used in a very similar context in Genesis 6:6-7, where the meaning is clearly grief, not the changing of God's mind.<sup>5</sup> So God was emotionally grieved over His decision to make Saul king.

So there is no contradiction at all in these verses. It is not a contradiction to say that on the one hand God's nature never changes and He never forgives unrepentant sinners, and on the other hand He does experience emotional pain over His past actions. There is no contradiction.

But there is a paradox. The emotions of God are an area of mystery that is very difficult to fully grasp. How can an eternal God have changing emotions? And if His decisions are perfectly good, why does He grieve over some of them later on?

### ***Not regret***

First of all, let's make sure we understand that it is possible to grieve over a decision you have made without regretting that decision. You can do something that you know is best, and when that decision causes you great pain you can grieve even though you still believe it was the best decision. God is not experiencing regret with Saul. But He is experiencing a painful emotion that is similar to the emotion we feel when we feel regret. God's decision to make Saul king was causing Him great pain and sadness.

So even though God is unchangeable in His nature, He is at the same time dynamic in His dealings with us.

### ***Human wisdom is wrong – God responds to events in time and has changing emotions***

Human wisdom might assume that since God is unchangeable in His nature, and no adjustments are ever made to His goodness or wisdom or power, and He is utterly reliable and will always respond in accordance with His perfect character; that must mean that God is in a static, fixed condition in relationship to the events of time. Human wisdom would conclude that God never responds to anything that happens because He is outside of time and unaffected by things that happen. If He is outside of time, then, human wisdom would assume, He cannot *respond* to anything that happens in time. Whatever takes place in time, God always knew those things were going to happen, and so you would think that when they do happen it would have no effect on Him. And human wisdom would also assume that if God is unchangeable, then He cannot have emotions in response to events. The ancient

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<sup>5</sup> The word NACHAM is not normally followed by the word “that” (Hebrew – כִּי). In this verse and in verse 35 it says God was grieved

that He made Saul king (NACHAM KI - נִחַמְתִּי כִּי). The only other place I could find that construction in reference to God was in Genesis 6:6,7. There it says that God grieved that He had created man. Does that mean God had emotional pain over having created man, or that He changed His mind about having man on the earth altogether? Clearly it means the former, because the very next line is “**and His heart was filled with pain.**” If God had changed His mind about having mankind on the earth He wouldn't have preserved Noah. So that same construction in a very similar context clearly has the sense of emotional grieving, not the sense of changing His mind.

Greek Philosophers taught that the gods were *apathia* – without emotion. They figured the gods could not possibly have emotion, otherwise they would be changeable.

But all that human wisdom is false. Scripture is as clear as could be that God does respond to things that happen in time, and He does experience dynamic, changing emotions in response to events. When Solomon could have asked God for anything and he asked for wisdom to rule...

**1 Ki.3:10 The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this.**

**1 Ki.11:9 The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel**

So back in chapter three, even though God was fully aware of the fact that Solomon would later turn away from Him, still God was genuinely pleased and happy when Solomon had good desires early on. When God knows there will be some sin or some turning away from Him in the future, His sorrow and anger *wait* until that turning away actually takes place. So while God's plan and purpose and character and nature never change in any way, His emotions are dynamic and responsive to events as they unfold in time, so that Scripture can speak of some things causing Him to be pleased and others causing Him grief.

### ***God's immutability requires He change based on our repentance or non-repentance***

So is both unchangeable and dynamic! His nature never changes, yet He moves with us through time and an engaging, responsive way. The Bible does not present God as being only outside of time. The Bible presents a God who is eternal and self-existent, but who also, amazingly, *walks* with us. He moves through time with us. You do not walk with a stationary object.

And for that reason His immutability actually *requires* that He be changeable and dynamic in His response to us based on our repentance or unrepentance. When I tune my trumpet to a piano I press the sustain pedal on the piano and then play a C on my trumpet toward the piano. That causes the "C" string on the piano to vibrate, so that whatever I play into the piano I get back. The sound from my trumpet "strikes a chord" in the piano and brings about a response in kind. The piano always has 88 keys, but when I approach the piano with my trumpet, I get back from it the notes I play. God always has all His attributes, but you experience the ones that are fitting given the notes your heart is playing toward God.

**2 Sam.22:26-27 To the faithful you show yourself faithful, to the blameless you show yourself blameless, <sup>27</sup> to the pure you show yourself pure, but to the crooked you show yourself shrewd.**

He is the eternal, immutable, unchangeable God; but because of this attribute He can be experienced in very different ways in response to what various people do or don't do. It is the fact that the piano does not change that different notes resound from different notes.

### ***Even dynamic in His actions***

In fact, God is not only dynamic and responsive with regard to His emotions; He even portrays Himself as being dynamic and responsive with regard to His actions. God's regret or sorrow over Saul was not only emotion but also included the action of removing Saul's kingship. Because of what Saul did, God rejected him. God interacts with human beings. There are so many "if you's" in His Word. "If you obey this will happen. If you disobey that will happen." There are some great works God will do only on the condition that we take action by faith, and He will actually allow them to go undone if we

do not take action (or if we take action apart from faith). He has actually placed in our hands the keys to marvelous and horrible things.

So let's close by giving a little thought to how we can take delight in this attribute of God.

## **How to take delight in immutability**

First, how can we learn to delight in His immutability? How do I get so that truth delights my heart? Is there something in the text to show me how? Yes. God's immutability contrasted with man's deceitfulness and unreliability. The problem with people is they change.

If I learn some way that I can serve my wife and bring joy to her heart, she can absolutely rely on me to do that... until I forget about it. Or until I wake up one day in a bad mood, or get distracted with something else. When you experience pain because of human changeability, use that to teach your soul how wonderful God's immutability is.

I never knew how precious truthful speaking really is until a few years ago when I was lied about publicly. The pain of being lied about was far greater than I ever thought it could be. And when I went through that, the more I experienced the damage that was done through unfaithful speech and actions, the more it made me love God's faithfulness. Human unreliability helps us understand what is so wonderful about God's reliability.

Leaning on something that I expect will hold my weight but that breaks, relying on something that turns out to be unreliable. Investments that seem great and turn out to be a scam, people who at one time are close, trusted friends but then turn around and use that which was shared in confidence maliciously against you, insurance companies who collect premiums for years but then find a way not to pay what should be a legitimate claim, auto mechanics who do expensive procedures when they are not necessary, Bible teachers who teach error because they are too lazy to check their sources; all those things make us angry because there is a deep longing in the soul to experience faithfulness and trustworthiness and reliability. Make that longing a longing for God.

## **How to take delight in God's responsiveness and changeable emotions**

So that is one way to take delight in God's immutability. What about the other side? What is it that is so wonderful about God's dynamic, changing emotions that can delight our hearts in Him?

Well, for one thing it is wonderful because through some incomprehensible miracle God is not displeased today over the sins I am going to commit tomorrow. This is something that is incomprehensible to me, and *exceedingly* wonderful. I cannot imagine knowing someone is going to do something bad in the future and somehow not letting that touch my emotions in the present. But that is exactly what God does for us! He allows us to do something that brings Him pleasure right now, even if He knows that in two hours we will be doing something that deeply grieves Him.

Imagine how horrible it would be if God did not do this. What if all your future sins and their consequence with regard to your closeness and intimacy with God were allowed to invade the present? What if the grief of future failures were allowed to break into your most precious times with God now? If God took all the sorrow that my sin would ever cause Him, and all the pleasure my trust in Him would ever bring and lumped it all together into one, constant, unchanging disposition, then I would suffer His displeasure for my future sins every moment of my life, and I would be unable to do anything to bring about any pleasure in His heart that is any different from any other time. Relating to Him then would not be like relating to a person. If God did not respond to anything there could be no personal interaction.

## ***We can please him***

But there is. We can do things to please Him and we can do things that grieve Him.

**2 Cor.5:9 So we make it our goal to please him**

**Eph.4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God**

Those verses would be meaningless if God's emotions were static and unresponsive to anything that we do.

It is an amazing thing that we can please God. And it is also a wonderful thing that we can grieve God. The possibility of bringing grief to the heart of God is a powerful motivator that helps us resist the impulses of the flesh. Saul cared only about God's actions toward him. But the psalmists continually cry out for God to feel a certain way toward them.

**Psalm 90:13 Have compassion on your servants.**

**Psalm 119:77 Let your compassion come to me that I may live**

**2 Corinthians 5:9 So we make it our goal to please him**

When you love someone nothing matters more to you than how they feel about you.

Let's rejoice in our unchanging dynamic God! We can fully trust Him because He is unchanging, and at the same time we can also interact with Him because He is dynamic. We can count on Him because He is immutable, and at the same time seek His favor in a greater way than we already have it because He is dynamic. He never changes, yet He walks with us through time. Let us take delight in walking with Him through this coming week. When we sin and experience God's displeasure let us never seek a change in God's nature by trying to get blessing from God without full repentance. But let us seek hard after a change in God's emotions – desiring nothing more than restored closeness with Him.

**Benediction: Mic.6:7-8 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 8 He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.**

# The Dynamic Unchanging God

## 1 Samuel 15 Day 1

**1 Samuel 15:29 He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind.**

The Lord is the “glory” (NETSACH) of Israel. This is not the normal word for “glory.” The most common meaning of this word is *eternity*. When used of God it seems to carry the idea especially of the splendor, supremacy and preeminence that He possesses in His eternity. The fact that He is eternal places Him in a position of reigning gloriously supreme over all. The eternal, splendorous, preeminent God of Israel does not lie or change His mind.

So God is the splendorous, preeminent, Eternal One of Israel. He is everlasting and constant in a way that makes Him supreme and splendorous. And this separates Him from man, who, in contrast to God, does lie and change his mind. So in what way is God everlasting that makes Him so unlike man when it comes to lying and changing?

I will exist forever, but that does not make me supreme or splendorous or unchangeable. God’s everlastingness is of a completely different kind than mine. Mine is an existence of eternal dependence – a derived existence. God is self-existent. My existence and life derives from His, so that if not for Him, I would not be able to exist. But His existence derives from no one. He alone possesses the power to exist in and of Himself.

One of the differences, then, between man’s existence and God’s existence is we change and He does not. Man is capable of getting better or worse. God is not, since He is the standard of perfect goodness. There is no better state for God to change into. And for God to change for the worse is simply a misuse of language – nonsense (like speaking of a square circle or a married bachelor).

*Good morning Dear Father,*

*Open my eyes this week to see what is so wonderful about Your eternity and self-existence. Anything that is true about You, if the eyes of my heart were opened to really see it, would thrill my soul. My soul right now, dear God, is cold and mostly unmoved by thinking about Your eternity. Incline my heart, dear Father, so that it rejoices and delights in this truth as my eyes are opened to it. Show me what the significance is, and how I can experience and enjoy this attribute throughout the day, that I might have greater fellowship and nearness to You this week. In my head I know that it is more wonderful to be near the glorious eternal One than to experience even the greatest pleasure on earth without nearness to the glorious, eternal One. But while I know that in my head, my soul doesn’t appreciate the truth of it. The appeal isn’t clear to me yet. Oh God, I want to glorify You by strongly desiring and greatly enjoying and being utterly satisfied by this aspect of Your nature. Glorify Yourself by granting this prayer, dear God.*

**Psalm 33:4 4 he is faithful in all he does.**

Your actions are always faithful. Nothing you do ever contradicts anything You have done before. Your actions are always in perfect harmony with Your words. You are utterly predictable in that You never do anything that differs from what You have revealed in Your Word. And You

are utterly unpredictable in that Your mind and will are so infinitely beyond what the greatest human mind and the collective wisdom of all humanity can conceive.

Until I was lied about egregiously I never knew how precious truthful speaking really is. The pain of being lied about was far greater than I ever thought it could be. I don't know why that is. But I do see how much damage was done through unfaithful speech and actions.

And unreliability helps me understand what is so wonderful about Your reliability. Leaning on something that I expect will hold my weight but that breaks – relying on something that turns out to be unreliable, creates problems ranging from mild pain to utter disaster.

Investments that portray themselves as reliable and safe, and then turn out to be scams so the investor loses all his money

People who pretend to be friends who can be trusted with anything but then turn around and use that which was shared in confidence maliciously against you

Insurance companies who collect premiums for years but then find a way not to pay what should be a legitimate claim

Auto mechanics who do expensive procedures when they are not necessary

Bible teachers who teach error because they are too lazy to check their sources

*Dear Lord, all these things make me angry because there is a deep longing in my soul to experience faithfulness and trustworthiness and reliability. Father, teach me how to make that longing a longing for You, and to know the experience of having it satisfied day by day as I make myself aware of Your faithfulness that I might learn to enjoy it.*

*Any time I ever experience any problem due to lack of reliability let that cause me to take all the more delight in a God who is utterly faithful.*

*When I see the ugliness of deceit or unreliability it shows me the beauty and preciousness of truth and faithfulness.*

*Let me see Your truthfulness and faithfulness wherever I look today. Let me see it in gravity and the laws of physics and the reliable way that You have designed the creation. Let me see it in Your dealings with Your servant and with other people. Let me see it in Your Word, as I review my memory verses.*

*Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father. There is no shadow of turning with Thee. Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not. As Thou has been Thou forever wilt be! Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed Thy hand hast provided. Great is Thy faithfulness Lord unto me.*

*Summer and winter and springtime and harvest, sun moon and stars in their courses above join with all nature in manifold witness to Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.*

*Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth, Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide, strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow, blessings all mine with 10,000 beside!*

**Attribute to behold**, desire, experience & enjoy: Faithfulness

**Promise to trust**: I can always fully rely on Him

**What will result if I experience this attribute today**: Peace and calmness, Rest and refreshment, like water to a tree, Confidence, courage, A sense of being attended to and cared for, Hope and rest, Strength

# The Unchanging Dynamic God

## 1 Samuel 15 Day 2

**1 Samuel 15:11** "I am grieved (NACHAM) that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions." Samuel was troubled, and he cried out to the LORD all that night.

**29** He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or NACHAM; for he is not a man, that he should NACHAM.

**35** Until the day Samuel died, he did not go to see Saul again, though Samuel mourned for him. And the LORD was NACHAM that he had made Saul king over Israel.

Obviously the word “NACHAM” is used in two different senses here. If a person were offered an alcoholic drink and said, “No thanks, I don’t drink. But I would like a drink of water or soda if you have it,” we would not take the statements, “I don’t drink” and “I would like a drink of water” to be a contradiction. It is simply two different uses of the word “drink.”

In verses 11 and 35 the word is used in an emotional way, to describe how God feels. The emotions of God are not the same as ours, but the closest we can come to understanding what God felt over Saul at that time is what we feel when we experience regret. It caused pain and sadness in the heart of God, and He communicated that to us through this word.

In verse 29 the word is used in the sense of changing and being unreliable, like a deceitful, changeable man.

So there is no contradiction. However there is a paradox. God is completely unchangeable in His nature, and at the same time dynamic in His dealings with His creation.

He is unchangeable in that His nature never changes. No adjustments are ever made to His goodness or wisdom or power. He is utterly reliable and will always respond in accordance with His perfect character. And human wisdom might assume that He is therefore in a static condition in relationship to the events of time. But that is not correct. Even though God was fully aware of everything that will happen in the life of someone like Saul, still Scripture portrays Him as being pleased and happy in times when a man trusts Him – even though He knows that in the future that man will turn from Him. And the sorrow of God seems to wait until that turning away actually takes place. So while God’s plan and purpose and character and nature never change in any way, His emotions are tied to events as they unfold in time, so that Scripture can speak of God actually *responding* to events – some things causing Him to be pleased and others causing Him grief.

*I don't fully understand this dear Lord, but I do love it that You are dynamic in some sense in Your dealings with me. If You took all the sorrow that my sin would ever cause You and all the pleasure all my trust in You would ever bring and put it all together into one, constant, unchanging disposition, then I would suffer Your displeasure for my future sins every moment of my life, and I would be unable to do anything to bring You pleasure. Relating to You would not be like relating to a person. I don't have any idea how You can do that, dear God. I can't imagine knowing someone is going to do something bad in the future and preventing that from touching my emotions in the present. But thank You, dear God, that You do that for me! You allow me to do something that brings you pleasure right now, even if You know that in 2 hours I will be doing something that deeply grieves You. Thank You, dear Father, that the disaster of all my future sin is not allowed to invade this day and time.*

*And I thank You also for the fact that I can not only do things to please You, but I can do things to grieve You. If Your level of grief with regard to me were always constant and unchangeable, the prospect of grieving You would never serve as a motive and deterrent from sin. It helps me to be able to think, "I want to resist this temptation because I so treasure closeness with my God that I can't bear the thought of grieving Him." Being able to think that way helps me in my walk with You, and if I didn't have that it would be that much more difficult for me to fight against the impulses of my flesh.*

*Open my eyes further to the beauty of this attribute as I walk through the day today, dear Lord, that by tonight I will have greater love in my heart for You because of a day spent experiencing and enjoying Your dynamic emotions.*

*And beyond all that dear God, You also describe Yourself as being dynamic not only in Your emotions but also in Your actions. Your regret about Saul was not only emotion but also included the action of removing his kingship. You interact in a dynamic way with Your creation. You tell us that You will do certain things on the condition that we do certain things. So many "if you's" in Your Word. Some great works You will do on the condition that I take action by, and You will actually allow to go undone if I do not (or if I take action apart from faith). You place into Your servant's hands the keys to marvelous and horrible things.*

*Again, I have no idea how You can do that and still maintain total sovereign control over all things. But I love it that You do. Thank You, dear God, that I can do things that matter one way or the other, and at the very same time be able to rest in full confidence in Your total control.*

**Attribute to behold, desire, experience & enjoy:** You are the God of dynamic emotions

**Promise to trust:** You will wait until sins/acts of faith actually happen before responding to them emotionally

**What will result if I experience this attribute today:** Motivation, , Fear of God, awe and reverence, Desire to obey

## **The Unchanging Dynamic God**

### **1 Samuel 14-15 Day 3**

**Psalm 18:32-36** It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect. <sup>33</sup> He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he enables me to stand on the heights. <sup>34</sup> He trains my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of bronze. <sup>35</sup> You give me your shield of victory, and your right hand sustains me; you stoop down to make me great. <sup>36</sup> You broaden the path beneath me, so that my ankles do not turn.

*Good morning, dear Father,*

*Sometimes I am weak and sometimes I am strong – the difference is Your grace. Sometimes my way is messed up, blocked, circuitous, a maze of dead ends, muddy, sandy, rough; other times it is smooth and wide and easy to find – the difference is your grace.*

*Sometimes my feet are like a drunk, or a toddler learning to walk; other times they are like a mountain goat on the rocks. As David ran across the rugged country in battle the difference between his foot slipping and falling and getting killed, or his foot not slipping and standing firm might be 1 centimeter. He doesn't have time to look down as he is fighting, but if his foot "just*

*happens” to land on a loose pebble rather than centimeter away where there is a course firm surface it could be the difference between enough or not enough traction to stand. Sometimes my foot slips. I try to say something to someone and I end up stepping on a pebble and slipping – the words that come out just aren’t quite right and I bumble my way into hurting someone or creating a costly misunderstanding. Other times my thoughts are clear, I can easily think of the right words, and the ones I pick “just happen” to be the right combination for that particular person at that particular moment. The difference is Your grace.*

*Sometimes the path seems to narrow beneath my feet, so that I keep stumbling and falling. Every few steps my foot steps off into selfishness or anger or lust or worry or pride. Other times the path widens under me and it seems easy to step in the right place. The difference is Your grace.*

*I am in a war that makes the ancient Israelite battles look like a thumb wrestling match. I must do battle with unseen, cosmic powers of evil in the heavenly realms. Sometimes I seem to suffer only defeat after defeat. Other times my arms can bend a bow of bronze. The difference is all Your special grace.*

*Dear Father, so often on days like this, when I’m behind in my work and I have a late start and I’m running out of time to get things done, and I have an extra appointment that will take a couple hours – it is so hard for me to pray because I’m distracted with thoughts about needing to get to work. I want to rush out of Your presence so I can get busy serving You and get my work done. Dear God, teach my heart that my only chance of getting my work done on time will be if I have strength and clarity of thought and things fall into place and I have discipline and stamina and am protected from unexpected interruptions, and my brain doesn’t start going off on one distraction after another. And every one of those things can be obtained only through special acts of Your grace. The path is going to have to be widened and smoothed. And the main way that will happen is through nearness to You. As I approach closer to Your presence all of those things come together. When I feel I need to cut short my seeking after You so I can get my work done I reveal a heart that things the source of my success in my work is me, not You. Forgive me, O my God.*

*Thank You, dear God, for all the promises implied in these verses. You will show Yourself gracious by doing all this for me. Lord, let the hope of these promises give Your servant strength and motivation and confidence in You. Let these promises protect Your servant from the lies of the enemy designed to penetrate my defenses.*

**Attribute to behold, desire, experience & enjoy:** You are the God who is the source of success

**Promise to trust:** You will widen my path and strengthen my arms and keep my foot from slipping.

**What will result if I experience this attribute today:** efficiency, success, greater delight in God.

## **The Dynamic Unchanging God**

### **1 Samuel 15 Day 4**

**Psalm 18:24-26** The LORD has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his sight. <sup>25</sup> To the loving you show yourself loving, to the blameless you show yourself blameless, <sup>26</sup> to the pure you show yourself pure, but to the crooked you show yourself shrewd.

When I tune my trumpet to a piano I press the sustain pedal on the piano and then play a C on my trumpet toward the piano. That causes the “C” string on the piano to vibrate, so that whatever I play into the piano I get back. The sound from my trumpet “strikes a chord” in the piano and brings about a response in kind.

The piano always has 88 keys – octaves far above and below the range possible on the trumpet. The capacity of the piano is never limited to the single note that I’m playing, and when a pianist uses a piano for its intended purpose many notes are sounded simultaneously in beautiful harmony. However when I approach the piano with my trumpet, I get back from it the notes I play.

*Glorious Father in heaven,*

*Hallowed be Your name! Show me, dear God, the gloriousness of this truth about You that my heart might hallow Your name in a greater way. Show me why it is so wonderful that You resound back to me the note that I play, that I might experience that great truth about You and shout for joy over it.*

*One reason Your virtue matching is wonderful is because it benefits me in the same way the piano does when I’m tuning my trumpet. You are the perfect pitch to which I can tune my life. When the note I play into the piano is sharp or flat, the piano sounds back the same note, except with the correct pitch, and I can then easily discern the difference and adjust toward the ideal. When I act in love or righteousness or purity toward You, You respond to me with true love, righteousness and purity that shows me how to correct what is sharp or flat.*

*Another reason it is wonderful is because I can pick the kind of grace I want from You. If I want gain – a good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running into my lap, I can be generous. If I want mercy, I can show mercy. But none of this happens if I have my back to You. To hear the note I play my trumpet into the piano, not away from it. If my sights are set on wealth rather than You, and I sound some kind of note of generosity to try to manipulate You into giving me my true love (wealth), that is not true generosity. It is nothing but manipulative greed, and in the face of that You will show Yourself hard against me. The note must be played toward You. If I would be generous, the generosity must be something that comes out of my heart in a movement toward You, not toward myself. I must be generous before You in a real way – for Your glory and for the sake of Your name, not for an ulterior motive.*

*The world imagines that since You are loving they will get soft treatment from You no matter what they do. You are loving and soft, but You are also severe and hard. Both Your kindness and Your severity are perfect and good, and we cannot play one note and expect a different one to resound. To the crooked You show Yourself shrewd. If my sinful heart devises a plan to get away with sin – to come up with a way in which I am OK with You even though my heart is cooling toward You, some rationalization for sin, or if I am deceitful and I get the better of people for my own gain – You will always get the better of me. You will always outwit me, outthink me, outmaneuver me. The more I become like Jacob the more Labens I will encounter.*

*But mostly the emphasis is on the positive – 3 examples of that to only one negative. And the most wonderful thing about it is the fact that what resounds from the strings of Your nature resounds with a million times the volume of the note I play. The piano is much softer than the trumpet, but when I play a note of righteousness toward You the resounding note is a thousand times louder and more beautiful than what I played. If I overlook a tiny offense against me You will overlook massive wickedness in my heart against You. If I give up a tiny fraction of my borrowed resources You will shower me with a good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over into the lap. If I show a little compassion to someone in trouble, You show deep compassion for me. But if I am deceitful or deal crookedly You will outwit me so extremely and thoroughly that my cleverness will be shown as the complete folly and stupidity that it is, like a two year old thinking he can outsmart his mother when his face is covered with crumbs and he hides the cookie behind his back and says, with his mouth full, “I’m not eating a cookie.”*

*You are the eternal, immutable, unchangeable God; but because of this attribute You can be experienced in very different ways in response to what various people do or don’t do. You can be both unchanging and reliable and dynamic in dealing with us. I can both count on You and interact with You! I can at once trust You and seek Your greater favor. And so I can experience variety in my interactions with*

*an unchanging God! It is the fact that the piano does not change that different notes resound from different notes.*

**Attribute to behold, desire, experience & enjoy:** You are the virtue-matching God

**Promise to trust:** You will resound with an infinitely greater, louder, more beautiful version of whatever note I play toward You

**What will result if I experience this attribute today:** Fear of God, awe, motivation

## The Dynamic Unchanging God

### 1 Samuel 15 Day 5

**Psalm 90:13-14 Relent, O LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants. <sup>14</sup> Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.**

Moses cries out for God to have compassion and to relent in His discipline. He was concerned not just with God's actions toward them but also how God felt emotionally. Moses asks that God allow His heart to be moved in a way that it has not yet been moved. It sounds like the relenting action that Moses desires from God will not occur until there is a feeling of compassion in the heart of God that has not yet occurred. As God moves with us through time there are some emotions that He will have that He does not now have in the way He will.

**Psalm 119:77 Let your compassion come to me that I may live, for your law is my delight.  
2 Corinthians 5:9 So we make it our goal to please him**

*Good morning, dear Lord God,*

*If I love You as Moses did, dear Lord, I will long not just for favorable actions from You, but for favorable emotions from You toward me. I will care not just about what You do for me, but also how You feel about me. It is a cold, distant relationship indeed when all a person really cares about is what he can get from the other person, and he has no concern about how that person feels toward him. Forgive me, dear God, for times when I fall into that kind of unloving manipulation – trying to get something from You by serving You or “keeping my nose clean.” There have been times, dear God, when the thought has occurred to me, in a moment of temptation, that You would be displeased with me if I gave in to the temptation, and I put that thought out of my head and went on with the sin. The thought of Your displeasure was not enough to make me stop. Oh dear Father, please forgive Your servant this wickedness! Teach me to love you such that the fear of Your displeasure grips my soul. May I long for Your compassion like the psalmist – as my very life.*

*I have thought so much recently about my feelings toward You – trying to learn to deepen my affections for You, to desire You more, to delight in You more, to fear You more, to love You more; but I really haven't thought that much about Your feelings toward me. I know in one sense they are constant, as ultimately Your delight in me is the very delight You take in Your own blessed Son, since I am in Him. And Oh what a wonderful grace that is dear God! That I can be in Christ, and therefore be the recipient of the greatest possible love, that which God the Father has for God the Son – what an unimaginable, glorious truth! It is beyond my comprehension. And yet it seems there is another sense in which Your feelings toward me change. You are never grieved over Your Son, but there are times when I can grieve You. And so I must make it my goal to please You (2 Cor.5:9).*

*The people I love bring me a great deal of delight. And I think the time when I am the most delighted by them is when I am able to do something that brings great delight to their hearts. If I can say something or do something that fills my kids with joy and happiness and laughter, and they are thrilled with me, that brings me great joy. If I can do something that brings tears of joy to my wife, oh how happy that makes me. So what greater joy could there be than to do something that would make You happy with me?*

*I realize this is a bit of a tenuous line of thinking. I don't want to fall into the error of thinking I can somehow earn Your favor through my own human strength, or that I can do something to deserve Your smile. I could no more deserve anything good from You than the man in Mt.18 could pay off his debt and then put the master in his debt. However, You have placed me into a position in which I can do things that please or displease You. Oh dear God, let both be powerful motivations in my life! Let the fear of Your displeasure grip me deep down in my soul. And let the desire for Your pleasure drive me to go to the kinds of extremes men will go when they desire something more than life itself.*

*Eric Liddell said You made him fast, and when he ran he could feel Your pleasure. Lord, I want to feel Your pleasure. Teach me to live a life controlled and driven by that desire. And Father, when You are pleased with me, teach me how to be aware and cognizant of it so that I may delight in it as I should. What does it mean exactly, dear God, for me to feel Your pleasure?*

**Attribute to behold, desire, experience & enjoy:** You are the God of dynamic emotions

**Promise to trust:** He will be pleased with me if I seek Him

**What will result if I experience this attribute today:** Intimacy and closeness with Him, joy