

Hednesford Pentecostal Church

The Character of God



Bible Version

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to assist in the meditation and study of the Godhead. It is extremely important that every Christian be engaged in the search for the knowledge of the Most High. We should be devoted to the person of God, dedicated to worshipping and enjoying fellowship with our Saviour.

Jer 9:23-24 Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; {24} But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgement, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.

Our security, strength and self-worth do not exist in job description, or what we have done, or what we own. These will add up to very little in eternity or are insignificant compared to the spiritual realm. Our security and worth should be in God. We are to understand and know Him. To understand means that we are required to use our mind. Meditation, knowledge, understanding and wisdom are all to do with consciousness of the mind. To know means to experience in personal communion, and this involves the heart and the soul. Also God is Spirit we are to worship Him in spirit and truth¹.

According to the above verses from Jeremiah, if we truly know God then we will understand and know God's love towards us, His righteousness, His correction and His judgement of rebellion. A search for the love of God will be fruitless unless it accompanies a search for righteousness.

2. THE REVELATION OF GOD

Unless God had revealed Himself to humankind we could know nothing of the divine attributes. But God has always sought to reveal Himself to man, whom He made in His image.

2.1. THE TESTIMONY OF CREATION

The first revelation that we have is that which is revealed in creation.

Psa 19:1-3. The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. {2} Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. {3} There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.

Rom 1:19-20. because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. {20} For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

We can see from these verses that the invisible attributes of God have always been manifested in His workmanship. Also we can see that our knowledge of the Godhead is limited to "what may be known". We may know what God has revealed but there are surely undisclosed attributes of the infinite Godhead which we cannot know. To the Cherubim and Seraphim there may be revealed attributes of God which we don't know in this life; just as they have not experienced the grace and mercy of God so freely given to us.

¹ John 4:23-24. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. {24} God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."



Jesus taught people to meditate on the natural world in order to learn about God's ways.

Luke 12:24. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds?

Luke 12:27. Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

There is great value in getting out of the town or city and retreating to the countryside or the mountains and allowing the created order to speak to us. Many have testified that upon receiving Christ their senses became more alert to God's handiwork in creation all around us. This is what George Wade Robinson wrote of in his hymn "Loved with Everlasting Love."

Heaven above is softer blue, earth around is sweeter green;
Something lives in every hue Christless eyes have never seen:
Birds with gladder songs o'erflow,
Flowers with deeper beauties shine,
Since I know, as now I now, I am His, and He is mine.

John the apostle wrote:

1 John 1:5. This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that **God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.**

Just as man was created in the image of God, so we can consider that light was made in the image of God. God is not light-like, God *is* light, and what we call light displays something of his nature. Light enables life; light sustains life; light illuminates and reveals; light dispels darkness. But only a small portion of light is visible to the human eye, the electromagnetic spectrum extends far beyond the frequencies of what is visible to us. To insects the world looks like a totally different place, because their eyes respond to a different frequency range. Similarly with regard to God "we know in part"².

2.2. THE TESTIMONY OF GOD'S WRITTEN WORD

The second revelation of the Godhead is given in Scripture, which is His Word. It gives a clear revelation of the character of the Godhead; enabling us through meditation to learn of Him, feed our spirits and renew our minds. The Psalms in particular describe the attributes of the Almighty, as many of these are meditations upon the Godhead or songs of worship and praise. The attributes of the Almighty are also portrayed in the testimonies of the saints in Scripture.

One way the Scripture teaches us about what God is like is by describing what He is *not* like, and indeed it is easier for our finite minds to consider what God is not. For instance, God has no beginning and no end, He undergoes no change, He cannot lie, He has no limitations and He needs no helper.

Isa 40:28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable.

² 1 Cor 13:12



Mal 3:6. For I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.

Luke 1:37. For with God nothing will be impossible."

The basis of this study is the revelation given us in Scripture.

2.3. THE TESTIMONY OF THE INCARNATE WORD

The third and clearest revelation of the divine attributes is the person of Jesus Christ.

Col 1:15. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

Jesus said that anyone who sees Him has seen the Father³. John said, "We beheld His glory"⁴.

Until a person accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour we can only know *about* God. But the life surrendered to the Lordship of Christ can personally experience God and can be said to know God.

John 14:20-23. "At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. {21} He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." {22} Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" {23} Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."

Jesus wants to reveal the Father and manifest Himself to us. To participate in this we must demonstrate love for the Godhead by obeying His commands.

3. KNOWING GOD

Throughout history God has sought fellowship with humankind, whom He created. This was not because of any need He has, since He is complete in Himself and needs no-one or nothing to meet any intrinsic need. It is because Father-like He pities His creation, and He chooses to do so.

Psa 103:13. As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him.

By His mercy and grace He calls men and women to know Him, believe on Him and understand Him.

Isa 43:10. "You are My witnesses," says the LORD, "and My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me."

The basis of this knowledge is to be experiential, that is, through an active relationship.

Dan 11:32. "...but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits."

John 17:3. "And this is eternal life, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

³ John 14:9. Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

⁴ John 1:14. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.



We are commanded not to make any graven image, particularly of the Almighty, since His perfection cannot be represented by the works of men or by the image of something in the heavens or on the earth⁵. Equally we must guard against forming a mental image of God which is based upon our own perceptions, experiences and emotions, and not upon the revelation contained in Scripture. He is not, as some imagine, an old man in the sky with a long white beard! It is crucial that we know and understand what God has said about Himself.

Psa 50:21. These things you have done, and I kept silent; **You thought that I was altogether like you**; but I will rebuke you, and set them in order before your eyes.

There is an inherent difficulty in using human language to describe the divine nature. Many of the words we would adequately use to describe someone else are deficient, inappropriate or even blasphemous when talking about God. Equally, we often use comparative language when describing someone else, but with whom can we compare God?

The study of God is not intended to solely accumulate facts about the attributes of the Godhead, but rather it is to affect our being and promote worship and service. To worship God in truth we must worship Him as He has revealed Himself, and not according to some emotional image which we may conjure up. Many people try and shape God to be what they want Him to be. They want a god who gives license to sin and allows them to indulge in various fancies; a god who makes no claim to time or possessions; a benevolent god who just wishes to love and bless people without making any demands for service. We cannot worship God in half-truths, but only the whole truth.

Mat 22:37-38 Jesus said to him, “ ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ {38} This is the first and great commandment.”

The love of God is to grow in us until it affects our whole being: heart, soul and mind. The *heart* is the core of our being; our spirit and our will. The love of God is not to be superficial, but is to grip the very centre of our being, affecting our dreams, our ambitions, our purpose and our fulfilment. Like the psalmist we are to say, "All my streams are in You"⁶.

The *soul* is the seat of our emotions, and the love of God is to be felt in our lives. It is to rejuvenate and refresh our emotions. When life and difficulties wear us down and leave us emotionally drained, then loving and worshipping God can revitalise and refresh us.

But we are also called to love God with our *mind*. That is our reason, our intellect and our understanding. Scripture holds up spiritual wisdom and understanding as a desirable and necessary aspect of the spiritual life. In order to love God with our mind we need to comprehend God with our mind, that is, knowing what He has said about Himself and having a scriptural view of the Godhead.

Some who claim to love God and have a close relationship with Him "forsake the gathering together"⁷ in direct contradiction to the command of the New Testament. Jesus said that it is

⁵ Exo 20:4-6. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; {5} you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, {6} but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

⁶ Psalm 87:7

⁷ Heb 10:25. not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.



those who keep His commandments that love Him⁸. If we say we love Him and willingly ignore His commandments, we deceive ourselves.

4. THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

Deut 6:4-5 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! {5} You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

Human language cannot fully express divine perfection, nor can human understanding truly grasp the divine character. We need to use various words to describe attributes of the Godhead and in doing so we separate out His characteristics. In reality, however, there are not different sides to His character; He is perfect and complete: One. This means that God is not complex but essentially simple. When we say that God is simple we mean that there is no conflict in the nature of God Unlike men He cannot be torn with divergent thoughts and desires

A. W. Tozer writes:

"The harmony of His being is the result not of a perfect balance of parts but of the absence of parts. Between His attributes no contradiction can exist. He need not suspend one to exercise another, for in Him all His attributes are one."⁹

When we talk about attributes of the Godhead we mean what can be correctly ascribed to Him, or whatever He has revealed about Himself as being true. We talk about there being multiple attributes of the Godhead, since it takes us numerous words and thoughts to describe what He has revealed about Himself. But what we call attributes are not descriptions of the way God acts, but rather of what He is - and He is One. Love is not what God does, God *is* love. God is not holy because of what God does or does not do. God *is* holy.

There is no disharmony between the divine attributes; no opposing motivations or desires. God never has to suspend one attribute to operate another; there is no tension, for instance, between divine justice and divine mercy, or between divine love and divine wrath. Some have suggested that the fall of man presented God with a problem, causing a conflict between His love and His holiness. But salvation through the cross was not the solution to a problem of God's, but rather to the need of fallen creation.

The essential oneness of God soon becomes apparent when we study the divine attributes. If God has power and knowledge then His infinity demands that He has *all* power and *all* knowledge. If God is self-existent then He must also be self-sufficient. If He is unchanging then He must also be true and faithful.

Tozer continues:

"He does not possess them as qualities; they are how God is as He reveals Himself to His creatures. All that God does agrees with all that God is, and being and doing are one in Him."¹⁰

We are exhorted to be like Him, and the fruit of the Spirit, as defined in Galatians, is Christ-likeness. We are to be imitators of Christ, and as such, He is to be our role model. He is to be

⁸ John 14:21

⁹ *The Knowledge of the Holy*: A. W. Tozer

¹⁰ *The Knowledge of the Holy*: A. W. Tozer



studied and experienced. We cannot achieve this high standard in our own strength or will power, but only by allowing Him to live His life through us.

Three statements of the Apostle John broadly summarise the nature of God: God is Spirit¹¹, God is light¹² and God is love¹³. The fact that God is *Spirit* means that He dwells in a realm into which, for the most part, we have little insight or experience. We are naked and open to Him, but we only see in part. The fact God is *light* means He is the source of life and energy. Light summarises the moral excellence and holiness of the Godhead, in whom there is no darkness. The fact that God is *love* is of great encouragement to all His creation, and this will be discussed fully later on.

Theologians classify God's attributes in two groups: incommunicable and communicable. The first group are those qualities which belong to God alone and separate the Creator from the creature. These include God's independence, His immutability (He never changes), His infinity (eternity and omnipresence) and His simplicity. The second group are those attributes which can, at least in a limited way, be found within human kind: those qualities which God gave us when He made us in His image, such as love, faithfulness and anger (wrath).

In describing God's attributes the Bible utilises *anthropomorphism*, that is, descriptions of God in language drawn from human life. God is said, for example, to have an arm, a hand, a finger, hearing and even smelling.

When the Scripture says that man was created in the image of God, we should realise that this is not the *exact* image of God but a vastly scaled-down reflection of His being.

Ezek 1:26-28. I then saw what looked like a throne made of sapphire and sitting on the throne was a figure in the shape of a human. {27} From the waist up, it was glowing like metal in a hot furnace, and from the waist down it looked like the flames of a fire. The figure was surrounded by a bright light, {28} as colorful as a rainbow that appears after a storm. I realized I was seeing the brightness of the LORD's glory! So I bowed with my face to the ground, and just then I heard a voice speaking to me.¹⁴

Ezekiel had to try and describe his indescribable vision of the Almighty using terms that would be familiar to his readers. It is here that human language and experience break down. He saw what looked something like a throne, but was so different from any throne he had seen that he could only say that it was the "likeness of a throne". Similarly, the appearance of the Almighty bore a vague resemblance to the form of a man, but was so unlike a man that Ezekiel could only say that it was the "appearance of a man".

5. THE INDEPENDENCE AND UNIQUENESS OF GOD

When talking about the independence of God theologians mean God's self-existence and self-sufficiency. When we consider human nature, "self" is often associated with negative and sinful traits like self-gratification, self-promotion, selfish ambition and self-centredness. Such human attitudes have self as the centre of attention in a way that expresses rebellion against the Lordship

¹¹ John 4:24. "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

¹² 1 John 1:5. This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

¹³ 1 John 4:7. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

¹⁴ *The Contemporary English*



of God. But when we talk about God's self we are referring to what He is, His essence and being, and there is nothing sinful and incorrect about that.

In considering the independence of God it is useful to consider the Bible's account of creation.

Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

God created time (the beginning), matter (the earth) and space (the heavens). But He was before all these, He exists outside these, and He is greater than these. He is outside time and unaffected by it. He is never hurried and never compelled by deadlines. He is Spirit, not consisting of created matter. He is outside space - even the heavens cannot contain Him.¹⁵

We picture God sitting on a throne surrounded by the angels in heaven. Although this is partly true, since this is how He is revealed in Revelation, this is not the whole truth but just another way He has chosen to reveal Himself. God is not just a figure in the heavens. He is greater than the heavens, greater than the earth, greater than the whole of creation, both the spiritual realm and the natural realm.

All things may be categorised into two groups: that which is God, and that which isn't God. That which is God is greater than that which isn't God. It is not possible for the Creator to be controlled, constrained or manipulated by His creation.

Exo 3:14. And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you."

The self-existence of God means that God has no origin. Everything else has an origin – a time and place when they began. To the human mind the idea of everything and everyone having a beginning and end is natural and comfortable. We are used to thinking about cause and effect, and about events happening sequentially in time. When we start to talk about God who has no beginning and no end, and who is outside time, our minds are uncomfortable with the grandeur of these concepts.

John 5:26. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself,

The self-sufficiency of God means that He is totally independent of anything or anyone else. God is what He is in Himself. He does not need air to breathe, space to exist in, people to relate to, angels to serve Him, or anything else. God has no necessary relationship to anything outside Himself. The whole of creation adds nothing to God, neither does it meet any need in God, since God needs nothing and is perfect and complete in Himself¹⁶. This may be a reproof to the proud heart of man, which thinks that God is enriched by our worship, or that the cause of God is dependent upon our labour.

God is unique in His self-sufficiency. Everything that is not God exists because God created it, and the continuation of the whole of creation is dependent upon the balance and provision within the created order.

¹⁵ 1 Kings 8:27. But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!

¹⁶ Acts 17:25. "Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.



God is solitary in His excellence. There is no-one or nothing like Him. His being is perfect and pure, and unchanging, needing no improvement and knowing no decay. In all of His attributes He is perfect, and the sum of perfection. None can match Him in any aspect of His character or ability. None can compare with Him; He is the Omnipresent, Omnipotent, and Only Wise God.

Ex 15:11. "Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

6. THE BEAUTY OF GOD

Songs 5:16. "His mouth is most sweet, yes He is altogether lovely."

All the attributes of the Godhead are fine, noble and beautiful, that is, He is overwhelmingly pleasing and desirable. His beauty consists of His simplicity and the purity of His person.

Psa 37:4. Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.

We can be delighted, overjoyed and satisfied in the person of our God.

There is nothing about Him which is less than desirable, nothing marred. On the contrary, everything that we can characterise about Him is perfect. His mercy is in perfect unity with His justice and holiness. He is not hard or unfeeling, bringing retribution at the earliest possible moment; but neither is He soft, allowing His law to be transgressed and His goodness to be mocked.

The beauty and wonder of creation, the vastness of the universe, the wonder of the stars, the magnificence of mountain ranges and the diversity of life forms all tell of the greater beauty and glory of the Designer and Creator.

Truly He is to be worshipped and adored. There is nothing in heaven or earth, nothing in this life or the next, which can compare with the beauty of God. Nothing or no-one is more desirable, attractive or satisfying.

Songs 5:10. My beloved is white and ruddy, chief among ten thousand.

Psa 45:2. You are fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured upon Your lips;

Psa 27:4. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.

When David wholeheartedly sought the beauty of the Lord, his heart was single and pure and he was walked in the way of life. When David allowed his heart to be deceived by the lesser beauty of Bathsheba his heart became deceitful, leading to wickedness, sin and death.

7. THE INFINITY OF GOD

The infinity of God is an attribute that is unique to Him. Nothing or nobody else can be described as truly infinite. God's infinity means that He is limitless; He knows no bounds and He is measureless. The whole of creation has limits, boundaries set by God in terms of time, space, power, authority and knowledge, but the Creator is not so constrained.

We are finite creatures and the thought of the infinite cannot be truly grasped by our finite minds. In our everyday language we describe very large or abundant things as infinite when they are not.



It is comforting to the saint to realise that the power and number of the enemies arrayed against the Church are numbered. There may be legions of demons, but there are only so many, and there is not one more. The devil may have great power, but there is a line at which his power runs out, and he is also restricted as to where and how he displays his power.

Our God, however, knows no such limit or restriction. His power is unlimited and He has all authority to use all His power wherever and whenever He chooses. The devil may be cunning but our God knows all things, has always known all things and will always know all things. Nothing can take the Almighty by surprise.

Rom 8:38-39. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, {39} nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We live in an age where sin abounds and the love of many grows cold. But all the sin and evil both of men and of demons is finite. There will come a time when the last sin is committed and the last wicked thought conceived. Weighed against the infinity of God's goodness, mercy and lovingkindness, they will be found to be insignificant.

Rom 5:20. Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,

The infinity of God comforts his saints in another way. Since God is infinite His attributes must also be infinite. So His love must be limitless, since God is love. His mercy, faithfulness and goodness are equally all limitless.

Jer 31:3. The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.

Eph 3:19. to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Psa 118:1-4. Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever. {2} Let Israel now say, "His mercy endures forever." {3} Let the house of Aaron now say, "His mercy endures forever." {4} Let those who fear the LORD now say, "His mercy endures forever."

Psa 52:1. Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man? The goodness of God endures continually.

Psa 100:5. For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations.

Psa 119:90. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you established the earth, and it abides.

Psa 147:5. Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite.

8. THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD

Mal 3:6. For I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.

Immutability is unique to the Godhead. He cannot change and never has changed. He has always been perfect, complete and whole. Therefore He can neither improve nor deteriorate. He does not grow old and He does not grow weary.



He has always been. For an eternity before He created anything He existed in the fellowship of the Trinity and in need of nothing.

Everything and everyone else knows change. Apart from God nothing is certain. Everything is subject to decay and corruption.

Isa 51:6. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look on the earth beneath. For the heavens will vanish away like smoke, the earth will grow old like a garment, and those who dwell in it will die in like manner; but My salvation will be forever, and My righteousness will not be abolished.

Psa 102:25-27. Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. {26} They will perish, but You will endure; yes, they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will change them, and they will be changed. {27} But You are the same, and Your years will have no end.

People change. Our bodies grow old and the years leave their mark on our faculties and strengths. Our characters are also subject to change. A person who is kind and open today can be bitter and resentful in years to come. A person who is spiritual today can be carnal in years to come. Circumstances, situations and experiences can fashion and re-fashion us. To maintain the health of our physical body and spiritual being requires deliberate discipline and care.

1 Cor 10:12. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

God's Spirit seeks to bring positive and enhancing changes in the lives of His saints.¹⁷

People are said to change with the times, but God does not and cannot. People are also inconsistent in their responses and dealings with each other. But God is unchanging in His ways and dealings with the all his creatures.

Num 23:19. God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

1 Sam 15:29. And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent.

James 1:17. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

We do not get a variety of reactions from God. He does not have moods. He is unaffected by tiredness or the weather; and he never gets out of bed from the wrong side.

As God cannot change in His being or essence, so He is immutable in His attributes and in His counsel. As such His covenants are immutable, although they may be conditional.

"The divine immutability, like the cloud which interposed between the Israelites and the Egyptian army, has a dark as well as a light side. It assures the execution of His threatening, as well as a performance of His promises; and destroys the hope which the guilty fondly cherish, that He will be all lenity to His frail and erring creatures, and that they will be much more lightly dealt with than the declarations of His own Word would lead us to expect. We oppose to these deceitful and presumptuous speculations

¹⁷ 2 Cor 3:18. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.



the solemn truth, that God is unchanging in veracity and purpose, in faithfulness and justice". - John Dick, 1850.

In other words God says what He means, and means what He says. His word can be relied upon, for it is sure and true.

Heb 6:17-18. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, {18} that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

Psa 119:89. Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.

Psa 33:9-11. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast. {10} The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect. {11} The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations.

9. THE OMNISCIENCE OF GOD

Psa 139:1-6. O LORD, You have searched me and known me. {2} You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. {3} You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. {4} For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether. {5} You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. {6} Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it.

God is omniscient, that is, He perfectly knows all things; absolutely everything. He knows all about Himself and He knows every deed, every word and even every thought of all His creatures. He is familiar with the life of every single creature, even the sparrows¹⁸. He knows each of us completely, including our motives, our intentions and the degree of truth behind all our words and actions. The very hairs on our head are numbered.¹⁹

Heb 4:13. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him of whom we must give account."

The future, even taking into account the actions of His rebellious, self-willed creatures, is as plain to God as the past. Nothing can take Him by surprise. There is nothing over which He is uncertain.

God's omniscience means that He has no need to learn. But it also means that He never has learned. He eternally omniscient, always perfectly knowing all things. He didn't have to study, search or consider, He simply knew.

Acts 15:18. Known to God from eternity are all His works.

¹⁸ Mat 10:29. Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will.

¹⁹ Mat 10:30.



Isa 40:13-14. Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD or as His counsellor has taught Him? { 14 } With whom did He take counsel and who instructed Him and taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge and showed Him the way of understanding?

How different God is from His creatures! Our minds work sequentially in time. We acquire knowledge little by little and develop our understanding line upon line. It is not possible for us to imagine how the mind of the Lord works outside time; such knowledge is too wonderful for us. All our sciences are attempts to observe and understand His workmanship; but He knows it all.

In Scripture we often find God asking questions, or being described as seeking or searching. So why does He who knows all things need to ask or search?

Gen 3:8-11. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. {9} Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" {10} So he said, "I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." {11} And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?"

Here we see the Lord asking three questions, the answers to which He already (and always) knew. God could have simply exposed Adam and told him everything he had done. But instead the questions invited Adam's confession and repentance.

So God never asks a question because He does not know the answer, but because He is instructing His creatures. He asks questions like a wise counsellor or parent.

Job 23:10. But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.

The omniscience of God should be of great comfort to His servants. Put simply, **GOD KNOWS**. When things go wrong: God knows. When we are misunderstood: God knows. When we feel alone or afraid: God knows. When we have failed and are broken: God knows.

This knowledge of God is not just a cold possession of facts. Not only does God know, He understands. And that brings warm comfort to His servants. He knows how we feel; He knows what we meant to do or what we meant to say and He understands.

Psa 103:13. As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him.

The knowledge of God cannot be divorced from His love, grace and mercy. He knows me and yet He still loves me. He knows me repeated failings, but He still shows me grace.

Although God always has known, we use language that describes God seeking and searching to remind ourselves that He is responding to that knowledge. Help appears when we need it; provision has been prepared and stored up in readiness.

2 Chr 16:9. For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him...



10. THE WISDOM OF GOD

Rom 11:33. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements and His ways past finding out!

Rom 16:27. to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.

As we have already seen, God is omniscient, knowing all things, but the church also describes Him as 'the only wise God'. To God belongs the perfection of wisdom. All wisdom is His.

Human wisdom could be defined as the skill or ability to utilise knowledge, but biblical wisdom is far more than the accumulation of knowledge or facts, and far more than cunning or skilfulness. Biblical wisdom is the power to devise perfect ends, the inclination to choose the best and highest goal and the choosing of the surest means of attaining it. Biblical wisdom has a strong moral connotation; it is pure, good and morally excellent.

God does everything in perfect wisdom. Therefore none of His acts can be improved upon and a better way could not be found. His finite creatures cannot improve on the workmanship of the infinitely wise God.

Isa 55:8-9. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. {9} "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

We may find some of the Almighty's works confusing. We may fail to recognise the worth of the direction He gives. But our hearts need to rest in who and what God is. Our sin-tainted senses may not recognise divine purpose, but faith says that even if people and the devil mean it for evil, God means it for good. The combined worldly and demonic wisdom cannot thwart the wisdom from above.

Gen 50:20. But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

Even in darkness and confusion faith states:

Rom 8:28. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Throughout Scripture God's wisdom is mentioned with His power because God's omniscience governs His omnipotence—infinite power is ruled by infinite wisdom. Imagine the effect of having infinite power without the wisdom to apply and direct it! He who, through infinite wisdom, plans and determines the best goal and the best route to achieving that goal, has the infinite power to ensure its accomplishment.

Job 9:4. God is wise in heart and mighty in strength. Who has hardened himself against Him and prospered?

No wisdom can prevail against the only wise God. We can have wisdom to govern ourselves or even others, but God is above our wisdom. He cannot be tricked or manipulated to do anything He does not want; even by a Christian's prayer of faith!

How comforting to know that the Sovereign, Almighty God, who governs everything that befalls us in life, is not only all-loving but is also the perfection of wisdom. When circumstances make us ask why and cause us to reel with shock and pain, let us be comforted that God in His wisdom planned this for our best. As Tozer says:



"With the goodness of God to desire our highest welfare, the wisdom of God to plan it, and the power of God to achieve it, what do we lack? Surely we are the most favoured of all creatures."

- Job 12:13. With Him are wisdom and strength, He has counsel and understanding.
- Dan 2:20. Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His.
- James 3:17. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.
- Eph 3:10. to the intent that now the manifest wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in heavenly places,
- Col 2:2-3. ...both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

11. THE SUPREMACY OF GOD

1 Chr 29:10-12. Therefore David blessed the LORD before all the assembly; and David said: "Blessed are You, LORD God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. {11} Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head over all. {12} Both riches and honour come from You, and You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; In Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.

Scripture teaches us that the Almighty God is far removed from His creatures. We often think that He is like us, but how far from the truth this is. He is the potter, and the whole of creation is the clay.

- Firstly God is supreme in His being.

The glory of His nature far excels the combined glory of all of His creation. It is unthinkable to suppose that He, who created all things in six days, is somehow inferior in any way to the creation, as though we had evolved to some higher state. Yet naturally people hate to give God His rightful homage. Their hearts have always cried out against Jesus saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us'.²⁰

- Secondly God is supreme in His authority.

God actively reigns over all of creation, both in the spiritual and physical realms. There never has and never will be any threat to the throne of the Almighty. Were the whole of creation to rebel, then 'He who sits in heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision'.²¹ Such an event does not even cause the Almighty to rise from His throne. He who spoke all things into being can speak again.

²⁰ Luke 19:14

²¹ Psalm 2:4



People tend to think that Satan is only a little weaker than the Godhead and is able to defeat God's purposes in some battles; although most grant God has won or will win the war. How far this is from the Scriptural perspective, which teaches that Satan, despite his rebellious heart, can only perform what God, in His infinite wisdom, allows. Like Pharaoh of old, he is a 'vessel of wrath prepared for destruction'.²²

How often in Scripture have God's people been sorely pressed, facing seemingly inevitable defeat, only for God to move in some miraculous way and turn the situation into a great victory.

12. THE SOVEREIGNTY AND MAJESTY OF GOD

Psa 115:3. But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.

Psa 135:6. Whatever the Lord pleases He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deep places.

The sovereignty of God may be defined as the exercise of His supremacy.

The majesty of God's court is not a reflection not of those things over which his dominion extends but of His own being and person. It isn't God's wealth, armies or subjects which make this King glorious; it is his own radiant being.

A human king or president could have a stronger nation come and strip him of all, leaving him a naked and defenceless human, no different from any other. With the Lord, however, it is His very being and supremacy which enable Him to rule over all. Those who would rebel against God's sovereign Lordship are powerless to resist it.

His active reign extends to all. There is nothing done in heaven or earth that He has not sovereignly allowed. Jesus said to Pilate, 'You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above.'²³

Scripture is, however, full of examples and instructions for us to call upon our sovereign Lord to change our circumstances; otherwise, we would never pray for the sick. Sometimes God allows problems so that we can experience His help and deliverance. So like Paul of old, we too can repeatedly ask for God's deliverance. But if, as with Paul's thorn in the flesh, God says He has allowed it, we can rely on God's all-sufficient grace. In all things we can be more than conquerors.²⁴

We know that whatever befalls has not only been allowed by God, but as with Job of old, the experience is limited and measured. Charles Spurgeon wrote:

"There is no attribute more comforting to His children than that of God's Sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe trials, they believe that Sovereignty has ordained their afflictions, that Sovereignty overrules them, and that Sovereignty will sanctify them all. There is nothing for which the children ought more earnestly contend than the doctrine of their Master over all creation - the Kingship of

²² Rom. 9:22

²³ John 19:11

²⁴ 2 Cor 12:7-9. And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. {8} Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. {9} And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.



God over all the works of His own hands - the throne of God and His right to sit upon that throne.

On the other hand, there is no doctrine more hated by worldlings, no truth of which they have made such a football, as the great, stupendous, but yet most certain doctrine of the Sovereignty of the infinite Jehovah. Men will allow God to be everywhere except on His throne. They will allow Him to be in His workshop to fashion worlds and make stars. They will allow Him to be in His almonry to dispense His alms and bestow His bounties. They will allow Him to sustain the earth and bear up the pillars thereof, or light the lamps of heaven, or rule the waves of the ever-moving ocean; but when God ascends His throne, His creatures gnash their teeth.

And we proclaim an enthroned God, and His right to do as He wills with His own, to dispose of His creatures as He thinks well, without consulting them in the matter; then it is that we are hissed and execrated, and then it is that men turn a deaf ear to us, for God on His throne is not the God they love. But it is God on the throne that we love to preach. It is God upon His throne whom we trust."

- Dan 4:35. ... For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His Kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, 'What have you done'.
- Isa 46:10. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying 'My counsel shall stand and I will do my pleasure.
- Eph 1:11. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.
- Psa 33:10. The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect.

13. THE HOLINESS OF GOD

Exo 15:11 "Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

The Lord is called the Holy One. He is the one who is glorious in holiness. He alone is the sum of all moral excellence. He is absolutely pure, untarnished even by the thought of sin. God cannot even be tempted by sin.²⁵ The holiness of God is totally incomprehensible to human minds and hearts. God's holiness is a positive attribute, that is, it is not merely the absence of imperfection and sin, but rather it is the presence of an unyielding purity.

God does not conform to a standard of holiness; God *is* the standard of holiness and the only standard that He recognises. As we cannot understand what it means for God to be without beginning or end, or for Him to be omnipresent, neither can God's infinite holiness be appreciated by our finite minds.

The holiness of God is an immeasurable absolute, which none of His creatures can own or partake in. As the saints sing in glory:

²⁵ James 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.



Rev 15:4. "Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? **For You alone are holy...**"

The sinless and unsullied Seraphim may have received a degree of imparted holiness, but even they join with the redeemed in praising God's holiness and they hide their faces when the holiness of God is revealed.

Isa 6:2-3. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. {3} And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!"

The holiness of God is totally overwhelming, and no-one can look upon this holy God and live.

In the symbolic images of Scripture the awesome holiness of God is represented by a consuming, purging fire.

Isa 33:14-15. The sinners in Zion are afraid; Fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" {15} He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, he who despises the gain of oppressions, who gestures with his hands, refusing bribes, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil:

Heb 12:28-29. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. {29} For our God is a consuming fire.

To come before this God there must an atoning sacrifice and a sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifice to hide the imperfections of those called to approach. This is true under both the Old and New Testaments. In Old Testament times those who expected God to compromise His holiness and who dared to approach Him in an unprescribed method perished.

2 Sam 6:5-7. Then David and all the house of Israel played music before the LORD on all kinds of instruments of fir wood, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrums, and on cymbals. {6} And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. {7} Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God.

Lev 10:1-3. Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. {2} So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. {3} And Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD spoke, saying: 'By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified.' " So Aaron held his peace.

When Moses saw the glory of God he could not see God's face. Before the fall Adam could walk with the Lord God in the garden without fear, but the presence of sin in our lives means that if we look upon the holiness of God we shall surely die.



Exo 33:20-23. But He said, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live." {21} And the LORD said, "Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. {22} "So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. {23} "Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen."

Tozer says:

We must hide our unholiness in the wounds of Christ as Moses hid himself in the cleft of the rock.

Scripture places major emphasis on God's holiness. It is uncompromising, unchanging and perfect. Holiness is the glory and beauty of the Godhead, and is the splendour of all His attributes. His love is a holy love, His wisdom is a holy wisdom, His judgements are holy, His name is a holy name, His arm is a holy arm, and His law is a holy law.

God's holiness is His singleness and simplicity of character, thought, deed and purpose; it is the very integrity and oneness of His nature. In God there are no conflicting passions, desires or purposes. He is not torn or made to falter by opposing internal forces. God is at total peace with Himself.

Holiness defines wholeness. God's total purity and simplicity ensure that He is complete in Himself, that He is unchanging and that He is incapable of decay. Against all the forces of evil and wickedness stands the unchangeable and unalterable holy nature of God; the possibility of their victory has never existed, since He cannot change. Nothing threatens the nature of God.

Mal 3:6. "For I am the LORD, I do not change..."

How alien to the human heart is such holiness! We are diseased by impurity and torn by complex and differing passions warring within. We may desire holiness, but sin is ever present.

Rom 7:22-24 For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. {23} But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. {24} O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

People demand that God change His standards to suit their time and fashions. But it is the holiness of God that demands that all unholiness and moral depravity be destroyed from His creation. It is God's holiness that demands a price for sin to be paid. It is the holiness of God that wages war against all impurity and everything that is contrary to wholeness within creation. It is God's holiness that demands that those who are saved be saved to the uttermost. How else could we dwell eternally with Him?

As we have noted, God only has one standard of holiness: His own holiness. Our problem is that, as mere humans, we are blind to the absolute holiness of God. When people think about holiness they think of abstinence from sinful practices. Human holiness and righteousness are comparative terms, as we compare ourselves with those we think are less righteous. But in comparison to God's holiness we suddenly find that we have no righteousness at all.

If sin is not allowed to act out its inventions through our members, or if it is not allowed to fill our minds with its slurry, its very presence within us still renders us unholy and in need of someone else's holiness to be imputed to us.

Isa 64:6 But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.



We are called to meditate on God's holiness and earnestly seek to be made holy, fleeing all immorality in deed and thought.

1 Pet 1:15-16 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, {16} because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." (Lev. 11:44).

Our choices need to be choices for holiness. We need to love and cherish what is good and pleasing to God. We also need to recognise and share God's abhorrence of all that is evil. The Messiah was commended because:

Psa 45:7 You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions.

We should not be seeking to achieve the minimum standard of separation and abstention, but rather we are called to press on relentlessly. When our flesh grows tired of such discipline and cries out for rest and indulgence, then we need to again gaze again upon the fiery holiness of God.

I John 1:5 ...God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

Psa 99:5 Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His footstool - He is Holy.

14. THE ADEQUACY OF GOD

Heb 7:25 Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

A faithful acceptance of the character of the Godhead, as revealed within the Scripture, will convince the believer that God is able to save and keep all those who call upon Him. No opposition can withstand the Almighty God; there are no unforeseen circumstances which the omniscient God is not prepared for; there is no confessed sin or failing which the divine forgiveness cannot forget; there is no individual too weak or reprobate for divine grace to receive and transform. This God can save and deliver from the past, present and future; from sin, the enemy and ourselves. Truly there is nothing which can separate us from the love of God.

It is a great comfort to the heart of the saint to know that **GOD IS ABLE!** Whatever the difficulty we face, however great the need, let us be assured that God is able. He can overcome the enemy within and the enemy without.

Luke 1:37. For with God nothing will be impossible.

Mat 19:26. But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

When Jesus prepared His disciples for the work of the gospel He didn't leave them great financial resources, a well-structured organisation or well-furnished buildings. He sent them the Holy Spirit and gave them the promises of Scripture. Observers everywhere recognised that they had been with Jesus, and God proved that He is able to build His church, achieve His purposes and overcome any and all opposition.

Jude 1:24-25 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, {25} To God our Saviour, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.



15. THE POWER OF GOD

God is Almighty. All might, all power and all strength are His, and His alone. The power of God is the ability to do whatever He pleases and perform whatever He promises, no matter who or what might oppose. Since God is infinite His power must also be infinite. The will of the Sovereign Lord is assured by His infinite power.

As with all God's characteristics, we find perfect control. He is Almighty, but His power is controlled and directed. His might is demonstrated in His works of creating, upholding and redeeming; but also in his ability to destroy.

Rather than stating that God's power has been fully manifested, Scripture says that His power is hidden. What has been seen of God's power is but a small part of the might of the Almighty.

Hab 3:3-4. God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. {4} His brightness was like the light; He had rays flashing from His hand, and there His power was hidden.

Jesus interestingly referred to his Father's throne as "the power":

Mark 14:62 Jesus said, "I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."

To His children, the power of God is a delight, assuring a full and complete fulfilling of all the promises and consummation of the covenant. To those who refuse His Lordship, however, the power of God is the guarantee of the performance of all that His word warns us of.

God's creatures may have been given power to exercise over themselves or over others, but none can exercise power over God. None can make God do anything He does not want to do, none can blackmail Him and none can manipulate Him. Many have tried, and failed dismally. The Israelites believed they could be guaranteed victory over the Philistines by taking the Ark of the Covenant into battle, despite their ungodly lifestyle. In effect they were putting God's glory on the line. They lost the battle, but God brought an even greater renown to His name through the event.²⁶ The Pharisees believed they had Jesus over a barrel on the issue of paying taxes, but Jesus' answer brought greater glory to His name and left His adversaries dumbfounded²⁷.

The combined power of all of His creatures cannot threaten the stability or comfort of the throne of God.

Psa 2:1-5. Why do the nations rage and the people plot a vain thing? {2} The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, {3} "Let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us." {4} He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the LORD shall hold them in derision. {5} Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure:

Like Pharaoh of old, those who harden themselves against the Almighty do so to their own hurt and make themselves vessels of wrath prepared for destruction. When a nation turns from God, changes its laws, allows evil and hates what is good, the Kingdom of God is not injured in the slightest, but that nation hurts itself.

²⁶ 1 Samuel chapters 4 and 5

²⁷ Matt 22:16-22



- Psa 62:11. God has spoken once, twice I have heard this: That power belongs to God.
- Heb 1:3. who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
- Psa 27:1. The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
- Eph 3:20-21. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, {21} to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

16. THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

- Lam 3:22-23. Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. {23} They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.

The prophet Jeremiah, who for years had witnessed the longsuffering of God as He continually called His people to repentance, and who had seen the justice and wrath of God poured out upon Jerusalem, here rejoices in God's mercy and faithfulness. How important it is to have a balanced knowledge and experience of God.

God's faithfulness is a characteristic that fills the believer with confidence and awe. The world in this present age may consider faithfulness to be a bind, limitation or weakness rather than a positive attribute. But the faithfulness of the Sovereign Creator stands sure. When marriage and business covenants are broken, often without guilt or remorse, the Lord remains true to His word, true to His promises, true to His covenants. This is because God remains true to Himself. Even when His people forsake a covenant with the Him, He remains faithful.

- 2 Tim 2:13. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

The faithfulness of God stems from His unchanging nature. There is no internal passion or external pressure which can make God change His mind or make Him unfaithful. God cannot lie and He cannot be unfaithful. Job knew to trust in God's faithfulness more than his own senses, reason or experiences:

- Job 13:15. Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him...

The Psalmist continues the same theme:

- Psa 119:75. I know, O LORD, that Your judgements are right, and that in faithfulness You have afflicted me.

God cannot change, therefore His ways, purposes and promises cannot change. For God to break a promise would mean that He went against His own word and against His own character; this He cannot do. Therefore the covenants of God stand sure and irrevocable. They are more certain than the stars in heaven or the world on which we stand. Jesus said:

- Mat 24:35. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

God believes in Himself, in His ability to perform what He has spoken. He meant what He said when He gave the promise, and nothing has happened, or will happen, that He didn't originally foresee. The faithfulness of God is dependent upon his ability to rule, and He is sovereign; upon His ability to demonstrate power, and He is almighty; and upon His ability to withstand the forces of any other being, and He is independent.



As Tozer says:

All that God does agrees with all that God is, and being and doing are one in Him.

The immutability of God means that He does not change in nature, purpose or will. *God's faithfulness is the immutability of His dealings with His creation.* He who changes not cannot fail; He cannot compromise His word or His character.

Psa 36:5. Your mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.

Heb 10:23. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

1 Cor 1:9. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The faithfulness of God demands faithfulness in those who call upon His name. As believers we are to believe God's word, and we are to demonstrate faithfulness to our own promises and commitments, both to God and to men.

Psa 116:18. I will pay my vows to the LORD now in the presence of all His people,

17. THE GOODNESS OF GOD

Psa 25:7-8. Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to Your mercy remember me, for Your goodness' sake, O LORD. {8} Good and upright is the LORD; therefore He teaches sinners in the way.

Exo 34:6-7. And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, {7} keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

The attributes that the Lord chooses to proclaim to Moses should be considered of prime importance, as these are the attributes that define God's dealings with mankind. He claims to be merciful, gracious, longsuffering, good and true. God's heart towards humanity is one of blessing not cursing, of forgiving not condemning. He is seeking opportunity to forgive and bless and takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked²⁸. But He is also truth, and will punish the unrepentant for their wickedness and rebellion.

Psa 119:68. You are good, and do good; Teach me Your statutes.

Central to the very essence of God is that the Lord is good. He is intrinsically good; there is nothing less than goodness in the Godhead, no badness, nothing to soil His character. In talking about the goodness of God we are not talking about His righteousness and holiness but about His attitude towards people and His creation in general. As the Christmas angels sang:

Luke 2:14. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

²⁸ Ezek 33:11. "Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'"



God is full of “goodwill towards men”. He is gentle and benevolent and disposed to kindness, generosity and patience. In other words, God reveals Himself as friendly, understanding and approachable. The source of this goodness is not any worth or merit found in the recipients but simply that God is good and does good, even to the unworthy and unthankful.

Rom 2:4. Or do you despise **the riches of His goodness**, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

Because God is perfectly good, all His works and dealings with people are also perfectly good. Nothing He does is shoddy or inferior; none of His dealings with any of His servants is second best. He knows how to give good and perfect gifts to His children²⁹, and in His goodness he blesses everyone with breath, food, sunshine and rain.

Gen 1:31. Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

The goodness of God was manifested at creation, and creation still speaks of the continual goodness of God towards humanity, despite severe provocation. Since the source of God's goodness is in Himself and He is unchanging and infinite, so His goodness is also unchanging, infinite and inexhaustible. There is never a time when God is not good or not disposed towards showing His goodness.

Psa 65:10-11. You water its ridges abundantly, You settle its furrows; You make it soft with showers, You bless its growth. {11} You crown the year with Your goodness, and Your paths drip with abundance.

Psa 107:8-9. Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! {9} For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness.

As Tozer says:

The whole outlook of mankind might be changed if we could all believe that we dwell under a friendly sky and that the God of heaven, though exalted in power and majesty, is eager to be friends with us.

Because God is perfectly good, everything He says is also fundamentally good and can be fully relied upon.

Psa 33:5. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.

The goodness of God is poured out on all who will come to Him humbly, seeking His mercy. The figurative place where we enjoy His goodness and the smile of His countenance is called “His right hand”. But in the parable of the sheep and goats³⁰, all those who refuse His prescribed way of salvation are removed to His left hand.

Rom 11:22. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.

²⁹ James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

³⁰ Matt 25:31-46



The unchanging and abiding goodness of God is a great source of encouragement and hope for the believer. We do not fear evil tidings because we expect God's goodness and blessing. When we get up in the morning we expect God to bless us. When we lay our heads down to sleep we expect God to keep us. Why? Because we are good? No definitely not, but because *He* is good.

Psa 27:13. I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living.

Psa 112:7. He will not be afraid of evil tidings; His heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.

18. THE MERCY OF GOD

Psa 86:5. For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.

Psa 145:8-9. The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy. {9} The LORD is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works.

Psa 23:6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

The twin to God's goodness is His mercy. The two are often mentioned together in Scripture. Although God's goodness was manifested at creation, there was no opportunity for the mercy of God to be revealed until sin had entered the world. This does not mean that God became merciful at the Fall. God is and will be what He always has been, since He cannot change. Rather, it means that before the Fall there was no opportunity for this eternal attribute to be expressed towards His creation.

When Satan tempted Adam and Eve to transgress God's commandment and rebel against divine authority, his expectation was that the holy God would deal with them according to His wrath alone. Satan did not know that God was merciful, and when God showed Himself merciful to the undeserving, all Satan's plans were dashed to pieces.

Satan tempted Eve to first doubt and then rebel against God's word because he actually believed God's word. It was his expectation that Adam and Eve would die immediately, but he didn't know about God's longsuffering.

There is and always will be more to the richness of the nature of God than any of His creatures realise. Throughout eternity we will still be exploring and learning more of the character of the Almighty.

1 Pet 1:3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

The mercy of God is His willingness to forgive the sins and crimes of His creatures, to cancel their debt. It is His prerogative to do so. No-one deserves or can earn forgiveness, but God delights to be merciful and often bears a long time with the sins of people, seeking to bring them to repentance. He and all heaven rejoice when one sinner repents and asks for God's mercy and forgiveness.³¹

³¹ Luke 15:7. "I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.



For us, mercy is not receiving the wrath that we deserve.

Psa 103:17-18. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children, {18} to such as keep His covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them.

Psa 136:1. Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.

Since mercy is an attribute of the unchanging and eternal Godhead, so God's mercy is infinite, eternal and undiminishing. All the sin and rebellion of humanity, although vast and ugly, is nevertheless finite and measurable, at least to a divine mind. Just as there was a time when the first sin was committed, so there will be a time when the last sin will be committed. Sin is not eternal, it is finite and it will finally be destroyed. Against this finite mountain of sin is arrayed the inexhaustible mercy of God. God is able and willing to forgive every human being, indeed the sin of the whole world.

John 3:16-17. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. {17} For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Rom 9:15-16. For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." {16} So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

Not only is God merciful but He is said to display tender mercy. There is nothing reluctant about God's pardoning; He abounds in mercy and forgives abundantly. Particularly through Jesus we see God's compassionate and understanding pity towards those stained and snared by sin.

Luke 1:76-78. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, {77} to give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins, {78} through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us;

Luke 7:47-48. "Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." {48} Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

John 8:11... "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

God is not obliged to show mercy to any of His creatures. His mercy issues from Himself. He is merciful, and it is not the result of any meritorious act on the part of the sinner. Even the act of repentance does not mean the sinner deserves the mercy of the God he has wronged.

In the parable of the unforgiving servant³² Jesus taught that the master was moved with compassion and cancelled the debts of his servants, but expected his servants to be equally forgiving towards others. Unforgiveness towards others in our lives prevents us receiving God's forgiveness. In His model prayer Jesus taught us to both ask for forgiveness and forgive others.

Mat 6:12. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Similarly the psalmist writes:

³² Matt 18:21-35



Psa 18:25-26. With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; with a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless; {26} with the pure You will show Yourself pure; and with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd.

19. THE GRACE OF GOD

God's grace is akin to His goodness and mercy, although the distinctions are fine ones. Mercy is forgiveness and cancelling of a debt, where grace is the imputing of merit upon the bankrupt, worth upon the worthless and the bestowing of blessings and favour upon the totally undeserving.

As Tozer says:

As mercy is God's goodness confronting human misery and guilt, so grace is His goodness directed towards human debt and demerit.

Mercy is not receiving what we do deserve, whereas grace is receiving what we do not deserve. It is God's mercy that forgives the sinner; it is His grace that makes him a saint. It is God's mercy that forgives the trespass; it is the grace of God that adopts the repentant one and calls him a son. Like His mercy, God's eternal grace was unknown and unrealised until the Fall .

Grace is the sovereign and saving favour of God exercised in the bestowing of blessings and salvation freely upon those who have no inherent merit and cannot repay. In fact the recipients of grace deserve God's wrath and damnation, but instead find eternal blessings and love. Their original sinful position is such that they cannot even request God's grace, unless grace first awakens the desire and brings about godly sorrow unto repentance.

Eph 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, {9} not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Rom 5:19-20 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. {20} Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,

None have a right to grace; God sovereignly bestow it as He alone chooses.

Eph 1:4-7 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, {5} having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, {6} to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. {7} In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace

John 1:17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

As with His mercy, the single channel of God's grace to fallen humanity is Jesus Christ crucified, risen and ascended. The New Testament theology of redemption is that we are saved by grace through the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Tim 1:9 who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,



It is only those redeemed through the precious blood of the Lamb who can partake of the grace of God. Jesus is the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world. We now look back to the cross, whereas those who lived prior to Christ's physical death looked forward to it. Jesus is the Seed promised to Eve, the Lamb which Abraham knew would be provided and the fulfilment of the Mosaic sacrificial system. Even in the Old Testament no-one was saved by the works of the law, but through the grace of God.

Gal 2:16 "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

It was through the grace of God that Abraham was called God's friend. It was by the grace of God that David was called a man after God's own heart. Similarly both Noah and Moses found grace in God's eyes.

Gen 6:8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

Exo 33:17 So the LORD said to Moses, "I will also do this thing that you have spoken; for you have found grace in My sight, and I know you by name."

Since grace is a divine attribute it is, like God's mercy, infinite, unlimited and inexhaustible. Hence Scripture talks about the riches of His grace. God's grace is also said to be glorious, that is, His grace is one of the attributes that sets Him, the Lofty One³³, apart from all His creatures.

Grace is a perfection of the divine character that is exercised only toward the elect. In neither the Old Testament or the New is the grace of God mentioned in connection with humanity at large. In this respect it is distinguished from His mercy, which is "over all His works"³⁴. That is not to say that everyone will be eternally forgiven, but rather that during this lifetime even the unrepentant receive some benefits from God's longsuffering and mercy, even if they refuse to acknowledge it.

2 Cor 12:9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

The grace of God fills the heart of the believer with great confidence and boldness. Not only does he stand before the throne of God without spot or blemish, but also he appears as the apple of God's eye, the subject of divine favour and blessing. Mercy forgives the debt, but grace makes the sinner a new creation, empowered and equipped to overcome sin. So in all the trials and difficulties of life it is the grace of God that is our sufficiency, our source of strength and our succour.

Eph 2:4-7 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, {5} even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), {6} and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, {7} that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

It will take the eternity of the coming age for the saint to appreciate the exceeding riches of God's grace. There are aspects of God's grace yet to be revealed and experienced.

³³ Isa 57:15

³⁴ Psa 145:9 The LORD is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works.



20. THE PATIENCE (LONGSUFFERING) OF GOD

Exo 34:6-7 And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, {7} "keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

Psa 86:15 But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth.

The patience or longsuffering of God is His ability to perfectly control Himself and wait before executing judgement. His mercy is His pity towards the person, whereas His longsuffering is His bearing with the sin of the person. God delights in showing mercy and forgiving iniquity and He demonstrates longsuffering to allow time and opportunity for repentance.

Ezek 33:11 "Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'

Rom 2:4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

The book of Jeremiah is a study on the patience of God. For forty years He pleaded and called His people to repentance, foretelling the consequences of their continued rebellion. But they would not heed the voice of the prophet and all the promised punishments came to pass.

God is said to "suffer long" because His delay in putting away sin, unrighteousness and defilement from creation, and His forbearance with the rebellious, prolongs the cause of irritation to His holy nature.

In Scripture the phrase 'slow to anger' is also used in reference to God's longsuffering.

Psa 103:8-10 The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. {9} He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. {10} He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities.

Unlike humans, God never loses His temper. His emotions never control Him, but He is always in control of His emotions, and the display of His emotions is always consistent with His wonderful nature. This is a source of great encouragement to His creatures. The Almighty never makes a mistake because of a sudden impulse; there can be no external factors which cause Him to make anything other than a perfectly balanced and appropriate decision.

2 Pet 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Christ's second coming has been a long time in appearing because of God's longsuffering and forbearance.

The longsuffering and endurance of God under the severest of provocation is in keeping with His heart of love.

1 Cor 13:4 Love suffers long...

1 Cor 13:7 [love] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.



In comparison to the divine heart, how little love and therefore patience, endurance and self-control do we find, even in the best of human hearts.

We may be able to judge rationally and collectively when the wrongdoing is not against us or our loved ones. But when we or those we care for are the victims of some heinous crime our decisions can be driven more by impulse and revenge than a concern for judgement or justice. How many innocent people have been killed by mob rule, when a community have been fanned to an hysterical state over some issue? There was no weighing of the facts, no proving of the guilt, just an acting on the passion of the moment.

How often have we been offended by someone's actions, omissions or words, only later to regret our knee-jerk reaction when we come to possess some further information?

Not only is God longsuffering towards the sinner, but also towards the saint. How He bears with us, putting up with our rude and selfish ways. When we look back and see how many changes He has wrought in our hearts over the years, and see how slow and reluctant we were to change, we realise that God has dealt with us according to His grace and longsuffering.

As God is longsuffering, so He seeks to develop the fruit of longsuffering or patience in the lives of those who call upon His name.

Gal 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, {23} gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

We need to manifest patience—with one another, in waiting for God to answer prayer, and in enduring trials and tribulations. Patient endurance under trials and persecutions is a consistent message in the epistles. There are times in life when we do suffer distress, through a variety of causes. When the deliverance is a long time in coming we are actually being refined in the crucible, and God is seeking to develop in us the Christ-like qualities of patience and endurance, which are of eternal value.

Eph 4:1-3 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, {2} with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, {3} endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Col 1:10-11 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; {11} strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;

Col 3:12-13 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; {13} bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

Rom 15:5-7 Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, {6} that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. {7} Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

James 1:2-4 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, {3} knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. {4} But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.



Rom 5:3-5 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; {4} and perseverance, character; and character, hope. {5} Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

It is not natural to the human heart to bear with one another. It is more natural to bear grudges and to keep a list of errors and hurts. But when God forgave us He destroyed the lists of our mistakes, rebellions and transgressions. We have to learn how to forgive. It may not be easy, but neither was it easy for God to forgive us: it cost Him Calvary.

Heb 10:36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:

21. THE JUSTICE OF GOD

Deut 32:3-4 For I proclaim the name of the LORD: Ascribe greatness to our God. {4} He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He.

Psa 33:4-5 For the word of the LORD is right, and all His work is done in truth. {5} He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.

Psa 89:14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; mercy and truth go before Your face.

Prov 21:3 To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

The justice of God is the manifestation of the nature and truth of God in all His judgements. God is always true to Himself, and He is truth. In all issues of judgement God is consistently true and righteous. He does not show partiality towards anyone.³⁵

God is just and always acts justly and fairly. Because He is longsuffering, we might not see God entering into judgement against someone immediately, but we know that no-one can escape the judgement seat of God.

Abraham knew that God was just and fair when he prayed:

Gen 18:24-25 "Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it? {25} "Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! **Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?**"

The believer can take great encouragement in the fact that God will always do what is right. We must also trust the character of God more than our own understanding or logic. When life is unfair, remember the judge of all the earth will do what is right. Equally we must realise that when God punishes someone, then their punishment is measured, appropriate and fair. Our minds may not be able to understand eternal damnation and the terrors of hell, but the judge of all the earth always does what is right.

³⁵ Acts 10:34 Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:



It should be recognised that justice is at the very heart of the redemption of the sinner. When God forgives a sinner, He does not ignore or overlook sin, and mercy cannot be received until justice has been satisfied.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We can receive the mercy of God, and be declared righteous before His court, because Jesus has already paid the penalty for our sin. Divine justice has been satisfied at Calvary. Divine mercy is now available to all who will confess their sin.

There has always been something within the human heart that has valued and cried out for justice. When injustices are suffered, when the guilty are released unpunished or the innocent wrongly punished, people are rightly grieved. In Scripture we see people crying out to God for justice against the wicked.

Psa 139:19-20 Oh, that You would slay the wicked, O God! Depart from me, therefore, you bloodthirsty men. {20} For they speak against You wickedly; Your enemies take Your name in vain.

Injustice indeed can cause great grief to our hearts. But we need to remember that God always does what is right and He always acts with eternity in mind. God has a day when all human injustices will be corrected, when all the wicked will be justly and fairly punished, and when the righteous will receive their rewards.

The psalmist was greatly distressed when he saw the prosperity of the wicked and the difficulties of the godly. When he allowed His mind to be consumed with such thoughts his heart was pained greatly. Finally his peace was restored when He realised their final end and the justice and wrath of God.

Psa 73:1- 5 Truly God is good to Israel, To such as are pure in heart. {2} But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped. {3} For I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked. {4} For there are no pangs in their death, But their strength is firm. {5} They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like other men.

Psa 73:12-16 {12} Behold, these are the ungodly, Who are always at ease; they increase in riches. {13} Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. {14} For all day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning. {15} If I had said, "I will speak thus," Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children. {16} When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me;

Psa 73:17-22 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end. {18} Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. {19} Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. {20} As a dream when one awakes, so, Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image. {21} Thus my heart was grieved, and I was vexed in my mind. {22} I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before You.

God expects those in authority in nations to manifest justice in all their courts. Justice and fairness brings a blessing upon a nation, but injustice and perverted justice brings a curse.



Lev 19:15 "You shall do no injustice in judgement. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbour.

Deut 10:17-18 "For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. {18} "He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing.

God also expects Christians to manifest justice and equity in their relationships and affairs.

Micah 6:8 He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?

Jer 9:24 But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgement, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.

22. THE WRATH OF GOD

Rev 19:1-2 After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honour and power belong to the Lord our God! {2} "For true and righteous are His judgements, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her."

The wrath of God is as much a divine perfection as any other attribute of the Godhead, and can be considered as His Holiness stirred into activity against sin. It is His eternal detesting of all unrighteousness, His displeasure and indignation against all evil. It is as necessary to portray the wrath of God as it is to portray His love, grace and longsuffering. Certainly the Lord is not ashamed to declare His wrath in His Word.

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son; but God so hates sin that the only price sufficient to redeem us was Calvary.

Many Christians would not consider the wrath of God as a perfection of the divine character, and might feel a need to apologise for it or explain it away before the world.

Psa 7:11 God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day.

We fail to realise God's hatred for all sin and unrighteousness, and we fail to realise that God is the principal victim of every sin (otherwise He could not forgive all sin). When we feel indifferent to sin as it abounds all around us, we do not recognise that God has a positive hatred for all sin and rebellion. The wrath of God remains upon those who refuse the salvation in Christ Jesus. Only through close communion with Him, only by experiencing His holiness and purity, can we be transformed to the place where we view and hate sin as God does, and where we no longer smirk at or feel unmoved by sin.

Deut 32:39-41 "Now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; nor is there any who can deliver from My hand. {40} For I raise My hand to heaven, and say, "As I live forever, {41} If I whet My glittering sword, and My hand takes hold on judgement, I will render vengeance to My enemies, and repay those who hate Me.



Rom 1:18-19 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, {19} because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

The anointed Messiah is described as having a dual ministry: to proclaim the season in which people may receive grace and forgiveness and be accepted by God, but also—at His second coming—to proclaim God's judgement against the unrepentant.

Isa 61:2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn,

Hence He who once stood before Pilate's judgement throne silent as a lamb will one-day roar like a lion. When the Lamb of God is angry there is no more hope of forgiveness and no more delay of judgement. To the repentant His promises stand firm, but to the unrepentant the warnings of His divine wrath are equally sure.

Rev 6:16-17 and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! {17} "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

2 Cor 5:11 Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.

Rom 11:22 Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.

23. THE JEALOUSY OF GOD

Deut 4:24 For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

Exo 34:14 for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God

Jealousy in human beings is considered a destructive, poisonous emotion. It is what Shakespeare called "the green-eyed monster". It may be surprising then, that throughout Scripture the Lord God describes Himself as a God "whose name is Jealous".

There are in fact two forms of human jealousy, only one of which is a vice. First, there is the jealousy which is a form of covetousness or resentment. This is destructive and sinful; it covets another's possession and hates the person whose it is by right. This is envy, a destructive fire that seeks either to take for oneself, or to destroy, the possession of another. This type of jealousy is not found in the heart of God, who is love, and neither should it be allowed to dwell in the heart of His saints.

1 Cor 13:4 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up;

Throughout Scripture covetousness, the desiring for oneself what belongs to another is forbidden. The tenth commandment summarises the scriptural admonition:

Exo 20:17 "You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbour's."



How alien to our modern materialistic world this is! People's sinful greed and lustful eye are strong motivational forces used by marketing strategists, the lottery and gambling institutions alike.

The second form of jealousy is a commendable and correct reaction to an intrusion upon a marriage relationship. It is a zeal to protect the love-relationship. Indeed if a married person felt no jealousy at the intrusion of an adulterer that person would be deficient in love and morals.

God's jealousy is of this second kind. He is jealous for the affection of His people, for whom He has spent so much, and with whom He has a covenant. God's jealousy is presented as a motive for action, whether in wrath or mercy. He is motivated to call His people back to their first love. In the Old Testament God often said that He was married to Israel, and that He viewed their worship of idols as an act of adultery.

Ezek 8:3 He stretched out the form of a hand, and took me by a lock of my hair; and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven, and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the north gate of the inner court, where the seat of the image of jealousy was, which provokes to jealousy.

Zeph 1:18 Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy, for He will make speedy riddance of all those who dwell in the land.

Psa 78:58-59 For they provoked Him to anger with their high places, and moved Him to jealousy with their carved images. {59} When God heard this, He was furious, and greatly abhorred Israel,

In the New Testament the church is called to be the betrothed bride of Christ.

Paul says to the church at Corinth:

2 Cor 11:2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

God also manifests an intolerance to disloyalty or rebellion. He is longsuffering indeed, but He will not be mocked.

Gal 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

At the end of the book of Joshua we read Israel's leader's stirring appeal to the people to consider carefully before entering into a covenant with the Lord and to consider the nature of the God they are seeking to serve. The context of the following quotation is the certainty of God's word in both the promised blessing for obedience and also the punishment that would follow should His people serve the false gods of the nations around them.

Josh 24:19-20 But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. {20} "If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after He has done you good."

The Scriptures also tell us that God is jealous for His name, that is, He will not give His glory to another or allow His name to be defamed. He will arise in His power and might and destroy all opposition and vindicate His name. Throughout history God has forgiven and blessed His people, not because they deserved it, but for His name's sake.



Ezek 39:25 "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Now I will bring back the captives of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name;

Ezek 36:22-23 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. {23} "And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD," says the Lord GOD, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes.

God expects His people to be zealous for Him, to be single-minded in their affections and service and to have no other God. We are to be jealous for our relationship with Him, defending it against the onslaught of all intrusion and coldness. The idols of materialism and the laziness of the flesh seek to entice us away from wholehearted devotion, preferring us to slumber in indifferent passivity.

Rev 2:4-5 "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. {5} "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place; unless you repent.

24. THE LOVE OF GOD

Song 8:7 Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it. If a man would give for love all the wealth of his house, it would be utterly despised.

In John's first epistle, one of the two essential attributes that he chooses to summarise the character of God is love. The other is light³⁶.

1 John 4:7-8 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. {8} He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

As the law could be summarised as firstly love for God and then love for one's neighbour, so the beautiful, pure and noble character of God can be described by saying, "God is love". It would not be true to take this verse in John's epistle and say that love solely defines God, although it could be said that the nature of God defines love. We should not equate love and God. There are wicked, godless people who feel and express love towards some individual, but that cannot be equated to the presence of God in their lives. There are people engaged in loving yet illegal relationships, for example homosexual or adulterous relationships, but their love, no matter how strong, does not legitimise their action nor indicate divine approval.

Sadly, some Christians who have fallen into an adulterous relationship have not only defended their actions but have suggested that the strength of their love towards each other indicated divine approval. How deceptive sin is, and how easily blinded the human heart! Strong emotions, positive or negative, often cloud reason.

³⁶ 1 John 1:5 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.



Love is one of the divine attributes, and the love of God and the lovely nature of God can be seen in His work of creation, throughout His written Word and in His work of redemption. Love is always something that is true of God and nothing God ever says or does is divorced from love. Everything He is, does and says is characterised by His perfect and eternal love. The believer is called to accept this statement as being scripturally revealed and true, even though circumstances in life may at times shout the opposite.

Rom 8:35-39 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword? As it is written, 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angles nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The love with which God loves is described in 1 Cor 13.

1 Cor 13:4-7 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; {5} does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; {6} does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; {7} bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

How different God's love is from that which is common to human nature. How robust, strong and selfless. God's sovereign love is eternal, infinite, immutable, holy and uninfluenced by the recipient. We can only participate in love on this dimension if we first receive the love that God has for us, through the free gift of redemption through Christ Jesus. We can only love God because He first loved us.

1 John 4:19 We love Him because He first loved us.

Our love is the result of God's love for us, and is not a source of merit on our part.

Jer 31:3 The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.

An everlasting love is an undying, unfading love. We find it easier to love some people, and impossible to love others. We are influenced by the other person's character. God can and does love us all, despite ourselves, because God is love.

Deut 7:7-8 "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; {8} "but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

God's love is not a weakness but a strength, and true love is strong and robust, able to withstand vigorous and violent abuse. Nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than at Calvary, where God incarnate suffered vile humiliation and abuse at the hands of His creation, and was able to say, "Father forgive them". God's love also has our eternal best in mind, and allows chastening and refining in this present age, often despite our cries for ease.

Heb 12:6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."



"God is love"—He is the author of all true love and it flows from His being, not in response to some quality or beauty in the subject of His love, but simply because "God is love". This love is characterised by giving and spending of self.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Hence the single most important characteristic or fruit that God seeks to develop in His people is that of sacrificial, selfless, unailing and unconditional love.

1 Cor 13:13 - 14:1 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.

Love is not an emotion. Emotionally we can feel the presence of love within our heart, but that feeling is not in itself love. Paul describes love as a "more excellent way" (1 Cor 12:31). Fundamentally love is an issue of the will. God chose to love us and forgive us and we must choose to love and forgive. In truth, without Christ's Spirit dwelling in us, without experiencing God's love and forgiveness we are not sufficiently free to love indiscriminately. To Simon the Pharisee, Jesus said:

Luke 7:47 "Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little."

Further more Jesus described the greatest display of love as a wilful and deliberate act:

John 15:12-13 "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. {13} "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

Such love is generally alien to the human breast. We can only successfully live a life as a living sacrifice, dedicated to others, through the grace and strength that a living and close relationship with God brings. To do so in our own strength would most likely leave us dry and embittered.

25. THE MEEKNESS OF CHRIST

The characteristics which apply to one person within the Trinity, apply equally to the whole Godhead, since the Lord Our God is One³⁷. However, Scripture refers specifically to the meekness of Christ. He is the suffering servant by virtue of being the mediator between God and man.

That the Almighty, Supreme God, who is King of kings and Lord of lords, should display humility and meekness is something the human mind can only marvel and rejoice at. His meekness is a guarantee for all those who will humble themselves, that they will be received lovingly and carefully by their Saviour.

Matt 11:29 Take My yolk upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Many in the world confuse meekness with weakness. Meekness is not weak and neither is it passive, indecisive or timidity. A good definition of meekness is "controlled strength."

³⁷ Deut 6:4 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!"



Phil 2:5-8 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, {6} who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, {7} but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. {8} And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Jesus was meek and lowly. He walked humbly with His Father and in society. He didn't seek His own, He didn't seek to be served³⁸, but came to do the will of His Father and to serve others. Jesus' example is to forsake our reputation so as to serve others.

He humbled Himself by coming as a child into the realm of humanity, and it is childlike humility that He commands His servants to adopt³⁹. In becoming a child Jesus gave up His independence and made Himself dependent on others.

Pride often manifests itself by making people totally independent, unwilling to submit to others or receive their help. Jesus humbled Himself by becoming a servant or slave, and finally He humbled Himself and became a sacrifice. There is a progression here in the growth of humility, and in the decrease of self, which we are called to follow. Without developing a childlike trust and confidence in God we will never be effective servants. Without a true servant's heart we will not live as a true living sacrifice.

Matt 20:28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

Luke 22:27 For who is the greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table. Yet I am among you as the One who serves.

As believers we are called to grow in humility and to flee from pride. A meek heart is one that is not consumed with self but trusts in one greater than itself. A meek heart is also one that is contented, whether abased or abounding. Paul wrote:

Phil 4:11-13 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: {12} I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. {13} I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

The fundamental nature of meekness in the life of the saint is seen in the following verse:

Micah 6:8 He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?

The meek are given specific promises in Scripture, which refer to a future age.

Psa 37:10-11 For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; indeed, you will look carefully for his place, but it shall be no more. {11} But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

³⁸ Mark 10:45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

³⁹ Mat 18:1-4 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" {2} Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, {3} and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. {4} "Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.



Isa 11:4 But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.

Mat 5:5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

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