

## Theology (Theology Proper)

The Doctrine of God. A study of His revelation, His essence, and His being in Trinity.

If God had wanted to remain unknown, then mankind would certainly never have come to know Him. He easily could have included Himself among the things which “eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man” (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:9). However, God is both nearby and knowable (Acts 17:23,27). God has provided an undeniable witness to Himself in natural revelation (Rom. 1:18-20). Creation testifies to His glory (Ps. 19:1-6), and the element of creation made in His own image and likeness (Gen. 1:26,27) is left without excuse (Rom. 1:20).

The new believer already knows that there is a God, and that His Son Jesus Christ died on the cross for his salvation. What the new believer does not know is how much more about God there is to know. God wants us to grow into adult sons and daughters with capacity for mature fellowship (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 1:3). Beyond the witness of natural revelation comes the particular testimony of special revelation. In God’s Word we are provided with the depths of God Himself (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:9-16).

It is through Biblical revelation that we can come to find out the glories of God’s Sovereignty, Righteousness, Justice, Love, Eternal Life, Immutability, Omnipresence, Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Veracity. It is through His revelation of Himself that we come to know Him, and yet we realize that our finite beings will always struggle to comprehend the infinite (Job 11:7; Rom. 11:33).

The baby believer needs to begin his theological studies by learning the basic aspects of Trinity, and the basic attributes of Deity. Before he begins to learn his essence box though, the baby believer should keep in mind an underlying principle. Knowing about God is not the same as knowing God. Believers can accumulate tremendous factual knowledge about God and they can understand all sorts of Divine attributes without ever truly knowing God at all. A believer who knows what God is may sometimes overlook who God is.

Knowing God is a definition of eternal life (Jn. 17:3). Knowing God the Father through knowing Jesus Christ it a definition of salvation and eternal life (Jn. 14:6). “Thus says the LORD, ‘Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,’ declares the LORD” (Jer. 9:23-24). This is the highest form of worship, and God desires it above any offering we might bring (Hos. 6:6).

J.I. Packer wrote a beautiful book titled “Knowing God.” Four paragraphs will strike the baby believer and the mature believer alike.

“The more complex the object, the more complex is the knowing of it. Knowledge of something abstract, like a language, is acquired by learning; knowledge of something inanimate . . . comes by inspection and exploration. These activities, though demanding in terms of concentrated effort, are relatively simple to describe. But more complicated. One does not know a living thing till one knows, not merely its past history, but how it is likely to react and behave under specific circumstances. A person who says ‘I know this horse’ normally means, not just ‘I have seen it before;’ . . . more probably, however, he means ‘I know how it behaves, and can tell you how it ought to be handled.’ Such knowledge only comes through some prior acquaintance with the horse, seeing it in action, and trying to handle it oneself.

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“In the case of human beings, the position is further complicated by the fact that, unlike horses, people cover up, and do not show everybody all that is in their hearts. A few days are enough to get to know a horse as well as you will ever know it, but you may spend months and years doing things in company with another person and still have to say at the end of that time, ‘I don’t really *know* him at all.’ We recognize degrees in our knowledge of our fellow-men; we know them, we say, ‘well’, ‘not very well’, ‘just to shake hands with’, ‘intimately’, or perhaps ‘inside-out’, according to how much, or how little, they have opened up to us when we met them.

“Thus, the quality and extent of our knowledge of them depends more on them than on us. Our knowing them is more directly the result of their allowing us to know them than of our attempting to get to know them. When we meet, our part is to give them our attention and interest, to show them good-will and to open up in a friendly way from our side. From that point, however, it is they, not we, who decide whether we are going to know them or not.

“Imagine, now, that we are going to be introduced to someone whom we feel to be ‘above’ us—whether in rank, or intellectual distinction, or professional skill, or personal sanctity, or in some other respect. The more conscious we are of our own inferiority, the more we shall feel that our part is simply to attend to him respectfully and let him take the initiative in the conversation. We would like to get to know this exalted person, but we fully realize that this is a matter for him to decide, not us. If he confines himself to courteous formalities with us, we may be disappointed, but we do not feel able to complain; after all, we had no claim on his friendship. But if instead he starts at once to take us into his confidence, and tells us frankly what is in his mind on matters of common concern, and if he goes on to invite us to join him in particular undertakings he has planned, and asks us to make ourselves permanently available for this kind of collaboration whenever he needs us, then we shall feel enormously privileged, and it will make a world of difference to our general outlook. If life seemed footling and dreary hitherto, it will not seem so any more, now that the great man has enrolled us among his personal assistants. Here is something to write home about!—and something to live up to!”<sup>1</sup>

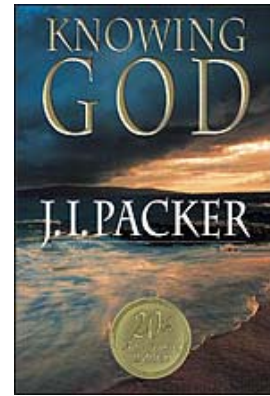
Packer’s illustration here pictures what the Bible communicates regarding God. He has invited us into His own counsel (Gen. 18:17; Jer. 23:18,22; Jn. 15:15) and has made us to be His fellow workers (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 3:9). Something to live up to indeed (Eph. 4:1; 1<sup>st</sup> Thess. 2:12; 2<sup>nd</sup> Thess. 1:11).

### *Trinity*

It has already been observed that knowing a person is one of the most complex things there is to know. The process is made easier (possible, even) when that person is transparent and forthcoming in revealing themselves. In the case of the infinite God, He is transparent and forthcoming in revealing Himself, so that is a blessing. There are two matters though with respect to God that makes knowing Him to be somewhat difficult. Indeed, to the unbeliever these items are insurmountable, but even for the believer these two features are a challenge.

The first matter is the infinite nature of God. Particular aspects of infinity will be examined in light of the specific attributes of His essence that reflect that infinity. The finite nature of humanity and the infinite nature of deity is a circumstance that should make every believer rejoice over the omnipotent and omniscient teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The second matter which presents a snag to knowing God is the matter of God’s Being in Trinity. Knowing a person is a hard enough task. In knowing God, the believer will come to know three Persons. Three Persons in One Being is one of the great paradoxical revelations of



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<sup>1</sup> J.I. Packer, “Knowing God.” ©1973 InterVarsity Press, pp.30-31. Note: Packer is a Calvinist and an Amillennialist. A baby believer should be aware of that when reading Packer on matters of salvation and prophecy.

God's word. Human wisdom cannot apprehend three equaling one, and yet that is precisely how the Bible reveals God's Being.

The word "Trinity" does not appear in the Bible. It is a theological term that has been developed in order to communicate the sum total of what the Old & New Testaments reveal concerning God. The theological term "trinity" can be defined here in theological terms, but this study will not do so at this point. First, this study will take a baby believer through the logical and linguistic (hermeneutical) process of searching the Scriptures and seeing if these things are so.

The Bible plainly declares that there is only one true God (capital G). He has many names by which He is referred to, but He is the same unchangeable Being no matter what He is called. His personal name is אֶהְיֶה which means "I AM" (Ex. 3:14). He alone is the eternal, self-existent, uncreated One. The principle of אֶהְיֶה "I AM" was entrusted to Moses as the meaning behind the memorial-name of יְהוָה (variously translated as the LORD, YHWH, Yahweh, or Jehovah).

יְהוָה YHWH is the most common name for God in the Old Testament where it appears over 6800 times. אֱלֹהִים Elohim (a plural noun) is also widely used, appearing over 2300 times in reference to the one true God. Together these terms are employed in the great monotheism passages of the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy 4:35: To you it was shown that you might know that the LORD [יְהוָה YHWH], He is God [אֱלֹהִים Elohim]; there is no other besides Him. Verse 39: Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD [יְהוָה YHWH], He is God [אֱלֹהִים Elohim] in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other.

Other applicable passages include Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:39; Isaiah 43:10-12; 44:6-8; 45:5-7. In the New Testament, passages would include 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 8:4 & James 2:19.

There are some false gods (small g) out there—spirit beings (commonly called angels) who pridefully equate themselves to God (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 8:5). These fallen angels are in open rebellion against God and that is a subject for later development in Basic Doctrinal Studies.

So, the basic understanding of God at this point is that there is only one true God. He alone is the eternal, self-existent, uncreated One. He is the only Being rightfully named "I AM." Yet . . .

There is also plainly revealed in Scripture three separate Persons that all have equal claim to the attributes and essence of God. All three Persons comprise one single essence, and all three Persons bear a single name. Matthew 28:19: Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Father is recognized as God. John 6:27 "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal. 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. The Deity of God the Father, as Charles Ryrie puts it, "is seldom debated."

Jesus Christ is recognized as God. His disciple Thomas testified to His Deity (John 20:28). He forgave sins, which is only God's privilege to do (Mark 2:1-12).

The Holy Spirit is declared to be God. Lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3) equals lying to God (Acts 5:4). God's attributes of Omniscience (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:10) and Omnipresence (Ps. 139:7) are ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

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The very first chapter of Scripture gives us an insight into the Trinity. In the beginning **אֱלֹהִים** Elohim (a plural noun) created (**בָּרָא** bara' <sup>Strong's #1254</sup> a masculine singular verb) the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1). Elohim is not a singular, not a dual, but a plural (3 or more) noun. In Genesis 1:26: **אֱלֹהִים** Elohim (plural) said (**אָמַר** 'amar <sup>Strong's #559</sup> a masculine singular verb), "Let Us make (1p.plur. **עָשָׂה** 'asah <sup>Strong's #6213</sup>) man in Our (plural) image (singular), according to Our (plural) likeness (singular).

Does Genesis 1 develop a thorough doctrine of Trinity? No, but it presents a narrative of creation that is consistent with the doctrine Trinity.

### *Personality*

One final area of study remains before launching into God's attributes of essence. God is not only a Being (therefore having essence) but as a Person He has personality. Strictly speaking, the three Persons of Trinity have three distinct personalities, and at the same time the One True God has one unique personality.

God's essence is often thought of as what God "is." God's personality can be thought of as "what kind of God" is God. "What is God?" can be answered with essence or attributes. "What kind of God is God?" can be answered with personality or character. There is often an overlap between personality and essence. God is love (essence), and He is a loving God (personality). God is righteousness (essence), and He is a righteous God (personality). Essentially, every element of essence will be reflected by a personality trait. Not every personality trait has a single attribute of God though. Some of God's personality traits are manifestations of multiple attributes or even all of God's attributes combined.

Attempts to paint too fine a line here will not only go beyond the scope of Basic Doctrinal Studies, but will in all likelihood result in incorrect conclusions. Theologians sometimes try to define God in human terms and the result is as flawed as the methodology. Nowhere in the Bible is there a "fruit of the spirit" type passage that reads: "The Essence of God is" (followed by a list). The study of God, then, is an inductive study taking in every description of God from Genesis to Revelation.

An exhaustive development of the personality, essence, character, attributes, & nature (think PECAN) of God is beyond the scope of this series. Here, we will equate personality, character, & nature under the Personality of God study, and we will equate essence & attributes under the Essence of God study.

The most common phrase in the Bible describing God is the declaration that He is Compassionate & Gracious. This description answers the question "what kind of God is God?" He is a compassionate and gracious God. Our God in Heaven is compassionate & gracious (Ex. 33:19; 34:6-7; 2<sup>nd</sup> Sam. 24:14; 2<sup>nd</sup> Chr. 30:9; Ps. 25:6; Lam. 3:32), slow to anger (Num. 14:18; Isa. 48:9; Rom. 9:22-23; 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 3:20; 2<sup>nd</sup> Pet. 3:9) and abounding in lovingkindness (Ex. 34:6-7; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8; Ps. 106; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2) and truth (Ps. 57:10; 86:15; 89:14; 108:4; 138:2; Lam. 3:22-23; John 1:17).

One of the most overlooked personality traits of God is that He is Jealous. So much so that Jealous is even one of His own names (Ex. 34:14). God's jealousy is typically not thought of as a single attribute or a part of His essence. Rather it is a manifestation of all of His essence. We must be cautious in not approaching the Jealousy of God in the carnal human context that we usually associate jealousy with. Carnal jealousy stems from selfishness and pride. Godly jealousy

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(2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 11:2) is another matter altogether—stemming from unselfish and humble devotion to Jesus Christ. The following survey of Bible verses will help to understand God’s Jealousy (Ex. 20:5; 34:14; Num. 25:10-13; Deut. 4:24 cf. Heb. 12:28-29; Deut. 32:16-17; ; Josh. 24:19; Nah. 1:2; Zech. 8:2).

Related to God’s jealous personality is His vengeful personality. Once again, we must not approach the Vengeance of God in the carnal human context that we usually associate with vengeance. Carnal vengeance stems from selfishness, pride and anger. The following survey of Bible verses will help us to understand God’s Vengeance (Deut. 32:34-43; Ps. 94:1; Nah. 1:2; Rom. 12:19; Heb. 10:30).

Another aspect of God’s Personality is His Sense of Humor. What a wonderful blessing for us in developing and maintaining a relaxed mental attitude! God Himself has a relaxed mental attitude! He possesses a sense of humor, or a mental delight in that which He observes. Even the worst of human volitional rebellion can spark a mental delight in His thinking and prompt His laughter enjoyment of His unthwartable purpose (Ps. 2:4; 37:13; Prov. 1:26; 8:30-31).

Finally, we must also conclude that as a trait of God’s Personality, He is supremely Confident or Secure. He needs nothing from any creature. He is confident, secure, and completely perfect in His Being. The only “need” that He has is His “need” to be consistent with His own personality, essence, character, attributes, and nature (Acts 17:25; Ps. 50:8-15; 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 2:13).

### *Essence*

Having dealt with God’s personality, character, and nature, we can now turn to God’s attributes and essence. Although differences will appear from study to study and from list to list, the following 10 aspects of God’s *being* will serve here as a Basic summary of God’s *essence*. The “essence box” that I learned as a child includes these 10 attributes: Sovereignty, Righteousness, Justice, Love, Eternal Life, Omniscience, Omnipresence, Omnipotence, Immutability, & Veracity.

Before examining each attribute of essence, let us bear in mind that God is so much more than a compilation of various “parts.” Each finite term by which we study one aspect of God’s Being will never fully define the infinite nature of that aspect. God is infinitely Sovereign, and any study we pursue on Sovereignty will fall short of an infinite understanding. So it is with each element, and so it is especially with the sum total of God’s Being.

“Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty? They are high as the heavens, what can you do? Deeper than Sheol, what can you know?” (Job 11:7-8).

We must also keep in mind that no part of God’s essence is ever manifest at the expense of any other part. God is Love, but He cannot express that Love in violation of His own Righteousness and Justice for example. God is Sovereignty, but He cannot manifest Sovereignty in a way that would change Himself and violate His own Immutability. God’s essence must be studied as a whole and not limited to the parts.

### **Sovereignty**

God is not subject to any authority higher than His own. He alone is uncreated and He alone has created. As the source of all things God is master of all things. Absolute Sovereignty, however, does not mean that God is not subject to anything. God is, in fact, subject to Himself.

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God is self-existent but not self-made. God did not create Himself and so God is not master of (sovereign over) Himself. To be precise: God's Sovereignty does not enable Him to violate His being.

Bible passages on Sovereignty make these comments quite clear. Job 23:13; Psa. 115:3; Isa. 46:9-11; Dan. 4:35; Eph. 1:11.

No being can overrule God's Sovereignty, but neither can God's Sovereignty overrule His own essence. He cannot deny Himself (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 2:13b). Moses even had the confidence in God's character to tell God what He could not do! In effect, Moses pointed out to God that His Sovereignty was not free to destroy Israel because God's Veracity would not allow Him to go back on a promise He had made to Israel (Ex. 32:9-14; Num. 14:11-19).

Perhaps the most perplexing aspect of God's Sovereignty is the significance of His sovereign creation of volitional creatures. The provision of volition in the angelic and human realms of creation sometimes prompts a conflict within our finite minds. Does the human exercise of volition actually overrule God's Sovereignty? Not at all! When man takes an action contrary to what God directs he is acting within the sphere of what God allows. God's Directive Will and God's Permissive Will are both within the realm of God's absolute Sovereignty. Since God sovereignly bestowed volition, the use of volition does not diminish Sovereignty. To the contrary, volition magnifies Sovereignty.

Volition will be studied in greater depth under Anthropology, but the Scriptures are very clear that God takes no pleasure in compulsion, but takes pleasure in voluntary service (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 9:7; 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 5:2; Philem. 14). Since Sovereignty by definition is the achievement of God's pleasure, volition is essential to Sovereignty, and determinism (no volition at all) is antithetical to it.

## Righteousness

Righteousness is the first of two attributes which together comprise God's Holiness. Our God is a holy God and He expects us to be holy (Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 1:16). Righteousness and Justice form a two-edged sword by which God's Holiness is possessed and expressed.

God is absolute righteousness (Deut. 32:4), not the relative righteousness of humanity (Gen. 38:26; 1<sup>st</sup> Sam. 24:17; 1<sup>st</sup> Kgs. 2:32). Righteousness means being right and doing right (Isa. 24:16a). The opposite of righteousness is treachery (Isa. 24:16b). The terms good and evil are used synonymously with righteous and unrighteous (Matt. 5:45).

God's absolute Righteousness is the eternal standard by which He may be approached. No human being measures up to absolute Righteousness (Isa. 64:6). Any sin falls short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23), and separates us from His holiness (Isa. 59:2). By faith in Jesus Christ, we may become the Righteousness of God in Him (Rom. 3:22; 5:19; 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 5:21).

God's righteousness is a theme often celebrated in the Psalms (7:9,11,17; 9:4,8; 11:7; 31:1; 116:5; 119:75,137,142; 129:4; 145:17). The walk of righteousness is the walk of wisdom according to Proverbs (1:3; 2:9,20; 3:33; 4:18; 10:2,3,6,7,11,16,20,21,24,25,28,30,31,32 etc.).

## Justice

The Holiness counterpart to Righteousness is the Justice of God. God possesses the absolute unchangeable standard of Righteousness, and when He administers that standard judicially He manifests His absolute unchangeable Justice.

Absolute Justice means God is absolutely *fair* in all of His judgments. The LORD our God will have no part in unrighteousness or partiality or the taking of a bribe (2<sup>nd</sup> Chr. 19:7). God's Justice cannot be bought (Deut. 10:17). This is the only form of Justice that can exist consistent with God's absolute Love (Deut. 10:18).

As already noted, He is Righteous and upright, and this finds expression in His faithful exercise of Justice. All His ways are just. He is a God of faithfulness and without injustice (Deut. 32:4). Because He is an impartial Judge, God's gracious and compassionate personality must be consistent with His Righteousness and Justice (Isa. 30:18).

The absolute Justice of God can form the basis of a bold and confident prayer life (Gen. 18:25). Notice a similarity between Moses' prayer life already mentioned and the prayer ministry of Abraham on behalf of Sodom.

Quite often finite creatures bound by time (i.e. human beings) fail to apprehend God's Justice. We become impatient in our frustrations and we cry out "how long?" to the Judge of All the Earth because He is not blasting sinners to smithereens in a manner that we can approve of. God is not slow, as some count slowness, but rather patient (2<sup>nd</sup> Pet. 3:9). He is slow to anger, and patient towards sinners as an expression of His compassionate personality. His compassion though does not negate His Justice. In the case of the unbeliever, He is patiently awaiting repentance so that His Justice can be administered to His undeserving Son on the cross rather than upon the deserving sinner (Ezek. 18:23,32).

In the end though, when patience has run its course, Justice is exercised and it is administered without any partiality. God will not be mocked (Gal. 6:7). He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished (Ex. 23:7; 34:7; Nah. 1:3).

God's impartial Justice is essential for our salvation. Specifically, the blessings of Justification can be faithfully counted upon only if our God is a God of impartial Justice (Rom. 2:11; 3:5,6,21-26). More will be seen on this in the Soteriology doctrine of Justification.

## Love

Now we come to perhaps the most misunderstood attribute of God—His Love. The kosmos world system and carnal humanity have developed some of the most perverted things and called them love. It is no wonder, then, that human understanding of God's love is off track.

Beneath most false understandings of love is the feature of gratification. A person can "love" activities such as hunting, fishing, or golf. These activities can gratify and supply a personal enjoyment. A person might also "love" certain foods like fajitas, pizza, or chocolate. In such cases these foods gratify our palate and supply a personal enjoyment.

All too often in personal relationships this pseudo-love is generated through gratification in one form or another. So long as self is being benefited, the "love" continues. All of this is

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contrary to God's form of Love. God's love is not selfish, but sacrificial. It does not center on what the one loving "gets" but rather on what the one loving "gives."

Even a brand new baby believer needs to learn the Greek word "agape" (ἀγάπη). The primary Love of God is agape love. The concept of agape is totally outside the realm of human experience. It is entirely within the realm of God, as the source and motivation for its expression.

Agape is defined in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:4-8. In a 16 part detailed description, agape love is presented as an ideal standard for a believer's life. No human being can live up to such an ideal standard through human effort. God Himself maintains the absolute standard of agape love in all of His thoughts and deeds.

A Biblical study of God's attribute of Love must also consider 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:7-8. It is a passage that addresses believers as "beloved" (agapetos, ἀγαπητός). It is a passage that exhorts believers to love (agapao, ἀγαπάω) one another. In a short, alliterative passage, the Christian Way of Life is here described. Ἀγαπητοί, ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους: Beloved, let us love one another.

The basis for believers to love one another is not because one or the other believer is worthy of love. Agape love does not depend on the object being loveable. The basis for Christian love is God's essence of Love (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 4:7-8). Our love for one another is not only beneficial to one another, but is also a testimony to the Love of God that so loved the world (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 4:9-11; Jn. 3:16).

### Eternal Life

God is outside of space & time as the creator of space & time. God alone is uncreated Being (I AM), without beginning and without ending. God infinitely transcends space (see below for Omnipresence) and time (Eternal Life). Therefore we can speak of God as "having" eternal life, although it may be more accurate to say that God is eternal. God is the eternal God (Deut. 33:27). He dwells in eternity (Isa. 57:15).

Psalm 90:2 is a great definition of eternal life. "Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God." The realm of time is bounded by eternity past (alpha) and eternity future (omega). That's the realm of God. God's timelessness is an element of His unchanging ness (see below for Immutability).

Psalm 90 establishes the stark contrast between God and fallen man. God is the refuge for all generations of mankind (Ps. 90:1) as the eternal Creator (Ps. 90:2). Fallen humanity is finite in physical life of dust to dust (Ps. 90:3-6). The Judgments of Adam (Ps. 90:7-8), and the flood (Ps. 90:9-10) have produced shorter life spans with greater urgency for wisdom (Ps. 90:11-12). Redeemed humanity can rejoice throughout the entire process of physical life because of God's eternal perspective and the grace promises of eternal rewards (Ps. 90:13-17).

Other passages for eternal life include Isa. 44:6; 1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 6:16; 2<sup>nd</sup> Pet. 3:8; & Rev. 1:4.

### Omniscience

God knows everything. The Lord is a "God of knowledge" (1<sup>st</sup> Sam. 2:3). Ah, but don't stop there! That one statement contains such depth of Truth! Unlike temporal creatures, God's knowledge is not an accumulated knowledge achieved through steps and stages of time. God's



past, present, and foreknowledge are features of His timelessness (Eternal Life) but are more so a feature of His infinite Mind. He is truly One “perfect in knowledge” (Job 36:4; 37:16).

God’s knowledge is not simply limited to facts. God possesses infinite knowledge, understanding and wisdom. His knowledge has not only observed all things, but has thoroughly analyzed all things, and related all things to one another in His infinitely perfect plan. This aspect is overlooked as it relates to His omnipotence (Job 36:5).

God possesses knowledge of every reality and every potential reality as a result of His creating volitional creatures. God knows all the would’ve’s, should’ve’s, and could’ve’s for individuals, nations, and indeed all of humanity (Matt. 11:20–24; 23:30).

God is patiently working out His own plan, allowing us to realize and understand certain things only after He brings them about (John 13:7). Ultimately, He works all things together for good (Rom. 8:28), and we creatures of time bound by time claim this by faith.

The finite human mind can only grasp the fringes of the wisdom and knowledge of God (Rom. 11:33; 1<sup>st</sup> Sam. 16:7; Job 26:14; Isa. 55:9).

### Omnipresence

God is everywhere. If omniscience was a difficult concept to grasp for those of finite knowledge, omniscience may be an even more difficult concept to grasp for finite creatures limited to being in one place at one time. God transcends both space and time. We’ve already studied His transcendence of time in our examination of Eternal Life. Omnipresence focuses on His transcendence of space.

In terms of both space and time, God’s transcendent position gives Him a perspective to interact with His creation at any point in space and at any point in time. Omnipresence is not only spatial, but also temporal—God is everywhere, and God is everywhen!

Now, for those of us who like to think in concrete rather than abstract terms, David has supplied a remarkable Psalm. Psalm 139 describes Omnipresence in such a way that we can understand perfectly. Running away from God is not possible. Neither is it possible to hide from Him (Jer. 23:24). God’s omnipresence is a great comfort for believers who can cling to the promise that He will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5–6).

God’s infinite Omnipresence cannot be contained or confined within finite boundaries (1<sup>st</sup> Kgs. 8:27; 2<sup>nd</sup> Chr. 2:6; Isa. 66:1; Jer. 23:24). The Holy of Holies did not “contain” God. His particular presence there did not exclude His omnipresence everywhere else. His particular presence there did supply a point of time & space in which creatures of time & space could have a particular interaction with His glory.

So it is with the indwelling of believers today. God’s presence within each of us (Jn. 14:23; 1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 3:24; 4:13,15,16) does not exclude or limit His omnipresence everywhere else. His particular presence within each of us supplies a particular manner in which we can interact with His glory (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 1:3).

### Omnipotence

God is all powerful. His titles **אֱלֹהֵי שַׁדַּי** El Shaddai (Gen. 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; Ex. 6:3) and **παντοκράτωρ** Pantokrator (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 6:18; Rev. 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7,14; 19:6,15; 21:22) rightly

refers to Him as God Almighty. He possesses all power (Eph. 1:19), and nothing is impossible for Him (Job 42:2; Jer. 32:27; Lk. 1:37). He does whatever He pleases (Psa. 115:3).

Omnipotence does not mean that God can do anything and everything. There are things God cannot do. The list of “cannots” is not by virtue of a power deficiency, but rather by virtue of an immutable consistency. God cannot violate His own character, nature, & essence (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 2:13). God cannot lie (Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18). God cannot abide iniquity in the solemn assembly (Isa. 1:13).

The answer to the question “Can God do everything?” is No, for He cannot do that which is out of harmony with His character. The question posed by some agnostics, “Can God make a stone so great that He cannot lift it?” is nonsensical for the same and other reasons—like asking can God make a square circle, an impossibility by definition, and so an absurdity.<sup>2</sup>

### Immutability

God cannot and does not change. He never has changed, and never will change. He is the eternal “I AM” and never “became” such. Malachi 3:6a “For I, the Lord, do not change.”

The Gospel of John begins with a declaration of the eternal Being of God the Son (the Word). This passage also makes it clear that God alone is uncreated and self-existent. “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” (John 1:3). Only God “is.” Everything else “became” or “came into being.”

The immutability of God is perhaps the most important attribute of His essence. Sovereignty is wonderful to behold and worship, but if it could change tomorrow, then it would not be worthy of true celebration. Likewise, we may cling to His grace for our salvation only so long as God remains gracious. In fact, no attribute of God’s essence would be the same without the attribute of Immutability to establish its absolute nature. We have already noted in the study above on Eternal Life that God’s timelessness is a manifestation of His immutability.

God is not only unchanging on a large scale, but He is also unchanging in the smallest detail. He has “no variation of shifting shadow.” (James 1:17b). Given that God is absolute perfection in His Being, even the smallest change would be a move to imperfection. Think about somebody physically standing at the absolute north pole of planet earth. Any step he takes—in any orientation—is going to be a step south. So it is with God’s perfection. Any step away (change) from that would be a movement of imperfection.

God is unchangeable and His purpose is unchangeable (Heb. 6:17). God works all things after the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11), and this is referred to as His eternal purpose (Eph. 3:11). Any Divine attribute of essence sets God apart from humanity, but His immutability and veracity are the two that we find explicitly stated (1<sup>st</sup> Sam. 15:29; Num. 23:19).

Sometimes the Scriptures use language that infers a “change of mind” on God’s part (Gen. 6:6-7; 1<sup>st</sup> Sam. 15:11,33; Jonah 3:10). Even such language of accommodation is testimony to God’s unchangeable purpose (Jer. 18:7-10; Isa. 46:10; Exek. 33:7-20).

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<sup>2</sup>Smith, J. H. (1992; Published in electronic form, 1996). *The new treasury of scripture knowledge : The most complete listing of cross references available anywhere- every verse, every theme, every important word*. Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson.

See [Great Doctrines of the Bible](#)

## Veracity

The final element of God's essence that we will examine is His attribute of Veracity. God is Absolute Truth, and everything He declares is absolutely true. YHWH is God of Truth (Ps. 31:5).

אֱמֶת אֱלֹהֵינוּ. κύριε ὁ θεὸς τῆς ἀληθείας. “He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true” (Jn. 3:33).

God's Veracity is such that every single promise is a “yes” promise worthy of our human “amen” (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 1:20). God's promises are certain because it is impossible for God to lie (Num. 23:19; 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 2:13; Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18). When the God Who cannot lie swears an oath by His own holiness, the infinite value of Veracity is infinitely multiplied (Ps. 89:35; Am. 4:2; Heb. 6:18). ∞<sup>∞</sup>

Human beings may doubt God's Truth because our finite nature cannot grasp His timetable (2<sup>nd</sup> Pet. 3:8-9). Our limitations do not alter God's veracity (Hab. 2:3).

Another term for the Veracity of God is His Faithfulness. Jesus Christ is The Amen, the faithful and true Witness (Rev. 3:14). He will even take this name into the Battle of Armageddon as one of His two great battlefield names—Faithful and True (Rev. 19:11).

Like all of God's attributes, Veracity is a stark contrast between Deity and humanity (Rom. 3:4).

Veracity also supplies a stark contrast with the Adversary! He “does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks the lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (Jn. 8:44). How could such a murderer and liar claim to ever become “like the Most High God” (Isa. 14:14)?

Just as with Immutability, our own salvation is meaningless if God is not Veracity. If God is personally capable of communicating falsehood then why should I trust His promise of eternal life? In fact, the Bible describes rejection of the gospel as rejection of God's Veracity (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 5:10).

