

The Essence of God

The phrase "Essence of God" is a theological term used to refer to God's personal characteristics, or to the facets of His personality. Sometimes the term "Attributes of God" is used to refer to God's essence. The "attributes", or the "essence", of God are His primary characteristics, so they cannot be completely communicated to man. They can be described to a degree, but they cannot be fully defined.

Finite man cannot define the infinite. The Bible is the Word of God, and as such it reveals those facts about the Creator that He has seen fit to reveal about Himself.

Man supposes that God thinks like a man. We think God wants revenge, because when we are insulted, we want revenge. When we are cheated, we want immediate justice and retribution. We are indignant and shocked at the behavior of others, so we expect God to be shocked.

But God does not feel insulted. He does not feel cheated. He owns everything. He is not indignant, temperamental, or emotional. He does not throw tantrums (or lightning bolts). He is not surprised or shocked by anything. He is never depressed or moody.

God is not arrogant or egotistical. He knows Himself, is self-assured, and is humble.

God is a rational, logical, stable-minded, patient; and all of His thinking is backed up by His omniscience. He approaches every issue from the basis of His perfect character, the subject of this study.

God approaches every issue regarding human beings out of His love for all men. His thinking toward man takes all of His attributes into consideration, but Love is always present. It is God's thinking about us, in love, that is His perfect grace thinking. He is always gracious, always thinks grace.

Spirituality is one of God's primary attributes. God is immaterial, in a universe that is made up of both material and immaterial. God has revealed something of what He is in the Word, but only He knows Himself fully. We must rely on what is written in the Bible for any understanding of what God is like.

The fact that God is a spiritual being means that He lives. Spirituality implies life. Jer. 10:10 and 1 Th. 1:9 tell us that God is alive and well. The life of God has no beginning and no ending. God is eternal. The Christian shares God's eternal life, but since his eternal life has a beginning at the time he accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour, his eternal life is properly called "everlasting life".

All of the characteristics of the divine essence are present in God at all times, but not all are manifest at the same time, just as while all colors are present in a ray of white light, the individual colors can be seen only under certain conditions of reflection or refraction. Various attributes of God can be seen in certain situations. For example:

- In salvation, God's love and eternal life are apparent.
- In judgment, His righteousness and justice are manifested.
- In God's faithfulness, His immutability and veracity are shown.
- In God's Plan, His omniscience and sovereignty are seen.
- In God's will, sovereignty is paramount.
- In God's revelation, veracity, love, and omniscience are obvious.

The rest of this paper is devoted to a description of the ten characteristics of the Essence of God as seen in the various Bible passages that describe them.

Sovereignty

GOD IS THE SUPREME BEING OF THE UNIVERSE.

Deut. 4:39 Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord, he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath; there is none else.

I Sam. 2:6-8 The Lord killeth, and maketh alive; he bringeth down to Sheol, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich; he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the refuse, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory; for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them.

I Chron. 29:11 Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine. This is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all.

II Chron. 20:6 And said, O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? And rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the nations? And in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?

Psalms 83:18 That men may know that thou, whose name alone is the Lord, are the Most High over all the earth.

Isaiah 45:5,6 I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me. That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else.

Acts 17:24 God, who made the world and all things in it, seeing that He is the Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands.

God has a will. He is eternal, infinite, and self-determining. He makes decisions, policies and sets up principles. This is divine volition.

Daniel 4:35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?

Heb. 6:13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by himself.

Psalms 47:7 For God is the King of all the earth; sing ye praises with understanding.

Psalms 115:3 But our God is in the heavens; He hath done whatsoever he pleased.

In His sovereignty, God decided to give man a free will. The meeting place of man's will and God's will is the cross. (John 3:16)

God's sovereign plan for the human race is first, salvation, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 16:31); second, during life on earth as a believer, to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to grow in

Christ (Eph 5:18; I Peter 3:18); and third, to have eternal life in heaven, in a resurrection body.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

God is absolutely holy or righteous.

Psalms 145:17 The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works.

Lev. 19:2b Ye shall be holy; for I, the Lord your God, am holy.

I Sam. 2:2 There is none holy like the Lord; for there is none beside thee, neither is there any rock like our God.

Psalms 22:3 But thou art holy, O thou who inhabitest the praises of Israel.

Psalms 111:9 He sent redemption unto His people; He hath commanded His covenant forever; holy and reverend is His name.

Isaiah 6:3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.

God is good.

Psalms 25:8 Good and upright is the Lord; therefore will He teach sinners in the way.

Psalms 34:8 Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusteth in him.

Psalms 86:5 For thou, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy unto all those who call upon thee.

God is free from sin.

II Cor. 5:21 For he hath made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

I John 1:5 This, then, is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

God is perfect in His character and person.

Deut. 32:4 He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He.

Psalms 7:9 Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish the just; for the righteous God tests the minds and hearts.

Rom. 1:17 For in it is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written The

just shall live by faith.

Psalms 11:7; 97:6; 111:3; 119:137

Jer. 23:6

John 17:25

Rom. 10:3

I John 2:29.

God is righteous in all His attitudes and actions

Deut. 32:4

2 Sam. 22:31

Psalms 119:137; 145:17

Dan. 9:14

Rev. 19:2

In the application of the concept of God's righteousness to the unbeliever, it is important to remember that His righteousness is absolute. This means that He cannot fellowship with sin. He must demand the same perfection of His creatures. Man's concept of righteousness is relative (Isa. 64:6); but no one can measure up to the divine standard nor achieve absolute righteousness by self effort. However, the righteousness of God is freely available to all who believe. Psalm 14:3; Rom. 3:22-23 and Tit. 3:5

JUSTICE

God is just and cannot be unfair. His justice demands that disobedience against His laws be punished. Justice administers the penalty that righteousness demands.

Psalm 19:9 ...the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

Psalm 50:6 ...for God is judge Himself.

Psalm 58:11 ...verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

Rom. 3:26 To declare at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

Heb. 10:30,31 For we know him that hath said, "Vengeance belongs unto Me, I will recompense, saith the Lord." And again, "The Lord shall judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Heb. 12:23

1 John 1:9

Rev. 15:3

God's justice is satisfied because of His grace provision of redemption. The Lord Jesus Christ, through His substitutionary, effective death on the cross, transferred the guilt of the sinner onto Himself, thus satisfying the justice of God. God is now free to pardon the sinner and justify the one who accepts His saving grace. God is equally free to justly condemn all who reject salvation. The basis of their indictment is works, never sins.

1 Pet. 2:24

Rom. 3:21-28; 4:5,5:12; 6:23 and 8:1

John 3:18,36; 5:28-30.

Grace always precedes judgment.

LOVE

God is eternal and unchangeable love.

Jer. 31:3 The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.

God, in His sovereignty, decided to treat man in grace. It is His love that motivates His grace. Righteousness and justice stood in the way because of the sin barrier between man and God. In love, God the Father sent His Son to the cross to die for the sins of the whole world. Righteousness and justice are thus satisfied, the barrier is removed, and love and grace can be given to men.

Eph. 2:8,9

Isa. 59:2

John 3:16.

ETERNAL LIFE

God is absolute existence.

Ex. 3:14 And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

John 8:58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

God has neither beginning nor end.

God existed in eternity past, and He will exist forever.

Gen. 1:1 In the beginning, God...

Isa. 43:13 Yea, before the day was I am He; and there is none that can deliver out of My hand: I will work, and who shall let it?

Col. 1:17 And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.

Deut. 32:40; 33:27

Job 36:26

Psalms 9:7; 90:2and (verse does not exist) 135:13

Lam. 5:19

Hab. 3:6

John 1:1-4

1 Tim. 1:17

1 John 5:11

Rev. 1:8 and 21:6 (not applicable)

The believer in Christ has everlasting life.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 10:28,29 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

verse repeated above

John 8:51: 14:1-3

The unbeliever will experience everlasting punishment.

Matt 25:46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

OMNISCIENCE

God is all knowledge.

1 Sam. 2:3 Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed.

Job 26:6 Hell is naked before Him, and destruction hath no covering.

Job 31:4 Doth he not see my ways, and count all my steps?

Job 34:21 For His eyes are upon the ways of

man, and He seeth all his goings.

Psalms 139:1-12

Psalms 147:4 He telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names.

Jer. 16:17 For Mine eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from My face, neither is their iniquity hid from Mine eyes.

Matt. 10:29,30 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Heb. 4:13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

Job 37:16; 42:2

Eze. 11:5

God is infinite in wisdom and understanding.

1 Sam. 16:7 ...for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.

Psalms 44:21 Shall not God search this out? for He knoweth the secrets of the heart.

Prov. 3:19 The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath He established the heavens.

Jer. 17:10 I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

Jer. 51:15 He hath made the earth by His power, He hath established the world by His wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by His understanding.

Matt. 6:8 ...for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him.

Rom. 8:27 And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Psalms 147:5

Prov. 17:3

Isa. 40:13,14

Nahum 1:7

Rom. 11:33

1 John 3:20

God knows the end from the beginning which is called foreknowledge.

Isa. 41:26; 42:9; 43:9 and 46:10

Acts 2:23; not the right context

1 Pet. 1:2

As God, the Lord Jesus Christ knew all things and all men.

Matt. 9:4

John 2:24; 19:28; 21:17

Application to believers:

Job 23:10 But He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

Matt. 6:31-33 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

James 1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

James 3:17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

OMNIPRESENCE

God is ever present, neither limited by time nor space, immanent and transcendent.

Jer. 23:24

Acts 17:27

The heavens cannot contain God.

1 Kings 8:27

Acts 17:24

Heaven is His throne and the earth His footstool.

Deut. 4:39

Isa. 66:1

Man cannot escape the presence of God.

Job 34:21,22

Psalm 139:7-10

Prov. 15:3

The Christian can take great comfort in the presence of God.

Gen. 28:15 And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

Josh. 1:9 Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage: be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whitherso ever thou goest.

Ex. 33:14

Psalm 121:3,4

Matt. 18:20

1 Cor. 3:16

Heb. 13:5

OMNIPOTENCE

God is all powerful and limitless in ability.

Gen. 17:1; 18:14

Job 26:7; 42:2

Psalms 24:8; 93:1 and 147:5

Isa. 40:26; 50:2

Jer. 27:5; 32:27

Mark 14:36

Luke 1:37

Rev. 4:8

God is limitless in authority.

Psalm 33:9

Rom. 13:1

Heb. 1:3

(Verse does not seem to fit the context.

Scriptures show the manifestation of God's power.

2 Chron. 16:9; 25:8

Psalm 74:13

The power of God's Son.

Matt. 9:6; 28:18

John 10:18; 17:2,3

The application of God's omnipotence to the Christian way of life.

1 Sam. 17:47
 Psalm 27:1
 Isa. 26:4; 40:29
 Jer. 33:3
 Acts 1:8
 1 Cor. 15:43
 2 Cor. 9:8
 Eph. 1:19; 3:20
 Phil. 4:13
 2 Tim. 1:12
 Heb. 7:25
 1 Peter 1:5

IMMUTABILITY

God is neither capable of nor susceptible to change.
 Psalm 102:26,27; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 1:12
 God is absolute stability.
 Isa. 40:28
 James 1:17
 God's Word and His works are unchanging.
 Psalm 119:89
 Eccl. 3:14
 Isa. 40:8
 God's great faithfulness is a product of His immutability.
 Psalms 36:5; 89:33; 119:90
 Lam. 3:23
 He is faithful to keep His promises.
 Num. 23:19
 1 Kings 8:56
 2 Cor. 1:20
 Tit. 1:2
 Heb. 10:23; 11:11
 He is faithful to forgive, 1 JOHN 1:9.
 He is faithful to keep us saved, 2 TIM. 2:12,13.
 He is faithful to deliver in times of pressure, 1 COR. 10:13.
 He is faithful in suffering, 1 PET. 4:19
 He is faithful to provide in eternity, 1 THESS. 5:24.

He is faithful to stabilize the believer,
 2 THESS. 3:3
 The faithfulness of Christ.
 Heb. 3:1,2; 13:8
 Rev. 1:5; 19:11

VERACITY

God's methods work, DEUT. 32:4
 God's truth is manifested:
 -In His ways.
 Psalms 25:10; 86:15
 Rev. 15:3
 -In His works
 Psalms 33:4; 111:7,8
 Dan. 4:37
 -In His Word
 2 Sam. 7:28
 1 Kings 17:24
 Psalms (may not fit in this context); 119:142,151; 138:2
 John 8:45; 17:17
 2 Cor. 6:7
 Eph. 1:13
 The Veracity of the Godhead:
 The Father
 Psalm 31:5
 Isa. 65:16
 Jer. 10:10
 John 3:33; 17:3
 Rom. 3:4
 The Son
 John 1:14; 8:32; 14:6
 1 John 5:20
 Rev. 16:7; 19:11
 The Holy Spirit
 John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13
 1 John 5:6
 Application of God's veracity to the Christian.
 Prov. 6:16-19
 Matt. 5:37

2 Tim. 2:15

1 John 4:6

The Trinity

There are three distinct persons of the Godhead, each possessing the entire essence of deity. The three persons comprise what the Scripture represents as the ONE TRUE GOD. In the unity of the Godhead (Acts 17:29; Rom. 1:20 and Col. 2:9) there are three persons on one substance, power and eternity (Isa. 48:16; Luke 3:22; John

14:16; Rom. 15:30; 1 Cor. 12:4-6 and 1 John 4:13,14)

The full title of God is "God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit". (Matt. 28:19 and 2 Cor. 13:14). Each person is made up of the same divine characteristics, making each equal to either of the other two (John 10:30 and 16:15). Therefore, when the Bible speaks of God as being One, it is a reference to essence; when speaking of the members of the Godhead, it is a reference to the persons.

	FATHER	SON	HOLY SPIRIT
SOVEREIGNTY	Psalm 103:19	Rev. 19:16	1 Cor. 12:11
RIGHTEOUSNESS	Matthew 13:43 (better fit)	Heb. 1:8	John 3:8
LOVE	1 John 4:8	1 John 3:16	Gal. 5:22-23
JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS	Deut. 32:4	Zech. 9:9	Luke 2:25 (possible fit)
ETERNAL LIFE	Jer. 10:10	Col. 1:17	Heb. 9:14
OMNISCIENT	Psalm 147:4,5	Col. 2:2-3	1 Cor. 2:10,11
OMNIPRESENCE	Psalm 139:8	Mt. 28:20	Psalm 139:7
OMNIPOTENCE	Psalm 147:5 Mt. 19:26	Isa. 11:2	
IMMUTABILITY	Psalm 102:26,27	Heb. 13:8	
VERACITY	John 17:3	John 14:6	1 John 5:6

Grace Notes is a ministry of Austin Bible Church, Austin, Texas

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For an index of topics, or information about regular Bible studies, write to:

Warren Doud

Grace Notes

1705 Aggie Lane

Austin, Texas 78757

E-Mail: wdoud@gracenotes.info

URL: <http://www.gracenotes.info>