

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 Savior, 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 today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there

is no other.

1 Sam. 2:6-8. The LORD kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up.

The LORD makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts.

He raises the poor from the dust, He lifts the needy from the ash heap To make them sit with nobles, And inherit a seat of honor; For the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, And He set the world on them.

1 Chron. 29:11. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O LORD, and You exalt Yourself as head over all.

2 Chron. 20:6. and he said, "O LORD, the God of our fathers, are You not God in the heavens? And are You not ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Your hand so that no one can stand against You.

Psalm 83:18. That they may know that You alone, whose name is the LORD, Are the Most High over all the earth.

Isaiah 45:5,6. I am the LORD, and there is no other; Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me;

That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun That there is no one besides Me.

Acts 17:24,25. The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;

nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things

God has a will.

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

Daniel 4:35. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And *among* the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'

Heb. 6:13,14. For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, Saying, I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you.

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

Psalm 115:3. But our God is in the heavens; He has 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.

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

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

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

Psalm 22:3. But you are holy, you who inhabits the praises of Israel.

Psalm 111:9. He sent redemption unto His people; He has 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.

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

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

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

God is free from sin.

2 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.

1 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.

Psalm 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

1 John 2:29.

God is righteous in all His 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.

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 judges in the earth.

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

Heb. 10:30,31. For we know him that has 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 you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you.

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 you say to 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

Lam. 5:19

Hab. 3:6

John 1:1-4

1 Tim. 1:17

1 John 5:11

Rev. 1:8

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 believes 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.

John 8:51

John 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 arrogance 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. Does he not see my ways, and count all my steps?

Job 34:21. For His eyes are upon the ways of man, and He sees all his goings.

Psalms 139:1-12

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

Jer. 16:17. For My eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from My face, neither is their iniquity hid from My 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 sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

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

Prov. 3:19. The Lord by wisdom has founded the earth; by understanding has 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 has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heaven by His understanding.

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

Rom. 8:27. And He that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because He makes 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

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 knows the way that I take: when He has 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, How shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek 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 upbraids 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 entreated, 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 you, and will keep you in all places where you go, and will bring you again into this land; for I will not leave you, until I have done that which I have spoken to you of.

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

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

John 8:45; 17:17

2 Cor. 6:7

Eph. 1:13

The Veracity of the Father

Psalm 31:5

Isa. 65:16

Jer. 10:10

John 3:33; 17:3

Rom. 3:4

The Veracity of the Son

John 1:14; 8:32; 14:6

1 John 5:20

Rev. 16:7; 19:11

The Veracity of 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

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