

# FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

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### I. INTRODUCTION

God's existence and power are clearly seen in the created world in which we live. These things are shown to *all* men, and can be known by them, apart from any direct revelation by God through His spoken or written Word. The creation points unmistakably to a divine Creator (Romans 1:19,20). Paul, when preaching to unregenerate pagans, said of God, "*He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness*" (Acts 14:17). God has not left man without an indication of His presence. Men who deny the existence of God, the Bible labels as "fools" (Psalm 14:1), who suppress the truth which the creation plainly reveals (Romans 1:18). The created world is evidence for God's existence and power which cannot honestly be denied or ignored. Creation points to its own Author, the Almighty God.

However, a deeper understanding of God's nature and character, beyond the fact that He exists and is powerful, can be gained only through the Word of God. Since the beginning of creation, God has communicated with men, progressively revealing more and more about Himself. We have this revelation of God, today, in the scriptures. The Bible is the means by which God brings us to a deeper understanding of Himself and His ways. It is through the scriptures that we come to understand that God is holy and righteous. The Bible reveals God's love to us by showing all that He did for us in Christ. He has not hidden Himself from man. Through His revealed Word, God has openly showed His nature and character.

### II. THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

When God created man, He created him in His own image and likeness (Genesis 1:26). Thus, in many respects, man is like God; God is a spirit, and He created man a spirit being. He gave to man a free will and a rational mind, which is able to reason. But there are some attributes which belong to God alone, and to no other created being. These are attributes which define God as the Creator, the Almighty One of the universe. "*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth*" (Genesis 1:1). In the beginning, before anything was,

Because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

*Romans 1:19,20*

And yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.

*Acts 14:17*

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds. There is no one who does good.

*Psalm 14:1*

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

*Romans 1:18*

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

*Genesis 1:26*

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

*Genesis 1:1*

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And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.  
*Colossians 1:17*

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."  
*Revelation 1:8*

Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless."  
*Genesis 17:1*

And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come."  
*Revelation 4:8*

Ah Lord God! Behold, Thou hast made the heavens and the earth by Thy great power and by Thine outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for Thee.  
*Jeremiah 32:17*

Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.  
*Isaiah 46:10,11*

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.  
*Isaiah 40:28*

God was there. God existed before anything existed; no one and nothing created Him, because He has always been (Colossians 1:17; Revelation 1:8). God's pre-existence places Him in a position of absolute supremacy. Everything that exists is there because God created it. "*Before the mountains were born, or Thou didst give birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God*" (Psalm 90:2).

There are many created beings in the universe, and they all bear, to some degree, the imprint of their Maker. But there is only one Creator, and that is God. Thus, the qualities which define God as supreme are those that belong only to Him. God is all-powerful (*omnipotent*); He is all-knowing (*omniscient*); and He is present everywhere at the same time (*omnipresent*). No man or angel can claim these attributes, for they are what define God as God. There is only one God, and He is supreme over all that He has created.

### A. OMNIPOTENCE

God is all-powerful. That is one of His exclusive attributes. The Bible describes God's acts and accomplishments as those which only an omnipotent God could perform. "*To whom then will you liken Me that I should be his equal?*" says the Holy One. '*Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power not one of them is missing*' " (Isaiah 40:25,26). There is no created being, whether human or angelic, which equals God in power and ability. Throughout the scriptures, God is referred to as "Almighty" (Genesis 17:1; Genesis 35:11; Revelation 4:8). God is Almighty because **only He is all-powerful.**

Because He is omnipotent, there is nothing that is beyond God's ability (Jeremiah 32:17). God's power is sufficient to bring about all His purposes and plans (Isaiah 46:10,11). All this God can do without in any way diminishing Himself. When He exerts power, or endues one of His creatures with it, His own power is never lessened. "*The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired*" (Isaiah 40:28).

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God is all-powerful, and so is able to do whatever He wills. However, God's will is always consistent with His divine nature. He will never use His power to do anything which contradicts that nature. Thus we find that there are certain things that God *cannot* do. The Bible says that **God cannot lie** (Titus 1:2), and **He cannot deny Himself** (II Timothy 2:13). God's supreme power always operates within the confines of His righteous and loving nature. God cannot sin, nor can He ignore sin in others, because to do so would be to deny His very nature. Omnipotence does not mean that God uses His power arbitrarily, irrespective of the limits which His character sets. God is not governed by His power; He always governs that power in keeping with His divine character and nature.

### B. OMNIPRESENCE

Another one of God's divine attributes is that of omnipresence. Omnipresence means that God is present everywhere at the same time. This does not mean that God and creation are one and the same (Pantheism); God is separate and distinct from His creation. But He is dynamically present everywhere in that creation. "*Am I a God who is near,*" says the Lord, *'And not a God far off? Can a man hide himself in hiding places, so I do not see him?'* declares the Lord. *'Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?'* declares the Lord" (Jeremiah 23:23,24). God's presence fills the universe that He made. David declared that no matter where he went, the presence of God's Spirit was there with him (Psalm 139:7-12). When Solomon dedicated the Temple, the "house of the Lord," he confessed that God's presence could not be confined to a building (II Chronicles 6:18).

Only God is omnipresent. He shares this attribute with no other created being. No man and no angel is present everywhere at the same time. (This means that Satan, a fallen angel, is not omnipresent. He can only be in one place at any given moment of time.) Because He is omnipresent, nothing escapes God's notice. Even the smallest sparrow does not go unnoticed by God (Luke 12:6). No good thing done goes unnoticed by God, and no sin committed goes unobserved by the all-present One (Psalm 94:7-9).

In the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago.

*Titus 1:2*

If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself.

*II Timothy 2:13*

Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Thy hand will lead me, and Thy right hand will lay hold of me. If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, and the light around me will be night," even the darkness is not dark to Thee. And the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to Thee.

*Psalm 139:7-12*

"But will God indeed dwell with mankind on the earth? Behold heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain Thee; how much less this house which I have built."

*II Chronicles 6:18*

Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? And yet not one of them is forgotten before God.

*Luke 12:6*

And they have said, "The Lord does not see, nor does the God of Jacob pay heed." Pay heed, you senseless among the people; and when will you understand, stupid ones? He who planted the ear, does He not hear? He who formed the eye, does He not see?

*Psalm 94:7-9*

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Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as His counselor has informed Him? With whom did He consult and who gave Him understanding? And who taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge, and informed Him of the way of understanding?

*Isaiah 40:13,14*

"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth! Tell Me, if you have understanding. Have you understood the expanse of the earth? Tell Me, if you know all this."

*Job 38:4,18*

Great is our Lord, and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite.

*Psalm 147:5*

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love.

*Ephesians 1:3,4*

O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me. Thou dost know when I sit down and when I rise up; Thou dost understand my thought from afar, Thou dost scrutinize my path and my lying down, and art intimately acquainted with all my ways.

*Psalm 139:1-3*

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.

*Psalm 139:23,24*

### C. OMNISCIENCE

God's omnipresence points directly to another of His divine attributes, that of omniscience. To be omniscient means to be all-knowing. Omniscience is intrinsic to God's very nature. His knowledge is not derived from any source outside of Himself. In other words, nobody "taught" God anything! "*Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as His counselor has informed Him? With whom did He consult and who gave Him understanding? And who taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge, and informed Him of the way of understanding?*" (Isaiah 40:13,14). God has always known everything there is to know. He sees and knows all that has happened in the past, all that is now happening, and all that will happen in the future.

Only God is omniscient. No man or angel can claim to be all-knowing. God's reprimand of Job is a commentary on the immeasurability of God's understanding as compared with the finiteness of man's understanding (Job 38:4,18). Only God is infinite in understanding (Psalm 147:5). Man is finite in his understanding. Any knowledge which a man has was derived from an outside source. But God's knowledge is not externally derived; it is an eternal attribute of His infinite nature. "*Great is our Lord, and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite*" (Psalm 147:5).

The Bible says that God knew about us before the foundation of the world, and predestined us to adoption as His very own children (Ephesians 1:3,4). He knows everything about us, and is familiar with all of our thoughts (Psalm 139:1-3); nothing is hidden from Him. If we live uprightly, we can derive comfort from knowing that God is aware of everything we do and the motivation behind our actions. In fact, God knows us better than we know ourselves. That is why David prayed, "*Search me, O Lord, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way*" (Psalm 139:23,24). And, those who do not live uprightly must not think that their actions go unobserved by the all-knowing, all-seeing God.

TRINITY OF GOD

### D. THE TRINITY

The trinity of the God-head is one of the profound mysteries of Christianity. To understand the Trinity is to understand

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how God can be one God, and yet three distinct persons simultaneously. A proper perception of the Trinity is essential, as misunderstanding of this truth has, in the past, led to error and heresy within the Church. The three distinct persons of the God-head are the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. Each of these persons is fully God, none being subordinate to the others. And yet these three persons are one God, not three Gods. The paradox of the Trinity is how there can be unity and plurality in God at the same time. These two concepts must be held in balance in order to retain a correct view of the God-head. Emphasizing the unity of God, at the expense of the plurality of God, will lead to error. By the same token, emphasizing the plurality of God at the expense of His unity, will cause the same problem.

The Trinity of the God-head involves two paradoxical concepts, the unity of God and the distinction of persons within the God-head. We will look at each of these separately.

### 1. Unity within the God-head

*"Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one!"* (Deuteronomy 6:4; Exodus 20:3-7). When God took the children of Israel out of Egypt, He called them away from the polytheism (i.e. worship of many gods) of the surrounding nations, telling them that there is only one God in heaven — the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This theme is reiterated throughout the Old Testament; there are no gods but God alone (Isaiah 43:10; 45:5). God is called the *"only true God"* (John 17:3), because every idol which people might worship is in reality a *"false god"* (I Corinthians 8:4), which the scripture labels *"lying vanities."* (Read Jeremiah 10:1-16).

### 2. Distinction of persons within the God-head

The scriptures clearly teach that there is a plurality within the unified God-head. *"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.'" (Genesis 1:26).* God is not addressing the angelic host here, for the creation of man is ascribed exclusively to God. The use of the plurals "Us" and "Our" in this verse is a reference to the three Persons of the Trinity. These Persons are distinguished at the baptism of Jesus (Read Luke 3:21,22). Here we see the

*"You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations, of those who hate me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain."*

*Exodus 20:3-7*

*"And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."*

*John 17:3*

Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one.

*I Corinthians 8:4*

Now it came about when all the people were baptized, that Jesus also was baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased."

*Luke 3:21,22*

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In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

*I John 4:10*

So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.

*Mark 16:19*

"Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear."

*Acts 2:33*

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."

*Matthew 28:19*

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

*II Corinthians 13:14*

"Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 'Father, glorify Thy name.' " There came therefore a voice out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

*John 12:27,28*

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

*John 1:1*

The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

*I John 4:8*

And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

*I John 4:16*

Son, being endued with the Holy Spirit, while the Father speaks His approval from heaven.

The three Persons of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) are indeed Persons, and not merely manifestations or modes of God. Jesus, the Son, was sent by the Father (I John 4:10), and returned to the Father (John 17:13), at whose right hand He is now seated (Mark 16:19). The Spirit who was promised by the Father, was sent by the Son after His ascension (Acts 2:33). This is one of many examples in which we see the distinction between the Persons of the Trinity (Matthew 28:19; II Corinthians 13:14; John 14:16,17,20-23). These scriptures become absurd and meaningless if the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are viewed merely as manifestations of one God. Manifestations don't converse with one another, neither do they express mutual affection for one another (John 12:27,28; 17:24). These are the actions and activities of persons, not manifestations or modes.

Each of the Persons within the Trinity is fully God. God is not divided. The Bible says of Jesus, "*For in Him (Jesus) all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form*" (Colossians 2:9). Jesus is no less God than the Father Himself (John 1:1). The scriptures also clearly equate the Holy Spirit with God. When Peter rebuked Ananias, for "*lying to the Holy Spirit,*" he said, "*You have not lied to men, but to God*" (Acts 5:3,4). The Trinity of the God-head must not be viewed as three Gods. There is only one God. **God's being is in three Persons, each one equal to the other, each one fully God, each one possessing all the attributes and characteristics that make God who He is.**

### III. THE NATURE OF GOD

God's nature is best described by the word **Love**. Although this isn't the only characteristic of His nature, it supercedes all others and is the one by which all the actions of God recorded in the Bible must be judged. The Bible says that **God is Love** (I John 4:8,16). He defines what the word Love means.

As believers, we must keep this revelation of God's character

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foremost in our thinking. **God is Love, and He desires only good for us all the days of our lives.** Because of His love, God promised a redeemer on the very day that man fell (Genesis 3:15). Because of His love, He fulfilled that promise by sending His own Son (John 3:16). Because of His love, He redeemed us through Christ and seated us with Himself in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:4-6).

Our perception of God's character must be rooted in a revelation of the love of God. Unless a person sees clearly how much God loves him, his concept of God will be twisted and marred by fear. God's intentions toward him will never be clear in his own thinking.

### A. MAN'S IMAGE OF GOD

To clearly understand God's love for us, we must begin by erasing from our minds some common misunderstandings about God's character. These misconceptions are prevalent among unbelievers, and a surprising number of Christians. They are rooted in the Fall and used by Satan to paint a dark and twisted picture of God in men's minds.

#### 1. Sin distorts man's image of God

God created man to have fellowship with Him. Sin not only destroyed that fellowship, but also distorted man's image of God. Because of sin, man lost sight of the fact that God is a **loving Father**. The fear that entered into him because of sin (Genesis 3:10) kept man from being able to see God as He really is. Sin put God far away from man; He was now a Being that struck terror in the minds of those to whom He appeared. Recall the Israelites' reaction to the manifestation of God's presence (Exodus 19:18,19). They told Moses to talk to God for them; they would stay in the background — at a safe distance.

#### 2. Satan defames God's character

Using man's distorted conception of God to his advantage, the enemy seeks to this day to deceive men about God's true character and intentions. In II Corinthians 4:4, Paul says the following concerning unbelievers: ". . . *in whose case, the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*" The god of this world is

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel."

*Genesis 3:15*

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

*John 3:16*

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.

*Ephesians 2:4-6*

And he said, "I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."

*Genesis 3:10*

Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently. When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder.

*Exodus 19:18,19*

Then they said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, lest we die."

*Exodus 20:19*

In whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

*II Corinthians 4:4*



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Namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

*II Corinthians 5:19,20*

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

*James 1:5*

For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord gives grace and glory; no good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.

*Psalms 84:11*

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.

*Ephesians 1:7*

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

*Romans 5:8*

And He sent messengers on ahead of Him. And they went, and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make arrangements for Him. And they did not receive Him, because He was journeying with His face toward Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."] And they went on to another village.

*Luke 9:52-56*

Satan. He is the one who is trying to convince unbelievers that God doesn't love them. He is the one who blinds their minds to the gospel, a gospel which boldly proclaims to all men that **God loves them**, that He has reconciled Himself to them through His Son; God is entreating them even now, "*Be reconciled to Me!*" (II Corinthians 5:19,20). Satan must keep unbelievers ignorant of this gospel revelation, for if they understood it, there would be no question as to whom they would serve.

Not only has Satan deceived and blinded unbelievers, but he has also deceived many believers. He comes to them with the commonly accepted lie that God is a withholder. The Bible clearly states that God is a **liberal giver** (James 1:5), and that He will *not* withhold any good thing from those who walk uprightly (Psalm 84:11). **Read Genesis 3:1-5.** In this account of Satan's temptation of Eve, the tempter told Eve that the real reason God didn't want them to eat from the tree of knowledge was because He was holding out on them. Satan planted in Eve's mind the idea that God's intentions toward her were not altogether loving, and that God was *withholding* good things from her.

Believers must settle in their own hearts and minds that God loves them, and is not holding out on them. The fact that God sent His own Son to die for us is eternal, unfading *proof* that He is a **liberal giver** and not a withholder (Ephesians 1:7; Romans 5:8). "*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not with Him freely give us all things?*" (Romans 8:32).

### 3. Religion affects man's thinking

Religion (by which we mean a set of ideas about God formed largely by the traditions of men, rather than the Word of God) has done much to promote an incorrect image of God in men's minds. Traditions of men have portrayed God as being an angry ogre, ready to strike down any offender. He is never thought of as loving, only stern and austere. This type of thinking was prevalent in Jesus' day, even among His own disciples. **Read Luke 9:52-56.** James and John (called the "Sons of Thunder" by Jesus in Mark 3:17) were ready to call fire down from heaven. They assumed that God's reaction to the Samaritan rejection of Christ would be the same as

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theirs. Jesus' response to them shows that they did not in any way understand the heart of the Father God, nor His reason for sending the Son. **James and John projected onto God their own ways of thinking and responding to people.**

Many Christians make the same mistake with regard to God's love toward them. They assume that God's ways and thoughts are just like man's ways and thoughts; they project their own carnal thinking about themselves onto God. Many times they base their concept of God's ways upon what *they* would do if *they* were God, just as James and John did. But, God says, "*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts*" (Isaiah 55:8,9). Never assume that you know what God is thinking unless He tells you through His Word. Presumption always leads to misunderstanding.

### B. GOD'S IMAGE REVEALED — JESUS

As we have already seen, man's concept of God is blackened by sin and twisted by religious tradition. But, God has a way to show man what He is really like, to reveal His true nature. That way is **Jesus**.

In Hebrews 1:3, Jesus is called "*the radiance of His (God's) glory, the exact representation of His nature.*" Jesus exactly represents God and His great love for man. He is, in effect, God's statement to the world: "Here is what I am like! This is how much I love you!"

In every way Jesus exemplifies the love of God, not only in the fact that He was sent by God (John 3:16), and that He died for our sins (Romans 5:8), but also in the manner in which He conducted His ministry while here on the earth. The teaching and lifestyle of Jesus during His earth walk reveal a God with a heart full of compassion and love.

#### 1. His teaching/Love

Whenever Jesus instructed His disciples, He always referred to God as "**Father**" and "**your Father**." The Jews knew God as "Yaweh," a name considered so holy that they were not allowed to say it audibly. Jesus came calling Yaweh, "Daddy"

And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

*Hebrews 1:3*

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

*John 3:16*

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

*Romans 5:8*

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"That your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you. Therefore do not be like them: for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him. Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name.'"

*Matthew 6:4,8,9*

Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will.

*Ephesians 1:4,5*

"Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened. Or what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, will he give him a stone? Or if he shall ask for a fish, will he not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!"

*Matthew 7:7-11*

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways," declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

*Isaiah 55:8,9*

"In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves me, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from the Father."

*John 16:26,27*

(Matthew 6:4,8,9). He knew that God was by nature a Father, and that before the foundation of the world, God had wanted a family (Ephesians 1:4,5). So He introduced Yaweh to the world as a "heavenly Father," One that is infinitely good and infinitely loving.

In Matthew 7:7-11, Jesus was teaching His disciples that God would answer their prayers and that the reason He would do so was because He is a loving Father. He said that no normal father would give his child stones and snakes when asked for bread and fish; in other words, no father gives evil, harmful things to his children. He would be considered warped and sadistic if he did so. The Father God is far better than any "evil," earthly father. "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, **HOW MUCH MORE shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!**" (Matthew 7:11). God doesn't give "stones" and "snakes" to His children; if a believer is getting "stones" and "snakes" in his life, he can be sure that they are not coming from the Father in heaven.

"In that day you will ask (the Father) in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request the Father on your behalf, for the Father Himself loves you . . ." (John 16:26,27). Jesus is saying that He won't have to ask the Father for us; God will answer because He loves us. Jesus prayed, at the end of His time on earth that ". . . the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them even as Thou didst love Me" (John 17:23). No one has any difficulty believing that God loves Jesus; Jesus is His only begotten Son. God would do anything for Jesus. But, here we are told that **God loves us just as much as He loves Jesus**. This is in keeping with the fact that God loved man so much, that He considered it worth the price of His own Son to redeem him from the hand of sin and Satan.

### 2. His life/Love personified

Not only did Jesus' teachings reflect the love of God, but His earthly life did as well. We see the compassion of God flowing from Jesus toward the lost, the hungry, the maimed, and the sick. He ". . . went about **doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him**" (Acts 10:38). When Jesus was moved with compassion, and healed

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the sick (Matthew 14:14), it was because God the Father wanted the sick healed. When Jesus was moved with compassion and fed the multitude (Matthew 15:32-37), it was because God the Father wanted the people fed. When Jesus was moved with compassion and told the disciples to pray the Lord to send laborers forth (Matthew 9:36-38), it was because God the Father wanted the lost multitudes saved. **Jesus was moved with compassion because God was moved with compassion.**

Jesus showed us beyond any doubt that God is a loving Father. His words and deeds were witnesses to this fact. Jesus didn't come representing an angry ogre, ready to condemn and destroy. Jesus came showing us a Father that wanted to reconcile to Himself the creature that He loved, a Father who wanted to save lost man from a life of death.

*"For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved"* (John 3:17 KJV).

### C. KNOWING GOD'S LOVE

The Church needs a revelation of the **Love of God**. We need to see it so clearly that our first thoughts at the start of the day are of God's love for us. Ignorance of the fact that God loves them has left many Christians spiritually paralyzed, unable to move with any boldness in the things of God. God has ". . . granted unto us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him . . ." (II Peter 1:3). We will not be able to fully appropriate all the things that God has given to us, unless we come to a full knowledge of who God is; we must know that He perfectly defines the word **Love**.

#### 1. Renewing our minds

Paul prayed for the Ephesian church, a church noted for its maturity in the Lord, that they "*being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God*" (Ephesians 3:17-19). Paul was praying that they receive a **supernatural revelation** of God's love. It is only by a revelation of the Holy

And when He came out, He saw a great multitude, and felt compassion for them, and healed their sick.  
*Matthew 14:14*

And Jesus summoned to Himself His disciples, and said, "I feel compassion for the multitude because they have remained with Me now for three days and have nothing to eat: and I do not wish to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way." And the disciples said to Him, "Where would we get so many loaves in a desert place to satisfy such a great multitude?" And Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven, and a few small fish." And He directed the multitude to sit down on the ground; and He took the seven loaves and the fish; and giving thanks, He broke them and started giving them to the disciples, and the disciples in turn, to the multitudes. And they all ate, and were satisfied, and they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, seven full baskets.

*Matthew 15:32-37*

And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."

*Matthew 9:36-38*

Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.  
*II Peter 1:3*

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Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Him, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from you." But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet."

*Matthew 12:38,39*

But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

*Ephesians 2:4-7*

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

*Romans 12:2*

Spirit that we can "*know*" something which "*surpasses knowledge.*" Only by the Spirit of God will our minds be able to grasp the immensity of God's love.

Because God's love goes beyond human reasoning, your intellect and emotions can't always be trusted to comprehend the love of God. Unfortunately, many believers base their assurance of God's love on their feelings, or on what they can figure out with their minds. They get up in the morning and see what state their emotions are in to determine whether God still loves them or not.

Your emotions can't tell you anything about the love of God. When a person has to experience a certain emotion before he'll believe that God really loves him, it's the same as asking God for a "sign" that His Word is true. The Pharisees were continually asking Jesus for a sign to prove that He was telling the truth; Jesus called them wicked and adulterous (Matthew 12:38,39).

God has given us all the proof we'll ever need to show us how great His love is. He sent His only begotten Son into the world to die, and watched Him hang on a cross, just so He could redeem us to Himself. Knowledge of God's love comes through meditating on the new covenant revelation of what He has done for us, and why He has done it. "*But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus*" (Ephesians 2:4-7).

"*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind . . .*" (Romans 12:2). We must have our minds renewed to the fact that God loves us. To wallow around in feelings of insecurity, inadequacy, and inferiority is nothing more than being conformed to this world. The world is trapped with these kinds of emotions because they have a twisted picture of God, but through His Word, God has revealed to us His true nature. He has shown us that He is a **loving Father!** As we renew our minds, the love of

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God will become a concrete reality for us. Knowing that — God is *for* us and not against us — will be so integrated into our thought patterns that the mere suggestion of inadequacy or insecurity will seem absurd. *“If God be for us, who can be against us?”* (Romans 8:31).

### 2. Holding fast our confidence

In Hebrews we are told that in order to please God we must believe something specific about His character; we must believe that **He is a rewarder** (Hebrews 11:6). Confidence in God is not possible unless a person believes that He is a rewarder and a liberal giver (James 1:7).

The apostle John said, *“And we have come to know and to believe the love which God has for us . . . ”* (I John 4:16). Again, we find the principle of believing something about God’s character; not only did John know about the love of God, but he also *believed* it. John had received a revelation of God; **God is love!** *“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear . . . ”* (I John 4:18). John knew that being free from fear, and having confidence before God were results of knowing and believing the love of God. When one has such a deep-rooted revelation of God’s love that he can say — “God is Love,” being afraid of God is out of the question; confidence before Him becomes very natural.

No one will begin to experience this freedom from fear and confidence before God until he puts **faith** in the fact that God loves him. In Hebrews 11:1, faith is called an **assurance**. In Hebrews 3:14 we are told to *“hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.”* You have to hold firmly to the assurance of God’s love. It is impossible to believe that God is a rewarder and a withholder at the same time; the two are incompatible. Either He is a rewarder, or He is a withholder; He can’t be both. But, the Bible is *explicit* as to the true character of God. God is a **rewarder** (Hebrews 11:6); He is a **liberal giver** (James 1:5); He will **not withhold any good thing from those who walk uprightly** (Psalm 84:11).

### D. GOD’S TRUE NATURE

God’s nature is Love; it always has been, and it always will be. The world, through sin and the deceits of Satan has

And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

*Hebrews 11:6*

For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord.

*James 1:7*

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

*Hebrews 11:1*

For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.

*Hebrews 3:14*

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

*James 1:5*

For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord gives grace and glory; no good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.

*Psalm 84:11*

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"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father.

*John 14:12*

developed a wrong picture of God. It has viewed God as angry and demanding, a person to be greatly feared. But, when God sent His only Son Jesus, He presented to the world the most profound evidence of love divinely possible. Through Jesus, God showed man once and for all the true nature of His character.

For too long the Church has been paralyzed by an unnecessary fear of God. She has lacked the confidence to move boldly in the areas where God has needed her. But, the Church today is awakening to the fact that God will not hold out on them.

It was this confidence that enabled the early church to do the mighty works which it did. They had a revelation of God's love for them; they knew He would answer their prayers and requests, because He loved them. As today's church begins to get "*rooted and grounded in love,*" (the revelation of God's love), she will begin to move in the boldness required to do the works of Jesus and the greater works that He referred to in John 14:12.

### IV. SUMMARY — THE ALMIGHTY — OUR LOVING FATHER

It is essential for a proper perspective of God, to understand His position of supremacy. Everything that exists is there because God created it. In His position of supremacy, God has attributes which cannot be shared by any other creature. These are the attributes which define God as God. God is all powerful; there is nothing that can diminish His might. God is all knowing; there is nothing that He does not know. God is present everywhere at the same time; He sees all that occurs anywhere, at any given moment of time.