

GOD – HIS NATURE, HIS NAMES, HIS ATTRIBUTES

It should be noted here at the outset of this study that the Bible does not attempt to prove God's reality. It simply states the fact of His existence and Christians accept Him in His self-revelation in scriptures by faith. We will now study the scriptures to determine how they reveal His essential nature.

(CP Jn 4:24). We learn here that God is *Spirit*. This is the nature of God in His Divine essence. As Spirit, God is not confined to the limitations of matter. He appeared to Moses in a flame of fire in a burning bush (CP Ex 3:1-6; De 4:15; Mk 12:26; Ac 7:30-35). We see in Ex 3:3 that although the bush was burning it was not consumed by the fire. We learn from this that the same God who kept the bush from being consumed by the fire will also keep earth and its inhabitants from being consumed by fire during the renovation of the earth, contemporaneous with the Great White Throne Judgement at the end of Christ's millennial reign (CP Ro 8:19-21; He 1:10-12; 12:25-28, 2Pe 3:7, 10-13; Rev 20:11; 21:1). God was also the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night that protected and guided the Israelites in their flight from Egypt (CP Ex 13:21-22; 14:19-20, 24; 40:34-38; Nu 9:15-23; 10: 33-34; 14:14). The cloud by day led the way for the children of Israel and the fire by night provided light for the whole camp.

Although He is spirit, God also has the image and the likeness of a man (CP Gen 1:26-27; Eze 1:26-28; 1Cor 11:7; Jas 3:9). We learn from these scriptures that God has a body like that of a man. Gen 1:26 teaches that man was created in God's bodily image. In Eze 1:26 God is described as having the appearance of a man, and in Jas 3:9 the phrase *similitude of God* means made like, outward or bodily image, same as 1Cor 11:7. If man was created in God's bodily image, then God's body is like that of a man. He has bodily presence (CP Gen 3:8; 32:24). Adam and Eve tried to hide from God's face – *presence* in Gen 3:8 is from the Hebrew word **paneḥ**, which means "face". In Gen 32:24 Jacob wrestled with God who had taken on the form of a man. God has bodily parts : heart (CP Gen 6:6; 8:21); feet (CP Ex 24:10; Dan 10:5-6; Rev 1:12-16); mouth (CP Ex 33:11; Nu 12:8; Rev 1:12-16); face (CP Ex 33:20, 23; Rev 22:3-5); hands, fingers (CP Ex 33:22-23; Psa 8:3-6; Eze 8:1-4; Rev 1:12-16; 5:1); back parts (CP Ex 33:23); eyes (CP Psa 11:4; 18:24; 33:18; Pr 5:21; 15:3; Rev 1:12-16); ears (CP Psa 18:6; 34:15; Jas 5:4); lips and tongue (CP Psa 89:34; Isa 30:27); loins (CP Eze 1:26-28; 8:1-4; Dan 10:5); hair, head and arms (CP Dan 7:9; 10:5-6; Rev 1:12-16). God also has a voice (CP Ex 33:11; Psa 29:3-9; Rev 1:26). He dwells in a city above the earth in Heaven (CP Isa 40:22; Jn 14:1-3; He 11:10-16; Rev 21). As an aside, we learn in Rev 21:2, 9-10 that the City of God, New Jerusalem, and not the church, is the bride of Christ*the Lamb's wife*. (For a more detailed study on this subject see author's study *The Bride of Christ* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**).

Scriptures record that God has been seen in bodily form on numerous occasions in the Old Testament. In Gen 18 He appeared to Abraham. He spoke to Abraham and ate the food prepared for Him by Sarah (CP Gen 18:1-22). Jacob wrestled with God (CP Gen 32:24). Seventy-four men saw God and ate with Him on Mt

Sinai (CP Ex 24:1-11). Moses saw God. Scriptures record that God spoke to Moses "face to face" (CP Ex 33:9-11). As they crossed the Jordan River into Jericho Joshua and the children of Israel saw God (CP Josh 5:13-15). Gideon saw God (CP Judg 6:11-24). So too Manoah and his wife – Samson's parents – saw God (CP Judg 13:2-23). King David saw God when He nearly destroyed Jerusalem because David had disobeyed Him and taken a census of the people (CP 1Chr 21:16-17). Job saw God after his testing by Satan (Job 42:5). Isaiah saw God and described Him seated upon the throne (CP Isa 6:1-13). Ezekiel saw God who commanded him to prophesy against Israel (CP Eze 1:1, 26-28; 8:1-4; 10:20; 40:3-4 with 43:6-7; 47:1-6). Daniel saw God and described His garments, His body, face, hair and voice (CP Dan 7:9-14; 10:5-6). Amos saw God standing on the altar as He passed judgement on Israel for their rebellion and sin (CP Amos 9:1). Zechariah also saw God. He was a rider of one of the horses under the myrtle trees (CP Zech 1:1, 7-17).

It should be noted here that those who saw God in the Old Testament did not see Him face to face in His glory. In Gen 18, Abraham saw Him in human form, as also did Jacob in Ex 32, Joshua in Josh 5, Gideon in Judg 6, Samson's parents in Judg 13, and David in 1Chr 21. The seventy-four also saw Him in Ex 24, but not face to face in His glory. In Ex 33 scripture records that God spoke to Moses face to face but it was out of the pillar of cloud (V9). The phrase, *God spoke to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his best friend* (V11), simply means that God spoke to Moses with great familiarity. Moses was God's intimate friend – a chosen vessel to fulfil God's purpose for the Israelites – but it does not mean that they were literally looking into each other's face when they spoke. The Lord spoke to Job out of the whirlwind in Job 42 (CP Job 37:9; 38:1; 40:6). Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Amos all saw God in a vision, not face to face in His glory.

No man has seen, nor can see, God face to face in His glory, because scriptures teach that He dwells in light so bright, no man can approach it (CP Ex 24:17; 33:18-23; 1Ti 6:13-16). Ex 24:17 teaches that the glory of the Lord as seen with human eyes is like a consuming fire devouring highly inflammable material (CP Ex 40:34-35; Nu 20:6; 1Ki 8:10-11; 2Chr 5:13-14; 7:1-2; Eze 1:28; 3:22-23; 43:2-3; 44:4). We learn from all these scriptures that the reason no man has seen God face to face in His glory is because no one could endure the spectacular purity of His essential nature. When Moses asked God to show him His glory in Ex 33:18-23, God replied that he could only see His back parts, for no one could see His face (in His glory), and live. Only Jesus has seen God face to face in His glory, and it is only through Jesus that one can see God's essential nature (CP Jn 1:17-18). The phrase *He hath declared Him*, in V18, means all that Jesus is and does, interprets and explains all that God is and does. Jesus is the manifested glory of God (CP Jn 14:7-11; He 1:1-3). It should also be noted here that Jesus is the one referred to as God in many of the Old Testament scriptures listed above (for a detailed study on this subject refer author's study, *Jesus – Eternally God*, in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**). All God's children will

see Him face to face in eternity (CP 1Jn 3:2; Rev 21:3-4; Rev 22:4).

God is *omnipresent* – everywhere. In His essential nature as Spirit, God is not limited to one place. Unrestricted by any bounds, God fills and transcends time and space (CP 1Ki 8:27; 2Chr 6:18; Psa 139:7-12; Jer 23:23-24; Mt 18:20; 28:30; Ac 17:24-28). Without bounds and limits God fills the universe in all its parts and is everywhere at once. Not a part, but the whole of God is present in every place (CP Isa 6:3). Although God is transcendent – different and independent from His creation – He has never excluded Himself from living among His people (CP Ex 29:45; Lev 26:11-12; Eze 37:27; 43:7; 1Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2Cor 6:16; Eph 2:19-22; He 3:4-6). We learn in Ac 17:24-28 that God is not only the source of life and breath for Christians, but is their environment as well, “... *for in Him we live, and move, and have our being*”.

God is *omnipotent* – He is all powerful (CP Job 9:4; 42:2; Psa 147:5; Jer 5:14; Eph 3:20; Rev 11:16-17; 15:2-3; 19:6, 15). Scriptures call Him Almighty God, God Almighty, the Almighty, the Lord Almighty, the Lord God Almighty (CP Gen 17:1; 28:3; 49:25; 2Cor 6:18; Rev 21:22). God has ultimate authority over all things (CP 1Chr 29:10-12; Psa 147:12-18). On the authority of God’s word Abraham and Sarah had a son – Isaac – when Abraham was one hundred, and Sarah, ninety years of age (CP Gen 17:1-2, 15-19; 18:13-14 with 21:1-3). All nature is subject to God’s will and His word (CP Job 37:9-24; 42:1-2). All men are subject to God’s authority (CP Dan 4:24-33; Jas 4:12-15). As the source of all power God is never weary or tired and sustains those who wait upon Him (CP Isa 40:27-31). Nothing is too difficult or impossible with God (CP Jer 32:17-19; Mt 19:26; Lu 1:26-37).

God is *omniscient* – all knowing (CP Ac 2:23; 15:18; Ro 11:33). God sees and knows everything, past, present and future (CP Gen 6:5; Job 23:10; Psa 34:15-16; 90:8; 139:1-6; 147:5; Pr 15:3, 11; Isa 46:9-10; Mt 6:4, 8; Ro 8:28-29; 1Pe 3:12). God’s knowledge is absolute (CP 1Sam 2:3; 16:17; 1Ki 8:39; Job 37:16, 42:2; Psa 44:21; Pr 16:2; 21:2; 24:12; Ro 2:11-16; 1Cor 3:11-15; 2Cor 5:10). Omniscience is the power of knowing the thoughts and intents of every heart. In 1Cor 3:11-15 and 2Cor 5:10 we learn that in a coming day every Christian in heaven will stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ to give an account of themselves to God for everything they have ever done in the course of their Christian life, whether it be good or bad. God will reveal their every thought, their every word, their every deed, their secret acts, their character, their motives, their attitude, their works, their ministry – God knows them all (CP Ecc 12:14; Ro 14:10-13; 1Cor 4:5; 2Cor 5:10).

God is *triune* – three-in-one. Scriptures teach that there are three distinct and separate co-equal and co-eternal members of the Godhead – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (CP Mt 3:16-17; Mk 1:9-11; Lu 3:21-22; Jn 1:29-34). Here we see clearly represented in scripture the three distinct and separate co-equal members of the Godhead. God the Father is represented by the voice in heaven, God the Son is Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit is represented by

the dove. This teaching of a triune God or three-in-one Godhead is called the Doctrine of the Trinity. It is a core truth of the Christian faith and is central to an understanding of Biblical revelation and the message of the gospel. It should be stressed here that although there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead, they all function as one (CP 1Cor 12:4-6; 2Cor 13:14; Eph 2:17-18; 4:4-6; 2Th 2:13-14 with 1Jn 5:6-7). *One* in 1Jn 5:6-7 means one in unity, not in number (CP Jn 17:5, 21-24). This oneness, while clearly emphasising the plurality of persons in the Godhead, is plainly expressed in the baptismal formula Jesus gave to the church before being taken up to heaven (CP Mt 28:19). *Name* here is singular, proving the oneness in unity of all three members of the Godhead it includes, although each one individually is God. The Father is God (CP Jn 4:21-24; Ro 1:7; 1Cor 8:6). The Son is God (CP Isa 7:14 and 9:6 with Mt 1:23; Jn 1:1-2; 20:26-28; 1Cor 15:45-47; Php 2:5-8; 1Ti 3:16; Tit 2:13-14; He 1:8; 1Jn 5:20). The Holy Spirit is God (CP Isa 6:8-11 with Ac 28:25-28; 5:3-4; 1Cor 2:10-12; 3:16; 2Cor 3:17-18; He 9:14).

Clearly those scriptures all establish the Doctrine of the Trinity. Although the word *Trinity* is not found in scripture, it is not crucial to sound Christian doctrine that the word defining it is not scriptural. What is crucial is that the doctrine itself stresses its authority in scripture. This the Doctrine of the Trinity does perfectly. In fact the New Testament church was founded on this teaching (CP Ac 2:32-33; 1Pe 1:2). The Doctrine of the Trinity is not a new revelation found only in the New Testament. It is a progressive revelation which underlies the whole teaching of scripture from the very first verse in the Bible (CP Gen 1:1). The very first verse in the Bible indicates that a plurality of persons exist in the Godhead because *God* is the Hebrew word **Elohim**, which is a plural noun. Its significance becomes more evident as we read further (CP Gen 1:26; 3:22; 11:6-7; Isa 6:8). These plural pronouns also stress a plurality of persons in the Godhead (CP Also Jn 14:23). **Elohim** is used over two thousand seven hundred times in the Old Testament, proving that many times that there is more than one person in the Godhead.

Many professing Christians however reject the Doctrine of the Trinity and deny the Deity of Jesus and the Holy Spirit both, so we need to look at some of the scriptures they use to promote their cause to see exactly what they teach (CP De 6:4; Isa 44:6-8; 45:21-22; Hos 13:4; Mk 12:29; 1Cor 8:6; Eph 4:6; Jas 2:19). The emphasis on all those scriptures is that God is one. Those who deny the Trinity and the deity of both Jesus and the Holy Spirit believe that because a singular noun – *one* – has been used here with the word *God*, that it means there is only one member in the Godhead – God the Father. They have conveniently ignored all the other scriptures that prove Jesus and the Holy Spirit are co-equal with the Father in the Godhead. Here again *one* means one in unity, not in number, because the word *God* is still a plural noun. God is merely contrasting Himself with idols in the Old Testament scriptures, and He is still the same God in the New Testament (CP De 6:14-15; Isa 44:9-11; 46:1-4; Hos 13:1-3). If there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead in the Old Testament, so too there is a plurality of persons in the Godhead in the

New Testament, as scriptures clearly show (for a more detailed study on the subject see author's study on *Jesus – eternally God* in his book, **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)** and his comments on Mt 1:18-21, Lu 1:35(B); Jn 1:1, 5:16-23, 12:41, Ac 13:33, 20:28, Php 2:5-8, Col 2:9, 1Ti 3:16, He 1:5, 5:5, 1Jn 5:6-9, Rev 1:8 in his book, **A Question and Answer Study on the New Testament**).

God is *immutable* – unchangeable (CP Nu 23:19; Psa 102:27; 119:89; Mal 3:6; Ro 11:29; 2Ti 2:13; He 6:17-18; 13:8; Jas 1:17; 1Jn 1:5). God is unchanging in His eternal plan of salvation toward His creation. When Moses asked Him His name, God replied, “*I AM THAT I AM*” (CP Ex 3:14). The literal meaning of what God says here is “*I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE*”. He is the God who is, and will be the same as He has always been in the past ... “*the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob ...*” (CP Ex 3:15; 6:3). God is the same today as He always has been: “this is my name forever, by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation” (NIV) – the God of salvation. The unchanging God of salvation though will repent of judgement when His call to obedience is affirmatively responded to (CP Jonah 1:1-3; 3:1-10). When God's terms for salvation are not met it is not failure or change with God, but with man (CP Ro 3:4). The unchanging God of salvation is revealed under the New Covenant in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (CP Jn 1:1, 18). In the New Testament Christ is the immutable God who comes to seek and save the lost (CP Mk 10:45; Lu 19:10). Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever (CP He 1:12; 13:8; Jas 1:17).

God is *self-existent* – has life in Himself. Is eternal – has no beginning or end. He has always been, and always will be (CP Gen 21:33; Ex 3:14-15; Psa 90:2; 102:24-27; 145:13; Isa 43:10; 44:6; 57:15; Rev 1:4). Here we see that God is an eternal being. He has always existed (CP Mic 5:2; Jn 1:4; 5:26; 1Ti 1:17; He 1:8; Rev 1:8; 22:13). Although the Bible does not attempt to prove God's reality, there is undeniable proof outside of scripture for all to see (CP Psa 19:1-6). The heavens declare God's glory to all who are on earth. *Declare* here means to recount, inscribe as a writer. The immensity of the universe tells of the greatness of its creator. The firmament – the stretched out expanse of the sky – shows His handiwork. *Shows* means to stand boldly out. Manifest, certify. *Handiwork* illustrates God's great power (CP V1 with Psa 8:1, 3; 75:1; 90:2; 111:6). Days utter speech. *Utter* here means gush forth, pour out. Nights show knowledge. *Show* means to declare, indicate. There is nowhere in the universe where the testimony of the heavens and the firmament for their creator, God, has not been heard (CP Psa 19:2-4A with Ro 1:20). Simply by looking up to heaven man can know there is a God and can perceive His eternal power. Paul used Psa 19:4A to show that the Jews had heard the word of truth, but having heard it, rejected it, which resulted in the gospel being given to the Gentiles (CP V4A with Ro 10:16-18). The sun is also a testimony to its creator, God. It traverses the heavens from one end to the other daily, and nothing is hidden from its heat. It enjoys universal exposure, reaching into every corner and crevice of the earth (CP Psa 19:4-6).

The heavens with their countless galaxies of stars. The firmament with its vast expanses of sky. The sun determining the day, the moon determining the night. The order of nature determining the seasons : summer, autumn, winter, spring; the tides ebbing and flowing, all conforming to their allotted times. The trees, the grass, the flowers. The bees that pollinate the flowers, the birds, and so much more, are all unceasing testimonies to a creator God, and unequivocally confirm His existence. Sadly though, the ungodly see His handiwork, but reject God Himself. They are without excuse (P Ro 1:18-20).

God is *infinite* (CP Psa 90:2; Isa 57:15). Here God is infinite in time. He is an eternal being (CP 1Ki 8:27). Here God is infinite in presence. This relates to His omnipresence (CP Mt 28:18). Here God is infinite in power. This relates to His omnipotence (CP Ro 11:33). Here God is infinite in knowledge. This relates to His omniscience (CP Psa 145:3-7). Here God is infinite in greatness. We have in these verses ten proofs of the infinite greatness of God: He is great (V3). He is greatly to be praised (V3). His greatness is unsearchable (V3). Every generation shall praise His works (V4). Every generation shall declare His mighty acts (V4, 6). The Psalmist spoke of the glorious honour of His majesty and of His wondrous works (V5, 6). All men shall speak of the might of His awe-inspiring acts (V6). They shall extol the memory of His great goodness (V7). They shall sing of His righteousness (V7).

God is *love* (CP 1Jn 4:8, 16). This is the nature of God in His Divine compassion. This love is considered by some to be a moral attribute of God, but it is His essential nature expressed in Him giving his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, up to death to provide salvation for His enemies (CP Ro 5:8-11; Eph 2:12-13; Col 1:20-22; Tit 3:3-7; 1Jn 4:9-10). God's plan of redemption from eternity past centres on His essential nature of love. It was this love that conceived the plan of redemption in Christ, and it was in Christ that God gave Himself (CP Isa 7:14; Mt 1:23; Jn 3:16). God's love as revealed in Christ is measureless and passes knowledge (CP Eph 3:14-19). Christ came as the personification of the love that God is (CP Jn 1:18). As we learned earlier in our study on “God is Spirit”, the phrase, *He hath declared Him* in Jn 1:18, means all that Jesus is and does, interprets and explains all that God is and does. Jesus is the manifested glory of God (CP Jn 14:7-11; He 1:1-3). When the love that God is bears with sinners failing to heed God's instructions and warnings, it is called *His longsuffering* or *forbearance* (CP Ro 2:4; 9:22; 1Pe 3:20; 2Pe 3:14-15). The whole of God's redemptive plan is Divine love in action. It is an exercise of the Divine will without any cause being able to be assigned, save that which lies in the nature of God Himself (CP De 7:7-8; Ro 5:8-11 with Jn 15:13).

God is a *consuming fire* (CP He 12:29). This underlines the retributive aspect of the Divine Nature. It is a warning to Christians against rejecting Christ (CP V 12-29). If severe punishment fell upon those who rejected God in the Old Testament, how much more the punishment of those who fail God's grace in Christ in the New Testament. So here Christians are

being exhorted to reinvigorate themselves spiritually and walk in the way God has ordained for them to be partakers of His holiness (CP V 9-11 with Pr 4:25-27; Eph 1:4). Strong Christians must never exhibit any spiritual slackness, so that weaker Christians may be encouraged and strengthened in their faith (CP Isa 35:3-4). The term *any root of bitterness* in He 12:15 refers metaphorically to any Christian apostatising and failing God's grace and inducing others to do the same (CP V 12-15 with De 29:18; He 3:12-13). Esau is used in V 16-17 in He 12 to warn Christians against rejecting God after being recipients of His good things (CP He 6:4-6; 10:26-31; 2Pe 2:20-22). Esau was an example of a *profane person* – one who lacks an affinity to God (CP Gen 25:27-34; 27:30-40). Esau's birthright was God's blessing upon the firstborn but as Gen 25:34 teaches, Esau despised it, and in despising it, he despised God. He wanted God's blessing, but not God.

In He 12:18-24, Mt Sinai, where God manifested Himself to Moses and gave him the Old Covenant law, is referred to as *the mount that might be touched*. This simply means that it is a real mountain. Anyone or anything that literally touched it was killed (CP V 18-24 with Ex 19:10-23; 20:18-21; De 4:11-13). Mt Zion is the spiritual mountain where God reigns – the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem (CP He 12:22 with Isa 2:2-3; Rev 14:1). Mt Sinai symbolises the law of bondage under the Old Covenant, whereas Mt Zion symbolises the blessings of God through Christ's shed blood under the New Covenant (CP Ga 4:21-31). The contrast between Mt Sinai and Mt Zion in He 12:18-24 is a warning to Christians not to reject Christ (CP V 25-29 with 6:4-6; 10:26-31; 2Pe 2:20-22).

When referring to God as a “consuming fire” in He 12:29, the writer of Hebrews quoted De 4:23-24 (CP De 4:23-24). Here God is referred to as a consuming fire and a jealous God, provoked to anger against those who reject Him and worship other gods (CP Ex 20:3-5; 34:14; De 5:8-9; 6:13-18; Josh 24:18-20). Calling Himself a jealous God simply means that God will not contend with rivals nor tolerate unfaithfulness. Because of who He is, God assumes the right to demand exclusive devotion to Himself. For New Testament Christians this means being exclusively devoted to the things of God and not the things of the world.

(CP 1Jn 1:5). God is *light*. This is the nature of God in his Divine character as revealed in Christ. As the chief manifestation of God's light to man, Christ fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy in the Old Testament that light would spring up in the darkness and shine on those who lived in the shadow of death (CP Isa 9:1-2; 49:6; Mt 4:13-17; Lu 8:16; Jn 1:1-9; 3:16-21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35-36). To walk in darkness is to live in sin and immorality. Those who walk in the light have fellowship with God and experience His grace. They live holy lives in obedience to God's word (CP 1Jn 1:7; 2:3-9; 3:9-10).

God is *truth* (CP De 32:4; Psa 31:5; Isa 65:16). Truth in this respect means not merely ethical truth, but truth in all its fullness and scope, pure from all error or falsehood (CP Nu 23:19; 1Sam 15:29; Psa 146:5-6; Isa 55:8-11; 2Ti 2:13; Tit 1:2; He 6:17-18; 10:23).

Jesus Christ is the perfect expression of the truth that is God's nature (CP Jn 14:6). As the perfect expression of the truth that is God's nature, Jesus is the only way by which anyone can come to God. He is the way to God because He is the truth of God (CP Jn 1:14), and the life of God (CP 1:4; Jn 3:15-16; 11:25). Every promise of God is fulfilled in Christ (CP 2Cor 1:19-20).

God is *holy*. Holy means absolute purity of nature. This is a characteristic unique to the nature of God (CP Ex 15:11; 1Sam 2:2; Isa 6:1-3). Holiness belongs to God as Divine and He would not be God without it. In that respect there is none holy like the Lord, as in 1Sam 2:2. Holiness is basically a term for the moral excellence of God (CP Hab 1:13). God is so perfectly holy He could not look upon His son, Jesus Christ, on the cross where He died as the sin offering for all mankind (CP Isa 53:1-12; 2Cor 5:21; Ga 3:13; Eph 5:2). Jesus on the cross bore the sin of all men, but God could not look upon sin even if it was borne by His Son, and at that moment in time Jesus experienced the abandonment and despair of being separated from God as punishment for sin (CP Mt 27:45-46).

As the absolute holy one God is free from evil, and hates and abhors sin. His holiness is the standard of life and conduct for His children (CP Psa 99:9; 111:9; Rev 15:4). God can present Himself as the pattern for holiness because He is the origin and source of it (CP Lev 19:2; 1Pe 1:15-16 with Eph 1:4; He 12:5-10; 1Jn 1:5). As holiness is the principle ruling God's actions towards His children, He demands obedience to, and uniformity with, such a standard. As He is, so must His children be (CP 1Jn 4:17). God's children cannot expect to be recipients of His love, if they are not holy like Him. It must be stressed here that if His children could not be holy, then God would not have commanded it. Christ in His life and character is the supreme example of the Divine holiness. In Him it consisted of more than mere sinlessness: it was His total consecration to the will of God, and to this end He sanctified Himself (CP Jn 17:19), and was made of God Christians' sanctification (CP 1Cor 1:30). Christians are made pure and holy in Christ. His holiness is both the standard of the Christian character and its guarantee. Both He and they have the same Father – God – and for that reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.

There is also a retributive aspect to Divine holiness (CP Rev 22:10-12). In the age to come it involves the world in judgement (CP He 12:25-27 with Rev 6:12-17; 20:4-15). But it is not the end of the world. There will be a final restoration afterwards: the heavens and the earth will be renewed and righteousness will reign throughout eternity (CP Isa 65:17; 2Pe 3:7, 10-13; Rev 22:1).

God is *wisdom* (CP Pr 8:12, 22). In the beginning of His way in V 22 does not refer to a point in time but to the fact that wisdom has always been God's essential nature from all eternity past, before creation (CP V 23). God through wisdom brought everything into being (CP Psa 74:16-17; Pr 3:19-20; 8:24-31; Jer 10:12-13). In His wisdom God separated light and dark and called them day and night. He set the bounds between sea and land and the national boundaries

between countries. He separated heat and cold and called them summer and winter. God through wisdom made all things (CP Psa 104:24; 136:5-9). God's wisdom is never overcome or taken unawares (CP Ro 8:28; 11:33; Col 2:3).

The highest expression of God's wisdom is His plan of redemption. It is referred to in scripture as *the wisdom of God in a mystery* (CP 1Cor 2:7-8). *The wisdom of God in a mystery* is His plan to redeem fallen man through Christ's death on the cross for sinners, which was hidden even from the angels and prophets in the Old Testament (CP 1Cor 1:18, 21-24, 30). What Paul is saying here is that while the story of Christ dying for sinners – the preaching of the cross – is foolishness to the ungodly, it is the power of God to save those who believe. Christ is the manifestation of that power and is the wisdom of God, which means that Christ is the revelation of God's plan of redemption. Christians are made the righteousness of God in Christ (CP 2Cor 5:21). In Christ Christians are sanctified – made holy – and redeemed.

God's plan of redemption astonishes both men and angels (CP Eph 3:9-11; 1Pe 1:12). The church is the perfect means of displaying God's wisdom – *manifold* in Eph 3:10 means variegated, multifaceted, in the way that many facets of a diamond reflect and enhance its beauty. The wisdom that God includes His knowledge of all things, past, present and future, making Him *the only wise God* (CP 1Ti 1:17 with Psa 139:1-6; Ac 15:18; He 4:13). As the preincarnate God by whom everything that is made was made, Christ is *the Lord* referred to in Pr 8:22 (CP Pr 8:22 with Jn 1:1-3; Ro 11:36; 1Cor 8:6; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16-17; He 1:1-2; Rev 4:11; 10:6).

God is *righteous*. This is the nature of God in His Divine goodness (CP Jn 17:23). The righteousness of God means essentially the same as the truthfulness of God (CP Ro 3:3-4). God's righteousness is His faithfulness to His own nature and promises, His moral self-consistency, exemplified in Christ ... *my righteous servant* (CP Isa 53:11) ... *the Lord our righteousness* (CP Jer 23:5-6; 33:16) ... *the Just one* (CP Ac 3:14; 7:52; 22:14). *Just* means righteous. Through Christ, God imputes His righteousness to those who receive Christ as their Saviour. It is only through the finished work of Christ that man can attain God's righteousness (CP Ro 3:23-26; 5:6-11; 2Cor 5:18-21; Col 1:20-22). This righteousness is proclaimed by Jesus as a gift to those who are granted the Kingdom of God (CP Mt 5:6). Since God Himself is the standard for Christians, the righteousness of God means God-like righteousness. This is the righteousness that God requires of man (CP Mt 6:33; Mk 10:29-30; 2Cor 6:14; Eph 4:24; 1Ti 4:8; He 12:5-11).

This completes our study on the nature of God. To summarise it we have learnt that in His essential nature God is spirit, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, triune, immutable, self-existent, infinite, love, a consuming fire, light, truth, holy, wisdom, righteous. Opinions vary among bible scholars as to what comprises the nature of God as opposed to His attributes, so it is not inconceivable that some will disagree with this study on the nature of God. In that case let us agree to disagree in love.

Now to look at the names of God. For the purpose of this study we will examine them in their scriptural order. **Elohim** is the name of God used first in scripture, indicating God's power and pre-eminence (CP Gen 1:1). *Elohim* is a plural noun, proving the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity – the three-in-one Godhead of Christianity (for a more detailed presentation of this subject, refer "God is Triune" in study on the nature of God, in previous section). Jesus is quoted as using a form of *Elohim* when He cried out in despair to God for forsaking Him on the cross (CP Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34). The name of God used next in scripture is **Jehovah** (CP Gen 6:5). *Jehovah* is the Jewish national name for God. It means self-existent or eternal one, indicating God's unoriginated, immutable, eternal and self-sustained existence. Let us look at those scriptures again that teach this (CP Gen 21:33; Ex 3:13-15; Psa 90:2; 102:24-27; 145:13; Isa 43:10; 44:6; 57:15; Rev 1:4; 22:13).

The name Jehovah is combined with other words in scripture which form what is known as the Jehovah titles, of which there are sixteen in all. They are *Jehovah-Elohim*, which means *the eternal creator* (CP Gen 2:4-25); *Adonai-Jehovah*, which means *the Lord our Sovereign* (CP Gen 15:1-8, 18; De 3:24; 9:26); *Jehovah-Jireh*, which means *the Lord will provide* (CP Gen 22:1-14); *Jehovah-Raphah*, which means *the Lord our healer* (CP Ex 15:26; Psa 103:2-3); *Jehovah-Nissi*, which means *the Lord our banner* (CP Ex 17:8-15); *Jehovah-Eloheka*, which means *the Lord thy God* (CP Ex 20:1-7); *Jehovah-Mekaddishkem*, which means *the Lord our sanctifier* (CP Ex 31:13; Lev 20:8; 21:8; 22:9, 15-16, 32; Eze 20:12); *Jehovah-Shalom*, which means *the Lord our peace* (CP Judg 6:22-24); *Jehovah-Saboath*, which means *the Lord of hosts* (CP 1Sam 1:3); *Jehovah-Elyon*, which means *the Lord most high* (CP Psa 7:17; 47:2); *Jehovah-Rohi*, which means *the Lord my shepherd* (CP Psa 23:1); *Jehovah-Hoseenu*, which means *the Lord our maker* (CP Psa 95:6); *Jehovah-Eloheenu*, which means *the Lord our God* (CP Psa 99:5, 8-9); *Jehovah-Tsidkeenu*, which means *the Lord our righteousness* (CP Jer 23:5-6; 33:15-16); *Jehovah-Shammah*, which means *the Lord is present* (CP Eze 48:35); *Jehovah-Elohay*, which means *the Lord my God* (CP Zech 14:3-5).

The name of God used next in scripture is **El**, which signifies strong, first, showing God to be the mighty one, the first cause of everything. *El* combines with other words in the Old Testament to reveal the character of God (CP Gen 14:18-20). Here the most high God is *El-Elyon*. Melchizedek blessed Abraham in the name of *El-Elyon* possessor of heaven and earth, so identifying *El-Elyon* as the supreme God. (Melchizedek was a Gentile whose priesthood is eternal in Christ (CP Psa 110:1-7; He 5:10; 6:20; 7:1-28)). Next is *El-Owlam* – everlasting God (CP Gen 21:33); *El-Qanna* – jealous God (CP Ex 20:5); *El-Rachuwm* – merciful God (CP De 4:31); *El-Aman* – faithful God (CP De 7:9); *El-Gadowl* – mighty God (CP De 7:21), and great God (CP De 10:17). *Lord* here is **Adon**, another name of God in the Old Testament. *Lord* is also **Adonai** (CP Nu 14:17). The next *El* word combination is *El-Shaddai* – the almighty God (CP Gen 17:1-5). *El-Shaddai* pictures God as the all-bountiful, all-sufficient one, the supplier of the needs of His people. Abraham only knew God as *El-Shaddai* when God made His

covenant with him (CP Ex 6:1-4). The name of God used next in scripture is **Eloahh**, which means Deity, God, the Divine One (CP De 32:15; Neh 9:16-17; Psa 139:19; Pr 30:5). Next we come to **Elah** (CP Ezra 4:24; Dan 3:15-29), **Tsur**, meaning strength (CP Psa 18:2; 19:14; 73:26; 144:1; Isa 26:4). Last, but by no means least, is **Jah** (CP Psa 77:1; 104:35; 105:7; 118:5, 14, 17-19; Isa 12:2).

In the New Testament there is only one main word for God, **Theos**, which means Deity, the supreme God (CP Mt 1:23; 3:9, 16; 4:3-10; 5:8, etc). *Theos* is used nearly one thousand three hundred times. The only other word used for God in the New Testament is **Kurios**, which means supreme in authority, Lord, Master. It is used only once (CP Ac 19:20). In most other places in the New Testament *Kurios* is used for both God and Jesus as *Lord* (CP Mk 12:29-30, 36-37; Lu 6:5), and Jesus as *Master* (CP Jn 13:13-14). There are still places however in the New Testament where *Kurios* is used to call men lord and master.

There are many symbolic and other names of God in scripture illustrative of His character (CP Gen 15:1). Here God is symbolised as a *shield* – protector and defender of the righteous (CP De 33:29; Psa 84:11; Pr 30:5). In Psa 84:11 God is symbolised as a *Sun* which illuminates, invigorates, warms and sustains life, and again as a *shield* to protect and defend the righteous. He is symbolised many times in scripture as a *rock*: the stable and strong one (CP De 32:4; Psa 19:14; Isa 17:10; 26:4). *Strength* in Psa 19:14 and Isa 26:4 means *rock* (CP De 32:15; Psa 40:1-2). Here God is the *rock of salvation*. He “begat” Israel with the gospel (CP De 32:18 with Ga 3:8 and He 4:2). God is the *rock* that sold Israel (CP De 32:30). This means that God permitted Israel to be defeated (CP De 28:68; Judg 2:14; 1Sam 12:9). God is the *rock of Israel* (CP 2Sam 23:3). The Psalmist calls God *the rock of my refuge* (CP Psa 94:22). *Rock* is also used as a symbol of Christ in scripture. He was the spiritual rock from which the Jews got water during their sojourn in the wilderness (CP Ex 17:1-6; Nu 20:1-8 with 1Cor 10:4). Christ was also referred to in scripture as a *stumbling stone and a rock of offence* (CP Gen 49:24; Psa 118:22; Isa 8:13-15; 28:16; Mt 21:42; Ro 9:33; 1Pe 2:4-8).

God is also referred to in the Old Testament as a *refuge* – a habitation rest, high tower, defence (CP De 33:27; 2Sam 22:3; Psa 9:9; 14:6; 91:2, 9), *horn of salvation* (CP 1Sam 2:1, 10; 2Sam 22:3; Psa 18:2). Jesus is the Horn of Salvation in the New Testament (CP Lu 1:69). God is symbolised as a *fortress* – a place of strength and safety (CP 1Sam 23:14, 19; Psa 18:2; 31:3; 91:2; 144:2; Jer 16:19; Nah 1:7). He is referred to as *deliverer* – who causes one to escape (CP 2Sam 22:1-2; Psa 18:2; 40:17; 70:5). He is symbolised as a *high tower* – a place so high as to be out of danger (CP 2Sam 22:3; Psa 18:2; 144:2), *buckler* – shield, defence (CP 2Sam 22:31; Psa 80:2; 91:4; Pr 2:7). God is also referred to as a *refiner* – the Lord’s purifying work in His children; His chastening of His children (CP Job 23:10; Psa 66:10; Isa 48:10; Zech 13:9; Mal 3:3 with He 12:5-11), *ancient of days* (CP Dan 7:9, 13, 22). God’s fatherhood is also figuratively referred to in the Old Testament (CP Ex 4:22; Psa 103:13; Jer 31:9; Hos 11:1). *Father* is the

distinguishing title for God in the New Testament (CP Jn 6:27; Ro 1:7; 1Cor 1:3; 8:6; 2Cor 1:3). We see in 2Cor 1:3 here that God is called the *Father of mercies*. He is also called the *Father of glory* (CP Eph 1:17), and the *Father of lights*, referring to Him as the creator of the heavenly bodies: the sun, moon and stars (CP Jas 1:17).

It should be noted here in bringing this section of our study on the names of God to a close, that in the Old Testament God is also called the *Holy One of Israel* (CP Psa 71:22; 78:41; 89:18; Isa 5:19, 24; 48:17); the *Lord God of Israel* (CP 1Chr 29:10) and the *Holy One of Jacob* (CP Isa 2:23). His offices are that of *Judge* (CP Gen 18:25; De 32:36; Isa 33:22), *Shepherd* (CP Gen 49:24; Psa 23:1; 80:1; Isa 40:11), *Saviour* (CP 2Sam 22:3; Isa 43:3; 45:21), *Redeemer* (CP Psa 19:14; 78:35; Isa 43:14; 49:7), *Creator* (CP Ecc 12:1; Isa 40:28; 43:15), *King* (CP Isa 33:22; 41:21; 43:15; 44:6), *Lawgiver* (CP Isa 33:22; Jas 4:12). We see in all of the scriptures subject of this section of our study, that the truth of God’s character is focused in His name. It reveals His power, authority and holiness.

Now to study the attributes of God. They are many but we will look at *grace* first because it is such an extensive teaching.

The word *grace* from the Greek word **charis**, properly speaking means that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, charm, sweetness, loveliness. It involves favour, goodwill, benevolence, loving-kindness, forgiveness, and mercy. In its Biblical setting grace signifies God’s kindness and love for man (CP Tit 3:3-7). For New Testament Christians grace is synonymous with God’s redemptive plan for fallen man manifest in the gift of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the blessings of salvation purchased through Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross for the sins of all mankind, past, present and future. Hell-deserving sinners are saved by grace through faith in Christ’s atoning death (CP Ro 5:1-2; Eph 1:3-7; 2:1-9).

The gospel of Christ is a gospel of grace (CP Ac 20:24, 32). Grace is God’s mercy bestowed on the basis of His justice satisfied at the cross of Christ upon hell-deserving sinners who put their faith in Christ as the saviour who died for them (CP Ac 17:30-31; Ro 3:21-26; He 9:15; 1Jn 2:2). We learn from these passages of scripture that God’s grace reaches back in time to His covenanted people under the law in the Old Testament – they too were saved by the atoning death of Christ in the New Testament. God merely suspended judgement for their sins until Jesus came and paid for them (CP Eph 1:3-4; 2Ti 1:8-10). God determined from all eternity to bestow His grace upon men through Christ’s atoning death, which was prefigured by the sacrificial system under the Old Covenant. All who participated in the Old Covenant sacrificial system were vindicated by Christ’s sacrificial death under the New Covenant (CP Gen 3:15 with He 9:11-16, 22-28; 10:1-4). *They which are called* in He 9:15 looks back to God’s covenanted people in the Old Testament. We learn in 1Jn 2:2 that Christ’s death was sufficient for all men. But it is only efficient for those under the New Covenant who believe on Him and obey Him (CP Mt 7:21-27; 12:30,

46-50; Jn 8:31, 51; Ac 3:19-26; Ro 2:13; Jas 1:22-25; 1Jn 5:2-3).

The first recorded instance in scripture of God's grace being bestowed is on Enoch in the Old Testament. He pleased God and was translated to heaven while still living (CP Gen 5:23-24; He 11:5). Next was Noah. God saved him and his family from the flood that destroyed everyone else living on earth at that time (CP Gen 6:8, 13-14, 18). God's grace is also revealed in the Old Testament in His covenant with Abraham (CP Gen 12:1-3; 15:16; 17:1-14). God's grace is also revealed in the Old Testament in His love for His chosen people, Israel (CP De 7:7-9; 8:18; 9:1-6). Regardless of how often Israel sinned against Him, God forgave them and He will restore them to their position of grace in the age to come (CP Jer 31:2-9; Zech 4:7; 12:10; Ro 11:1-5, 25-33). Grace is also revealed in the Old Testament in the power of the law to convert and restore sinners (CP Ps 19:7-11).

God's grace in the Old Testament is revealed in the Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant upon which the blood of the animal sacrifices and sin offerings for the priest and the people of Israel on the Day of Atonement, which prefigured the supreme sacrifice of Christ as the sin offering for all mankind in the New Testament, was sprinkled (CP Lev 16:11-16). The blood of the animal sacrifices foreshadowed the blood Christ would shed in His atoning death on the cross. The difference however, is that the blood of the animal sacrifices could not pardon sin. Only Christ's shed blood can do that. His shed blood put away sin forever (CP Lev 16:6, 11-19 with He 9:1-10, 18). The Mercy Seat emphasised that forgiveness of sin is possible only by God's grace on the basis of His justice satisfied through the shed blood of Jesus in the New Testament, who was the true Mercy Seat (CP Lev 17:11 with Ro 3:24-25; 5:11; Col 1:20; 1Jn 2:2). The Mercy Seat was the Old Testament type of the Throne of Grace in the New Testament where Jesus sits at God's right hand and mercy and grace are dispensed to meet the needs of New Testament believers (CP He 4:14-16). We will look at the Throne of Grace from a New Testament perspective a little later. There are many other instances of God's grace revealed in the Old Testament, but those listed here will suffice for the purpose of this study.

The law under the Old Covenant was given by Moses, but grace under the New Covenant came by Christ (CP Jn 1:17; 1Cor 1:3-4; 2Ti 1:8-10). The depth of meaning of grace is richer under the New Covenant. Under the law of Moses sin was revealed and sinners were condemned to death. In the New Testament in Christ, grace not only forgives sin, it provides a righteousness for the sinner (CP Ro 5:12, 15-21; 2Cor 5:21). In Ro 5:20 we learn that not only did the Old Covenant law reveal sin, but it caused it to happen. V21 and 2Cor 5:21 teach that grace provides a righteousness for sinners unattainable under the Old Covenant. Under the New Covenant, where sin abounds grace abounds even more, providing forgiveness of sin and empowering believers to resist it (CP Ro 6:1-2, 14; 1Jn 3:5-10). Grace introduces believers into a new realm in the New Testament. By it believers are taken out of the sphere of death into life by faith in Jesus Christ (CP Col 1:12-14).

Repentant sinners are fully and freely justified in Christ (CP Tit 2:11).

This does not mean that everyone who ever lived has known of God's grace that brings salvation. It refers to humanity in general. God's saving grace through the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ has made salvation available to the whole of humanity (CP Ro 5:15, 18; 2Cor 5:18-19; Tit 3:4). Grace teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; to live soberly, righteously, Godly, and to look for the coming again of Jesus to take all the saints of God – Old Testament and New Testament alike – back to heaven with Him at the rapture (CP Tit 2:11-13 with Ro 6:13-23; 8:12-13; He 12:14 and Php 3:20). This present age of grace began with the death and resurrection of Jesus and will end with His coming again to rapture the saints to heaven (CP Jn 14:1-3; 1Cor 15:51-58; 1Th 4:13-18; 5:1-11).

The first person to receive of God's grace in the New Testament was Mary, mother of Jesus (CP Lu 1:30). *Favour* here is grace. Grace is one of God's infinite attributes and is the result of the eternal counsel and purpose of His will (CP Eph 1:3-14; 2Ti 1:8-9). We see also in Eph 1:13-14 that another manifestation of God's grace is that He gives the Holy Spirit to repentant sinners upon accepting Christ as their saviour, to assure them of their future resurrection to glory with Christ. That is why Paul calls Him, in V13, the "Holy Spirit of Promise". One of the many graces bestowed upon believers is the gift of giving (CP 2Cor 4:15; 8:1-7, 10-19; 9:7-15). A heart possessed of grace is a liberal heart, but it should be noted, as 2Cor 8:12 teaches, that God only expects believers to give according to what they have, not according to what they do not have. Believers must never feel bad if they do not have anything to give. It is not the amount one gives that matters, but the willingness to give, if one has it.

Grace is also the enabling power of believers to endure extreme hardships in their witness for God. His strength – their enabling grace – is made perfect in their weakness (CP 2Cor 12:7-9). The conduct of those in whom grace is resident is characterised by Godly sincerity in all that they say and do. Their conduct is the transparent genuineness of the grace within them (CP 2Cor 1:12). Grace exercised by believers in their speech acts as a purifying influence on all who hear it (CP Pr 10:20-21; Eph 4:29; Col 4:6). Grace is not only a gift but a trust to keep, believers have been entrusted with the stewardship of grace (CP 1Pe 4:10 with Ro 12:6-8; 1Cor 12:4-11). All these gifts of the Spirit are gifts of grace and what Peter is teaching in 1Pe 4:10 is that believers are meant to be channels of blessing for others with the gifts of grace they have each received from the Holy Spirit. Grace qualifies believers to exercise the gifts of the Spirit (CP Eph 3:8; Php 1:7). Grace is also associated with the development of faith and patience, enabling believers undergoing trials to bear the suffering until they receive the final instalment of their salvation when Christ comes again to take them back to heaven with Him (CP 1Pe 1:3-13 with Jn 14: 1-3; 1Cor 15:51-58; 1Th 4:13-18; 5:1-11). This is the grace that will be brought to them on which believers are to set their hopes fully in 1Pe 1:13.

God's grace knows no distinction between nationalities, social status or gender of those who have been saved. They are all one in Christ (CP Ga 3:28).

This does not mean that there is no distinction between the sexes in their function in the church. It simply means that no one is preferred above another as a child of God (CP V 22-29). Grace is the key element in believers for their witness in the world (CP Ac 4:33). Grace is a continuing work in believers enabling them to abound to every good work (CP 1Cor 15:10; 2Cor 9:8). Grace operates in believers both to will and to act according to God's good pleasure (CP Php 2:12-13 with Tit 2:11-12). Obedience to God's word is a gift of God's grace (CP Eph 2:4-7). *Quickened* here means to cause to live, to make alive. It is used in the sense of being raised from death to life with Christ to do the work of God's word. In their unsaved state believers were dead in their trespasses and sins – disobedient to the word of God. But upon their acceptance of Christ they were made alive by the Holy Spirit to a renewed life in Christ (CP Ro 6:1-13; Eph 5:14; Col 2:8-13). *Quickened* in this context means a type of spiritual resurrection; it expresses what being born again means (CP Jn 3:3-5).

As noted earlier in this study, mercy and grace for New Testament believers are dispensed from the Throne of Grace – God's throne in heaven – where Jesus sits at God's right hand (CP He 4:14-16 with He 1:3; 8:1; 10:12, 19-22). By His sacrificial death Jesus has opened up a way for New Testament believers into the very presence of God to obtain mercy and grace in their time of need that was not possible under the Old Covenant. Mercy and Grace are dispensed through Christ's intercession for believers with God (CP Ro 8:33-34; 1Ti 2:5-6; He 7:25; 9:24; 1Jn 1:8-2:1). We learn in 1Jn 1:8-2:1 that believers can, and do sin. But they are not habitual sinners. When they do sin God has made provision for them to confess and receive his forgiveness. This keeps believers in an undefiled condition – they are cleansed from all unrighteousness (CP Psa 32:1-5; 119:1; Pr 28:13). Believers can come boldly – confidently – to the Throne of Grace knowing also that every petition they desire of God that conforms to His word, will be granted them (CP Jn 14:13-14; 16:23-24; 1Jn 5:14-15). As also noted earlier, the Throne of Grace was typified in the Old Testament by the Mercy Seat on the Ark of the Covenant upon which the blood of the animal sacrifices and sin offerings were sprinkled on the Day of Atonement, prefiguring Christ's ultimate sacrifice.

Grace is the sustaining influence enabling believers to persevere in their Christian walk (CP Ac 11:23; 20:32; 2Cor 9:14). The *word of His grace* to which Paul commended the Ephesian elders in Ac 20:32 are the scriptures (CP Lu 4:3-4; 1Th 2:13; 2Ti 3:15-17). The scriptures are the record of God's gracious dealings with mankind, and the source of spiritual growth for all Christians. Although Paul is speaking to the church leaders in Ac 20:32 – they are subject to the authority of scripture just as the congregation is – he means it for every believer in Christ. Scriptures are able to build all believers up to maturity in Christ and bring them to the place where God would have them to be in Him, in order to inherit the eternal kingdom (CP Ro 8:16-17; Eph 1:3, 11-14; 1Pe 1:3-5). *Them*

which are sanctified in Ac 20:32 refers to Christians generally (CP Ac 26:18; 1Cor 1:2; Jude 1). Grace gives boldness to those ministering God's word, enabling them to unreservedly remind others in the church of Christian doctrine that could be neglected or forgotten (CP Ro 15:14-16 with 1Ti 4:6; 2Ti 2:14; Tit 3:1). Grace is the enabling power of God in believers to labour abundantly in the work of His word (CP 1Cor 15:10). Grace is also the enabling power of God in believers to preach the gospel (CP Eph 3:7-8).

Grace inspires singing (CP Col 3:16). The singing of Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs helps to internalise the word of God in believers and establishes their heart's affection for Jesus, and their brothers and sisters in Christ. Psalms are scriptural songs, hymns can be divinely or humanly inspired songs and spiritual songs are impromptu songs sung under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (CP Eph 5:18-19). Grace brings hope (CP 2Th 2:16). The hope referred to here looks back on God's gift of His Son, Jesus, in whom believers have eternal comfort now in their salvation, and the promise of being raised to future glory with Jesus throughout eternity (CP V 13-14). Grace abounds exceedingly with faith and love (CP 1Ti 1:12-14). Faith and love are gifts of God's grace in Christ (CP Eph 1:15; 3:17-19; Col 1:4). 1Ti 1:12-14 also teaches that no matter how shameful one's past may be, God will forgive and use those who accept Christ as saviour (CP 2Ti 2:1). Here we see that grace gives strength. This is admonishing believers to be courageous with the strength which God's grace provides; to render service to the Lord faithfully with the ability that comes through union with Him (CP V 1-7).

Grace aids in suffering (CP He 2:9). God's grace here is manifested in Christ's suffering in His atoning death on the cross as the sacrificial sin-offering for all mankind, in order to redeem as many as will receive Him as their saviour, from eternal damnation (CP V 10-18). Christ was made a little lower than the angels for a time, but is now crowned with glory and honour, seated at God's right hand in heaven. By His perfect life and His sacrificial death, Christ has made it possible for mankind to be redeemed to God and eventually regain sovereignty over creation (CP V 5-8 with Psa 8:4-9). Grace helps render true service (CP He 12:28). In light of the fact that believers will inherit God's eternal kingdom, which will be the only thing that will survive in its present form from the shaking of heaven and earth, believers are admonished to exercise grace in their service to God, not as mere ritual activity, but in reverential awe and Godly fear (CP V 24-29). Grace gives stability (CP He 13:9). Only God's grace can inspire and empower believers to live holy lives, not endless rules concerning food and drink (CP Tit 2:11-14). Grace gives life (CP 1Pe 3:7). The *grace of life* here in effect means the grace of God, which gives life. Believing husbands and wives are equal heirs of God's grace and salvation, and husbands who fail to honour their wives and treat them with the respect they deserve as being physically and emotionally weaker than them, will not have their prayers answered (CP Eph 5:25, 28-29).

Now let us look at some aspects of grace from a human perspective. Grace can be resisted. Grace will

never fail believers, but believers will fail grace (CP 2Cor 6:1; Ga 1:6; He 12:14-15). Grace can be frustrated (CP Ga 2:21). If believers try to add works to grace to save themselves they are sinning (CP V 18-20). Once they accept Christ as saviour believers are dead to the law and only follow after the things of God revealed in Christ. Their life is no longer centred on self, but on Christ. Being *crucified with Christ* means dying to self and allowing the resurrection power of Christ to indwell them (CP Ro 6:1-14; 7:6). Believers must not nullify God's grace by self-efforts to attain righteousness. Works cannot be added to grace for salvation (CP Ro 4:4-5 and 11:6 with Ga 2:20-21). Grace can be abandoned (CP Ga 5:1-5). Paul is warning believers here against turning away from God's grace in Christ. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything with Christ. He is only concerned with one's faith that works itself out by love (CP 1Cor 7:18-19; Ga 6:15-16; Col 2:8-12; 3:11-14).

Faith which worketh by love means that faith in Christ expresses itself in self-sacrificing love for others (CP Jn 13:2-17, 34-35; 15:12-17; Ro 5:5; 12:9-10, 15-16; 15:1-3; 1Cor 13:1-7; Ga 5:13-15, 22-26; 6:2; Eph 5:1-2; Php 2:1-5; Col 3:12-14; 1Th 3:12-13; 4:9; He 13:1; Jas 2:14-26; 1Pe 1:22; 2:17; 3:8; 4:8; 2Pe 1:5-9; 1Jn 2:3-5, 9-11; 3:14-19; 4:7-21; 5:1-3; 2Jn 5:6). Grace can be turned into lasciviousness (CP Jude 4). *Lasciviousness* means unrestrained vice of sexual freedom. These men were obviously teaching that salvation by grace allows believers to sin without restraint and not be judged for it. They taught pardon for sin, but not the imperative of holiness. That of course is a lie of the devil, but sadly it is the cause of many contemporary believers failing God's grace.

Preservation is an attribute of God. He preserves the souls of the righteous for His Eternal Kingdom (CP Gen 45:4-8; Psa 31:23; 35:6; 37:28; 145:20). In the New Testament God's preserving power is accomplished through His Son, Jesus (CP Jn 6:37-40; 1Th 5:23; 2Ti 4:18; Jude 1:1). *Anger* is also an attribute of God, but God does not get angry without just cause (CP Ex 4:10-14; Nu 20:7-11; De 4:23-25; Isa 5:24-25; Mic 5:15; Zeph 1:17-18; 3:1-8; Zech 10:3; Mk 3:5; 11:15-16; Jn 2:13-17). God was angry with Moses in Nu 20:7-11 because Moses disobeyed Him. He told Moses to talk to the rock and it would give forth water – an Old Testament type of Christ, the living water, or water of life (CP Ex 17:1-6 with Jn 4:10-14 and 1Cor 10:1-4) – but Moses completely disregarded what God told him and smote the rock twice with his rod because he was angry with the Israelites. God then got angry with Moses and would not allow him to cross over Jordan and take the Israelites into the Promised Land (CP De 3:23-27). In Mk 11:15-16 and Jn 2:13-17 Jesus was also angry with righteous indignation toward the moneychangers and traders who desecrated the temple. God is by nature slow to anger (CP Neh 9:13, 16-17; Psa 103:8; 145:8); and His anger lasts for but a moment (CP Psa 30:5; 103:9).

Another attribute of God is *Glory*, which denotes the revelation of His being, nature and presence to mankind. God's glory is both physical and spiritual. It is the display of His Divine attributes and perfections, as well as the physical manifestation of

His presence. The glory of God went with the Israelites out of Egypt into the wilderness as a pillar of cloud by day to lead the Israelites, and a pillar of light by night to light up their camp (CP Ex 13:21-22; 14:17-20; 16:7, 10; Nu 9:15-23). *Honour* in Ex 14:17-18 means glory. God's glory was manifest here in the Egyptians all being drowned in the Red Sea (CP Ex 24:16-17). The glory of God here, as seen with human eyes was like a consuming fire devouring highly inflammable material (CP Ex 33:18-23). Here we learn that when Moses besought God to show him His glory, God could only let him see His back parts because no man could see the glory of His face and live. God dwells in a light which no man can approach (CP 1Ti 6:16). Moses became an example of this himself when his own face could not be looked upon by the Israelites for its brightness, when he came down from the mountain (CP Ex 34:29-35; 2Cor 3:6-13). God's glory was also so overwhelming in the Old Testament that Moses could not enter the tabernacle (CP Ex 40:34-38). A similar glory appeared when Solomon finished the temple (CP 1Ki 8:10-11). God's glory is manifest in His original creation and in sustaining it for all His creatures (CP Psa 104:10-28, 31).

In the New Testament God's glory describes the revelation of the character and the presence of God in the person and the work of Christ. He is the outshining of the Divine glory (CP Jn 1:14; He 1:1-3). Christ radiates God's glory because He shares God's nature and essence. Whatever God is in character and nature, is expressed in Christ. He is the express image of God's glory (CP Col 1:15). The glory of God was seen by the shepherd's at the birth of Christ (CP Lu 2:8-14). The first manifestation of God's glory in Christ was at the wedding in Cana when Christ turned the water into wine (CP Jn 2:1-11), then at the transfiguration of Christ (CP Lu 9:28-36), after that when Christ raised up Lazarus from the dead (CP Jn 11:1, 3-7, 17, 32-34, 38-45), finally, at Christ's resurrection and ascension to heaven (CP Lu 24:26; Ac 3:13; Ro 6:4; 1Ti 3:16). It is reasonable to say that God's glory was manifest in Christ in all His miracles, as it will be for Christians too who do the same works, as Christ promises they can (CP Mk 16:17-18; Jn 14:12-14).

Goodness, another attribute of God is experienced in the goodness of His creative work (CP Gen 1:31; 2:9); in the good that He does (CP Gen 50:19-21; Ex 18:9; Psa 65:11; 119:68; Ro 2:3-4; 8:28; 11:22; Jas 1:17); in those that do good (CP Psa 37:27; 1Pe 2:11-12; 1Jn 2:9; 3:6-10; 3Jn 11). God's original creation was good and He continues to sustain it on behalf of all His creatures (CP Psa 104:10-28; 145:9-10). Another of God's attributes is His *mercy*. God's mercy is expressed by His actions. It is never just a feeling with God, but is the outward expression of His active compassion, and is the very source of life for His children (CP Psa 5:12 with 103:4, 6-17; 119:41, 77, 156). God's mercy cannot be separated from His love, His grace, and His faithfulness (CP Psa 37:24). In the New Testament God is called the Father of Mercies (CP 2Cor 1:3). Jesus is the ultimate manifestation of God's mercy and the assurance of that mercy for believers (CP He 2:14-18). God's mercy is over all that He has made (CP Psa 145:9), and it is because of His mercy that one can be saved (CP Eph 2:4; Tit 3:5).

Another of God's attributes is *patience*. Patience is forbearance, endurance, long-suffering, self-restraint.

It is the quality of one who is able to avenge oneself but refrains from doing so. In the Old Testament God's patience is mainly manifest in His dealings with the children of Israel. They continually rebelled and disobeyed Him, but He always dealt with them patiently (CP Isa 48:1-9; Hos 11:1-9; Ro 9:22). God's patience with sinners gives them time to repent (CP Ro 2:4; 2Pe 3:8-9). God was patient with sinners under the Old Covenant, suspending judgement – forbearing their sins – until Jesus came and paid for them with His life-blood under the New Covenant (CP Ro 3:25 with He 9:15). God's patience will run out though in due course and then it will be too late for sinners (CP Ac 17:30-31). It will be too late also for many professing Christians (CP Rev 2:1, 5; 2:2, 14, 16; 2:18, 20-23; 3:1-3; 3:14-19). Patience is one of the attributes Christians in the New Testament are admonished to add to their faith, in order to grow in grace (CP 2Pe 1:5-11). Jesus is the exemplar of patience in the New Testament – the greatest example that Christians must follow (CP He 12:1-3).

Another of God's attributes is His *faithfulness* (CP De 7:9; Psa 36:5; Isa 49:7; 1Cor 1:9; 1Pe 4:19). God is faithful to His word. He will carry out both His promises and His warnings (CP De 7:7-15 and 8:19-20 with Nu 23:19). The same teaching is in the New Testament also (CP 2Ti 2:12-13). This is a warning to Christians to remain faithful to Christ. If they do not, Christ, who must remain faithful to His word, will disown them (CP Mt 10:33). This is the retributive aspect of God's faithfulness, and Christians must be aware of it in order to carefully consider their position before doing anything that could jeopardise their standing with God (CP He 6:4-8; 10:26-31). Christians must understand that when they choose any course to follow, they choose its consequences as well. God cannot bless and prosper disobedience and unfaithfulness. Another attribute of God is *life*. He gives this life to those who love and obey Him (CP De 30:19-20; Psa 27:1; 36:9; 91:14-16; 103:2-4; Pr 16:15). Jesus is the life-giving expression of God in the New Testament (CP Jn 10:9-10, 27-28; 11:25-26; 14:6; Col 3:4).

God is also *just*. Righteous and without sin God upholds the moral order of the universe (CP De 32:4; Neh 9:33; Psa 36:6; 89:14; Isa 45:21-22; Dan 9:14). God's determination to punish sinners with death proceeds from His justice (CP Gen 2:16-17; De 28:63; 30:15-20; Ro 6:23). God is angry at sin and reveals His wrath against every form of wickedness because of His love for righteousness (CP Judg 10:7; 1Ki 14:15, 22; Psa 78: 21-22; Ro 1:18; 3:5-6). God's justice is not opposed to His love. It was to satisfy His justice that He sent Jesus Christ into the world to save sinners as His gift of love (CP Isa 53:5-11; Jn 3:16; Ro 4:23-26; 1Pe 3:18; 1Jn 4:9-10). Jesus is called the *Just One* in the New Testament (CP Ac 3:14; 7:52; 22:14). Another of God's attributes is His compassion – He is *compassionate*. To be compassionate means to have sympathy for, to suffer with, to pity, have mercy (CP 2Ki 13:23; Psa 78:38-39; 86:15; 103:13; 111:4; 112:4; 145:8). Out of His compassion for humanity God provided forgiveness and salvation (CP Mic 7:18-20). In the New Testament Christ was

likewise moved with compassion on those He preached to and healed, multitudes and individuals alike (CP Mt 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:30-34; Mk 1:40-42; Lu 7:12-15; Jas 5:11).

Forgiveness is another of God's many attributes. From the Divine perspective it denotes complete pardon for sin of those who confess and repent (CP Psa 32:5; 103:11-13; 130:3-4; Pr 28:13; Jer 31:33-34; Mic 7:18-19; Ro 3:24-26; Col 2:13; 1Jn 1:9). In the Old Testament the primary means of obtaining forgiveness was through the sacrificial system as the atonement for sin (which prefigured Christ as the supreme sacrifice in the New Testament). The forgiveness of God was channelled through the sacrificial offerings as an act of mercy. However, the emphasis was still on the need for a repentant heart as the basis for forgiveness (CP Isa 1:10-18; Hos 6:6; Joel 2:12-13; Amos 5:21-27). In the New Testament Christ is the perfect and final sacrifice through whom God's forgiveness is available to all who desire it (CP Ro 3:23-26; He 10:11-14; 1Jn 2:2). Forgiveness in the New Testament rests on the atoning work of Christ and is directly linked with faith in Him (CP Jn 3:16, 18; Ac 10:43; 13:38-39; Ro 10:11; Ga 3:22).

Another attribute of God is His *Kindness* (CP Neh 9:16-17; Psa 103:8, 11, 17; 117:2; 119:76; Isa 54:8, 10; Joel 2:12-13; Jon 4:2). In the Old Testament kindness is intermingled with mercy and grace. Being slow to anger and abounding in love is a characteristic of God which distinguishes His kindness from His wrath (CP Ex 34:6; Nu 14:18; Neh 9:17; Psa 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jon 4:2). God's kindness is also referred to in the Old Testament as His *loving-kindness*, denoting an everlasting love that cannot be shaken (CP Psa 17:7; 36:7; 63:3; 103:1, 4; 107:43; 138:2; Jer 9:24; 31:3; 32:18). In the New Testament, God's kindness expressed through Christ is equivalent to His grace, and embodies the fullness of salvation (CP Tit 3:4 with Eph 2:7).

Yet another of God's attributes is His providence. God's providence is His continual care for His people and His creation. It is the infinite care God takes of His creation from the falling of each sparrow to the ground and the numbering of each hair of each head (CP Lu 12:47), to the unfailing upholding and sustaining of all the vast universe by the word of His power (CP He 1:1-3). It is that eternal power at work that precludes any notion that fate or luck or chance has anything to do with the outcome of a man's life. Divine providence has been at work in the universe since creation. It was God's providence that originally brought all things into existence (CP Isa 45:18; Col 1:16-17), that provided redemption after the fall (CP Gen 3:15; Eph 1:1-11), that preserved the human race at the flood (CP Gen 6:8-8:22). It was the providence of God that multiplied Abraham and Sarah's offspring as the dust (CP Gen 13:16), as the stars (CP Gen 15:5), and as the sand, in numbers (CP Gen 22:17). God's providence also provided the sacrifice for Abraham in place of his son, Isaac (CP Gen 22:1-14). *Jehovah Jireh* means, "the Lord will provide".

The theme of God's providential care for the created order is present throughout scripture (CP Neh 9:6-38). The Psalms are filled with allusions to God's guidance

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and sustenance of His creation (CP Psa 19:1-13; 23:1-6; 65:1-13; 104:2-19; 107:1-43; 150:2, 6). The most significant of God's providential acts was to send Messiah – Christ – as the atoning sacrifice for mankind's sins (CP Isa 42:1-6; 53:1-12 with Jn 3:16-17; Ro 3:21-26). Christians can face the future with confidence knowing that nothing will ever be able to separate them from God's providence and mercy and love in Christ (CP Ro 8:28-39), and the fact that they may suffer for their faith is of no consequence in light

of Christ's strengthening and sustaining power within them (CP 2Cor 1:3-7; Php 4:13), Amen!

This now completes the study on God – His nature, His names, His attributes. It is essential to be mindful of the fact that God is triune and therefore all that describes Him is equally true of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit. The three beings in the Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit are co-equal.