

THE EVERLASTING PERFECTIONS OF GOD

***A STUDY TO STRENGTHEN BELIEVERS IN THEIR FAITH
TO FACE THE PAINFUL TRIALS OF LIFE***

MARTIN PURYEAR

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IN YOU, O LORD, I HAVE TAKEN REFUGE; LET ME NEVER BE ASHAMED. IN YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS DELIVER ME. INCLINE YOUR EAR TO ME; RESCUE ME QUICKLY. BE TO ME A ROCK OF STRENGTH, A STRONGHOLD TO SAVE ME; FOR YOU ARE MY ROCK AND MY FORTRESS. FOR YOUR NAME'S SAKE, YOU WILL LEAD ME AND GUIDE ME ... I WILL REJOICE AND BE GLAD IN YOUR LOVINGKINDNESS BECAUSE YOU HAVE SEEN MY AFFLICTION. YOU HAVE KNOWN THE TROUBLES OF MY SOUL ... AS FOR ME, I TRUST IN YOU, O LORD. I SAY, "YOU ARE MY GOD."

– PSALM 31:1-3, 7, 14

A SNAPSHOT OF THE COURSE

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CHAPTER 1**AT THE END OF THE ROPE**

GOD DOES NOT BECOME A REALITY IN OUR LIVES UNTIL HE BECOMES A NECESSITY

– SOURCE UNKNOWN

Her eyes were swollen from long bouts with grief. A deep, unimaginable grief. On her husband's face there was no expression at all ... just a numbed, lifeless, downward stare. Seated in front of the couple was their pastor whose countenance ached with a sadness that said, "I would give my right arm to be able to remove this pain from you; but I can't." He knew that now was not the time to teach theology.

"He was just five years old!" the young mother said. No, she did not say those words; she spewed them. They boiled out of her mouth as water boils over onto an unwatched stove. *"His entire life was in front of him, and your god killed him!"* Her teeth were clenched as she gave credit for the death of her child to the God of her pastor.

"Couldn't He have stopped this from happening! I thought He loved our child! I thought He loved us! That's what you said in front of the whole church when we dedicated Chad to the Lord! Is this your idea of a God of love!" And as she beat her pastor with the fist of her tongue, she was aiming straight for the Face of God.

"Why? What good can possibly come from this? How can we ever forgive that killer? He was texting behind the wheel, for Christ's sake!"

The woman literally screamed the last few words before breaking down – once again – to weep. And then – once again – there was silence ...

... that deafening silence that could be heard over the sobbing of a young mother who would not be comforted ...

... that heavy silence that hung over a wordless father who was unable to comfort himself, let alone his wife ...

... that agonizing silence that gripped a pastor who had failed to prepare His flock for those circumstances of life that slam them to the ground.

The couple was not prepared for this storm. But the storm had come. Its wind and its rain were battering against the very foundation of their home. But the foundation of *this* home was not solid rock. No, its underpinning was a platform of sand ... an unstable, shifting sand.

For years this man and his wife had taken bits and pieces about God from bits and pieces of the Bible and molded Him into the god they wanted Him to be. But they were strangers to the

whole God ... of the *whole* Bible. His ways, they did not know. As a result, the response of these parents to the death of their child was confusion and anger and bitterness. And now, there was precious little foundation in which to set the anchor of their faith.

Beloved friends, life in this fallen world will – at some point – slam each one of us to the ground. Though we hope they are few, storms do come. This is a fact of life for everyone reading these words. There is no “if” to it.

Those who are wise will prepare their “roofs” for these approaching storms when the sun is shining, not when it is raining. But that is not what most do. Most disregard the certainty of life’s storms until they are right in the middle of one. Then, finding themselves at the end of their rope, they desperately reach for something to hang on to ... something that will provide an immediate “fix” ... something that will give them hope ... something that will kill the pain.

To be sure, there are a lot of pain killers out there. And there are many who will turn to these “spiritual Ibuprofens” in times of despair and hopelessness and emptiness. But over time, their search for relief often slides into some form of addiction (alcohol abuse, drug abuse, some type of sexual perversion, workaholism, materialism) or into an unhealthy, unstable, and sometimes immoral dependence upon another person.

But there *is* a true Anchor for the soul. And it is to Him that many others turn.

Our circumstances offer us no hope.

Our emotions are shattered.

Our friends offer us all the comfort they can; but as well-intentioned as they are, their efforts fall flat.

And so, we do the only thing we *can* do. We cry out to God for help.

BE NOT FAR FROM ME, FOR TROUBLE IS NEAR; FOR THERE IS NONE TO HELP ... O LORD, BE NOT FAR OFF; O YOU MY HELP, HASTEN TO MY ASSISTANCE. (PSALM 22:11, 19)

But to our surprise – and then to our dismay – we hear nothing from Him. We assumed we would receive His immediate relief. But we get nothing ... nothing but silence.

MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME? FAR FROM MY DELIVERANCE ARE THE WORDS OF MY GROANING. O MY GOD, I CRY BY DAY, BUT YOU DO NOT ANSWER; AND BY NIGHT, BUT I HAVE NO REST. (PSALM 22:1-2)

It is at this point that what we believe about God rises to the surface. Not what we *say* we believe but what we *really believe*. If you want to know what a person really believes about God, the place to find out is not in a Sunday School classroom. No, the best place to discover a person’s theology is in an emergency room ... or an intensive care waiting room ... or a funeral

home. The tests given in seminary classrooms do not hold a candle to the tests given in these kinds of rooms. There we find people clinging to the Divine Knot at the end of their rope. They may be strong in faith, or they may be weak in faith, or they may be somewhere in between. But there is one thing we can be sure of. In these kinds of rooms – these rooms of fear and helplessness and heartache – whatever level of faith they have is laid bare. Whether rock-solid or unstable, one's faith is revealed for what it is. There is nothing fake about it.

Dear friends, when life comes apart at the seams, there will, of course, be pain. But *before* we let fear and hopelessness and despair rush in to take control of our lives, let us get to know the Anchor of our soul. Let us learn to cling, *right now*, to the only sure Foundation we have.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

We are about to apply 20 of God's character traits to a real-life situation. To do so, we will first consider a description of each of (what we are calling) His "perfections." Then, we will attempt to answer this question:

Let's suppose that Chad's parents had been spiritually mature at the time of this crisis. If they had, by faith, grabbed hold of and clung to this truth about God's character, how would that have helped to comfort their souls and stabilize their lives?

Each perfection will then be followed by an appeal for *you* to take what you are learning about God and, in the privacy of your own prayer closet, apply this same question to a major concern *you* are facing in your own life.

WHEN I, BY FAITH, GRAB HOLD OF AND CLING TO THIS TRUTH ABOUT GOD'S CHARACTER, HOW WILL THAT HELP TO COMFORT MY SOUL AND STABILIZE MY LIFE DURING THE TRIAL I AM FACING TODAY?

- This trial might be a *personal or family problem* (for example, the death of a family member or friend / a serious illness / finances / unemployment / a negative relationship with a family member, friend, coworker, or fellow student / your boss' attitude / a certain fear / a major decision / etc.).
- Or it might concern a *national or international situation* (for example, the economy / a military conflict / a global pandemic / global immorality / political instability / racial or ethnic tension / violence / the environment / etc.).

Our goal is to *gain a deeper understanding – and appreciation – of God's perfections*. In doing so, we will be equipped to *stand firm in our faith* as we face the painful trials of life. It will prepare us to grab hold of every truth we know about God when assaulted by the realities of living in a fallen world. It will make us ready to cling tightly to Him, not as a last resort but as our *first resort*.

Yes, it is true. *Perhaps* He will improve our circumstances ... or even remove the trial from us altogether. But then again, maybe not. We *can*, however, be sure of this. If we cast our cares upon Him, He *can – and will* – turn our anxieties and fears and defeat into triumph. This, He has promised to do.

CAST YOUR BURDEN UPON THE LORD AND HE WILL SUSTAIN YOU; HE WILL NEVER ALLOW THE RIGHTEOUS TO BE SHAKEN. (PSALM 55:22)

Dear friends, no matter how *small* or how *great* our challenges are, we can depend upon the one true God, the God of the Bible, to deal with them ... by His power ... according to His will ... and in His time ... which, in turn, will allow us to get a good night's sleep.

CHAPTER 2

GOD is *SELF-EXISTENT*

God was not created. He was not dependent on anyone or anything else outside Himself for His *existence*. (All creation, however, was dependent upon Him for *its* existence.)

FOR JUST AS THE FATHER HAS LIFE IN HIMSELF, EVEN SO HE GAVE TO THE SON ALSO TO HAVE LIFE IN HIMSELF. (JOHN 5:26)

GOD is *ETERNAL*

Even before time began (in eternity past), God existed in His fullness. And if time were to ever cease (in eternity future), He will continue to exist in His fullness. The existence and perfections of God have no limitations regarding time.

BEFORE THE MOUNTAINS WERE BORN, OR YOU GAVE BIRTH TO THE EARTH AND THE WORLD, EVEN FROM EVERLASTING TO EVERLASTING, YOU ARE GOD. (PSALM 90:2)

GOD is *IMMUTABLE*

God does not change. Throughout eternity past ... at the present time ... and throughout eternity future, He remains the same. He does not change Himself nor can anyone or anything else change Him. His infinite perfections, His holy and righteous character, His moral laws, His wise purposes, His sovereign plans, His gracious promises, and His generous spiritual blessings all remain steadfast and sure.

FOR I, THE LORD, DO NOT CHANGE; THEREFORE YOU, O SONS OF JACOB, ARE NOT CONSUMED. (MALACHI 3:6)

*[If Chad's parents had, by faith, clung to these truths – that God is **self-existent** and **eternal** and **immutable** (unchanging), how would that have helped to comfort their souls and stabilize their lives?]*

If Chad's parents had been mature believers at the time of their son's accident, they would have grabbed hold of every truth they had ever learned about God. Over time, as a stunned denial of his death gave way to the unimaginable pain of its reality, this one truth – perhaps before any of the others – would step forward: God is still God.

He did not stop being God right before the accident ... or during the accident ... or right after the accident. As He was throughout eternity past and as He will be throughout eternity future, so He is now. God is still God. His Name has been ... is ... and always will be ... "I AM." He is eternal.

Furthermore, when Chad was killed, his parents would have constantly reminded each other that God did not stop being *fully* God. When things happen that do not make any sense, God has not become something less than He once was. He is still just as wise ... just as loving ... and just as good as He always has been and always will be. From everlasting to everlasting, God remains the same. Their son's death did not change that. In the pain of their trial, the thoughts and emotions of his parents would *gradually* be steadied and comforted by this reality: God has not changed; and He never will.

When *I*, by faith, grab hold of and cling to these truths – that God is ***self-existent*** and ***eternal*** and ***immutable*** (*unchanging*), how will that help to comfort *my* soul and stabilize *my* life during the trial I am facing today?

CHAPTER 3

GOD is **RIGHTEOUS** and **JUST**

God is fully upright and true ... blameless and above reproach. It is according to this perfect standard – His righteousness – that He judges both angels and man.

FOR THE LORD IS RIGHTEOUS, HE LOVES RIGHTEOUSNESS; THE UPRIGHT WILL BEHOLD HIS FACE. (PSALM 11:7)

... IN THE FUTURE THERE IS LAID UP FOR ME THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHICH THE LORD, THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE, WILL AWARD TO ME ON THAT DAY. AND NOT ONLY TO ME, BUT ALSO TO ALL WHO HAVE LOVED HIS APPEARING. (2ND TIMOTHY 4:8)

AND THEY SANG THE SONG OF MOSES, THE BOND-SERVANT OF GOD, AND THE SONG OF THE LAMB, SAYING, "GREAT AND MARVELOUS ARE YOUR WORKS, O LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY; RIGHTEOUS AND TRUE ARE YOUR WAYS, KING OF THE NATIONS!" (REVELATION 15:3)

*[If Chad's parents had, by faith, grabbed hold of and clung to these truths – that God is **righteous** and **just**, how would that have helped to comfort their souls and stabilize their lives?]*

It was a black jeep. The driver: a 27-year-old male. No passengers. Driving 40 miles per hour in a residential neighborhood. The posted speed limit: 30 miles per hour. Texting while at the wheel. A ball rolls across the street, being chased by a five-year-old child. The mother's frantic scream, "Chad, stop!" is not heard by a little boy focused on getting his ball. Emerging from between two parked cars, her son darts into the street. He is not seen by the driver. *Nothing* is seen by the driver except the screen on his smart phone. Realizing he has run over something, he is startled and looks up. He thinks he has hit a dog. But he has just killed a child. It took all of seven seconds.

The charge: "Vehicular manslaughter." A felony. The sentence was minimum: 13 months in a federal prison. According to the judicial system, this was the value of the little boy's life. Thirteen months.

The 27-year-old will be 28 when he gets out. He will sacrifice one year and one month of personal freedom. He will be separated from his wife and five-year-old daughter for one year and one month. He will miss the day his little girl turns six; and he will miss the day she starts first grade. He will miss one wedding anniversary. One Thanksgiving. One Christmas. One summer vacation with his family. Then he will be released.

Chad will not be present for what would have been his sixth birthday. He will not be present for elementary school ... middle school ... high school ... college. He will not be present for scores of Thanksgivings ... and Christmases ... and summer vacations. Little League baseball ...

fishing with Dad ... getting his driver's license ... high school graduation ... college graduation ... a satisfying career ... marriage ... children ... grandchildren ... all of it, violently yanked away in seven seconds by an irresponsible motorist.

Each of these realizations – one by one – came crashing down upon Chad's parents. They knew they would never watch their son mature ... as a child, as a teenager, as a young adult, and finally as a man. Over the years, one would remind the other, "Today is Chad's birthday." And they would also remember him on another anniversary. But the mother would keep that one to herself. And so would the father.

Chad's parents would have no more contact with the driver. He and his family moved away. But for the next two years, on the anniversary of Chad's death, they wondered if he, too, was thinking about that little boy. *Their* little boy. Was he reminded of their son every time he looked at his daughter? Or had he pushed everything about that day as far out of his memory as he possibly could. They would never know.

For two years they continued to resent the injustice of a justice system that set the price of their precious child at one year and one month in prison. They felt violated. They knew, of course, that no judge could bring their son back. But just because they were believers, was their sense of justice supposed to be satisfied with what seemed to be nothing more than "a slap on the back of the hand"! What that driver lost came nowhere close to what Chad's family would lose for years to come! For him, the loss of 13 months of freedom and the loss of a "clean record." For them, the loss of a cherished life and the countless memories they would have had. They knew this was no "eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth" sentence. No, this was "a tooth for an eye" sentence.

Eventually, these young parents realized that, somehow, their chains of resentment had to be broken. And so, making an appointment with their pastor, they asked for his counsel.

*"I would encourage you both to place the court's decision in the hands of the Chief Justice of the universe. You need to transfer your full faith over to **the judicial system of God**. In His time, He will make all things right.*

*I would also encourage each of you to 'seal' your faith in Him with this continuing verbal commitment: 'Father, I trust You to make this right.' If you do, you will be able to rest – right now – in the knowledge that – in the future – His full **justice** will prevail."*

*"There is one more thing I would advise you both to do. And this, you can be sure, is key to your deliverance from bitterness. I would encourage each of you to pray for the salvation of the driver. Often. But before you do, remind yourselves of the mercy that God showed you in your own salvation. Then ask the Savior to show this man as much **mercy** as He showed you."*

The pastor's advice was heeded and turned out to be priceless in value. As Chad's parents trusted God to fulfill His perfect justice ... in His way ... in His time, their resentment eventually faded. And as their prayers for the driver's salvation gradually became *pleas* for God's mercy to be poured out upon him and his family, what so easily could have become a lifetime of bitterness disappeared.

When *I*, by faith, grab hold of and cling to these truths – that God is ***righteous*** and ***just***, how will that help to comfort *my* soul and stabilize *my* life during the trial I am facing today?

THE SINFUL CHOICES OF MAN AND THE SOVEREIGN WILL OF GOD

WHEN JOSEPH'S BROTHERS SAW THAT THEIR FATHER WAS DEAD, THEY SAID, "WHAT IF JOSEPH BEARS A GRUDGE AGAINST US AND PAYS US BACK IN FULL FOR ALL THE WRONG WHICH WE DID TO HIM!" SO THEY SENT A MESSAGE TO JOSEPH, SAYING, "YOUR FATHER CHARGED BEFORE HE DIED, SAYING, ... "PLEASE FORGIVE, I BEG YOU, THE TRANSGRESSION OF YOUR BROTHERS AND THEIR SIN, FOR THEY DID YOU WRONG." AND NOW, PLEASE FORGIVE THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE SERVANTS OF THE GOD OF YOUR FATHER." AND JOSEPH WEPT WHEN THEY SPOKE TO HIM. THEN HIS BROTHERS ALSO CAME AND FELL DOWN BEFORE HIM AND SAID, "BEHOLD, WE ARE YOUR SERVANTS." BUT JOSEPH SAID TO THEM, "DO NOT BE AFRAID, FOR AM I IN GOD'S PLACE? AS FOR YOU, YOU MEANT EVIL AGAINST ME, BUT GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD IN ORDER TO BRING ABOUT THIS PRESENT RESULT, TO PRESERVE MANY PEOPLE ALIVE. (GENESIS 50:15-20)

God is sovereign over the affairs of man. Surprisingly, this includes their sinful choices.

To accomplish His *holy* purposes, God *permits* man to exercise his free will. He *allows* man to *be* what he *is* by nature ... sinful. God does not *cause* him to sin; He simply "removes His hand of restraint" and *allows* man to "be himself." In doing so, His righteous will is accomplished without participating in the sin Himself.

Consider, for example, the Crucifixion. God did not *cause* the nation of Israel (through their religious leaders) and the government of Rome (through Pontius Pilate) to condemn Jesus; He *allowed* them to do so. As a result, God accomplished His will (He provided man the means of salvation) by allowing both Jews and Gentiles to sin (by crucifying His blameless Son); and He did so without participating with them in the sin (thereby, maintaining His holiness).

Often, the sinfulness of man has a "ripple effect." That is, it tends to harm "innocent bystanders" (spouses, children, relatives, friends, employees, employers, pedestrians, other motorists, citizens of a country, church members, et. al.). As God's children learn to "live by faith" during a trial in which *they* are the victims, (1) their capacity to trust their heavenly Father is enlarged, and (2) their character becomes more like that of Christ. As with Chad's parents, God allows the sins of others (indeed, He uses "all things") to accomplish His holy will, namely, to conform His children "to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:28-29).

However, let us not forget the reality of God's *justice*: *a guilty man remains responsible for his actions*. God does not force him to sin. (It is the guilty one's choice to do so, not God's.) Nor does God participate with him in his sin. (He remains separated from sin. God is, and will always be, holy.) Therefore, the One Who is sovereign over the affairs of a sinful man is *just* in punishing that man for his sinful choices. In doing so

the guilty one is held accountable for his sin,

the innocent victim is avenged,

society is protected from chaos,

and the honor of God's *righteous and just* Name is protected.

CHAPTER 4

GOD is SPIRIT

God does not have a body. He is not composed of different parts or substances that can be separated one from the other. Nor can He ever be contained in or confined to one place.

GOD IS SPIRIT, AND THOSE WHO WORSHIP HIM MUST WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH. (JOHN 4:24)

GOD is OMNIPRESENT

God is present everywhere ... at the same time ... all the time ... in the fullness of His being. His presence has no limitations.

"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 23:24)

WHERE CAN I GO FROM YOUR SPIRIT? OR WHERE CAN I FLEE FROM YOUR PRESENCE? IF I ASCEND TO HEAVEN, YOU ARE THERE; IF I MAKE MY BED IN SHEOL, BEHOLD, YOU ARE THERE. IF I TAKE THE WINGS OF THE DAWN, IF I DWELL IN THE REMOTEST PART OF THE SEA, EVEN THERE YOUR HAND WILL LEAD ME, AND YOUR RIGHT HAND WILL LAY HOLD OF ME. (PSALM 139:7-10)

*[If Chad's parents had, by faith, grabbed hold of and clung to these truths – that God is **spirit** and **omnipresent**, how would that have helped to comfort their souls and stabilize their lives?]*

For several years, Chad's parents had been members of a closeknit Bible study group in their church. Not surprisingly, word about the accident began to spread quickly among its members. It did not take long for those, who were able, to rush to the emergency room where they found the pastor of their church sitting with Chad's family ... holding them ... weeping with them ... praying with them ... doing what he could to comfort them. And as these others arrived, they encircled this young mother and father in small pockets of prayer, each crying out to the ever-present God of comfort to minister to this dear couple they loved.

The next few days would be a blur to Chad's parents. There were arrangements to be made, arrangements that never crossed their minds they would ever *need* to make. Those that could, helped as much as they could. The women in their small group scheduled and prepared the meals. The men in their small group scheduled to cut the grass and run errands.

But there came a time when everything that could be done had been done. There came a time when their pastor and all their friends needed to resume their own routines and

responsibilities. And so, with heartfelt assurances of their availability to help, they returned to their homes. That is, all but One.

Among all their friends, this One did not leave. Nor would He *ever* leave. And if anyone could comfort them, if anyone could be their stronghold, if anyone could remind them of every truth they had ever learned about God (truths they needed to remember now more than ever), it was this Friend. This Divine Knot at the end of their rope, this bedrock Foundation was there to offer His uninterrupted attention. Chad's parents would take Him up on that offer for many days to come as they poured forth their pleas for strength before the all-powerful, ever-present God.

To be sure, this young couple was right in the middle of one of the most important lessons they would ever learn. They were learning to live by faith. But not in their pastor. Not in their church. Not in their friends. Not in their feelings. Not in their logic. Not in their circumstances. And not in some god of their imagination. No, they were learning to place their trust in the true and living God of the Bible. The whole God, of the whole Bible.

No longer surrounded by a roomful of friends, they were learning *to stand on their own two feet of faith*, a faith that was being tempered to withstand the trials of a fallen world, trials that cause most who are without faith or who are weak in faith to collapse under their weight. They were learning to lay hold of the ever-present God, the One Who had laid hold of *them* by His right hand.

WHERE CAN I GO FROM YOUR SPIRIT? OR WHERE CAN I FLEE FROM YOUR PRESENCE? IF I ASCEND TO HEAVEN, YOU ARE THERE; IF I MAKE MY BED IN SHEOL, BEHOLD, YOU ARE THERE. IF I TAKE THE WINGS OF THE DAWN, IF I DWELL IN THE REMOTEST PART OF THE SEA, EVEN THERE YOUR HAND WILL LEAD ME, AND YOUR RIGHT HAND WILL LAY HOLD OF ME. (PSALM 139:7-10)

When *I*, by faith, grab hold of and cling to these truths – that God is ***spirit*** and ***omnipresent***, how will that help to comfort *my* soul and stabilize *my* life during the trial I am facing today?

CHAPTER 5

GOD is *OMNIPOTENT*

God is all-powerful. He can do anything He wills. Nothing is impossible for Him. His strength has no limitations.

IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH. (GENESIS 1:1)

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. (ISAIAH 40:28)

I AM GOD ALMIGHTY. WALK BEFORE ME AND BE BLAMELESS. (GENESIS 17:1)

GOD is *SELF-SUFFICIENT*

God is not dependent upon His creation for anything. He has no need for anyone or anything outside Himself to *sustain* Him. (All creation, however, is dependent upon Him to sustain *it*.)

THE GOD WHO MADE THE WORLD AND ALL THINGS IN IT, SINCE HE IS LORD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH, DOES NOT DWELL IN TEMPLES MADE WITH HANDS; NOR IS HE SERVED BY HUMAN HANDS, AS THOUGH HE NEEDED ANYTHING, SINCE HE HIMSELF GIVES TO ALL PEOPLE LIFE AND BREATH AND ALL THINGS. (ACTS 17:24-25)

*“How **can** we ever forgive that killer!”*

*[If Chad’s parents had, by faith, grabbed hold of and clung to these truths – that God is **omnipotent** and **self-sufficient**, how would that have helped to comfort their souls and stabilize their lives?]*

Once the reality of their son’s death had sunk in, Chad’s father and mother were faced with a choice. It was a decision that had been forced upon them under the most heart-wrenching of conditions. They would not make this decision as a couple but, rather, as individuals. And afterwards, each would live with the consequences of his and her choice.

The question that confronted this spiritually mature couple was not

Can I forgive the one who killed my son?

No, that was not the question. The question before them was

Will I forgive the one who killed my son?

According to the Scriptures, they knew that God *expected* them to forgive the driver of the car.

*WHENEVER YOU STAND PRAYING, FORGIVE, IF YOU HAVE **ANYTHING** AGAINST **ANYONE**, SO THAT YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN WILL ALSO FORGIVE YOU YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS. (MARK 11:25)*

Since forgiveness was the will of the Father, they knew that God had given them everything they would need to obey His will (2nd Peter 1:3). But from the very start, there was a struggle within their hearts against this command. This inner battle came from knowing that their son was dead. It came from knowing that his death should not have happened. It came from knowing that he was dead because of this man's reckless behavior. It came from knowing that no matter how just the sentence he receives in court, no judge could bring their son back. How then could this grief-stricken mother and father possibly extend forgiveness to the one who killed their son?

And to the *extent* God expected!

*BE ... FORGIVING (OF) EACH OTHER, **JUST AS GOD IN CHRIST ALSO HAS FORGIVEN YOU.** (EPHESIANS 4:31-32)*

"Just as" God had forgiven them! "With the *same kind* of forgiveness"! "To the *same degree*"! Is this even possible! The answer, of course, is "No, it is not" ... at least it is not *humanly* possible. The parents of a child who had been snatched from them so unexpectedly and so suddenly knew that God expected a lot more from them than what they *could* give. Far from being man-made, this level of forgiveness had to be *God-generated*, something that is true for *every commandment* found on every page of Scripture. The fact is,

ONLY GOD HAS THE POWER TO OBEY GOD.

Chad's parents are given a choice: either to hate this man or to forgive him. Two individuals are being called upon to make this decision: Chad's father *and* Chad's mother. Not together as a couple. Separately.

If either (or both) choose to hang on to their hatred, they will be tormented for the rest of their lives in a prison of bitterness. For them, there will be no rest.

But if either (or both) choose to forgive, they will experience a "release," a "letting go" of bitterness and anger and unrest. And in place of that prison, they will dwell in a haven of peace. *But to do so, each must cling to his indwelling Helper.*

The choice is theirs. Perhaps one would forgive more quickly than the other. Or maybe both will be able to triumph over their anger sooner rather than later. Either way, the forgiveness of God is available *by faith*, coming from the all-powerful One. The One Who created the heavens and the earth. The One Who can do the impossible.

THE THINGS THAT ARE IMPOSSIBLE WITH PEOPLE ARE POSSIBLE WITH GOD. FOR NOTHING WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD. (LUKE 1:37, 18:27)

When *I*, by faith, grab hold of and cling to these truths – that God is ***omnipotent and self-sufficient***, how will that help to comfort *my* soul and stabilize *my* life during the trial I am facing today?

CHAPTER 6

GOD is ONE (UNITY)

There is only one true God, namely the God of Whom Jesus testified, the God of Israel and of the New Testament Church. He has throughout eternity past ... He does today ... and He will throughout eternity future exist as the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. He is one God in three holy Persons (the Trinity).

HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD IS OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE! (DEUTERONOMY 6:4)

FOR THERE IS ONE GOD, AND ONE MEDIATOR ALSO BETWEEN GOD AND MEN, THE MAN CHRIST JESUS (1ST TIMOTHY 2:5)

GOD is LOVING

God wants what is best for His children. And by His sovereignty and wisdom, He will use every word they hear and every situation they face to produce **the highest good** in their lives. He seeks to transform the character of His sons and daughters into that of His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ: their thoughts, attitudes, speech, conduct, and composure (under pressure).

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. (1ST JOHN 4:16)

AND WE KNOW THAT GOD CAUSES ALL THINGS TO WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THOSE WHO LOVE GOD, TO THOSE WHO ARE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE. FOR THOSE WHOM HE FOREKNEW, HE ALSO PREDESTINED TO BECOME CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON, SO THAT HE WOULD BE THE FIRSTBORN AMONG MANY BRETHREN; AND THESE WHOM HE PREDESTINED, HE ALSO CALLED; AND THESE WHOM HE CALLED, HE ALSO JUSTIFIED; AND THESE WHOM HE JUSTIFIED, HE ALSO GLORIFIED. WHAT THEN SHALL WE SAY TO THESE THINGS? IF GOD IS FOR US, WHO IS AGAINST US? HE WHO DID NOT SPARE HIS OWN SON, BUT DELIVERED HIM OVER FOR US ALL, HOW WILL HE NOT ALSO WITH HIM FREELY GIVE US ALL THINGS?

WHO WILL SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST? WILL TRIBULATION, OR DISTRESS, OR PERSECUTION, OR FAMINE, OR NAKEDNESS, OR PERIL, OR SWORD? JUST AS IT IS WRITTEN, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." BUT IN ALL THESE THINGS WE OVERWHELMINGLY CONQUER THROUGH HIM WHO LOVED US. FOR I AM CONVINCED THAT NEITHER DEATH, NOR LIFE, NOR ANGELS, NOR PRINCIPALITIES, NOR THINGS PRESENT, NOR THINGS TO COME, NOR POWERS, NOR HEIGHT, NOR DEPTH, NOR ANY OTHER CREATED THING, WILL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD, WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD. (ROMANS 8:28-32, 35-39)

"I thought He loved our child! I thought He loved us! That's what you said in front of the whole church when we dedicated Chad to the Lord! Is this your idea of a God of love!"

If there is one complaint a Christ-rejecting world seems to have against God, it is this one: "No God of love would have allowed this to happen to a five-year-old child." Confronted with the realities of a fallen world, the unbeliever's conclusion is that this so-called "god" is unjust ... or he is weak ... or he is indifferent. But he is not loving. (Perhaps the world is simply looking for a reason to reject Him.)

*[If Chad's parents had, by faith, grabbed hold of and clung to these truths – that there is **one God Who loves** them, how would that have helped to comfort their souls and stabilize their lives?]*

If Chad's parents had been spiritually mature, they would not need to be convinced that the one true and living God loved them.

For years they had experienced the wonder of *the Father's* fellowship. They had benefited from His wise guidance, His countless physical and material provisions, and His priceless spiritual blessings. Yes, they knew that God, their heavenly Father, loved them.

And for years they had experienced the wonder of *the Son's* fellowship. They had benefited from His work on the Cross for their sake: His rescue from sin's eternal penalty ... His deliverance from sin's confusion and emptiness and misery ... and their anticipation of an everlasting citizenship in His Kingdom of Light. Yes, they knew that God, their Savior, loved them.

Furthermore, they had experienced the wonder of *the Holy Spirit's* fellowship. They had benefited from His wise instruction, His comfort, His joy, His peace, indeed, all the fruit of His life. Yes, they knew that God, their indwelling Helper, loved them.

For years they had seen overwhelming evidence of the one, true God's love for them.

Furthermore, they would have understood what He was trying to accomplish in their lives. God's goal was nothing less than *to bring their character in alignment with the likeness of His Son, Christ Jesus* (Romans 8:28-30). Their heavenly Father could show them no greater love than this: to build into their lives – through *faith* and *obedience* – blessings the world would give their right arm to have:

Lives filled with *joy* instead of misery ... *peace* instead of anxiety and fear ... *confidence* instead of self-doubt ... *strength* instead of weakness ... *satisfaction* instead of discontentment ... *stability* instead of insecurity ... lives that were *productive* and *useful* ... lives with *purpose* and *direction*.

But to become like their Savior, Chad's parents also knew what that would involve. They knew from experience that God's corrective measures were a painful – but necessary – part of their spiritual growth. They knew that the Father was willing to allow “momentary, light affliction” to come into the lives of His children to produce “an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” (2nd Corinthians 4:17). They would have known that *divine discipline is also motivated by the love of God*.

"MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES." IT IS FOR DISCIPLINE THAT YOU ENDURE; GOD DEALS WITH YOU AS WITH SONS; FOR WHAT SON IS THERE WHOM HIS FATHER DOES NOT DISCIPLINE? BUT IF YOU ARE WITHOUT DISCIPLINE, OF WHICH ALL HAVE BECOME PARTAKERS, THEN YOU ARE ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN AND NOT SONS. FURTHERMORE, WE HAD EARTHLY FATHERS TO DISCIPLINE US, AND WE RESPECTED THEM; SHALL WE NOT MUCH RATHER BE SUBJECT TO THE FATHER OF SPIRITS, AND LIVE? FOR THEY DISCIPLINED US FOR A SHORT TIME AS SEEMED BEST TO THEM, BUT HE DISCIPLINES US FOR OUR GOOD, SO THAT WE MAY SHARE HIS HOLINESS. ALL DISCIPLINE FOR THE MOMENT SEEMS NOT TO BE JOYFUL, BUT SORROWFUL; YET TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN TRAINED BY IT, AFTERWARDS IT YIELDS THE PEACEFUL FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. (HEBREWS 12:5-11)

Chad's death, no doubt, caused them to struggle with the “hardness” of God's method to bring their lives in alignment with the character of Christ. But this godly couple knew *what* He was doing. And once they had weathered His discipline, their prayers were filled with pleas for God to *continue* to cultivate “His holiness” and “the peaceful fruit of righteousness” in their lives for the sake of His glory.

Beloved, to remain convinced that God still loves us as we endure a painful trial, we must accept the role suffering plays in our spiritual development. To be conformed to the image of our Savior, taking up our own cross is not something we can go around. It is something we must go through. To be sure, following the Son's example of submitting to the will of the Father (no matter what the cost) includes priceless *blessings*. But obedience will often call the believer to a life of affliction and personal loss. To experience “the power of (Christ's) resurrection” in our lives, we must prepare to face “the fellowship of His sufferings” (Philippians 3:10-11). If we are willing to accept the high price that confronts every Christ-follower: to bear our cross ... to die to self ... to drink from His cup, we will have no problem reconciling the painful cost of discipleship with the deep and magnanimous and everlasting love of God.

When *I*, by faith, grab hold of and cling to these truths – that there is **one God Who loves me**, how will that help to comfort *my* soul and stabilize *my* life during the trial I am facing today?

CHAPTER 7

GOD is GOOD

God is full of kindness and goodwill toward all His creation. He takes holy pleasure in providing it with what will best enhance its wellbeing.

YOU LORD ARE GOOD AND DO GOOD; TEACH ME YOUR STATUTES. (PSALM 119:68)

THE LORD IS GOOD TO ALL, AND HIS MERCIES ARE OVER ALL HIS WORKS. (PSALM 145:9)

GOD is GRACIOUS

God abundantly blesses all humanity – unbelievers and believers alike – with favors heaped upon favors ... *undeserved* gifts of life, health, food, shelter, clothing, friends, family (plus many others).

THE LORD IS COMPASSIONATE AND GRACIOUS, SLOW TO ANGER AND ABOUNDING IN LOVINGKINDNESS. (PSALM 103:8)

BUT I SAY TO YOU, LOVE YOUR ENEMIES AND PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU, SO THAT YOU MAY BE SONS OF YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN; FOR HE CAUSES HIS SUN TO RISE ON THE EVIL AND THE GOOD, AND SENDS RAIN ON THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE UNRIGHTEOUS. (MATTHEW 5:44-45)

Additionally, every spiritual blessing is fully and freely lavished upon those who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ for salvation. Gifts piled upon gifts. Undeserved. Priceless. Eternal.

IN HIM WE HAVE REDEMPTION THROUGH HIS BLOOD, THE FORGIVENESS OF OUR TRESPASSES, ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE WHICH HE LAVISHED ON US. (EPHESIANS 1:7-8)

*“He was just five years old! His entire life was in front of him, and **your** god killed him!”*

*[If Chad’s parents had, by faith, grabbed hold of and clung to these truths – that God is **good** and **gracious**, how would that have helped to comfort their souls and stabilize their lives?]*

In the five years of life he was given, how was God good to Chad? Well first, he was given five years of life. During that time, he had been given a fair degree of health. He was given parents that loved him. And grandparents. And aunts and uncles and cousins. God provided him with food and shelter and clothes. He had a friend or two. And like most little boys, he enjoyed having fun. He enjoyed some birthday parties and holiday celebrations.

God gave good gifts to Chad. Why? Because **God** is good.

And how was God good to Chad's parents? They were given five years with their child. They were given the satisfaction and delight in watching him play and develop as a little boy. Without those five years, they would have missed out on every day they had with him. Furthermore, God continues to take care of them, providing them with everything *they* need to sustain their lives.

God gave – and continues to give – good gifts to Chad's parents. Why? Because **God** is good.

This was not just sterile theology to these two. They *believed* it. They had experienced His kindness firsthand in their own lives and in the life of their son. How then could this heartbroken couple reconcile what they knew about the goodness of God with His removal of that precious gift from their lives?

How? By comparing what they *had been given* for five years (Chad) with what they *deserved to be given* because of their sinfulness. Sinners do not deserve good gifts. Sinners deserve eternal death. Chad's parents knew that God had given good gifts to them because **He** is good ... not because *they* were good. All the gifts they had received from His hand were *undeserved*. That is what "grace" is: *undeserved favor*.

So, when the sovereign One allowed Chad's life to be taken from him, his parents knew that God had not deprived him (or them) of something he (or they) were *entitled* to have.

It will take time for this kind of pain to subside. But at some point, these maturing parents will look back on this situation with a different set of eyes. With hearts of *gratitude*, they will begin to consider each of the 1,800+ days their son was given (and each of the 1,800+ days they were given to be with him) as a gift, an *undeserved gift*, coming from the hands of a gracious God.

Beloved, our God is a good God, One Who is generous with His grace.

When *I*, by faith, grab hold of and cling to these truths – that God is **good** and **gracious**, how will that help to comfort *my* soul and stabilize *my* life during the trial I am facing today?

BUT IS GOD GOOD ... ALL THE TIME?

*taken from the website, Steward of Truth Publications
www.stewardoftruth.com
archived blog, "Is God Good ... All the Time?"
(June 17th, 2015)*

When I was growing up, my family would always pray before a meal. I cannot remember a time when we did not thank God for the food before us. Even when I was quite young, I was given a "turn to pray." And this is what I would say:

"God is great. God is good. Let us thank Him for our food. Amen."

Do you believe that? Do you believe that God is great ... and good?

I do not believe I have ever run across a person who said he believed in God ... but thought that He was weak. "God" and "great" just seem to go together. These two words seem inseparable, whether in times of joy or (especially) in times of pain. Indeed, one of the best places to observe a person's belief in the power of God is in an Intensive Care waiting room. There, even those who are not all that religious will often turn to God because they believe He is *able* to help them when no one else can. For those who believe in Him, the greatness of God is a given.

The goodness of God, however, is a different matter. "God" and "good" do not always go together, at least in the heart of the one who is suffering. I have known more than a few people who were bitter toward the God they said was great. And most of the time, the reason they resented Him is because they believed He had let them down in some way:

- He had "cheated" them from having something He *should* have given them ... but didn't.
- Or He had "robbed" them of something they *used* to have ... and should *still* have ... but *no longer* have ... because He took it away from them.

The Bible knows nothing of a God that "cheats" and "robs." But the God of the Bible does withhold. And He does remove. The Father does allow the pain of loss and helplessness and brokenness to enter the lives of those Whom He dearly loves.

THE LORD GAVE AND THE LORD HAS TAKEN AWAY. BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD. (JOB 1:21)

Why would He do that? Why would a good God allow His children to suffer loss? There *is* an answer to this question. When God decides to crumble the self-reliant spirit of a self-assured person, His purpose in doing so is for this crippled life to become more dependent upon Him. **IF** faith is the response of this weakened one, the gaping hole in his life can now be filled, not with the power of frail men but with the power of almighty God.

It then becomes a life that can glorify more fully the God of his redemption.

It becomes a life that can represent the Savior more accurately to a spiritually bankrupt world that is hopelessly groping in darkness for peace, a world that is sentenced to a Christless eternity.

It becomes a life that will share more fully in the radiant glory of the Son of God throughout the ages to come ...

... all of which are *infinitely more important* than his own health, prosperity, and well-being,

... and all of which are *infinitely more important* than the health, prosperity, and well-being of those he loves,

... but *none* of which would have been possible apart from this painful – but priceless – gift of brokenness.

So, do you believe in the goodness of God in the good times ... *and* the bad? To truly appreciate the value of suffering, we must have the same perspective God has. We are not weakened because God failed in His responsibility to keep us happy. We are weakened because He loves us enough to share His glory with us ... an eternal glory that *demands that we first be emptied of ourselves* so that, through faith, we might be filled with the power of a great God.

Dear friends, when we can truthfully say while suffering,

“God is great. God is good.”

then – and only then – will we be able to say,

“Let us thank Him for our *weaknesses*.”

For when we are weak, then we are strong ... in Christ Jesus.

AND HE HAS SAID TO ME, “MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR YOU, FOR POWER IS PERFECTED IN WEAKNESS.” MOST GLADLY, THEREFORE, I WILL RATHER BOAST ABOUT MY WEAKNESSES, SO THAT THE POWER OF CHRIST MAY DWELL IN ME.

THEREFORE, I AM WELL CONTENT WITH WEAKNESSES, WITH INSULTS, WITH DISTRESSES, WITH PERSECUTIONS, WITH DIFFICULTIES, FOR CHRIST’S SAKE; FOR WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN I AM STRONG.
(2ND CORINTHIANS 12:9-10)

CHAPTER 8

GOD is *MERCIFUL*

Because of His great and persisting compassion, God *withholds* from His children the eternal punishment their sinfulness deserves (mercy). [He has, instead, *granted* them eternal and abundant life, along with the promises of many more blessings to come (grace).]

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). (EPHESIANS 2:4-5)

*[If Chad's parents had, by faith, grabbed hold of and clung to this truth – that God is **merciful**, how would that have helped to comfort their souls and stabilize their lives?]*

Shortly after Chad died, his parents made an appointment with their pastor. As mature believers, they were not looking for someone on whom they could vent their anger toward God. Although their emotions had been shattered, their faith in God's wisdom and goodness remained steady. No, this couple wanted to know where the soul of their young son was.

They knew that Chad had a sin nature ... that he had, in fact, been born a sinner ... and that he had acquired that inclination to rebel against God the moment he was conceived (Psalm 51:5). (No one had to teach their son to be selfish or disobedient.)

They also knew that, in his five years of life, Chad had heard numerous Bible stories from his parents, from his Sunday School teachers, and from his Vacation Bible School leaders. So, he knew *about* Christ's Death and Resurrection. But his parents were not sure that Chad understood *why* he needed the Savior. He did not yet seem *able* to grasp the *eternal consequence* of selfishness or disobedience.

The pastor's answer to their question focused on *the mercy of God*. It was his view that there are many who die in "a state of innocence." This would include those who were very young children and those who were severely mentally challenged. It was his understanding that when one dies in that state, he or she is ushered immediately into the Presence of Christ. For that to be Chad's eternal destiny seemed more in keeping with the compassion – and justice – of God regarding those who are unable – or not yet able – to understand the eternal consequence of their sins and, in response, trust in Christ for salvation.

Over the years what their pastor said would do much to cultivate peace within the souls of this couple. They would be comforted in knowing that they – who were *made righteous* by faith –

would one day be reunited with their son who had died in *innocence*. How great a solace is the mercy of God!

When *I*, by faith, grab hold of and cling to this truth – that God is *merciful*, how will that help to comfort *my* soul and stabilize *my* life during the trial I am facing today?

CHAPTER 9

GOD is INFINITE

God has no limitations of any kind. He never reaches the end of His abilities.

CAN YOU DISCOVER THE DEPTHS OF GOD? CAN YOU DISCOVER THE LIMITS OF THE ALMIGHTY? THEY ARE HIGH AS THE HEAVENS, WHAT CAN YOU DO? DEEPER THAN SHEOL, WHAT CAN YOU KNOW? ITS MEASURE IS LONGER THAN THE EARTH AND BROADER THAN THE SEA. (JOB 11:7-9)

THE THINGS THAT ARE IMPOSSIBLE WITH PEOPLE ARE POSSIBLE WITH GOD. FOR NOTHING WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD. (LUKE 1:37, 18:27)

GOD is OMNISCIENT

God is all-knowing. He has never had to learn anything. He has never been, nor ever will be, ignorant about anything. God fully knows and understands all things the way they are. His knowledge has no limitations.

THE LORD KNOWS THE THOUGHTS OF MAN, THAT THEY ARE A MERE BREATH. (PSALM 94:11)

AND THERE IS NO CREATURE HIDDEN FROM HIS SIGHT, BUT ALL THINGS ARE OPEN AND LAID BARE TO THE EYES OF HIM WITH WHOM WE HAVE TO DO. (HEBREWS 4:13)

O LORD, YOU HAVE SEARCHED ME AND KNOWN ME. YOU KNOW WHEN I SIT DOWN AND WHEN I RISE UP; YOU UNDERSTAND MY THOUGHT FROM AFAR. YOU SCRUTINIZE MY PATH AND MY LYING DOWN, AND ARE INTIMATELY ACQUAINTED WITH ALL MY WAYS. EVEN BEFORE THERE IS A WORD ON MY TONGUE, BEHOLD, O LORD, YOU KNOW IT ALL. YOU HAVE ENCLOSED ME BEHIND AND BEFORE, AND LAID YOUR HAND UPON ME. SUCH KNOWLEDGE IS TOO WONDERFUL FOR ME; IT IS TOO HIGH, I CANNOT ATTAIN TO IT. (PSALM 139:1-6)

WHO HAS MEASURED THE WATERS IN THE HOLLOW OF HIS HAND, AND MARKED OFF THE HEAVENS BY THE SPAN, AND CALCULATED THE DUST OF THE EARTH BY THE MEASURE, AND WEIGHED THE MOUNTAINS IN A BALANCE AND THE HILLS IN A PAIR OF SCALES? 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 40:12-14)

Indeed, He knows everything that is possible.

WOE TO YOU, CHORAZIN! WOE TO YOU, BETHSAIDA! FOR IF THE MIRACLES HAD OCCURRED IN TYRE AND SIDON WHICH OCCURRED IN YOU, THEY WOULD HAVE REPENTED LONG AGO IN SACKCLOTH AND ASHES. (MATTHEW 11:21)

*[If Chad's parents had, by faith, grabbed hold of and clung to these truths – that God is **infinite** and **omniscient**, how would that have helped to comfort their souls and stabilize their lives?]*

Within the local church that Chad's parents attended was an older couple considered to be "pillars of the faith." Both Mr. and Mrs. Smith were known for their strong prayer lives and their deep understanding of God's Word. Their godly reputation would have been reason enough for this grieving couple to seek them out; but there was something else that drew them to their home. About twenty years ago, Mr. and Mrs. Smith lost their 14-year-old daughter to a serious illness.

At first, the Smiths simply took them by their hands, wanting to comfort them ... wanting to reassure them ... wanting to help carry their weight of pain as much as possible. And as the four of them sat around the kitchen table, it became clear that the faith of Chad's parents – though unbroken – was being severely tested. "At times" they said, "God seems so indifferent."

Then Mr. Smith spoke.

*"You came to our home because you knew we could relate to what you are going through. You knew that we had gone through something similar and, therefore, we could feel your pain. You are right; we **do** feel your pain. Perhaps more than most in our church. But we want you to know that we are not the only ones in this kitchen who can relate to your situation. There is Someone else Who knows more about this accident and knows more about how you feel than either my wife or I ever could."*

And for the next few minutes, Mr. and Mrs. Smith reminded them of their all-knowing God.

They were reminded that God had been an eyewitness to the accident. *He knew* about its every detail ... from beginning to end. *He knew* that the driver had been negligent. *He knew* that he was guilty.

But they were also reminded that God had been an eyewitness to another heart-wrenching Event. And this Event was no accident. God had watched an entire nation – His chosen people – reject His Son. And He had watched the Roman government crucify Him. *He knew* every detail of this Execution ... from beginning to end. *He knew* that all of them, Jew and Gentile alike, were guilty of premeditated murder.

*"Do you think He must have felt the same **pain** you now feel over your loss?"*

*"And what about those who killed **His** Son? Do you think He must have felt the same kind of **anger** you now feel toward this driver who took your son's life?"*

They were also reminded that *God knew* Chad was only five years old ... that he was only a child and had died in a state of innocence. *God* also *knew* that His Own Son was sinless. *He knew* that Jesus had not deserved to die.

*“Do you think He also felt the **injustice** of His Son’s Death, One He knew was without sin, being executed by those whose sinful lives made them worthy of death?”*

“Dear brother and sister, the One you have come to love and trust and serve knows all about Chad’s accident. He also knows what you are going through right now. He knows what pain toward the loss of a beloved son feels like. He knows what anger toward those who are guilty feels like. He knows what the injustice of an undeserved death feels like. No, beloved friends, God is not indifferent.”

To be sure, staring this young couple in the face were many long hours and days and weeks and months. But as they poured out their hearts before the Throne of grace, they reminded themselves and each other that they were praying to a Father *Who knew even more about the accident than what they knew and Who felt even more than what they felt* (Hebrews 4:14-16).

It was a turning point in their lives. Never had they sensed the intensity of God’s compassion as they did now. Never had God seemed so sympathetic to them as now. Now it was easier for them to place their confidence in Him.

They would remember those hours and days and weeks and months for the rest of their lives.

When *I*, by faith, grab hold of and cling to these truths – that God is **infinite** and **omniscient**, how will that help to comfort *my* soul and stabilize *my* life during the trial I am facing today?

CHAPTER 10

GOD is SOVEREIGN

“The sovereignty of God is the pillow upon which the child of God rests his head at night, giving perfect peace.” – Charles Spurgeon

God rules as supreme Governor of the universe. He controls all the movements of His creation, from its planets to its subatomic particles. He also rules over all its affairs, including the life of every individual and the history of every nation. Nothing in the world is independent of its Creator. God has every detail of every life in the palm of His hand.

*THE LORD HAS ESTABLISHED HIS THRONE IN THE HEAVENS, AND HIS SOVEREIGNTY RULES OVER ALL.
(PSALM 103:19)*

“Couldn’t He have stopped this from happening!”

*[If Chad’s parents had, by faith, grabbed hold of and clung to this truth – that God is **sovereign**, how would that have helped to comfort their souls and stabilize their lives?]*

Concerning the lives of His children, God has something we do not have. He has “the big picture.” He has a purpose for our lives that stretches into (and throughout) eternity itself (Revelation 22:1-5). And with each day He gives us, another piece is added to that picture.

As mature believers, Chad’s parents would have known that. They would have known that God was in control of their lives. They would have believed that He was piecing together *their* big picture, using “all things” to do so and wasting nothing in the process (Romans 8:28). And when they arrived at the end of their numbered days, having fulfilled their purpose on earth, each would be able to look back over his life and say, “Now I understand!”

This mature couple would have believed all that about their son, too. They would have believed that God was also in control of Chad’s life ... including his death. They would have believed that God had a purpose for him, one that only required five years of life to fulfill. They would have believed that the days of his life – just like theirs – were numbered. And they would have believed that God’s purpose for his life and the number of his days were fulfilled on the same day.

But there is a great deal that even the most spiritually mature parents *cannot* know. Chad’s parents would not have known the number of days God had assigned to their child nor the *full* purpose of this five-year-old’s life. Nor were they promised to understand all the “why’s” of his

death. Nevertheless, what they are called upon to do is to *trust* the One Who is piecing together the pictures of their lives.

When *I*, by faith, grab hold of and cling to this truth – that God is ***sovereign***, how will that help to comfort *my* soul and stabilize *my* life during the trial I am facing today?

CHAPTER 11

GOD is *HOLY*

God is totally separate from His creation in His nature and in His purity. He is present with us, but He is not “one of us.” (Unlike us, He is *not common*.) Furthermore, He is present in the world but is removed from its “worldliness.” (Unlike us, He is *not sinful*.) He is worthy to receive the praise and submission of both angels and man.

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY IS THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS, AND WHO IS TO COME.
(REVELATION 4:8B)

THIS IS THE MESSAGE WE HAVE HEARD FROM HIM AND ANNOUNCE TO YOU, THAT GOD IS LIGHT, AND IN HIM THERE IS NO DARKNESS AT ALL. (1ST JOHN 1:5)

“Why? What good can possibly come from this?”

*[If Chad’s parents had, by faith, grabbed hold of and clung to this truth – that God is **holy**, how would that have helped to comfort their souls and stabilize their lives?]*

If Chad’s parents had been mature believers at the time of their son’s accident, they would have known that *God is not like them*. They would have known that “His ways are not their ways” ... that His way of thinking is not their way of thinking ... and the paths He takes His children down would not always be the paths they would have chosen.

They also would have known that they, as believers, were not commanded to accept God’s ways only if His ways made sense to them. They would have known that *the just were expected to “live by faith”* (Hebrews 10:38) ... that they were to trust God even when what He does defies logic, which is good because what happened to their child did not make any sense.

Hopefully, they also would have understood God’s *revealed* purpose for their lives: *to be conformed to the image of His Son* (Romans 8:28-29). To be sure, they would *not* have known the *specific plan* God would use to accomplish His purpose for them. (No one does.) Therefore, they would have offered up their lives to God with the attitude, “Abba! Father! All things are possible for You ... yet not my will, but Yours be done” (Matthew 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42).

As discussed above under “Sovereign” (page 34), God is piecing together a “big picture,” one that Chad’s parents did not know (nor were they responsible to know). To accomplish that plan, the route He used took this couple in a very different – and heart-wrenching – direction than what they had expected, one that turned their world upside down.

As mature believers, Chad's parents would have known that to get through this, they would have to sink the roots of their faith deeper into the Holy One Whose ways were different than their own: Whose purpose was higher ... Whose motive was nobler ... and Whose plan was wiser. And in doing so, they would gradually realize that *this trial had been necessary* for them

to know their Father in heaven better,
to trust Him more fully,
to be conformed into the likeness of His Son,
and to bear the greatest amount of fruit in their service to Him,

all of which are priceless, eternal blessings.

Do you remember the mother crying out, "Why? What *good* can possibly come from this?"

Dear friends, each of these "*priceless, eternal blessings*" is the good.

When *I*, by faith, grab hold of and cling to this truth – that God is ***holy***, how will that help to comfort *my* soul and stabilize *my* life during the trial I am facing today?

CHAPTER 12

GOD is FAITHFUL

What God has promised to do, He *will* do (in His Own time). He is true to His every word.

GOD IS NOT A MAN THAT HE SHOULD LIE, NOR A SON OF MAN THAT HE SHOULD REPENT. HAS HE SAID, AND WILL HE NOT DO IT? OR HAS HE SPOKEN, AND WILL HE NOT MAKE IT GOOD? (NUMBERS 23:19)

YOUR LOVINGKINDNESS, O LORD, EXTENDS TO THE HEAVENS; YOUR FAITHFULNESS REACHES TO THE SKIES. (PSALM 36:5)

GOD is TRUTH

The integrity of all that God is and all that He says is perfect. There is no ignorance, deceit, or lies residing in Him or coming from Him. His Person and His Word are 100% trustworthy.

INTO YOUR HAND I COMMIT MY SPIRIT. YOU HAVE RANSOMED ME, O LORD, GOD OF TRUTH. (PSALM 31:5)

JESUS SAID TO HIM, "I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE; NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER BUT THROUGH ME." (JOHN 14:6)

FOR YOUR LOVINGKINDNESS IS GREAT ABOVE THE HEAVENS, AND YOUR TRUTH REACHES TO THE SKIES. (PSALM 108:4)

YOU ARE NEAR, O LORD, AND ALL YOUR COMMANDMENTS ARE TRUTH. (PSALM 119:151)

SANCTIFY THEM IN THE TRUTH; YOUR WORD IS TRUTH. (JOHN 17:17)

*[If Chad's parents had, by faith, grabbed hold of and clung to these truths – that God is **faithful** and **truth**, how would that have helped to comfort their souls and stabilize their lives?]*

Long before their son's death, Chad's parents had nurtured their souls by *abiding* in the Presence of their heavenly Father. Each day, they had cultivated their relationships with Him through the reading of His Word and prayer. Certainly, those times before God's throne had been pleasant and refreshing. But whether they realized it or not, their souls were being tempered for the unknown trials that lay ahead. Now, upon the death of their son, they were going to need every fiber of that strength as they clung to the Divine Knot at the end of their rope.

By faith this couple knew that God had not abandoned them. No, that's not entirely true. At times, they felt as though He had. And that lie would try to slip into their minds from time to time as they struggled with the God of their circumstances, the sovereign One Whom they had grown to love over the years. But as they slowly recovered from having the breath knocked out of them, they reminded each other – on several occasions – that God would keep every promise He had ever made to them.

“In the past has He ever once failed to keep a promise? Has He ever let us down?” And with relief, they reminded each other, *“No, He has not!”*

“In the past have any of His promises ever been laced with a lie? Or has even a shade of deception ever been found within one His pledges to us?” And with confidence, they declared to each other, *“No, never!”*

“Have we not learned over the years that the integrity of His Person and His Word is 100% sterling in quality? Have we not learned that the Truth – and nothing but the Truth – saturates His every word? Have we not learned that God keeps His Word?” And with gladness, they agreed, *“Yes, always!”*

The key to this assurance – that God is faithful, and God is truth – was in *knowing the Scriptures*. Not by studying books *about* the Bible but by studying the Bible itself. From their time in the God-breathed Scriptures, they knew what the Author had promised ...

... and just as important, they knew what He had *not* promised. These young parents understood that nowhere in the Bible does God promise children a long and healthy life. In fact, they knew a couple in their church, strong prayer warriors, who had lost one of their children to a serious illness. No, they were not expecting God to keep a promise He never made. They had seen too many believers do that, some of whom were now angry with the One Who, they thought, had “let them down.” But with Chad's parents, the investment they had made over the years in God's Word was now *protecting* them from claiming any (so-called) “promises” they wished God had made but, in fact, had not.

Beloved, the God of Truth is true to His Word. He has never broken His Word. According to **His** timetable, He has, is, and will keep every promise He has ever made. God is worthy of our trust.

When *I*, by faith, grab hold of and cling to these truths – that God is ***faithful and truth***, how will that help to comfort *my* soul and stabilize *my* life during the trial I am facing today?

CHAPTER 13**GOD is WISE**

God "sees everything in focus." He has perfect goals

for His creation

for His angels

for mankind in general

for His children in particular

and ultimately for the glory of His Name.

Furthermore, He is in the process of accomplishing those goals by perfect means. Better plans could not be set; and better strategies to achieve those goals could not be imagined.

OH, THE DEPTH OF THE RICHES BOTH OF THE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD! HOW UNSEARCHABLE ARE HIS JUDGMENTS AND UNFATHOMABLE HIS WAYS! (ROMANS 11:33)

IT IS HE WHO MADE THE EARTH BY HIS POWER, WHO ESTABLISHED THE WORLD BY HIS WISDOM, AND BY HIS UNDERSTANDING HE STRETCHED OUT THE HEAVENS. (JEREMIAH 51:15)

... THE WISDOM FROM ABOVE IS FIRST PURE, THEN PEACEABLE, GENTLE, REASONABLE, FULL OF MERCY AND GOOD FRUITS, UNWAVERING, WITHOUT HYPOCRISY. (JAMES 3:17)

TO THE ONLY WISE GOD, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, BE THE GLORY FOREVER. AMEN. (ROMANS 16:27)

"Why? What good can possibly come from this?"

*[If Chad's parents had, by faith, grabbed hold of and clung to this truth – that God is **wise**, how would that have helped to comfort their souls and stabilize their lives?]*

The eulogy was brief. One of the family members stood to read his obituary. The pastor of his family's church was then given the privilege of reading a few of his favorite Bible verses, followed by the congregation singing a selection of his favorite hymns. But most of the service was devoted to something else.

Chad's father died at the age of 83. And like the funeral of Chad's mother two years earlier, it was decided that most of his service would be a time of testimonies. One person after another stood to testify of his – and his wife's – rock-solid faith and abiding love toward their Savior.

One by one, each described the considerable impact they had on countless lives over the past 50 years.

How their two surviving children and their spouses (now in their mid-50's) and their six grandchildren (now in young adulthood) had all been influenced by their godly parents / grandparents to trust in the Savior's Death as payment for their sins and to walk – by faith – in resurrection power each day.

How an uncle and a cousin and two high school classmates and one of their neighbors and his wife and a co-worker and a score of fifth grade Sunday School children had all come to know the Savior through the consistent witness of this couple's words and lives.

How the faith of several in their church – and other churches – had been comforted and strengthened to endure their own heart-wrenching trials (including the deaths of four children) by a couple that had been tempered and refined so thoroughly in their own crucible.

And how an entire church had begun to share the Gospel with their neighbors, their classmates, their co-workers, their family members, and their friends.

This is what Chad's parents let God do with them. This is what happened when two lives submitted their wills to an all-wise God Who knew what it would take to prepare them to have this level of influence. To be sure, over the years they had asked each other, "Was all this worth Chad's death?" And the answer was always the same:

"Yes, our church family's emboldened commitment to the Great Commission was worth the fiery ordeal we were called upon to endure."

"Yes, the strengthened faith of our Christian brothers and sisters who were suffering from their own losses was worth the painful tragedy that crushed our hearts."

"Yes, the salvation and eternal glory of our children and grandchildren and relatives and friends and Sunday School children were well worth clinging to the divine Knot at the end of our rope."

Their heavenly Father would have agreed with them:

"Yes, the eternal welfare of others is worth enduring the death of One's Son."

*FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD, THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON,
THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. (JOHN 3:16)*

Most surely, God's ways are not our ways. Powerful enough to have prevented the accident from happening, He was also wise enough to allow it to take place.

SUCH IS THE PAINFUL ... AND LOVING ... WISDOM OF GOD

When *I*, by faith, grab hold of and cling to this truth – that God is ***wise***, how will that help to comfort *my* soul and stabilize *my* life during the trial I am facing today?

APPENDIX A: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**CHAPTER 1: "AT THE END OF THE ROPE" (6-8)**

At the top of Chapter 1, there is a statement that we should carefully consider. "God does not become a reality *in our lives* until He becomes a necessity."

- ? What do you think about this statement? Do you agree with it? If so, why? And if not, why not?

Right from the start, we are introduced to a couple that has been thrust into a heart-wrenching situation: the accidental death of their five-year-old son.

- ? As we consider their situation, what troubling issues and questions do you think they *are* struggling with and will likely struggle with in the future? For example, we know they will be asking God, "Why did You allow this to happen?" What else do you think this couple will be forced to deal with?

CHAPTER 2: GOD IS SELF-EXISTENT, ETERNAL, IMMUTABLE (10-11)

Let's say that *you or a beloved family member or a friend has just been diagnosed with a terminal illness.*

- ? How would these perfections – God is ***self-existent, eternal, immutable*** – strengthen you to stand firm in *your faith toward God* and in *your resolve to obey His will* as you face this situation?

CHAPTER 3: GOD IS RIGHTEOUS AND JUST (12-14)

Let's say that *your boss expects you follow his unethical practices and if you do not, he will find a reason to replace you.*

- ? How would these perfections – God is ***righteous and just*** – strengthen you to stand firm in *your faith toward God* and in *your resolve to obey His will* as you face this situation?

THE SINFUL CHOICES OF MAN AND THE SOVEREIGN WILL OF GOD (15)

On page 6 of your reading, Chad's mother "gave credit for the death of her child to the God of her pastor": *"His entire life was in front of him, and **your** god killed him!"*

? From this statement, what do you think she believes about God?

? How would you respond to someone who blames God for the evil in this world?

CHAPTER 4: GOD IS SPIRIT AND OMNIPRESENT (16-17)

Let's say that *your spouse, who claimed to be a believer when you married, has since denied the faith and now wants nothing to do with Jesus Christ.*

? How would these perfections – God is **spirit and omnipresent** – strengthen you to stand firm in *your faith toward God* and in *your resolve to obey His will* as you face this situation?

CHAPTER 5: GOD IS OMNIPOTENT AND SELF-SUFFICIENT (18-20)

Let's say that *there has been a collapse in the economy and your bank has closed its doors, preventing you from getting your money out.*

? How would these perfections – God is **omnipotent and self-sufficient** – strengthen you to stand firm in *your faith toward God* and in *your resolve to obey His will* as you face this situation?

CHAPTER 6: GOD IS ONE (UNITY) AND LOVING (21-23)

Let's say that *you are the object of contempt and criticism among your co-workers (or fellow students) because you have identified yourself with Christ Jesus.*

? How would these perfections – God is **one and loving** – strengthen you to stand firm in *your faith toward God* and in *your resolve to obey His will* as you face this situation?

CHAPTER 7 GOD IS GOOD AND GRACIOUS (24-26)

Let's say that you *have an obnoxious family member whom you always dread being around but is present at all the family get-togethers.*

- ? How would these perfections – God is **good and gracious** – strengthen you to stand firm in *your faith toward God* and in *your resolve to obey His will* as you face this situation?

BUT IS GOD GOOD ... ALL THE TIME? (27-28)

- ? When you find yourself questioning the goodness of God, what can you do to change your doubts toward Him into a fullness of faith in His kindness and goodwill toward you?

CHAPTER 8 GOD IS MERCIFUL (29-30)

Let's say that you *are fearful that a certain war between two countries could easily turn into a world war.*

- ? How would this perfection – God is **merciful** – strengthen you to stand firm in *your faith toward God* and in *your resolve to obey His will* as you face this situation?

CHAPTER 9: GOD IS INFINITE AND OMNISCIENT (31-33)

Let's say that you *have a rebellious, wayward child who has abandoned every principle of wisdom you tried to teach him / her and who is no longer willing to listen to you.*

- ? How would these perfections – God is **infinite and omniscient** – strengthen you to stand firm in *your faith toward God* and in *your resolve to obey His will* as you face this situation?

CHAPTER 10: GOD IS SOVEREIGN (34-35)

Let's say that *your beloved spouse has just had a devastating stroke and the prognosis is long-term care.*

- ? How would this perfection – God is **sovereign** – strengthen you to stand firm in *your faith toward God* and in *your resolve to obey His will* as you face this situation?

CHAPTER 11: GOD IS HOLY (36-37)

Let's say that you *have a boss who has made your job unbearable, but circumstances prevent you from finding other work. (You are stuck in this job.)*

- ? How would this perfection – God is **holy** – strengthen you to stand firm in *your faith toward God* and in *your resolve to obey His will* as you face this situation?

CHAPTER 12: GOD IS FAITHFUL AND TRUTH (38-40)

Let's say that you *were laid off from your job, placing your family in severe financial trouble. Yet, no matter how hard you look, there are no jobs that would adequately support your family.*

- ? How would these perfections – God is **faithful and truth** – strengthen you to stand firm in *your faith toward God* and in *your resolve to obey His will* as you face this situation?

CHAPTER 13: GOD IS WISE (41-43)

Let's say that you *have been diagnosed with an incurable eye disease that will gradually cause you to lose your eyesight.*

- ? How would this perfection – God is **wise** – strengthen you to stand firm in *your faith toward God* and in *your resolve to obey His will* as you face this situation?

APPENDIX B: THE EVERLASTING PERFECTIONS OF GOD**1) GOD is SELF-EXISTENT**

God was not created. He was not dependent on anyone or anything else outside Himself for His *existence*. (All creation, however, was dependent upon Him for *its* existence.)

FOR JUST AS THE FATHER HAS LIFE IN HIMSELF, EVEN SO HE GAVE TO THE SON ALSO TO HAVE LIFE IN HIMSELF. (JOHN 5:26)

2) GOD is ETERNAL

Even before time began (in eternity past), God existed in His fullness. And if time were to ever cease (in eternity future), He will continue to exist in His fullness. The existence and perfections of God have no limitations regarding time.

BEFORE THE MOUNTAINS WERE BORN, OR YOU GAVE BIRTH TO THE EARTH AND THE WORLD, EVEN FROM EVERLASTING TO EVERLASTING, YOU ARE GOD. (PSALM 90:2)

3) GOD is IMMUTABLE

From eternity past ... at the present time ... and throughout eternity future, God does not change. He does not change Himself nor can anyone or anything else change Him. His infinite perfections, His holy and righteous character, His moral laws, His wise purposes, His sovereign plans, His gracious promises, and His generous spiritual blessings all remain steadfast and sure.

FOR I, THE LORD, DO NOT CHANGE; THEREFORE YOU, O SONS OF JACOB, ARE NOT CONSUMED. (MALACHI 3:6)

4) GOD is RIGHTEOUS and JUST

God is fully upright and true ... blameless and above reproach. It is according to this perfect standard – His righteousness – that He judges both angels and man.

FOR THE LORD IS RIGHTEOUS, HE LOVES RIGHTEOUSNESS; THE UPRIGHT WILL BEHOLD HIS FACE. (PSALM 11:7)

... IN THE FUTURE THERE IS LAID UP FOR ME THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHICH THE LORD, THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE, WILL AWARD TO ME ON THAT DAY. AND NOT ONLY TO ME, BUT ALSO TO ALL WHO HAVE LOVED HIS APPEARING. (2ND TIMOTHY 4:8)

AND THEY SANG THE SONG OF MOSES, THE BOND-SERVANT OF GOD, AND THE SONG OF THE LAMB, SAYING, "GREAT AND MARVELOUS ARE YOUR WORKS, O LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY; RIGHTEOUS AND TRUE ARE YOUR WAYS, KING OF THE NATIONS!" (REVELATION 15:3)

5) **GOD is SPIRIT**

God does not have a body. He is not composed of different parts or substances that can be separated one from the other. Nor can He ever be contained in or confined to one place.

GOD IS SPIRIT, AND THOSE WHO WORSHIP HIM MUST WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH. (JOHN 4:24)

6) **GOD is OMNIPRESENT**

God is present everywhere ... at the same time ... all the time ... in the fullness of His being. His presence has no limitations.

"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 23:24)

WHERE CAN I GO FROM YOUR SPIRIT? OR WHERE CAN I FLEE FROM YOUR PRESENCE? IF I ASCEND TO HEAVEN, YOU ARE THERE; IF I MAKE MY BED IN SHEOL, BEHOLD, YOU ARE THERE. IF I TAKE THE WINGS OF THE DAWN, IF I DWELL IN THE REMOTEST PART OF THE SEA, EVEN THERE YOUR HAND WILL LEAD ME, AND YOUR RIGHT HAND WILL LAY HOLD OF ME. (PSALM 139:7-10)

7) **GOD is OMNIPOTENT**

God is all-powerful. He can do anything He wills. Nothing is impossible for Him. His strength has no limitations.

IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH. (GENESIS 1:1)

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. (ISAIAH 40:28)

I AM GOD ALMIGHTY. WALK BEFORE ME AND BE BLAMELESS. (GENESIS 17:1)

8) **GOD is SELF-SUFFICIENT**

God is not dependent upon His creation for anything. He has no need for anyone or anything outside Himself to *sustain* Him. (All creation, however, is dependent upon Him to sustain *it*.)

THE GOD WHO MADE THE WORLD AND ALL THINGS IN IT, SINCE HE IS LORD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH, DOES NOT DWELL IN TEMPLES MADE WITH HANDS; NOR IS HE SERVED BY HUMAN HANDS, AS THOUGH HE NEEDED ANYTHING, SINCE HE HIMSELF GIVES TO ALL PEOPLE LIFE AND BREATH AND ALL THINGS. (ACTS 17:24-25)

9) **GOD is ONE (UNITY)**

There is only one true God, namely the God of Whom Jesus testified, the God of Israel and of the New Testament Church. He has throughout eternity past ... He does today ... and He will throughout eternity future exist as the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. He is one God in three holy Persons (the Trinity).

HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD IS OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE! (DEUTERONOMY 6:4)

FOR THERE IS ONE GOD, AND ONE MEDIATOR ALSO BETWEEN GOD AND MEN, THE MAN CHRIST JESUS (1ST TIMOTHY 2:5)

10) **GOD is LOVING**

God wants what is best for His children. And by His sovereignty and wisdom, He will use every word they hear and every situation they face to produce **the highest good** in their lives. He seeks to transform the character of His sons and daughters into that of His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ: their thoughts, attitudes, speech, conduct, and composure (under pressure).

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. (1ST JOHN 4:16)

AND WE KNOW THAT GOD CAUSES ALL THINGS TO WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THOSE WHO LOVE GOD, TO THOSE WHO ARE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE. FOR THOSE WHOM HE FOREKNEW, HE ALSO PREDESTINED TO BECOME CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON, SO THAT HE WOULD BE THE FIRSTBORN AMONG MANY BRETHREN; AND THESE WHOM HE PREDESTINED, HE ALSO CALLED; AND THESE WHOM HE CALLED, HE ALSO JUSTIFIED; AND THESE WHOM HE JUSTIFIED, HE ALSO GLORIFIED. WHAT THEN SHALL WE SAY TO THESE THINGS? IF GOD IS FOR US, WHO IS AGAINST US? HE WHO DID NOT SPARE HIS OWN SON, BUT DELIVERED HIM OVER FOR US ALL, HOW WILL HE NOT ALSO WITH HIM FREELY GIVE US ALL THINGS?

WHO WILL SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST? WILL TRIBULATION, OR DISTRESS, OR PERSECUTION, OR FAMINE, OR NAKEDNESS, OR PERIL, OR SWORD? JUST AS IT IS WRITTEN, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED." BUT IN ALL THESE THINGS WE OVERWHELMINGLY CONQUER THROUGH HIM WHO LOVED US. FOR I AM CONVINCED THAT NEITHER DEATH, NOR LIFE, NOR ANGELS, NOR PRINCIPALITIES, NOR THINGS PRESENT, NOR THINGS TO COME, NOR POWERS, NOR HEIGHT, NOR DEPTH, NOR ANY OTHER CREATED THING, WILL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD, WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD. (ROMANS 8:28-32, 35-39)

11) GOD is GOOD

God is full of kindness and goodwill toward all His creation. He takes holy pleasure in providing it with what will best enhance its wellbeing.

YOU LORD ARE GOOD AND DO GOOD; TEACH ME YOUR STATUTES. (PSALM 119:68)

THE LORD IS GOOD TO ALL, AND HIS MERCIES ARE OVER ALL HIS WORKS. (PSALM 145:9)

12) GOD is GRACIOUS

God abundantly blesses all humanity – unbelievers and believers alike – with favors heaped upon favors ... *undeserved* gifts of life, health, food, shelter, clothing, friends, family (plus many others).

THE LORD IS COMPASSIONATE AND GRACIOUS, SLOW TO ANGER AND ABOUNDING IN LOVINGKINDNESS. (PSALM 103:8)

BUT I SAY TO YOU, LOVE YOUR ENEMIES AND PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU, SO THAT YOU MAY BE SONS OF YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN; FOR HE CAUSES HIS SUN TO RISE ON THE EVIL AND THE GOOD, AND SENDS RAIN ON THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE UNRIGHTEOUS. (MATTHEW 5:44-45)

Additionally, every spiritual blessing is fully and freely lavished upon those who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ for salvation. Gifts piled upon gifts. Undeserved. Priceless. Eternal.

IN HIM WE HAVE REDEMPTION THROUGH HIS BLOOD, THE FORGIVENESS OF OUR TRESPASSES, ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE WHICH HE LAVISHED ON US. (EPHESIANS 1:7-8)

13) GOD is MERCIFUL

Because of His great and persisting compassion, God *withholds* from His children the eternal punishment their sinfulness deserves (mercy). [He has, instead, *granted* them eternal and abundant life, along with the promises of many more blessings to come (grace).]

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). (EPHESIANS 2:4-5)

14) **GOD is INFINITE**

God has no limitations of any kind. He never reaches the end of His abilities.

CAN YOU DISCOVER THE DEPTHS OF GOD? CAN YOU DISCOVER THE LIMITS OF THE ALMIGHTY? THEY ARE HIGH AS THE HEAVENS, WHAT CAN YOU DO? DEEPER THAN SHEOL, WHAT CAN YOU KNOW? ITS MEASURE IS LONGER THAN THE EARTH AND BROADER THAN THE SEA. (JOB 11:7-9)

THE THINGS THAT ARE IMPOSSIBLE WITH PEOPLE ARE POSSIBLE WITH GOD. FOR NOTHING WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD. (LUKE 1:37, 18:27)

15) **GOD is OMNISCIENT**

God is all-knowing. He has never had to learn anything. He has never been, nor ever will be, ignorant about anything. God fully knows and understands all things the way they are. His knowledge has no limitations.

THE LORD KNOWS THE THOUGHTS OF MAN, THAT THEY ARE A MERE BREATH. (PSALM 94:11)

AND THERE IS NO CREATURE HIDDEN FROM HIS SIGHT, BUT ALL THINGS ARE OPEN AND LAID BARE TO THE EYES OF HIM WITH WHOM WE HAVE TO DO. (HEBREWS 4:13)

O LORD, YOU HAVE SEARCHED ME AND KNOWN ME. YOU KNOW WHEN I SIT DOWN AND WHEN I RISE UP; YOU UNDERSTAND MY THOUGHT FROM AFAR. YOU SCRUTINIZE MY PATH AND MY LYING DOWN, AND ARE INTIMATELY ACQUAINTED WITH ALL MY WAYS. EVEN BEFORE THERE IS A WORD ON MY TONGUE, BEHOLD, O LORD, YOU KNOW IT ALL. YOU HAVE ENCLOSED ME BEHIND AND BEFORE, AND LAID YOUR HAND UPON ME. SUCH KNOWLEDGE IS TOO WONDERFUL FOR ME; IT IS TOO HIGH, I CANNOT ATTAIN TO IT. (PSALM 139:1-6)

WHO HAS MEASURED THE WATERS IN THE HOLLOW OF HIS HAND, AND MARKED OFF THE HEAVENS BY THE SPAN, AND CALCULATED THE DUST OF THE EARTH BY THE MEASURE, AND WEIGHED THE MOUNTAINS IN A BALANCE AND THE HILLS IN A PAIR OF SCALES? 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 40:12-14)

Indeed, He knows everything that is possible.

WOE TO YOU, CHORAZIN! WOE TO YOU, BETHSAIDA! FOR IF THE MIRACLES HAD OCCURRED IN TYRE AND SIDON WHICH OCCURRED IN YOU, THEY WOULD HAVE REPENTED LONG AGO IN SACKCLOTH AND ASHES. (MATTHEW 11:21)

16) **GOD is SOVEREIGN**

God rules as supreme Governor of the universe. He controls all the movements of His creation, from its planets to its subatomic particles. He also rules over all its affairs, including the life of every individual and the history of every nation. Nothing in the world is independent of its Creator. God has every detail of every life in the palm of His hand.

*THE LORD HAS ESTABLISHED HIS THRONE IN THE HEAVENS, AND HIS SOVEREIGNTY RULES OVER ALL.
(PSALM 103:19)*

17) **GOD is HOLY**

God is totally separate from His creation in His nature and in His purity. He is present with us, but He is not "one of us." (Unlike us, He is *not common*.) Furthermore, He is present in the world but is removed from its "worldliness." (Unlike us, He is *not sinful*.) He is worthy to receive the praise and submission of both angels and man.

*HOLY, HOLY, HOLY IS THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS, AND WHO IS TO COME.
(REVELATION 4:8B)*

THIS IS THE MESSAGE WE HAVE HEARD FROM HIM AND ANNOUNCE TO YOU, THAT GOD IS LIGHT, AND IN HIM THERE IS NO DARKNESS AT ALL. (1ST JOHN 1:5)

18) **GOD is FAITHFUL**

What God has promised to do, He *will* do (in His Own time). He is true to His every word.

GOD IS NOT A MAN THAT HE SHOULD LIE, NOR A SON OF MAN THAT HE SHOULD REPENT. HAS HE SAID, AND WILL HE NOT DO IT? OR HAS HE SPOKEN, AND WILL HE NOT MAKE IT GOOD? (NUMBERS 23:19)

YOUR LOVINGKINDNESS, O LORD, EXTENDS TO THE HEAVENS; YOUR FAITHFULNESS REACHES TO THE SKIES. (PSALM 36:5)

19) **GOD is TRUTH**

The integrity of all that God is and all that He says is perfect. There is no ignorance, deceit, or lies residing in Him or coming from Him. His Person and His Word are 100% trustworthy.

*INTO YOUR HAND I COMMIT MY SPIRIT. YOU HAVE RANSOMED ME, O LORD, GOD OF TRUTH.
(PSALM 31:5)*

JESUS SAID TO HIM, "I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE; NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER BUT THROUGH ME." (JOHN 14:6)

FOR YOUR LOVINGKINDNESS IS GREAT ABOVE THE HEAVENS, AND YOUR TRUTH REACHES TO THE SKIES. (PSALM 108:4)

YOU ARE NEAR, O LORD, AND ALL YOUR COMMANDMENTS ARE TRUTH. (PSALM 119:151)

SANCTIFY THEM IN THE TRUTH; YOUR WORD IS TRUTH. (JOHN 17:17)

20) **GOD is WISE**

God "sees everything in focus." He has perfect goals

for His creation

for His angels

for mankind in general

for His children in particular

and ultimately for the glory of His Name.

Furthermore, He is in the process of accomplishing those goals by perfect means. Better plans could not be set; and better strategies to achieve those goals could not be imagined.

OH, THE DEPTH OF THE RICHES BOTH OF THE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD! HOW UNSEARCHABLE ARE HIS JUDGMENTS AND UNFATHOMABLE HIS WAYS! (ROMANS 11:33)

IT IS HE WHO MADE THE EARTH BY HIS POWER, WHO ESTABLISHED THE WORLD BY HIS WISDOM, AND BY HIS UNDERSTANDING HE STRETCHED OUT THE HEAVENS. (JEREMIAH 51:15)

... THE WISDOM FROM ABOVE IS FIRST PURE, THEN PEACEABLE, GENTLE, REASONABLE, FULL OF MERCY AND GOOD FRUITS, UNWAVERING, WITHOUT HYPOCRISY. (JAMES 3:17)

TO THE ONLY WISE GOD, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, BE THE GLORY FOREVER. AMEN. (ROMANS 16:27)