

The Attributes of God - A. W. Pink

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THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

from A. W. Pink -The Attributes of God

God is omniscient. He knows everything: everything possible, everything actual and all creatures, of the past, the present, and the future. He is perfectly acquainted with every detail in the life of every being in heaven, in earth, and in hell. "He knoweth what is in the darkness" (Dan. 2:22). Nothing escapes His notice, nothing can be hidden from Him, nothing is forgotten by Him. Well may we say with the Psalmist, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it" (Ps. 139:6). His knowledge is perfect. He never errs, never changes, never overlooks anything. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). Yes, such is the God with whom "**we** have to do"!

"Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, Thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compasses" my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue but, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether" (Ps. 139:2-4). What a wondrous Being is the God of Scripture! Each of His glorious attributes should render Him honorable in our esteem. The apprehension of His omniscience ought to bow us in adoration before Him. Yet how little do we meditate upon this Divine perfection! Is it because the very thought of it fills us with uneasiness?

How solemn is this fact: nothing can be concealed from God! "For I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them" (Ezek. 11:5). Though He be invisible to us, we are not so to Him. Neither the darkness of night, the closest curtains, nor the deepest dungeon can hide any sinner from the eyes of Omniscience. The trees of the garden were not able to conceal our first parents. No human eye beheld Cain murder his brother, but his Maker witnessed his crime. Sarah might laugh derisively in the seclusion of her tent, yet was it heard by Jehovah. Achan stole a wedge of gold and carefully hid it in the earth, but God brought it to light. David was at much pains to cover up his wickedness, but not too much time had passed until the all-seeing God sent one of His servants to say to him, "Thou art the man!" And to writer and reader is also said, "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. 32:23).

Men would strip Deity of His omniscience if they could—what a proof that "the carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7)! The wicked do as naturally hate this Divine perfection as much as they are naturally compelled to acknowledge it. They wish there might be no Witness of their sins, no Searcher of their hearts, no Judge of their deeds. They seek to banish such a God from their thoughts: "They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness" (Hosea 7:2). How solemn is Ps. 90:8! Good reason has every Christ-rejecter for trembling before it: "Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our **secret** sins in the light of Thy countenance."

But to the believer, the fact of God's omniscience is a truth fraught with much comfort. In times of perplexity he says with Job, "But **He knoweth** the way that I take" (Job 23:10). It may be profoundly mysterious to me, quite incomprehensible to my friends, but **He knoweth**! In times of weariness and weakness believers assure themselves, "**He knoweth** our frame; He remembereth that we are dust" (Ps. 103:14). In times of doubt and suspicion they **appeal** to this very attribute, saying, "**Search me**, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23, 24). In time of sad failure, when our actions have belied our hearts, when our deeds have repudiated our devotion, and the searching question comes to us, "Lovest thou Me?", we say, as Peter did, "Lord, Thou knowest **all** things; Thou knowest that I love Thee" (John 21:17).

Here is encouragement to prayer. There is no cause for fearing that the petitions of the righteous will not be heard, or that their sighs and tears shall escape the notice of God, since He knows the thoughts and intents of the heart. There is no danger of the individual saint being overlooked amidst the multitude of supplicants who daily and hourly present their various petitions, for an **infinite** Mind is as capable of paying the same attention to millions as if only one individual were seeking its attention. So too the lack of appropriate language, the inability to give expression to the deepest longing of the soul, will not jeopardize our prayers, for "It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (Isa. 65:24).

"Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite" (Ps. 147:5). God not only knows everything that has happened in the past in every part of His vast dominion, and He is not only thoroughly acquainted with everything that is now transpiring throughout the entire universe, but He is also perfectly cognizant of every event, from the least to the greatest, that ever will happen in the ages to come. God's knowledge of the future is as complete as is His knowledge of the past and the present, and that, because the future depends entirely upon Himself. Were it in anyway possible for something to occur apart from either the direct agency or permission of God, then that something would be independent of Him, and He would at once cease to be Supreme.

Now the Divine knowledge of the future is not a mere abstraction, but something which is inseparably connected with and accompanied by His purpose. God has Himself designed whatsoever shall yet be, and what He has designed **must** be effectuated. As His most sure Word affirms, "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and **none** can stay His hand" (Dan. 4:35). And again, "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that **shall** stand" (Prov. 19:21). The wisdom and power of God being alike infinite, the accomplishment of whatever He hath purposed is absolutely guaranteed. It is no more possible for the Divine counsels to fail in their execution than it would be for the thrice holy God to lie.

Nothing relating to the future is in anywise uncertain so far as the actualization of God's counsels are concerned. None of His decrees are left contingent either on creatures or secondary causes. There is no future event which is only a mere possibility, that is, something which may or may not come to pass: "**Known** unto God are **all** His works from the beginning" (Acts 15:18). Whatever God has decreed is inexorably certain, for He is without variableness, or shadow of turning (James 1:17). Therefore we are told at the very beginning of that book, which unveils to us so much of the future, of "Things which must shortly come to pass" (Rev. 1:1).

The perfect knowledge of God is exemplified and illustrated in every prophecy recorded in His Word. In the Old Testament are to be found scores of predictions concerning the history of Israel, which were fulfilled to their minutes' detail, centuries after they were made. In them too are scores more foretelling the earthly career of Christ, and they too were accomplished literally and perfectly. Such prophecies could only have been given by One who knew the end from the beginning, and whose knowledge rested upon the unconditional certainty of the accomplishment of everything foretold. In like manner, both Old and New Testament contain many other announcements yet future, and they too "must be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44), must because foretold by Him who decreed them.

It should, however, be pointed out that neither God's knowledge nor His cognition of the future, considered simply in themselves, are causative. Nothing has ever come to pass, or ever will, merely because God knew it. The **cause** of all things is the **will** of God. The man who really believes the Scriptures knows beforehand that the seasons will continue to follow each other with unfailing regularity to the end of earth's history (Gen. 8:22), yet his knowledge is not the cause of their succession. So God's knowledge does not arise from things because they are or will be, but because He has **ordained** them to be. God knew and foretold the crucifixion of His Son many hundreds of years before He became incarnate, and this, because in the Divine purpose, He was a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world: hence we read of His being "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23).

A word or two by way of application. The infinite knowledge of God should fill us with amazement. How far exalted above the wisest man is the Lord! None of us knows what a day may bring forth, but all futurity is open to His omniscient gaze. The infinite knowledge of God ought to fill us with holy **awe**. Nothing we do, say, or even think, escapes the cognizance of Him with whom we have to do: "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov. 15:3). What a curb this would be unto us, did we but meditate upon it more frequently! Instead of acting recklessly, we should say with Hagar, "Thou God seest me" (Gen. 16:13). The apprehension of God's infinite knowledge should fill the Christian with **adoration**. The whole of my life stood open to His view from the beginning. He foresaw my every fall, my every sin, my every backsliding; yet, nevertheless, fixed His heart upon me. Oh, how the realization of this should bow me in wonder and worship before Him!

THE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD

from A. W. Pink -The Attributes of God

What controversies have been engendered by this subject in the past! But what truth of Holy Scripture is there which has not been made the occasion of theological and ecclesiastical battles? The deity of Christ, His virgin birth, His atoning death, His second advent; the believer's justification, sanctification, security; the church, its organization, officers, discipline; baptism, the Lord's supper, and a score of other precious truths might be mentioned. Yet, the controversies which have been waged over them did not close the mouths of God's faithful servants; why, then, should we avoid the vexed questions of God's Foreknowledge, merely because there are some who will charge him with inciting strife? Let others contend if they will, our duty is to bear witness according to the light vouchsafed us.

There are two things concerning the Foreknowledge of God about which many are in ignorance: the **meaning** of the term, its Scriptural scope. Because this ignorance is so widespread, it is an easy matter for preachers and teachers to palm off perversions of this subject, even upon the people of God. There is only one safeguard against error, and that is to be established in the faith; and for that, there has to be prayerful and diligent study, and a receiving with meekness the engrafted Word of God. Only then are we fortified against the attacks of those who assail us. There are those today who are misusing this very truth in order to discredit and deny the absolute sovereignty of God in the salvation of sinners. Just as higher critics are repudiating the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures; evolutionists, the work of God in creation; so some pseudo Bible teachers are perverting His foreknowledge in order to set aside His unconditional election unto eternal life.

When the solemn and blessed subject of Divine foreordination is expounded, when God's eternal choice of certain ones to be conformed to the image of His Son is set forth, the Enemy sends along some man to argue that election is based upon the foreknowledge of God, and this "foreknowledge" is interpreted to mean that God foresaw certain ones would be more pliable than others, that they would respond more readily to the strivings of the Spirit, and that because God knew they would believe, He, accordingly, predestinated them unto salvation. But such a statement is radically wrong. It repudiates the truth of total depravity, for it argues that there is something good in some men. It takes away the independency of God, for it makes His decrees rest upon what He discovers in the creature. It completely turns things upside down, for in saying God foresaw certain sinners would believe in Christ, and that because of this, He predestinated them unto salvation, is the very reverse of the truth. Scripture affirms that God, in His high sovereignty, singled out certain ones to be recipients of His distinguishing favors (Acts 13:48), and therefore He determined to bestow upon them the gift of faith. False theology makes God's foreknowledge of our believing the cause of His election to salvation; whereas, God's election is the cause, and our believing in Christ is the effect.

Let us pause and define our terms. What is meant by "foreknowledge"? "To know beforehand," is the ready reply of many. But we must not jump to conclusions, nor must we turn to Webster's dictionary as the final court of appeal, for it is not a matter of the etymology of the term employed. What is needed is to find out how the word is **used** in Scripture. The Holy Spirit's usage of an expression always defines its meaning and scope. It is failure to apply this simple rule which is responsible for so much confusion and error. So many people assume they already know the signification of a certain word used in Scripture, and then they are too lazy to **test** their assumptions by means of a concordance. Let us amplify this point.

Take the word "flesh." Its meaning appears to be so obvious that many would regard it as a waste of time to look up its various connections in Scripture. It is hastily assumed that the word is synonymous with the physical body, and so no inquiry is made. But, in fact, "flesh" in Scripture frequently includes far more than what is corporeal; all that is embraced by the term can only be ascertained by a diligent comparison of **every** occurrence of it and by a study of each separate context. Take the word "world." The average reader of the Bible imagines this word is the equivalent for the human race, and consequently, many passages where the term is found are wrongly interpreted. Take the word "immortality." Surely **it** requires no study! Obviously it has reference to the indestructibility of the soul. Ah, my reader, it is foolish and wrong to assume anything where the Word of God is concerned. If the reader will take the trouble to carefully examine each passage where "mortal" and "immortal" are found, it will be seen that these words are never applied to the soul, but always to the body.

Now what has just been said on "flesh," the "world," "immortality," applies with equal force to the terms "know" and "foreknow." Instead of imagining that these words signify no more than a simple cognition, the different passages in which they occur require to be carefully weighed. The word "foreknowledge" is not found in the Old Testament. But "know" occurs there frequently. When that term is used in connection with God, it often signifies **to regard with favor**, denoting **not mere** cognition but an **affection** for the object in view. "**I know** thee by name" (Ex. 33:17). "Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that **I knew you**" (Deut. 9:24). "Before I formed thee in the belly **I knew** thee" (Jer. 1:5). "They have made princes and **I knew it not**" (Isa. 40:15). "You only have I **known** of all the families of the earth" (Amos 3:2). In these passages "knew" signifies either **loved** or **appointed**.

In like manner, the word "know" is frequently used in the New Testament, in the same sense as in the Old Testament. "Then will I profess unto them, **I never knew you**" (Matt. 7:23). "I am the good shepherd and **know** My sheep and am **known** of Mine" (John 10:14). "If any man love God, the same is known of Him" (1 Cor. 8:3). "The Lord **knoweth** them that are His" (2 Tim. 2:19).

Now the word "foreknowledge" as it is used in the New Testament is less ambiguous than in its simple form "to know." If every passage in which it occurs is carefully studied, it will be discovered that it is a moot point whether it ever has reference to the mere perception of events which are yet to take place. The fact is that "foreknowledge" is never used in Scripture in connection with events or actions; instead, it always has reference to persons. It is persons God is said to "foreknow," not the actions of those persons. In proof of this we shall now quote each passage where this expression is found.

The first occurrence is in Acts 2:23. There we read, "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." If careful attention is paid to the wording of this verse, it will be seen that the Apostle was not there speaking of God's foreknowledge of the **act** of the crucifixion, but of the **Person** crucified: "Him (Christ)

being delivered by,” etc.

The second occurrence is in Rom. 8:29, 30. “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren. Moreover **whom** He did predestinate, them He also called,” etc. Weigh well the pronoun that is used here. It is not **what** He did foreknow, but **whom** He did. It is not the surrendering of their wills nor the believing of their hearts, but the **persons** themselves that are here in view.

“God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew” (Rom. 11:2). Once more the plain reference is to persons, and to persons only.

The last mention is in 1 Peter 1:2: “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” **Who** are “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father”? The previous verse tells us: the reference is to the “strangers scattered” i. e. the Diaspora, the Dispersion, the believing Jews. Thus, here too the reference is to persons, and not to their foreseen acts.

Now in view of these passages (and there are no more) what scriptural ground is there for anyone saying God “foreknew” the **acts** of certain ones, viz., their “repenting and believing,” and that because of those acts He elected them unto salvation? The answer is, None whatever. Scripture **never** speaks of repentance and faith as being foreseen or foreknown by God. Truly, He **did** know from all eternity that certain ones **would** repent and believe, yet this is not what Scripture refers to as the **object** of God’s “foreknowledge.” The word uniformly refers to God’s foreknowing **persons**; then let us “hold fast the form of sound words” (2Tim. 1:18).

Another thing to which we desire to call particular attention is that the first two passages quoted above show plainly and teach implicitly that God’s “foreknowledge” **is not causative**, that instead, something else lies behind, precedes it, and that something is His own **sovereign decree**. Christ was “delivered by the (1) determinate counsel and (2) foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23). His “counsel” or decree was the ground of His foreknowledge. So again in Rom. 8:29. That verse opens with the word “for,” which tells us to look back to what immediately precedes. What, then, does the previous verse say? This: “all things work together for good to them ... who are the called according to His purpose.” Thus God’s “foreknowledge” is **based upon** His “purpose” or decree (see Ps. 2:7).

God foreknows what **will be** because He has decreed what **shall be**. It is therefore a reversing of the order of Scripture, a putting of the cart before the horse, to affirm that God elects because He foreknows people. The truth is, He “foreknows” because He has **elected**. This removes the ground or cause of election from outside the creature, and places it in God’s own sovereign will. God purposed in Himself to elect a certain people, not because of anything good in them or from them, either actual or foreseen, but solely out of His own mere pleasure. As to why He chose the ones He did, we do not know, and can only say, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.” The plain truth of Rom. 8:29 is that God, before the foundation of the world, singled out certain sinners and appointed them unto salvation (2 Thess. 2:13). This is clear from the concluding words of the verse: “Predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son,” etc. God did not predestinate those whom He foreknew **were** “conformed,” but, on the contrary, those whom He “foreknew” (i. e., loved and elected) He predestinated **to be** conformed.” Their conformity to Christ is not the cause, but the effect of God’s foreknowledge and predestination.

God did not elect any sinner because He foresaw that he would believe, for the simple but sufficient reason that no sinner ever does believe until God gives him faith; just as no man sees until God gives him sight. Sight is God’s gift, seeing is the consequence of my using His gift. So faith is God’s gift (Eph. 2:8, 9), believing is the consequence of my using His gift. If it were true that God had elected certain ones to be saved **because** in due time they would believe, then that would make believing a **meritorious** act, and in that event the saved sinner **would** have ground for “boasting,” which Scripture emphatically denies: Eph. 2:9.

Surely God’s Word is plain enough in teaching that believing is **not** a meritorious act. It affirms that Christians are a people “who have believed **through grace**” (Acts 18:27). If, then, they have believed “through grace,” there is absolutely nothing meritorious about “believing,” and if nothing meritorious, it could not be the ground or cause which moved God to choose them. No; God’s choice proceeds not from anything in us, or anything from us, but solely from His own sovereign pleasure. Moreover, in Rom. 11:5, we read of “a remnant according to the election of grace.” There it is, plain enough; election itself is **of grace**, and grace is **unmerited** favor, something for which we had **no claim** upon God whatsoever.

It thus appears that it is highly important for us to have clear and scriptural views of the “foreknowledge” of God. The popular idea of Divine foreknowledge is not only inadequate and erroneous, but slanders the reality of God’s attributes, bringing Him disgrace rather than the glory which is His due. God not only knew the end from the beginning, but He planned, fixed, predestinated everything from the beginning. And, as cause stands to effect, so God’s purpose is the ground of His prescience. If then the reader be a real Christian, he is so because God chose him in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4), and chose not because He foresaw you **would** believe, but chose simply because it pleased Him to choose; chose you notwithstanding your natural unbelief. This being so, **all** the glory and praise belongs alone to Him. You have **no** ground for taking **any** credit to yourself. You have “believed through grace” (Acts 18:27), and that, because your very election was “of grace” (Rom. 11:5).

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

from A. W. Pink -The Attributes of God

The sovereignty of God may be defined as the **exercise** of His supremacy—see preceding chapter. Being infinitely elevated above the highest creature, He is the Most High, Lord of heaven and earth. Subject to none, influenced by none, absolutely independent; God does as He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases. None can thwart Him, none can hinder Him. So His own Word expressly declares: “My counsel shall stand, and I **will do** all My pleasure” (Isa. 46:10); “He doeth according to **His** will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand” (Dan. 4:35). Divine sovereignty means that God is God in fact, as well as in name, that He is on the Throne of the universe, directing all things, working all things “after the counsel of His own will” (Eph. 1:11).

Rightly did the late **Charles Haddon Spurgeon** say in his sermon on Matt. 20:15,

There is no attribute more comforting to His children than that of God’s Sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe trials, they believe that Sovereignty has ordained their afflictions, that Sovereignty overrules them, and that Sovereignty will sanctify them all. There is nothing for which the children ought more earnestly to contend than the doctrine of their Master over all creation—the Kingship of God over all the works of His own hands—the Throne of God and His right to sit upon that Throne. On the other hand, there is no doctrine more hated by worldings, no truth of which they have made such a football, as the great, stupendous, but yet most certain doctrine of the Sovereignty of the infinite Jehovah. Men will allow God to be everywhere except on His throne. They will allow Him to be in His workshop to fashion worlds and make stars. They will allow Him to be in His almonry to dispense His alms and bestow His bounties. They will allow Him to sustain the earth and bear up the pillars thereof, or light the lamps of heaven, or rule the waves of the ever-moving ocean; but when God ascends His throne, His creatures then gnash their teeth. And we proclaim an **enthroned** God, and His right to do as He wills with His own, to dispose of His creatures as **He** thinks well, without consulting them in the matter; then it is that we are hissed and execrated, and then it is that men turn a deaf ear to us, for God on His throne is not the God they love. But it is God upon the throne that we love to preach. It is God upon His throne whom we trust. (Read Spurgeon’s full sermon text - [Divine Sovereignty](#))

“Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places” (Ps. 135:6). Yes, dear reader, such is the imperial Potentate revealed in Holy Writ. Unrivalled in majesty, unlimited in power, unaffected by anything outside Himself. But we are living in a day when even the most “orthodox” seem afraid to admit the proper Godhood of God. They say that to press the sovereignty of God excludes human responsibility, whereas human responsibility is based upon Divine sovereignty, and is the product of it.

“But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever **He** hath pleased” (Ps. 115:3). He **sovereignly** chose to place each of His creatures on that particular footing which seemed good in His sight. He created angels: some He placed on a conditional footing, others He gave an immutable standing before Him (1 Tim. 5:21), making Christ their head (Col. 2:10). Let it not be overlooked that the angels which sinned (2 Peter 2:5), were as much His creatures as the angels that sinned not. Yet God foresaw they **would** fall, nevertheless He placed them on a mutable, creature, conditional footing, and suffered them to fall, though He was not the Author of their sin.

So too, God **sovereignly** placed Adam in the garden of Eden upon a **conditional** footing. Had He so pleased, He could have placed him upon an unconditional footing; He could have placed him on a footing as firm as that occupied by the unfallen angels, He could have placed him upon a footing as sure and as immutable as that which His saints have in Christ. But, instead, He chose to set him in Eden on the basis of creature responsibility, so that he stood or fell according as he measured up or failed to measure up to his responsibility—obedience to his Maker. Adam stood accountable to God by the law which his Creator had given him. Here was responsibility, unimpaired responsibility, tested out under the most favorable conditions.

Now God did not place Adam upon a footing of conditional, creature responsibility, because it was right He **should** so place him. No, it was right because God did it. God did not even give creatures being because it was right for Him to do so, i. e., because He was under any obligations to create; but it was right because He did so. God is sovereign. His will is supreme. So far from God being under any law of “right,” He is a law unto Himself, so that whatsoever **He** does is right. And woe be to the rebel that calls His sovereignty into question: “Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth. Shall the clay say to Him that fashioned it, What makest Thou?” (Isa. 45:9).

Again, the Lord God sovereignly placed Israel upon a **conditional** footing. The 19th, 20th and 24th chapters of Exodus afford a clear and full proof of this. They were placed under a covenant of works. God gave to them certain laws, and promised to bless

them as a nation if they obeyed and observed His statutes.. But Israel were stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart. They rebelled against Jehovah, forsook His law, turned unto false gods, apostatized. In consequence, Divine judgment fell upon them, they were delivered into the hands of their enemies, dispersed abroad throughout the earth, and remain under the heavy frown of God's displeasure to this day.

It was God in the exercise of His high sovereignty that placed Satan and his angels, Adam, and Israel in their respective **responsible** positions. But so far from His sovereignty taking away responsibility from the creature, it was by the exercise thereof that He placed them on this conditional footing, under such responsibilities as He thought proper; by virtue of which sovereignty, He is seen to be God over all. Thus, there is perfect harmony between the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of the creature. Many have most foolishly said that it is quite impossible to show where Divine sovereignty ends and creature accountability begins. **Here** is where creature responsibility begins: in the sovereign ordination of the

35. Creator. As to His sovereignty, there is not and never will be any "end" to it!

Let us give further proofs that the responsibility of the creature is based upon God's sovereignty. How many things are recorded in Scripture which were right because God **commanded** them, and which would not have been right had He not so commanded! What right had Adam to "eat" of the trees of the Garden? The permission of his Maker (Gen. 2:16), without which he would have been a thief! What right had Israel to "borrow" of the Egyptians' jewels and raiment (Ex. 12:35)? None, unless Jehovah had authorized it (Ex. 3:22). What right had Israel to slay so many lambs for sacrifice? None, except that God commanded it. What right had Israel to kill off all the Canaanites? None, save as Jehovah had bidden them. What right has the husband to require submission from his wife? None, unless God had appointed it. And so we might go on. Human responsibility is **based upon** Divine sovereignty.

Here absolute sovereignty is also displayed. God placed His elect upon a **different** footing from Adam or Israel. He placed His elect upon an unconditional footing. In the Everlasting Covenant Jesus Christ was appointed their Head, took their responsibilities upon Himself, and wrought out a righteousness for them which is perfect, indefeasible, eternal. Christ was placed upon a conditional footing, for He was "made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law," only with this infinite difference: the others failed; He did not and could not. And **who** placed Christ upon that conditional footing? The Triune God. It was sovereign will that appointed Him, sovereign love that sent Him, sovereign authority that assigned Him His work.

Certain conditions were set before the Mediator. He was to be made in the likeness of sin's flesh; He was to magnify the law and make it honorable; He was to bear all the sins of all God's people in His own body on the tree; He was to make full atonement for them; He was to endure the outpoured wrath of God; He was to die and be buried. On the fulfillment of those conditions He was promised a reward: Isa. 53:10–12. He was to be the Firstborn among many brethren; He was to have a people who should share His glory. Blessed be His name forever, He fulfilled those conditions, and because He did so, the Father stands pledged, on solemn oath, to preserve through time and bless throughout eternity every one of those for whom His incarnate Son mediated. Because He took their place, they now share His. His righteousness is theirs, His standing before God is theirs, His life is theirs. There is not a single condition for them to meet, not a single responsibility for them to discharge in order to attain their eternal bliss. "By one offering He **hath perfected** forever them that are set apart" (Heb. 10:14).

Here then is the sovereignty of God openly displayed before all, displayed in the **different** ways in which He has dealt with His creatures. Part of the angels, Adam, Israel, were placed upon a conditional footing, continuance in blessing being made dependent upon **their** obedience and fidelity to God. But in sharp contrast from them, the "little flock" (Luke 12:32), have been given an unconditional, an immutable standing in God's covenant, God's counsels, God's Son; their blessing being made dependent upon what **Christ** did for them. "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal: The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim. 2:19). The foundation on which God's elect stand is a perfect one: nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it (Eccl. 3:14). Here, then, is the highest and grandest display of the absolute sovereignty of God. Verily, He has "mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth" (Rom. 9:18).

THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD

from A. W. Pink -The Attributes of God

IMMUTABILITY is one of the Divine perfections which is not sufficiently pondered. It is one of the excellencies of the Creator which distinguishes Him from all His creatures. God is perpetually the same: subject to no change in His being, attributes, or determinations. Therefore God is compared to a *rock* (Deut 32:4, etc.) which remains immovable, when the entire ocean surrounding it is continually in a fluctuating state; even so, though all creatures are subject to change, God is immutable. Because God has no beginning and no ending, He can know no change. He is everlastingly "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jam 1:17).

First, GOD IS IMMUTABLE IN HIS ESSENCE. His nature and being are infinite, and so, subject to no mutations. There never was a time when He was not; there never will come a time when He shall cease to be. God has neither evolved, grown, nor improved. All that He is today, He has ever been, and ever will be. "I am the LORD, I change not" (Mal 3:6) is His own unqualified affirmation. He cannot change for the better, for He is already perfect; and being perfect, He cannot change for the worse. Altogether unaffected by anything out-side Himself, improvement or deterioration is impossible. He is perpetually the same. He only can say, "I AM THAT I AM" (Exo 3:14). He is altogether uninfluenced by the flight of time. There is no wrinkle upon the brow of eternity. Therefore His power can never diminish nor His glory ever fade.

Secondly, GOD IS IMMUTABLE IN HIS ATTRIBUTES. Whatever the attributes of God were before the universe was called into existence, they are precisely the same now, and will remain so for ever. Necessarily so; for they are the very perfections, the essential qualities of His being. *Seniper ideni* (always the same) is written across every one of them. His power is unabated, His wisdom undiminished, His holiness unsullied. The attributes of God can no more change than Deity can cease to be. His veracity is immutable, for His Word is "for ever.. settled in heaven" (Psa 119:89). His love is eternal: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer 31:3) and "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). His mercy ceases not, for it is "everlasting" (Psa 100:5).

Thirdly, GOD IS IMMUTABLE IN HIS COUNSEL. His will never varies. Perhaps some are ready to object that we ought to read the following: "And it *repented* the LORD that He had made man" (Gen 6:6). Our first reply is, Then do the Scriptures contradict themselves? No, that cannot be. Numbers 23:19 is plain enough: "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent." So also in 1 Samuel 15:29, "The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for He is not a man, that He should repent." The explanation is very simple. When speaking of Himself, God frequently accommodates His language to our limited capacities. He describes Himself as clothed with bodily members, as eyes, ears, hands, etc. He speaks of Himself as "waking" (Psa 78:65), as "rising up early" (Jer 7:13); yet He neither slumbers nor sleeps. When He institutes a *change in His dealings* with men, He describes His course of conduct as "repenting." Yes, God is immutable in His counsel. "The gifts and calling of God are *without* repentance" (Rom 11:29). It must be so, for "He is in one mind, and who can turn from Him? and what His soul desireth, even that He doeth" (Job 23:13).

Change and decay in all around we see,
may He who changeth not abide with thee.

God's purpose never alters. One of two things causes a man to change his mind and reverse his plans: want of foresight to anticipate everything, or lack of power to execute them. But as God is both omniscient and omnipotent there is never any need for Him to revise His decrees. No, "The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations" (Psa 33:11). Therefore do we read of "the immutability of His counsel" (Heb 6:17).

Herein we may perceive the infinite distance which separates the highest creature from the Creator. Creaturehood and mutability are correlative terms. If the creature was not mutable by nature, it would not be a creature; it would be God. By nature we tend toward nothingness, since we came from nothing. Nothing stays our annihilation but the will and sustaining power of God. None can sustain himself a single moment. We are entirely dependent on the Creator for every breath we draw. We gladly own with the Psalmist, Thou "holdeth our soul in life" (Psa 66:9). The realization of this ought to make us lie down under a sense of our own nothingness in the presence of Him in Whom "we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

As fallen creatures we are not only mutable, but everything in us is *opposed* to God. As such we are "wandering stars" (Jude 13), out of our proper orbit. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it *cannot rest*" (Isa 57:20). Fallen man is inconstant. The words of Jacob concerning Reuben apply with full force to all of Adam's descendants: "unstable as water" (Gen 49:4). Thus it is not only a mark of piety, but also the part of wisdom to heed that injunction, "cease *ye from man*" (Isa 2:22). No human being is to be depended on. "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is *no help*" (Psa 146:3). If I disobey God, then I deserve to be deceived and disappointed by my fellows. People who like you today may hate you tomorrow. The multitude who cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David," speedily changed to "Away with Him, crucify Him."

Herein is **SOLID COMFORT**. Human nature cannot be relied upon; but God can! However unstable I may be, however fickle my friends may prove, God changes not. If He varied as we do, if He willed one thing today and another tomorrow, if He were controlled by caprice, who could confide in Him?

But, all praise to His glorious name, He is ever the same. His purpose is fixed, His will is stable, His word is sure. Here then is a *rock* on which we may fix our feet, while the mighty torrent is sweeping away everything around us. The permanence of God's character guarantees the fulfillment of His promises: "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee" (Isa 54:10).

Herein is **ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAYER**. "What comfort would it be to pray to a god that, like the chameleon, changed color every moment? Who would put up a petition to an earthly prince that was so mutable as to grant a petition one day, and deny it another?" (Stephen Charnock, 1670). Should someone ask, But what is the use of praying to One whose will is already fixed? We answer, Because He so requires it. What blessings has God promised without our seeking them? "If we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us" (1 John 5:14), and He *has* willed everything that is for His child's good. To ask for anything contrary to His will is not prayer, but rank rebellion.

Herein is **TERROR FOR THE WICKED**. Those who defy Him, who break His laws, who have no concern for His glory, but who live their lives as though He existed not, must not suppose that, when at the last they shall cry to Him for mercy, He will alter His will, revoke His word, and rescind His awful threatenings. No, He has declared, "Therefore will I also deal in fury: Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in Mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them" (Eze 8:18). God will not deny Himself to gratify their lusts. God is holy, unchangingly so. Therefore God hates sin, eternally hates it. Hence the *eternality* of the punishment of all who die in their sins.

"The Divine immutability, like the cloud which interposed between the Israelites and the Egyptian army, has a dark as well as a light side. It insures the execution of His threatenings, as well as the performance of His promises; and destroys the hope which the guilty fondly cherish, that He will be all lenity to His frail and erring creatures, and that they will be much more lightly dealt with than the declarations of His own Word would lead us to expect. We oppose to these deceitful and presumptuous speculations the solemn truth, that God is unchanging in veracity and purpose, in faithfulness and justice (John Dick, 1850)."

THE HOLINESS OF GOD

from A. W. Pink -The Attributes of God

Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy" (Rev. 15:4). He only is independently, infinitely, immutably holy. In Scripture He is frequently styled "The Holy One": He is so because the sum of all moral excellency is found in Him. He is absolute Purity, unsullied even by the shadow of sin. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). Holiness is the very excellency of the Divine nature: the great God is "glorious in holiness" (Ex. 15:11). Therefore do we read, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13). As God's power is the opposite of the native weakness of the creature, as His wisdom is in complete contrast from the least defect of understanding or folly, so His holiness is the very antithesis of all moral blemish or defilement. Of old God appointed singers in Israel "that they should praise the beauty of holiness" (2 Chron. 20:21). "Power is God's hand or arm, omniscience His eye, mercy His bowels, eternity His duration, but holiness is His beauty" (Stephen Charnock). It is this, supremely, which renders Him lovely to those who are delivered from sin's dominion.

"A chief emphasis is placed upon this perfection of God:

God is oftener styled Holy than Almighty, and set forth by this part of His dignity more than by any other. This is more fixed on as an epithet to His name than any other. You never find it expressed "His mighty name" or "His wise name," but His *great* name, and most of all, His *holy* name. This is the greatest title of honour; in this latter doth the majesty and venerableness of His name appear (Stephen Charnock).

This perfection, as none other, is solemnly celebrated before the Throne of Heaven, the seraphim crying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts" (Isa. 6:3). God Himself singles out this perfection, "Once have I sworn by My holiness" (Ps. 89:35). God swears by His "holiness" because that is a *fuller* expression of Himself than anything else. Therefore are we exhorted, "Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness" (Ps. 30:4). "This may be said to be a transcendental attribute, that, as it were, runs through the rest, and casts lustre upon them. It is an attribute of attributes" (John Howe, 1670). Thus we read of "the *beauty* of the Lord" (Ps. 27:4), which is none other than "the beauty of holiness" (Ps. 110:3).

As it seems to challenge an excellency above all His other perfections, so it is the glory of all the rest: as it is the glory of the Godhead, so it is the glory of every perfection in the Godhead; as His power is the strength of them, so His holiness is the beauty of them; as all would be weak without almightiness to back them, so all would be uncomely without holiness to adorn them. Should this be sullied, all the rest would lose their honour; as at the same instant the sun should lose its light, it would lose its heat, its strength, its generative and quickening virtue. As sincerity is the lustre of every grace in a Christian, so is purity the splendour of every attribute in the Godhead. His justice is a holy justice, His wisdom a holy wisdom, His arm of power a "holy arm" (Ps. 98:1), His truth or promise a "holy promise" (Ps. 105:42). His name, which signifies all His attributes in conjunction, "is holy," Ps. 103:1 (Stephen Charnock).

God's holiness is manifested in His *works*. "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works" (Ps. 145:17). Nothing but

that which is excellent can proceed from Him. Holiness is the rule of all His actions. At the beginning He pronounced all that He made “very good” (Gen. 1:31), which He could not have done had there been anything imperfect or unholy in them. Man was made “upright” (Eccl. 7:29), in the image and likeness of his Creator. The angels that fell were created holy, for we are told that they “kept not their first habitation” (Jude 6). Of Satan it is written, “Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee” (Ezek. 28:15).

God’s holiness is manifested in His **law**. That law forbids sin in **all** of its modifications: in its most refined as well as its grossest forms, the intent of the mind as well as the pollution of the body, the secret desire as well as the overt act. Therefore do we read, “The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Rom. 7:12). Yes, “the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether” (Ps. 19:8, 9).

God’s holiness is manifested **at the Cross**. Wondrously and yet most solemnly does the Atonement display God’s infinite holiness and abhorrence of sin. How hateful must sin be to God for Him to punish it to its utmost deserts when it was imputed to His Son!

Not all the vials of judgment that have or shall be poured out upon the wicked world, nor the flaming furnace of a sinner’s conscience, nor the irreversible sentence pronounced against the rebellious demons, nor the groans of the damned creatures, give such a demonstration of God’s hatred of sin, as the wrath of God let loose upon His Son. Never did Divine holiness appear more beautiful and lovely than at the time our Saviour’s countenance was most marred in the midst of His dying groans. This He Himself acknowledges in Ps. 22:1. When God had turned His smiling face from Him, and thrust His sharp knife into His heart, which forced that terrible cry from Him, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” He adores this perfection—“Thou art holy,” v. 3 (Stephen Charnock).

Because God is holy He **hates all sin**. He loves everything which is in conformity to His law, and loathes everything which is contrary to it. His Word plainly declares, “The froward is an abomination to the Lord” (Prov. 3:32). And again, “The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord” (Prov. 15:26). It follows, therefore, that He must necessarily punish sin. Sin can no more exist without demanding His punishment than without requiring His hatred of it. God has often forgiven sinners, but He never forgives sin; and the sinner is only forgiven on the ground of Another having borne his punishment; for “without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22). Therefore we are told, “The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for His enemies” (Nahum 1:2). For one sin God banished our first parents from Eden. For one sin all the posterity of Canaan, a son of Ham, fell under a curse which remains over them to this day (Gen. 9:21). For one sin Moses was excluded from Canaan, Elisha’s servant smitten with leprosy, Ananias and Sapphira cut off out of the land of the living.

Unregenerate sinners cannot conceive of God’s holiness, much less begin to believe in it. Many, then, presume that God’s character is one-sided, that His merciful disposition will override everything else, and thus there is no cause for much alarm. “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether as thyself” (Ps. 50:21) is God’s charge against them. They think only of a “god” patterned after their own evil hearts. Hence their continuance in a course of mad folly. Such is the holiness ascribed to the Divine nature and character in the Scriptures that it clearly demonstrates their superhuman origin. The character attributed to the “gods” of the ancients and of modern non-Christians is the very reverse of that immaculate purity which pertains to the true God. An ineffably holy God, who has the utmost abhorrence of all sin, was never invented by any of Adam’s fallen descendants! The fact is that nothing makes more manifest the terrible depravity of man’s heart and his enmity against the living God than to have set before him One who is infinitely and immutably holy. His own idea of **sin** is practically limited to what the world calls “crime.” Anything short of that man palliates as “defects,” “mistakes,” “infirmities,” etc. And even where sin is owned at all, excuses and justifications are made for it.

The “god” which the vast majority of professing Christians “love” is looked upon very much like an indulgent old man, who himself has no relish for folly, but leniently winks at the “indiscretions” of youth. But the Word says, “Thou hatest **all** workers of iniquity” (Ps. 5:5). And again, “God is angry with the wicked every day” (Ps. 7:11). But men refuse to believe in **this** God, and gnash their teeth when His hatred of sin is faithfully pressed upon their attention. No, sinful man was no more likely to devise a holy God than to create the Lake of fire in which he will be tormented for ever and ever.

Because God is holy, acceptance with Him on the ground of creature-doings is utterly impossible. A fallen creature could sooner create a world than produce that which would meet the approval of infinite Purity. Can darkness dwell with Light? Can the Immaculate One take pleasure in “filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6)? The best that sinful man brings forth is defiled. A corrupt tree cannot bear good fruit. God would deny Himself, vilify His perfections, were He to account as righteous and holy that which is not so in itself; and nothing is so which has the least stain upon it contrary to the nature of God. But blessed be His name, that which His holiness demanded His grace has provided in Christ Jesus our Lord. Every poor sinner who has fled to Him for refuge stands “accepted in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:6). Hallelujah.

Because God is holy the utmost reverence becomes our approaches unto Him. “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all about Him” (Ps. 89:7). Then “Exalt ye the Lord our God, and worship at His footstool; He is

holy" (Ps. 99:5). Yes, "at His **footstool**," in the lowest posture of humility, prostrate before Him. When Moses would approach unto the burning bush, God said, "put off thy shoes from off thy feet" (Ex. 3:5). He is to be served "with fear" (Ps. 2:11). Of Israel His demand was, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me, and before all the people I will be glorified" (Lev. 10:3). The more our hearts are awed by His ineffable holiness, the more acceptable will be our approaches unto Him.

Because God is holy we should desire to be conformed to Him. His command is, "Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). We are not bidden to be omnipotent or omniscient as God is, but we are to be holy, and that "in **all** manner of deportment" (1 Peter 1:15).

This is the prime way of honouring God. We do not so glorify God by elevated admirations, or eloquent expressions, or pompous services of Him, as when we aspire to a conversing with Him with unstained spirits, and live to Him in living **like** Him (Stephen Charnock).

Then as God alone is the Source and Fount of holiness, let us earnestly seek holiness from Him; let our daily prayer be that He may "sanctify us **wholly**; and our whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23)

THE POWER OF GOD

from A. W. Pink -The Attributes of God

We cannot have a right conception of God unless we think of Him as all-powerful, as well as all-wise. He who cannot do what he will and perform all his pleasure cannot be God. As God hath a will to resolve what He deems good, so has He power to execute His will.

The power of God is that ability and strength whereby He can bring to pass whatsoever He pleases, whatsoever His infinite wisdom may direct, and whatsoever the infinite purity of His will may resolve.... As holiness is the beauty of all God's attributes, so power is that which gives life and action to all the perfections of the Divine nature. How vain would be the eternal counsels, if power did not step in to execute them. Without power His mercy would be but feeble pity, His promises an empty sound, His threatenings a mere scarecrow. God's power is like Himself: infinite, eternal, incomprehensible; it can neither be checked, restrained, nor frustrated by the creature (Stephen Charnock).

"God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God" (Ps. 62:11). "God hath spoken once": nothing more is necessary! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His word abideth forever. "God hath spoken once": how befitting His Divine majesty! We poor mortals may speak often and yet fail to be heard. He speaks but once and the thunder of His power is heard on a thousand hills. "The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice; hailstones and coals of fire. Yea, He sent out His arrows, and scattered them; and He shot out lightnings, and discomfited them. Then the channels of waters were seen and the foundations of the world were discovered at Thy rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of Thy nostrils" (Ps. 18:13–15).

"God hath spoken once": behold His unchanging authority. "For who in the heavens can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?" (Ps. 89:6). "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed **as nothing**: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" (Dan. 4:35). This was openly displayed when God became incarnate and tabernacled among men. To the leper He said, "I will, be thou clean, and **immediately** his leprosy was cleansed" (Matt. 8:3). To one who had lain in the grave four days He cried, "Lazarus, come forth," and the dead came forth. The stormy wind and the angry wave were hushed at a single word from Him. A legion of demons could not resist His authoritative command.

"Power **belongeth** unto God," and to Him alone. Not a creature in the entire universe has an atom of power save what God delegates. But God's power is not acquired, nor does it depend upon any recognition by any other authority. It belongs to Him inherently.

God's power is like Himself, self-existent, self-sustained. The mightiest of men cannot add so much as a shadow of increased power to the Omnipotent One. He sits on no buttressed throne and leans on no assisting arm. His court is not maintained by His courtiers, not does it borrow its splendor from His creatures. He is Himself the great central source and Originator of all power (C. H. Spurgeon). Not only does all creation bear witness to the great power of God, but also to his entire independency of all created things. Listen to His own challenge: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened or who laid the cornerstone thereof?" (Job 38:4–6). How completely is the pride of man laid in the dust!

Power is also used as a name of God, “the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power” (Mark 14:62), that is, at the right hand of God. God and power are so inseparable that they are reciprocated. As His essence is immense, not to be confined in place; as it is eternal, not to be measured in time; so it is almighty, not to be limited in regard of action (Stephen Charnock).

“Lo, these are parts of His ways: but how little a portion is heard of Him? but the thunder of His power who can understand? (Job 26:14). Who is able to count all the monuments of His power? Even that which is displayed of His might in the visible creation is utterly beyond our powers of comprehension, still less are we able to conceive of omnipotence itself. There is infinitely more power lodged in the nature of God than is expressed in all His works.

“Parts of His ways” we behold in creation, providence, redemption, but only a “little part” of **His** might is seen in them. Remarkably is this brought out in Hab. 3:4: “and **there** was the hiding of His power.” It is scarcely possible to imagine anything more grandiloquent than the imagery of this whole chapter, yet nothing in it surpasses the nobility of this statement. The prophet (in vision) beheld the mighty God scattering the hills and overturning the mountains, which one would think afforded an amazing demonstration of His power. Nay, says our verse, **that** is rather the “hiding” than the displaying of **His** power. What is meant? This: so inconceivable, so immense, so uncontrollable is the power of Deity, that the fearful convulsions which He works in nature conceal more than they reveal of His infinite might!

It is very beautiful to link together the following passages: “He walketh upon the waves of the sea” (Job 9:8), which expresses God’s uncontrollable power. “He walketh in the circuit of Heaven” (Job 22:14), which tells of the immensity of His presence. “He walketh upon the wings of the wind” (Ps. 104:3), which signifies the amazing swiftness of His operations. This last expression is very remarkable. It is not that “He flieth,” or “runneth,” but that He “walketh” and that, on the very “wings of the wind”—on the most impetuous of the elements, tossed into utmost rage, and sweeping along with almost inconceivable rapidity, yet they are **under** His feet, beneath His perfect control!

Let us now consider God’s power **in creation**. “The heavens are Thine, the earth also is Thine, as for the world and the fulness thereof, Thou has founded them. The north and the south Thou hast created them” (Ps. 89:11, 12). Before man can work he must have both tools and materials, but God began with nothing, and by His word alone out of nothing made all things. The intellect cannot grasp it. God “spake and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast” (Ps. 33:9). Primeval matter heard His voice. “God said, Let there be ... and it **was** so” (Gen. 1:7). Well may we exclaim, “Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is Thy hand, high is Thy right hand” (Ps. 89:13).

Who, that looks upward to the midnight sky; and, with an eye of reason, beholds its rolling wonders; who can forbear enquiring, Of **what** were their mighty orbs **formed**? Amazing to relate, they were produced without materials. They sprung from emptiness itself. The stately fabric of universal nature emerged out of **nothing**. What instruments were used by the Supreme Architect to fashion the parts with such exquisite niceness, and give so beautiful a polish to the whole? How was it all connected into one finely-proportioned and nobly finished structure? A **bare fist** accomplished all. **Let them be**, said God. He added no more; and at once the marvelous edifice arose, adorned with every beauty, displaying innumerable perfections, and declaring amidst enraptured seraphs its great Creator’s praise. “By the **word** of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth,” Ps. 33:6 (James Hervey, 1789).

Consider God’s power **in preservation**. No creature has power to preserve itself. “Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow up without water?” (Job 8:11). Both man and beast would perish if there were not herbs for food, and herbs would wither and die if the earth were not refreshed with fruitful showers. Therefore is God called the Preserver of “man and beast” (Ps. 36:6). He “upholdeth all things by the word of His power” (Heb. 1:3). What a marvel of Divine power is the prenatal life of every human being! That an infant can live at all, and for so many months, in such cramped and filthy quarters, and that without breathing, is unaccountable without the power of God. Truly He “holdeth our soul in life” (Ps. 66:9).

The preservation of the earth from the violence of the sea is another plain instance of God’s might. How is that raging element kept pent within those limits wherein He first lodged it, continuing its channel, without overflowing the earth and dashing in pieces the lower part of the creation? The natural situation of the water is to be above the earth, because it is lighter, and to be immediately under the air, because it is heavier. Who restrains the natural quality of it? Certainly man does not, and cannot. It is the fiat of its Creator which alone bridles it: “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed” (Job 38:11). What a standing monument of the power of God is the preservation of the world!

Consider God’s power **in government**. Take His restraining of the malice of Satan. “The devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). He is filled with hatred against God, and with fiendish enmity against men, particularly the saints. He that envied Adam in paradise envies us the pleasure of enjoying any of God’s blessings. If Satan could satisfy his own will, he would treat all the same way he treated Job: he would send fire from heaven on the fruits of the earth, destroy the cattle, cause a wind to overthrow our houses, and cover our bodies with boils. But, little as men may realize it, God bridles him to a large

extent, prevents him from carrying out his evil designs, and confines him within **His** ordinations.

So too God restrains the natural corruption of men. He suffers flagrant and superfluous outbreaks of sin to show what fearful havoc has been wrought by man's apostasy from his Maker, but who can conceive the frightful lengths to which men would go were God to remove His curbing hand? "Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, their feet are swift to shed blood" (Rom. 3:14, 15). This is the nature of every descendant of Adam. Then what unbridled licentiousness and headstrong folly would triumph in the world, if the power of God did not interpose to lock down the floodgates of it! See Ps. 93:3, 4.

Consider God's power **in judgment**. When He smites, none can resist Him: see Ezek. 22:14. Who could resist the awesome and terrible power of God's wrath demonstrated in the deluge of Noah? With the exception of Noah and his family, the entire human race, impotent and frail before the storms of His anger, were swept away in astounding torrents from the deep. A shower of fire and brimstone from heaven, and the cities of the plain were exterminated. Pharaoh and all his hosts were impotent when God blew upon them at the Red Sea. What a terrific word is that in Rom. 9:22: "What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." God is going to display His mighty power upon the reprobate not merely by incarcerating them in Gehenna, but by supernaturally preserving their bodies as well as souls amid the eternal burnings of the Lake of Fire.

Well may all **tremble** before such a God! To treat with impudence One who can crush us more easily than we can a moth, is a suicidal policy. To openly defy Him who is clothed with omnipotence, who can rend us in pieces or cast us into Hell any moment He pleases, is the very height of insanity. To put it on its lowest ground, it is but the part of wisdom to heed His command, "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little" (Ps. 2:12).

Well may the enlightened soul **adore** such a God! The wondrous and infinite perfections of such a Being call for fervent worship. If men of might and renown claim the admiration of the world, how much more should the power of the Almighty fill us with wonderment and homage. "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods, who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (Ex. 15:11).

Well may the saint **trust** such a God! He is worthy of implicit confidence. Nothing is too hard for Him. If God were stinted in might and had a limit to His strength we might well despair. But seeing that He is dothed with omnipotence, no prayer is too hard for Him to answer, no need too great for Him to supply, no passion too strong for Him to subdue; no temptation too powerful for Him to deliver from, no misery too deep for Him to relieve. "The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. 27:1). "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 3:20, 21)

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

from A. W. Pink -The Attributes of God

Unfaithfulness is one of the most outstanding sins of these evil days. In the business world, a man's word is no longer his bond. In the social world, marital infidelity abounds on every hand, the sacred bonds of wedlock being broken with as little regard as the discarding of an old garment. In the ecclesiastical realm, thousands who have solemnly covenanted to preach the truth make no scruple to attack and deny it. Nor can reader or writer claim complete immunity from this fearful sin: in how many ways have we been unfaithful to Christ, and to the light and privileges which God has entrusted to us! How refreshing, then, how unspeakably blessed, to lift our eyes above this scene of ruin, and behold One who is faithful, faithful in all things, faithful at all times.

"Know therefore that the Lord Thy God, He is God, the **faithful** God" (Deut. 7:9). This quality is essential to His being, without it He would not be God. For God to be unfaithful would be to act contrary to His nature, which were impossible: "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. 2:13). Faithfulness is one of the glorious perfections of His being. He is as it were dothed with it: "O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto Thee? or to Thy faithfulness **round about** Thee?" (Ps. 89:8). So too when God became incarnate it was said, "Righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins" (Isa. 11:5).

What a word is that in Ps. 36:5, "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and Thy faithfulness unto the clouds." Far above all finite comprehension is the unchanging faithfulness of God. Everything about God is great, vast, incomparable. He never forgets, never fails, never falters, never forfeits His word. To every declaration of promise or prophecy the Lord has exactly adhered, every engagement of covenant or threatening He will make good, for "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" (Num. 23:19). Therefore does the believer exclaim, "His compassions fail not, they are new every morning: **great** is Thy faithfulness" (Lam. 3:22, 23).

Scripture abounds in illustrations of God's faithfulness. More than four thousand years ago He said, "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22). Every year that comes furnishes a fresh witness to God's fulfillment of this promise. In Gen. 15:13 we find that Jehovah declared unto Abraham, "Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them...But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again" (vv. 13–16). Centuries ran their weary course. Abraham's descendants groaned amid the brick-kilns of Egypt. Had God forgotten His promise? No, indeed. Read Ex. 12:41, "And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt." Through Isaiah the Lord declared, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (7:14). Again centuries passed, but "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman" (Gal. 4:4).

God is true. His Word of Promise is sure. In all His relations with His people God is faithful. He may be safely relied upon. No one ever yet really trusted Him in vain. We find this precious truth expressed almost everywhere in the Scriptures, for His people need to know that faithfulness is an essential part of the Divine character. This is the basis of our confidence in Him. But it is one thing to accept the faithfulness of God as a Divine truth, it is quite another to **act upon it**. God has given us many "exceeding great and precious promises," but are we really counting on His fulfillment of them? Are we actually **expecting** Him to do for us all that He has said? Are we resting with implicit assurance on these words, "He is **faithful** that promised" (Heb. 10:23)?

There are seasons in the lives of all when it is not easy, no not even for Christians, to believe that God is faithful. Our faith is sorely tried, our eyes bedimmed with tears, and we can no longer trace the outworkings of His love. Our ears are distracted with the noises of the world, harassed by the atheistic whisperings of Satan, and we can no longer hear the sweet accents of His still small voice. Cherished plans have been thwarted, friends on whom we relied have failed us, a professed brother or sister in Christ has betrayed us. We are staggered. We sought to be faithful to God, and now a dark cloud hides Him from us. We find it difficult, yea, impossible, for carnal reason to harmonize His frowning providence with His gracious promises. Ah, faltering soul, severely tried fellow pilgrim, seek grace to heed Isa. 50:10, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and **stay upon his God**."

When you are tempted to doubt the faithfulness of God, cry out, "Get thee hence, Satan." Though you cannot now harmonize God's mysterious dealings with the avowals of His love, wait on Him for more light. In His own good time He will make it plain to you. "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter" (John 13:7). The sequel will yet demonstrate that God has neither forsaken nor deceived His child. "And therefore will the Lord wait that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they **that wait for Him**" (Isa. 30:18).

"Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace,
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread,
Are rich with mercy, and shall
Break In blessing o'er your head."

"Thy testimonies which Thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful" (Ps. 119:138). God has not only told us the best, but He has not withheld the worst. He has faithfully described the ruin which the Fall has effected. He has faithfully diagnosed the terrible state which sin has produced. He has faithfully made known his firmly established hatred of evil, and that He must punish the same. He has faithfully warned us that He is "a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29). Not only does His Word abound in illustrations of His fidelity in fulfilling His promises, but it also records numerous examples of His faithfulness in making good His threatenings. Every stage of Israel's history exemplifies that solemn fact. So it was with individuals: Pharaoh, Korah, Achan and a host of others are so many proofs. And thus it will be with you, my reader: unless you have fled or do flee to Christ for refuge, the everlasting burning of the Lake of Fire will be your sure and certain portion. God is faithful.

God is faithful in **preserving** His people. "God is faithful, by whom ye are called unto the fellowship of His Son" (1 Cor. 1:9). In the previous verse promise was made that God would confirm unto the end His own people. The Apostle's confidence in the absolute security of believers was founded not on the strength of their resolutions or ability to persevere, but on the veracity of Him that cannot lie. Since God has promised to His Son a certain people for His inheritance, to deliver them from sin and condemnation, and to make them participants of eternal life in glory, it is certain that He will not allow any of them to perish.

God is faithful in **disciplining** His people. He is faithful in what He withholds, no less than in what He gives. He is faithful in sending sorrow as well as in giving joy. The faithfulness of God is a truth to be confessed by us not only when we are at ease, but also when

we are smarting under the sharpest rebuke. Nor must this confession be merely of our mouths, but of our hearts, too. When God smites us with the rod of chastisement, it is faithfulness which wields it. To acknowledge this means that we humble ourselves before Him, own that we fully deserve His correction, and instead of murmuring, thank Him for it. God never afflicts without a reason. “For **this cause** many are weak and sickly among you” (1 Cor. 11:30), says Paul, illustrating this principle. When His rod falls upon us let us say with Daniel, “O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion of faces” (9:7).

“I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou **in faithfulness** hast afflicted me” (Ps. 119:75). Trouble and affliction are not only consistent with God’s love pledged in the everlasting covenant, but they are parts of the administration of the same. God is not only faithful notwithstanding afflictions, but faithful in sending them. “Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes: Thy lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him nor suffer My faithfulness to fail” (Ps. 89:32, 33). Chastening is not only reconcilable with God’s lovingkindness, but it is the effect and expression of it. It would much quieten the minds of God’s people if they would remember that His covenant love binds Him to lay on them seasonable correction. Afflictions are necessary for us: “In their affliction they will seek Me early” (Host 5:15).

God is faithful in **glorifying** His people. “Faithful is He which calleth you, who also will do” (1Thess. 5:24). The immediate reference here is to the saints being “preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” God deals with us not on the ground of our merits (for we have none), but for His own great name’s sake. God is constant to Himself and to His own purpose of grace: “whom He called ... them He also glorified” (Rom. 8:30). God gives a full demonstration of the constancy of His everlasting goodness toward His elect by effectually calling them out of darkness into His marvelous light, and this should fully assure them of the certain continuance of it. “The foundation of God **standeth sure**” (2 Tim. 2:19). Paul was resting on the faithfulness of God when he said, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day” (2 Tim. 1:12).

The apprehension of this blessed truth will **preserve us from worry**. To be full of care, to view our situation with dark forebodings, to anticipate the morrow with sad anxiety, is to reflect poorly upon the faithfulness of God. He who has cared for His child through all the years will not forsake him in old age. He who has heard your prayers in the past will not refuse to supply your need in the present emergency. Rest on Job 5:19, “He **shall** deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.”

The apprehension of this blessed truth will **check our murmurings**. The Lord knows what is best for each one of us, and one effect of resting on this truth will be the silencing of our petulant complainings. God is greatly honored when, under trial and chastening, we have good thoughts of Him, vindicate His wisdom and justice, and recognize His love in His very rebukes.

The apprehension of this blessed truth will beget increasing **confidence in God**. “Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:19). When we trustfully resign ourselves, and all our affairs into God’s hands, fully persuaded of His love and faithfulness, the sooner shall we be satisfied with His providences and realize that “He doeth **all** things well.”

THE GOODNESS OF GOD

from A. W. Pink -The Attributes of God

“The goodness of God endureth continually” (Ps. 52:1). The “goodness” of God refers to the perfection of His nature: “God is light, and in Him is **no** darkness at all” (1 John 1:5) There is such an absolute perfection in God’s nature and being that nothing is wanting to it or defective in it, and nothing can be added to it to make it better.

He is originally good, good of Himself, which nothing else is; for all creatures are good only by participation and communication from God. He is essentially good, not only good, but goodness itself: the creature’s good is a superadded quality, in God it is His essence. He is infinitely good; the creature’s good is but a drop, but in God there is an infinite ocean or gathering together of good. He is eternally and immutably good, for He cannot be less good than He is; as there can be no addition made to Him, so no subtraction from Him (Thomas Manton).

God is **summum bonum**, the highest good.

God is not only the Greatest of all beings, but the Best. All the goodness there is in any creature has been imparted from the Creator, but **God’s** goodness is not derived from anything, for it is the essence of His eternal nature. As God is infinite in power from all eternity, before there was any display thereof, or any act of omnipotency put forth, so He was eternally good before there was any communication of His bounty, or any creature to whom it might be imparted. Thus, the first manifestation of this Divine perfection was in giving being to all things. “Thou art good, and **doest** good” (Ps. 119:68). God has in Himself an infinite and inexhaustible

treasure of all blessedness, enough to fill all things.

All that emanates from God—His decrees, His creation, His laws, His providences—cannot be otherwise than good: as it is written, “And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was **very good**” (Gen. 1:31). Thus, the “goodness” of God is **seen**, first, in creation. The more closely the creature is studied, the more the beneficence of its Creator becomes apparent. Take the highest of God’s earthly creatures, man. Abundant reason has he to say with the Psalmist, “I will praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are Thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well” (139:14). Everything about the structure of our bodies attests the goodness of their Maker. How suited the hands to perform their allotted work! How good of the Lord to appoint leep to refresh the wearied body! How benevolent His provision to give to the eyes lids and brows for their protection! And so we might continue indefinitely.

Nor is the goodness of the Creator confined to man; it is exercised toward all His creatures. “The eyes of all wait upon Thee; and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest Thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing” (Ps. 145:15, 16). Whole volumes might be written, yea have been, to amplify this fact. Whether it be the birds of the air, the beasts of the forest, or the fish in the sea, abundant provision has been made to supply their every need. God “giveth food to all flesh, for His mercy endureth forever” (Ps. 136:25). Truly, “The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord” (Ps. 33:5).

The goodness of God is seen in the variety of natural pleasures which He has provided for His creatures. God might have been pleased to satisfy our hunger without the food being pleasing to our palates—how His benevolence appears in the varied flavors which He has given to meats, vegetables, and fruits! God has not only given us senses, but also that which gratifies them; and this too reveals His goodness. The earth might have been as fertile as it is without its surface being so delightfully variegated. Our physical lives could have been sustained without beautiful flowers to regale our eyes with their colors, and our nostrils with their sweet perfumes. We might have walked the fields without our ears being saluted by the music of the birds. Whence, then, this loveliness, this charm, so freely diffused over the face of nature? Verily, “The **tender** mercies of the Lord are over **all** His works” (Ps. 145:9).

The goodness of God is seen in that when man transgressed the law of His Creator a dispensation of unmixed wrath did not at once commence. Well might God have deprived His fallen creatures of every blessing, every comfort, every pleasure. Instead, He ushered in a regime of a mixed nature, of mercy and judgment. This is very wonderful if it be duly considered, and the more thoroughly that regime be examined the more will it appear that “mercy rejoiceth against judgment” (James 2:13). Notwithstanding all the evils which attend our fallen state, the balance of good greatly preponderates. With comparatively rare exceptions, men and women experience a far greater number of days of health than they do of sickness and pain. There is much more creature-happiness than creature-misery in the world. Even our sorrows admit of considerable alleviation, and God has given to the human mind a pliability which adapts itself to circumstances and makes the most of them.

Nor can the benevolence of God be justly called into question because there is suffering and sorrow in the world. If man **sins against** the goodness of God, if he despises “the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering,” and after the hardness and impenitency of his heart treasures up unto himself wrath against the day of wrath (Rom. 9:5), who is to blame but himself? Would God be “good” if He punished not those who ill-use His blessings, abuse His benevolence, and trample His mercies beneath their feet? It will be no reflection upon God’s goodness, but rather the brightest exemplification of it, when He shall rid the earth of those who have broken His laws, defied His authority, mocked His messengers, scorned His Son, and persecuted those for whom He died.

The goodness of God appeared most illustriously when He sent forth His Son “made of woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal. 4:4, 5). Then it was that a multitude of the heavenly host praised their Maker and said, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, **goodwill** toward men” (Luke 2:14). Yes, in the Gospel the “**grace** (which word in Greek conveys the idea of **benevolence** or **goodness**) of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11). Nor can God’s benevolence be called into question because He has not made every sinful creature to be a subject of His redemptive grace. He did not bestow it upon the fallen angels. Had God left all to perish it would have been no reflection on His **goodness**. To any who would challenge this statement we will remind him of our Lord’s sovereign prerogative: “Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with Mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?” (Matt. 20:15).

“O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men” (Ps. 107:8). God’s great benevolence justly requires gratitude. Yet, the goodness of God is so constantly and abundantly manifested to humanity that it is often taken for granted, and lightly esteemed. In the daily course of events, God’s goodness is evident everywhere, experienced by all always. Corrupt souls mistake the constancy of God’s goodness for monotony, and come to think of His goodness as a natural human right. “Despises” thou the riches of His goodness?” (Rom. 2:4). His goodness is “despised” when it is not improved as a means to lead men to repentance, but, on the contrary, serves to harden them from the supposition that God entirely overlooks their sin.

The goodness of God is the life of the believer's trust. It is this excellency in God which most appeals to our hearts. Because His goodness endureth forever, we ought never to be discouraged: "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth them that trust in Him" (Nahum 1:7).

When others behave badly to us, it should only stir us up the more heartily to give thanks unto the Lord, because He is good; and when we ourselves are conscious that we are far from being good, we should only the more reverently bless Him that **He** is good. We must never tolerate an instant's unbelief as to the goodness of the Lord; whatever else may be questioned, this is absolutely certain, that Jehovah is good; His dispensations may vary, but His nature is always the same (C. H. Spurgeon).

THE PATIENCE OF GOD

from A. W. Pink -The Attributes of God

Far less has been written upon this than the other excellencies of the Divine character. Not a few of those who have expatiated at length upon the Divine attributes have passed over the patience of God without any comment. It is not easy to suggest a reason for this, for surely the longsuffering of God is as much one of the Divine perfections as is His wisdom power, or holiness, and as much to be admired and revered by us. True, the actual term will not be found in a concordance as frequently as the others, but the glory of this grace itself shines forth on almost every page of Scripture. Certain it is that we lose much if we do not frequently meditate upon the patience of God and earnestly pray that our hearts and ways may be more completely conformed thereto.

Most probably the principal reason why so many writers have failed to give us anything, separately, upon the patience of God was because of the difficulty of distinguishing this attribute from the Divine goodness and mercy, particularly the latter. God's longsuffering is mentioned in conjunction with His grace and mercy again and again, as may be seen by consulting Ex. 34:6, Num. 14:18, Ps. 86:15, etc. That the **patience** of God is really a display of His **mercy**, that it is indeed one way in which it is frequently manifested, cannot be denied. But that patience and mercy are one and the same excellency, and are not to be separated, we cannot concede. It may not be easy to discriminate between them, nevertheless, Scripture fully warrants us in affirming some things about the one which we cannot about the other.

Stephen Charnock, the Puritan, defines God's patience, in part, thus:

It is part of the Divine goodness and mercy, yet differs from both. God being the greatest goodness, hath the greatest mildness; mildness is always the companion of true goodness, and the greater the goodness, the greater the mildness. Who so holy as Christ, and who so meek? God's slowness to anger is a branch...from His mercy: "The Lord is full of compassion, slow to anger" (Ps. 145:8). It differs from mercy in the formal consideration of the object: mercy respects the creature as miserable, patience respects the creature as criminal; mercy pities him in his misery, and patience bears with the sin which engendered the misery, and is giving birth to more.

Personally, we would define the Divine patience as that power of control which God exercises over Himself, causing Him to bear with the wicked and forbear so long in punishing them. In Nahum 1:3 we read, "The Lord is slow to anger and great in power," upon which Mr. Charnock said,

Men that are great in the world are quick in passion, and are not so ready to forgive an injury, or bear with an offender, as one of a meaner rank. It is a want of power over that man's self that makes him do unbecoming things upon a provocation. A prince that can bridle his passions is a king over himself as well as over his subjects. God is slow to anger **because** great in power. He has no less power over Himself than over His creatures.

It is at the above point, we think, that God's patience is most clearly distinguished from His mercy. Though the creature is benefitted thereby, the patience of God chiefly respects Himself, a restraint placed upon His acts by His will; whereas His mercy terminates wholly upon the creature. The patience of God is that excellency which causes Him to sustain great injuries without immediately avenging Himself. He has a power of patience as well as a power of justice. Thus the Hebrew word for the Divine longsuffering is rendered "slow to anger" in Nehemiah 9:17, Ps. 103:8, etc. Not that there are any passions in the Divine nature, but that God's wisdom and will is pleased to act with that stateliness and sobriety which is becoming to His exalted majesty.

In support of our definition above let us point out that it was to this excellency in the Divine character that Moses appealed, when Israel sinned so grievously at Kadesh-Barnea, and there provoked Jehovah so sorely. Unto His servant the Lord said, "I will smite them with the pestilence and disinherit them." Then it was that the mediator Moses, as a type of the Christ to come, pleaded, "I beseech Thee, let **the power** of my Lord be great according as Thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is **longsuffering**," etc. (Num. 14:17). Thus, His "longsuffering" is His "power" of self-restraint.

Again, in Rom. 9:22 we read, “What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His **power** known, endured with much **longsuffering** the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction....?” Were God to immediately break these reprobate vessels into pieces, His power of self-control would not so eminently appear; by bearing with their wickedness and forbearing punishment so long, the power of His patience is gloriously demonstrated. True, the wicked interpret His longsuffering quite differently—“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Eccl. 8:11)—but the anointed eye adores what they abuse.

“The God of patience” (Rom. 15:5) is one of the Divine titles. Deity is thus denominated, first, because God is both the Author and Object of the grace of patience in the saint. Secondly, because this is what He is in Himself: patience is one of His perfections. Thirdly, as a pattern for us: “Put on therefore, as the **elect of God**, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, **longsuffering**” (Col. 3:12). And again, “Be ye therefore followers (emulators) of God, as dear children” (Eph. 5:2). When tempted to be disgusted at the dullness of another, or to be revenged on one who has wronged you, call to remembrance God’s infinite patience and longsuffering with yourself.

The patience of God is **manifested** in His dealings with sinners. How strikingly was it displayed toward the antediluvians. When mankind was universally degenerate, and all flesh had corrupted its way, God did not destroy them till He had forewarned them. He “waited” (1 Peter 3:20), probably no less than one hundred and twenty years (Gen. 6:3), during which time Noah was a “preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5). So, later, when the Gentiles not only worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, but also committed the vilest abominations contrary even to the dictates of nature (Rom. 1:19–26) and thereby filled up the measure of their iniquity, yet, instead of drawing His sword for the extermination of such rebels, God “suffered all nations to walk in their own ways,” and gave them “rain from heaven and fruitful seasons” (Acts 14:16, 17).

Marvelously was God’s patience exercised and manifested toward **Israel**. First, He “suffered their manners” for forty years in the wilderness (Acts 13:18). Later, when they had entered Canaan, but followed the evil customs of the nations around them, and turned to idolatry, though God chastened them sorely, He did not utterly destroy them, but in their distress, raised up deliverers for them. When their iniquity was raised to such a height that none but a God of infinite patience could have borne them, He spared them many years before He allowed them to be carried down into Babylon. Finally, when their rebellion against Him reached its climax by crucifying His Son, He waited forty years ere He sent the Romans against them, and that, only after they had judged themselves “unworthy of eternal life” (Acts 13:46).

How wondrous is God’s patience with the world today. On every side people are sinning with a high hand. The Divine law is trampled under foot and God Himself openly despised. It is truly amazing that He does not instantly strike dead those who so brazenly defy Him. Why does He not suddenly cut off the haughty infidel and blatant blasphemer, as He did Ananias and Sapphira? Why does He not cause the earth to open its mouth and devour the persecutors of his people, so that, like Dathan and Abiram, they shall go down alive into the Pit? And what of apostate Christendom, where every possible form of sin is now tolerated and practiced under cover of the holy name of Christ? Why does not the righteous wrath of Heaven make an end of such abominations? Only one answer is possible: because God bears with “**much** longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.”

And what of the writer and the reader? Let us review our own lives. It is not long since **we** followed a multitude to do evil, had no concern for God’s glory, and lived only to gratify self. How patiently He bore with our vile conduct! And now that grace has snatched us as brands from the burning, giving us a place in God’s family, and has begotten us unto an eternal inheritance in glory, how miserably we requite Him. How shallow our gratitude, how tardy our obedience, how frequent our backslidings! One reason why God suffers the flesh to remain in the believer is that He may exhibit His “longsuffering **to usward**” (2 Peter 3:9). Since this Divine attribute is manifested only in this world, God takes advantage to display it toward “His own.”

May our meditation upon this Divine excellency soften our hearts, make our consciences tender, and may we learn in the school of holy experience the “patience of saints,” namely, submission to the Divine will and continuance in well doing. Let us earnestly seek grace to emulate this Divine excellency. “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). In the immediate context of this verse Christ exhorts us to love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us. God bears long with the wicked notwithstanding, the multitude of their sins, and shall we desire to be revenged because of a single injury?

THE MERCY OF GOD

from A. W. Pink -The Attributes of God

“O give thanks unto the Lord: for He is good, for His mercy endureth forever” (Ps. 136:1). For this perfection of the Divine character

God is greatly to be praised. Three times over in as many verses does the Psalmist here call upon the saints to give thanks unto the Lord for this adorable attribute. And surely this is the least that can be asked for from those who have been recipients of such bounty. When we contemplate the characteristics of this Divine excellency, we cannot do otherwise than bless God for it. His mercy is “great” (1 Kings 3:6), “plenteous” (Ps. 86:5), “tender” (Luke 1:78), “abundant” (1 Peter 1:3); it is “from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him” (Ps. 103:17). Well may we say with the Psalmist, “I will sing aloud of Thy mercy” (59:16).

“I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy” (Ex. 33:19). Wherein differs the “mercy” of God from His “grace”? The mercy of God has its spring in the Divine goodness. The first issue of God’s goodness is His benignity or bounty, by which He gives liberally to His creatures as creatures; thus has He given being and life to all things. The second issue of God’s goodness is His mercy, which denotes the ready inclination of God to relieve the misery of fallen creatures. Thus, “mercy” presupposes *sin*.

Though it may not be easy at the first consideration to perceive a real difference between the grace and the mercy of God, it helps us thereto if we carefully ponder His dealings with the unfallen angels. He has never exercised mercy toward them, for they have never stood in any need thereof, not having sinned or come beneath the effects of the curse. Yet, they certainly are the objects of God’s free and sovereign grace. First, because of His *election* of them from out of the whole angelic race (1 Tim. 5:21). Secondly, and in consequence of their election, because of His *preservation* of them from apostacy, when Satan rebelled and dragged down with him one-third of the celestial hosts (Rev. 12:4). Thirdly, in making Christ their *Head* (Col. 2:10; 1 Peter 3:22), whereby they are eternally secured in the holy condition in which they were created. Fourthly, because of the exalted *position* which has been assigned them: to live in God’s immediate presence (Dan. 7:10), to serve Him constantly in His heavenly temple, to receive honorable commissions from Him (Heb. 1:14). This is abundant *grace* toward them; but “mercy” it is not.

In endeavoring to study the mercy of God as it is set forth in Scripture, a threefold distinction needs to be made, if the Word of Truth is to be “rightly divided” thereon. First, there is a general mercy of God, which is extended not only to all men, believers and unbelievers alike, but also to the entire creation: “His tender mercies are over *all* His works” (Ps. 145:9); “He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things” (Acts 17:25). God has pity upon the brute creation in their needs, and supplies them with suitable provision. Secondly, there is a *special* mercy of God, which is exercised toward the children of men, helping and succoring them, notwithstanding their sins. To them also He communicates all the necessities of life: “for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:45). Thirdly, there is a *sovereign* mercy which is reserved for the heirs of salvation, which is communicated to them in a covenant way, through the Mediator.

Following out a little further the difference between the second and third distinctions pointed out above, it is important to note that the mercies which God bestows on the wicked are solely of a *temporal* nature; that is to say, they are confined strictly to this present life. There will be no mercy extended to them beyond the grave: “It is a people of no understanding: therefore He that made them will not have mercy on them, and He that formed them will show them no favour” (Isa. 27:11). But at this point a difficulty may suggest itself to some of our readers, namely, Does not Scripture affirm that “His mercy endureth forever” (Ps. 136:1)? Two things need to be pointed out in that connection. God can never cease to be merciful, for this is a quality of the Divine essence (Ps. 116:5); but the *exercise* of His mercy is regulated by His sovereign will. This must be so, for there is nothing outside Himself which obliges Him to act; if there were, that “something” would be *supreme*, and God would cease to be *God*.

It is pure sovereign grace which alone determines the exercise of Divine mercy. God expressly affirms this fact in Rom. 9:15, “For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.” It is not the wretchedness of the creature which causes Him to show mercy, for God is not influenced by things outside of Himself as we are. If God were influenced by the abject misery of leprous sinners, He would cleanse and save *all* of them. But He does not. Why? Simply because it is not His pleasure and purpose so to do. Still less is it the merits of the creatures which causes Him to bestow mercies upon them, for it is a contradiction in terms to speak of *meriting* “mercy.” “*Not* by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy. He saved us” (Titus 3:5)—the one standing in direct antithesis to the other. Nor is it the merit of Christ which moves God to bestow mercies on His elect: that would be substituting the effect for the cause. It is “through” or because of the tender mercy of our God that Christ was sent here to His people (Luke 1:78). The merits of Christ make it possible for God to *righteously* bestow spiritual mercies on His elect, justice having been fully satisfied by the Surety! No, mercy arises *solely* from God’s imperial pleasure.

Again, though it be true, blessedly and gloriously true, that God’s mercy “endureth forever,” yet we must observe carefully the objects *to whom* His “mercy” is shown. Even the casting of the reprobate into the Lake of Fire is an act of *mercy*. The punishment of the wicked is to be contemplated from a threefold viewpoint. From God’s side, it is an act of *justice*, vindicating His honor. The mercy of God is never shown to the prejudice of His holiness and righteousness. From their side, it is an act of *equity*, when they are made to suffer the due reward of their iniquities. But from the standpoint of the redeemed, the punishment of the wicked is an act of unspeakable *mercy*. How dreadful would it be if the present order of things, when the children of God are obliged to live in the midst of the children of the Devil, should continue forever! Heaven would at once cease to be heaven if the ears of the saints still heard the blasphemous and filthy language of the reprobate. What a mercy that in the New Jerusalem “there shall in nowise enter into it any

thing that defileth, neither worketh abomination" (Rev. 21:27)!

Lest the reader might think in the last paragraph we have been drawing upon our imagination, let us appeal to Holy Scripture in support of what has been said. In Ps. 143:12 we find David praying, "And of Thy **mercy** cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am Thy servant." Again; in Ps. 136:15 we read that God "overthrew Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea: **for** His **mercy** endureth forever." It was an act of vengeance upon Pharaoh and his hosts, but it was an act of "mercy" unto the Israelites. Again, in Rev. 19:1–3 we read, "I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: **for** true and righteous are His judgments: for He hath **judged** the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath **avenged** the blood of His servants at her hand. And again they said, **Alleluia**. And her smoke rose up forever and ever."

How many there are who say, I do not believe that God will ever cast me into Hell; He is too merciful. What vain presumption! Such a hope is a viper, which if cherished in their bosoms will sting them to death. God is a God of justice as well as mercy, and He has expressly declared that He will "by no means clear the guilty" (Ex. 34:7). Yea, He has said, "The wicked **shall** be turned into hell, all the nations that forget God" (Ps. 9:17). As well might men reason thus: I do not believe that if filth be allowed to accumulate and sewage become stagnant and people deprive themselves of fresh air, that a merciful God will let them fall a prey to a deadly fever. The fact is that those who neglect the laws of health are carried away by disease, notwithstanding God's mercy. Equally true is it that those who neglect the laws of spiritual health shall forever suffer the Second Death.

Unspeakably solemn is it to see so many **abusing** this Divine perfection. They continue to despise God's authority, trample upon His laws, continue in sin, and yet presume upon His mercy. But God will not be unjust to Himself. God shows mercy to the truly penitent, but not to the impenitent (Luke 13:3). To continue in sin and yet reckon upon Divine mercy remitting punishment is diabolical. It is saying, "Let us do evil that good may come," and of all such it is written that their "damnation is just" (Rom. 3:8). Presumption shall most certainly be disappointed; read carefully Deut. 29:18–20. Christ is the spiritual Mercyseat, and all who despise and reject His Lordship shall "perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little" (Ps. 2:12).

But let our final thought be of God's spiritual mercies unto His own people. "Thy mercy is great unto the heavens" (Ps. 57:10). The riches thereof transcend our loftiest thought. "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him" (Ps. 103:11). None can measure it. The elect are designated "vessels of mercy" (Rom. 9:23). It is mercy that quickened them when they were dead in sins (Eph. 2:4, 5). It is mercy that saves them (Titus 3:5). It is His abundant mercy which begat them unto an eternal inheritance (1 Peter 1:3). Time would fail us to tell of His preserving, sustaining, pardoning, supplying mercy. Unto His own, God is "the Father of mercies" (2 Cor. 1:3).

"When all Thy mercies, O my God,

My rising soul surveys,

Transported with the view I'm lost,

In wonder, love, and praise."

THE LOVE OF GOD

from A. W. Pink -The Attributes of God

There are three things told us in Scripture concerning the **nature** of God. First, "God is spirit" (John 4:24). In the Greek there is no indefinite article, and to say "God is a spirit" is most objectionable, for it places Him in a class with others. God is "spirit" in the highest sense. Because He is "spirit" He is incorporeal, having no visible substance. Had God a tangible body, He would not be omnipresent, He would be limited to one place; because He is "spirit" He fills heaven and earth. Secondly, "God is light" (1 John 1:5), which is the opposite of darkness. In Scripture "darkness" stands for sin, evil, death, and "light" for holiness, goodness, life. "God is light" means that He is the sum of all excellency. Thirdly, "God is love" (1 John 4:8). It is not simply that God "loves," but that He is Love itself. Love is not merely one of His attributes, but His very nature.

There are many today who talk about the love of God, who are total strangers to the God of love. Divine love is often reduced in our day to a sort of gushy sentimentality, a good-natured and liberal indulgence, a weak and soft emotion patterned after human feeling. But such a notion is erroneous; we must seek recourse in defining God's love from the revelation of the Scriptures. That there is urgent need for this is apparent not only from the ignorance which so generally prevails, but also the low state of spirituality which is now so sadly evident everywhere among professing Christians. How little real love there is for God. One chief reason for this is because our hearts are so little occupied with His wondrous love for His people. The better we are acquainted with His love—its

character, fulness, blessedness—the more will our hearts be drawn out in love to Him.

1. The love of God is **uninfluenced**. By this we mean, there was nothing whatever in the objects of His love to call it into exercise, nothing in the creature to attract or prompt it. The love which one creature has for another is because of something in the object; but the love of God is free, spontaneous, uncaused. The only reason why God loves any is found in His own sovereign will: “The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but **because** the Lord loved thee” (Deut. 7:7, 8). God has loved His people from everlasting, and therefore nothing about the creature can be the cause of what is found in God from eternity. He loves **from** Himself: “according to His own purpose” (2 Tim. 1:9).

“We love Him, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). God did not love us because we loved Him, but He loved us before we had a particle of love for Him. Had God loved us in return for ours, then it would not be spontaneous on His part; but because He loved us when we were loveless, it is clear that His love was uninfluenced. It is highly important, if God is to be honored and the heart of His child established, that we should be quite clear upon this precious truth. God’s love for me and for each of “His own” was entirely unmoved by anything in us. What was there in me to attract the heart of God? Absolutely nothing. But, to the contrary, there was everything to repel Him, everything calculated to make Him loathe me—sinful, depraved, a mass of corruption, with “**no** good thing” in me.

“What was there in me that could merit esteem.

Or give the Creator delight?

“Twas even so, Father, I ever must sing,

Because it seemed good in Thy sight.”

2. It is **eternal**. This of necessity. God Himself is eternal, and God is love; therefore, as God Himself had no beginning, His love had none. Granted that such a concept far transcends the grasp of our feeble minds, nevertheless, where we cannot comprehend we can bow in adoring worship. How clear is the testimony of Jer. 31:3, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” How blessed to know that the great and holy God loved His people before heaven and earth were called into existence, that He had set His heart upon them from all eternity. Clear proof is this that His love is spontaneous, for He loved them endless ages before they had any being.

The same precious truth is set forth in Eph. 1:4,5: “According as He hath chosen us in Him **before** the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him. **In love** having predestinated us.” What praise should this evoke from each of His children! How tranquilizing for the heart: since God’s love toward me had no beginning, it can have no ending! Since it is true that “from everlasting to everlasting” He is God, and since God is “love,” then it is equally true that “from everlasting **to** everlasting” He loves His people.

3. It is **sovereign**. This also is self-evident. God Himself is sovereign, under obligations to none, a law unto Himself, acting always according to His own imperial pleasure. Since God is sovereign, and since He is love, it necessarily follows that His love is sovereign. Because God is God, He does as He pleases; because God is love, He loves whom He pleases. Such is His own express affirmation: “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated” (Rom. 9:13). There was no more reason in Jacob why he should be the object of Divine love than there was in Esau. They both had the same parents, and were born at the same time, being twins; yet God loved the one and hated the other! Why? Because it pleased Him to do so.

The sovereignty of God’s love necessarily follows from the fact that it is uninfluenced by anything in the creature. Thus, to affirm that the cause of His love lies in God Himself is only another way of saying, He loves whom He pleases. For a moment, assume the opposite. Suppose God’s love were regulated by anything else than His will: in such a case He would love by rule, and loving by rule He would be under a law of love, and then so far from being free, God would Himself be **ruled by law**. “In love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to”—what? Some excellency which He foresaw in them? No! What then? “According to the good pleasure of His will” (Eph. 1:4, 5).

4. It is **infinite**. Everything about God is infinite. His **essence** fills heaven and earth. His **wisdom** is illimitable, for He knows everything of the past, present, and future. His **power** is unbounded, for there is nothing too hard for Him. So His love is without limit. There is a depth to it which none can fathom; there is a height to it which none can scale; there is a length and breadth to it which defies measurement, by any creature-standard. Beautifully is this intimated in Eph. 2:4: “But God, who is rich in mercy, for His **great** love wherewith He loved us”: the word “great” there is parallel with the “God so loved” of John 3:16. It tells us that the love of God is so transcendent it cannot be estimated.

No tongue can fully express the infinitude of God’s love, or any mind comprehend it: it “passeth knowledge” (Eph. 3:19). The most extensive ideas that a finite mind can frame about Divine love, are infinitely below its **true** nature. The heaven is not so

far above the earth as the goodness of God is beyond the most raised conceptions which we are able to form of it. It is an **ocean** which swells higher than all the mountains of opposition in such as are the objects of it. It is a **fountain** from which flows all necessary good to all those who are interested in it (John Brine, 1743).

5. It is **immutable**. As with God Himself there is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17), so His love knows neither change nor diminution. The worm Jacob supplies a forceful example of this: “Jacob have I loved,” declared Jehovah, and despite all his unbelief and waywardness, He never ceased to love him. John 13:1 furnishes another beautiful illustration. That very night one of the apostles would say, “Show us the Father”; another would deny Him with cursings; all of them would be scandalized by and forsake Him. Nevertheless, “having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them **unto the end**.” The Divine love is subject to no vicissitudes. Divine love is “strong as death....many waters cannot quench it” (Song 8:6, 7). Nothing can separate from it (Rom. 8:35–39).

“His love no end nor measure knows,

No change can turn its course,

Eternally the same it flows

From one eternal source.”

6. It is **holy**. God’s love is not regulated by caprice, passion, or sentiment, but by principle. Just as His grace reigns not at the expense of it, but “through righteousness” (Rom. 5:21), so His love never conflicts with His holiness. “God is light” (1 John 1:5) is mentioned **before** “God is love” (1 John 4:8). God’s love does not arise from a sentimental disposition, nor from softness. His divine ardor is not gushiness.. Scripture declares that “whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth” (Heb. 12:6). God will not wink at sin, even in His own people. His love is **pure**, unmixed with any maudlin sentimentality.

7. It is **gracious**. The love and favor of God are inseparable. This is clearly brought out in Rom. 8:32–39. What that love is, from which there can be no “separation,” is easily perceived from the design and scope of the immediate context: it is that goodwill and grace of God which determined Him to give His Son for sinners. That love was the impulsive power of Christ’s incarnation: “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (John 3:16). Christ died not in order to make God love us, but because He did love His people. Calvary is the supreme demonstration of Divine love. Whenever you are tempted to doubt the love of God, Christian reader, go back to Calvary.

Here then is abundant cause for trust and patience under Divine affliction. Christ was beloved of the Father, yet **He** was not exempted from poverty, disgrace, and persecution. **He** hungered and thirsted. Thus, it was **not** incompatible with God’s **love** for Christ when He permitted men to spit upon and smite Him. Then let no Christian call into question God’s love when he is brought under painful afflictions and trials. God did not enrich Christ on earth with temporal prosperity, for “He had not where to lay His head.” But He **did** give Him the Spirit “without measure” (John 3:34). Learn then that **spiritual** blessings are the principal gifts of Divine love. How blessed to know that when the world hates us, God loves us!

THE WRATH OF GOD

from A. W. Pink -The Attributes of God

It is sad indeed to find so many professing Christians who appear to regard the wrath of God as something for which they need to make an apology, or who at least wish there were no such thing. While some would not go so far as to openly admit that they consider it a blemish on the Divine character, yet they are far from regarding it with delight; they like to ignore it, relegating the doctrine out the back shute of their minds, harboring the delusion that His wrath is inconsistent with His goodness. , and they rarely hear it mentioned without a secret resentment rising up in their hearts against it. Even with those who are more sober in their judgment, not a few seem to imagine that there is a severity about the Divine wrath that makes it too terrifying to form a theme for profitable contemplation.

Yes, many there are who turn away from a vision of God’s wrath as though they were called to look upon some blotch in the Divine character or some blot upon the Divine government. But what saith the Scriptures? As we turn to them we find that God has made no attempt to conceal the facts concerning His wrath. He is not ashamed to make it known that vengeance and fury belong unto Him. His own challenge is, “See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand. For I lift up My hand to heaven, and say, I live forever. If I whet My glittering sword, and Mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to Mine enemies, and will reward them that hate Me” (Deut. 32:39–41). A study of the concordance will show that there are more references in Scripture to the anger, fury, and wrath of God,

than there are to His love and tenderness. Because God is holy, He hates all sin; and because He hates all sin, His anger burns against the sinner (Ps. 7:11).

Now the wrath of God is as much a Divine perfection as is His faithfulness, power, or mercy. It **must be so**, for there is no blemish whatever, not the slightest defect in the character of God; yet there **would be** if "wrath" were absent from Him! Indifference to sin is a moral blemish, and he who hates it not is a moral leper. How could He who is the Sum of all excellency look with equal satisfaction upon virtue and vice, wisdom and folly? How could He who is infinitely holy disregard sin and refuse to manifest His "severity" (Rom. 9:22) toward it? How could He, who delights only in that which is pure and lovely, not loathe and hate that which is impure and vile? The very nature of God makes Hell as real a necessity, as imperatively and eternally requisite, as Heaven is. Not only is there no imperfection in God, but there is no perfection in Him that is less perfect than another.

The wrath of God is His eternal detestation of all unrighteousness. It is the displeasure and indignation of Divine equity against evil. It is the holiness of God stirred into activity against sin. It is the moving cause of that just sentence which He passes upon evildoers. God is angry against sin because it is a rebelling against His authority, a wrong done to His inviolable sovereignty. Insurrectionists against God's government shall be made to know that God is the Lord. They shall be made to feel how great that Majesty is which they despise, and how dreadful is that threatened wrath which they so little regarded. Not that God's anger is a malignant and malicious retaliation, inflicting injury for the sake of it, or in return for injury received. No, though God will vindicate His dominion as the Governor of the universe, He will not be vindictive.

That Divine wrath is one of the perfections of God is not only evident from the considerations presented above, but is also clearly established by the express declarations of His own Word. "For the wrath of God is revealed **from heaven**" (Rom. 1:18). Robert Haldane comments on this verse as follows:

It was revealed when the sentence of death was first pronounced, the earth cursed, and man driven out of the earthly paradise, and afterwards by such examples of punishment as those of the Deluge, and the destruction of the Cities of the Plain by fire from heaven, but especially by the reign of death throughout the world. It was proclaimed in the curse of the law on every transgression, and was intimated in the institution of sacrifice, and in all the services of the Mosaic dispensation. In the eighth chapter of this epistle, the Apostle calls the attention of believers to the fact that the whole creation has become subject to vanity, and groaneth and travaileth together in pain. The same creation which declares that there is a God, and publishes His glory, also proves that He is the Enemy of sin and the Avenger of the crimes of men.... But above all, the wrath of God was revealed from heaven when the Son of God came down to manifest the Divine character, and when that wrath was displayed in His sufferings and death, in a manner more awful than by all the tokens God had before given of His displeasure against sin. Besides this, the future and eternal punishment of the wicked is now declared in terms more solemn and explicit than formerly. Under the new dispensation, there are two revelations given from heaven, one of wrath, the other of grace.

Again, that the wrath of God is a Divine perfection is plainly demonstrated by what we read in Ps. 95:11: "Unto whom I swear in My wrath." There are two occasions of God's "swearing": in making promises (Gen. 22:16); and in pronouncing judgments (Deut. 1:34f). In the former, He swears in mercy to His children; in the latter, He swears to deprive a wicked generation of its inheritance because of murmuring and unbelief. An oath is for solemn confirmation (Heb. 6:16). In Ge 22:16 God says, "By **Myself** have I sworn." In Ps. 89:35 He declares, "Once have I sworn by My **holiness**." While in Ps. 95:11 He affirms, "I swear in **My wrath**." Thus the great Jehovah Himself appeals to His "wrath" as a perfection equal to His "holiness": He swears by the one as much as by the other! Again, as in Christ "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9), and as all the Divine perfections are illustriously displayed by Him (John 1:18), therefore do we read of "the **wrath** of the Lamb" (Rev. 6:16).

The wrath of God is a perfection of the Divine character upon which we need to frequently meditate. First, that our hearts may be duly impressed by God's detestation of sin. We are ever prone to regard sin lightly, to gloss over its hideousness, to make excuses for it. But the more we study and ponder God's abhorrence of sin and His frightful vengeance upon it, the more likely are we also to realize the heinousness of sin. Secondly, to beget a true fear in our souls for God: "Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28, 29). We cannot serve Him "acceptably" unless there is due "reverence" for His awful Majesty and "godly fear" of His righteous anger; and these are best promoted by frequently calling to mind that "our God is a consuming fire." Thirdly, to draw out our souls in fervent praise for our having been delivered **from** "the wrath to come" (1 Thess. 1:10)

Our readiness or our reluctance to **meditate** upon the wrath of God becomes a sure test of our hearts' true attitude toward Him. If we do not truly rejoice in God, for what He is in Himself, and that because of all the perfections which are eternally resident in Him, then how dwelleth **the love of God** in us? Each of us needs to be most prayerfully on his guard against devising an image of God in our thoughts which is patterned after our own evil inclinations. Of old the Lord complained, "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether as thyself" (Ps. 50:21). If we rejoice not "at the remembrance of His **holiness**" (Ps. 97:12), if we rejoice not to know that in a soon-

coming Day God will make a most glorious display of His **wrath** by taking vengeance upon all who now oppose Him, it is proof positive that our hearts are not in subjection to Him, that we are yet in our sins, and that we are on the way to the everlasting burnings.

“Rejoice, O ye nations (Gentiles) His people, for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance to His adversaries” (Deut. 32:43). And again we read, “I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: **For** true and righteous are His judgments: for He hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia” (Rev. 19:1–3). Great will be the rejoicing of the saints in that day when the Lord shall vindicate His majesty, exercise His awful dominion, magnify His justice, and overthrow the proud rebels who have dared to defy Him.

“If thou Lord, shouldest mark (impute) iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” (Ps. 130:3). Well may each of us ask this question, for it is written, “the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment” (Ps. 1:5). How sorely was **Christ’s** soul exercised with thoughts of God’s marking the iniquities of His people when they were upon Him! He was “amazed and very heavy” (Mark 14:33). His awful agony, His bloody sweat, His strong cries and supplications (Heb. 5:7), His reiterated prayers (“If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me”), His last dreadful cry (“My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”) all manifest what fearful apprehensions He had of **what** it was for God to “mark iniquities.” Well may poor sinners cry out, “Lord **who** shall stand,” when the Son of God Himself so trembled beneath the weight of His wrath! If thou, my reader, hast not “fled for refuge” to Christ, the only Savior, “how wilt thou do in the swelling of the Jordan?” (Jer. 12:5).

When I consider how the goodness of God is abused by the greatest part of mankind, I cannot but be of his mind that said, The greatest miracle in the world is God’s patience and bounty to an ungrateful world. If a prince hath an enemy got into one of his towns, he doth not send them in provision, but lays close siege to the place, and doth what he can to starve them. But the great God, that could wink all His enemies into destruction, bears with them, and is at daily cost to maintain them. Well may He command us to bless them that curse us, who Himself does good to the evil and unthankful. But think not, sinners, that you shall escape thus; God’s mill goes slow, but grinds small; the more admirable His patience and bounty now is, the more dreadful and unsupportable will that fury be which ariseth out of His abused goodness. Nothing smoother than the sea, yet when stirred into a tempest, nothing rageth more. Nothing so sweet as the patience and goodness of God, and nothing so terrible as His wrath when it takes fire (William Gurnall, 1660).

Then “flee,” my reader, flee to Christ; “flee **from** the wrath to come” (Matt. 3:7) ere it be too late. Do not, we earnestly beseech you, suppose that this message is intended for somebody else. It is **to you!** Do not be contented by **thinking** you **have** already fled to Christ. Make **certain!** Beg the Lord to search your heart and show you yourself.

A Word to Preachers. Brethren, do we in our sermons preach on this solemn subject as much as we ought? The Old Testament prophets frequently told their hearers that their wicked lives provoked the Holy One of Israel, and that they were treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath. And conditions in the world are no better now than they were then. Nothing is so calculated to arouse the careless and cause carnal professors to search their hearts, as to enlarge upon the fact that “God is angry with the wicked every day” (Ps. 7:11). The forerunner of Christ warned his hearers to “flee from the wrath to come” (Matt. 3:7). The Savior bade His auditors, “Fear Him, which after He hath killed, hath power to cast into Hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him” (Luke 12:5). The Apostle Paul said, “Knowing therefore the **terror** of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Cor. 5:11). Faithfulness demands that we speak as plainly about Hell as about Heaven.