

# THE ESSENCE OF GOD

We have been talking about the Essence of God as what defines Him as a being. In the doctrine of the unity of God, there is only one essence or substance. We say that though there are three persons in the Godhead, He is one in essence. There is one God, yet three who possess every attribute of deity equally, perfectly, and eternally. There is a unity of essence and a plurality of persons belonging to the same divine being. The persons of the Godhead are not separate and independent beings but three persons with identical essence eternally and inseparably united as one.

This essence of God is said to comprise the following attributes, which we will look into in some detail during this study.

1. Sovereignty
2. Righteousness
3. Justice
4. Love
5. Eternal Life
6. Omniscience
7. Omnipotence
8. Omnipresence
9. Immutability
10. Veracity

Some expositors may expand to this list, but I believe these ten attributes pretty well sum it all up. Take any one of these attributes away from God or change any one, and you will have destroyed God's essence. It is all or none.

Satan understands God's essence very well and intends to use it against Him. This is exactly what he is doing during the Angelic Conflict. His plan is to render God a liar. Satan intends to do that by destroying all of Israel before God can deliver on the Four Unconditional Covenants, four promises He made to Israel. If Israel can be destroyed, then there will be no Israel to receive the promised blessings, and God will be made a liar. That would destroy God's attributes of veracity, righteousness and justice. That would also render God no longer sovereign, as His plan would have been thwarted and His authority rendered moot. Such would render God unqualified to sit in judgment of Satan, and Satan's appeal would be won on a technicality.

Understanding the essence of God helps us humans understand why God behaves the way He does. His actions are driven by his person, that is who and what He is, His essence, in other words. If we can understand His essence better, we can better understand God and how we must relate to Him and how He must relate to us. While one of the attributes of God's essence is omnipotence, that is He is all-powerful and can "do anything," God is actually self-limiting in that He can't do anything that would compromise any of the attributes of His essence without compromising His deity. God will not, He cannot compromise His essence nor adjust His essence to suit man, so man must adjust to God's essence—or remain lost forever.

## **Sovereignty**

God is, first of all, sovereign – that is God is supreme volition. His volition has always existed, and there is no higher volition in the universe. As sovereign, God is the Supreme Being of the universe (Deut 4:39 1 Sam. 2:6-8; 1 Chron. 29:11; 2 Chron. 20:6; Psa. 83:18).

**Deut. 4:39** Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.

That passage makes it very clear. God is supreme over all, and we need to consider that fact in our own hearts, recognize that fact, and adjust ourselves to it, because it is an immutable fact. All too many human beings do not recognize that God is sovereign and are thus maladjusted to His sovereignty. For them there is another god or even multiple gods, and often that god is themselves or something they find pleasure in. And they think mistakenly that they are getting away with something, but in truth God is only recognizing the free will He granted to man. In spite of man's rejection of God's sovereignty, God remains no less the ruler of all. Galatians 6:7 makes that clear when it says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Often the results of our actions produce the misery that we experience, and God has no need of intervention. We may mock God, but we must be prepared to deal with the consequences. If we sow corn, corn will grow, not wheat, not spinach. Likewise if we sow evil, we may expect to reap evil.

He is said to be the King of heaven and earth (Psa. 47:2; Matt. 6:13; Heb. 8:1; Rev. 4:2-3).

**Psa. 47:2** For the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth.

The Scriptures express that God has divine volition:

**Isa 46:9** Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; 10 declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.

That is as clear a statement of intent as ever was. God is the Congress, Supreme Court, and President all in one being. And all God does is for **His** “good pleasure” according to His plan. God’s “pleasure” resulted in a plan for humanity. In Harmony with His sovereign decree that man be allowed freedom of choice, God will never use His absolute will to coerce the volition, which He gave man. God honors your decisions, whether they are for or against Him. As far as the believer is concerned, God has a plan for your life – to be molded in the image of Christ.

God is sovereign over all, but not unapproachable. In fact, He wants us to approach Him. He desires fellowship with His creation. Hebrews 4:6 says we should draw near with confidence to the throne of grace where we can find mercy. The Greek word translated “confidence” means with frankness, bluntness, and openly, the idea being that we have assurance in our salvation to do so. See also Hebrews 10:19, 22 and Ephesians 2:18 and 3:12 for this same message.

God is no less sovereign today, but believers in the Church Age are a new creation and stand in the blood washing of Christ in the possession of God’s own righteousness. That righteousness was imputed to our accounts in heaven as a result of our trust in the work of Jesus the Christ on the Cross (Ro. 4:6, 11, 22-24; Ga. 3:6; Ja. 2:23).

God is sovereign over all; there is none other. That makes His sovereignty an attribute unique only to God.

## **Righteousness**

To consider God's righteousness, we have to also consider His justice. Together the two combine to form God's Holiness or His integrity. God's holiness (integrity) is not listed as an attribute, because it is really made up of these two other attributes. When you say holiness to most people, they conjure up images in their minds of sanctimonious piety. They get a picture of God with His hands clasped together in prayer. That is human viewpoint.

God shows Himself holy through His righteousness. He shows His abhorrence of sin and evil through His justice, by His judgment upon sin, using the perfect standard of His own perfect righteousness. He also shows His holiness through His deliverance, which is the work of His righteousness condemning sin, and His justice administering the blessing of eternal life to those who believe.

The holiness of God is the sum total of His perfection, specifically His perfect righteousness and His perfect justice. These two attributes combine to form all which is holy in God. Webster defines holy as "spiritually pure." Nothing captures the concept of purity better than perfect righteousness, for there is no spiritual purity apart from perfect righteousness. God's perfect justice combines with His perfect righteousness to judge and administer that perfect and pure standard. Thus we call this combination of divine attributes interacting in harmony with each other the holiness or integrity of God.

God is said also to be "good" (Psa. 25:8; 34:8; 119:68; Luke 18:19). His character and His person are perfect (Deut. 32:4b; Psa. 11:7; 97:6; 111:3; 119:137a; Jer. 23:6; Rom. 1:17; 10:3; 1 John 2:29). It is impossible to have perfect righteousness without having perfect character and perfect personality. Many believe that personality is based on scintillation and animation, but the key to personality is righteousness. Think about that for a moment. Someone who you perceive as having good character and personality is, in reality, in possession of a righteousness nature. They say and do morally right things. By definition then, God's perfect righteousness has perfect character and personality.

Sometimes we see God's righteousness expressed by the word "holiness" in Scripture. God is absolute righteousness or holiness. "There is none

holy as the Lord...” (1 Sam. 2:2; Lev. 19:2b; Psa. 22:3, 111:8; John 17:11; Rev. 3:7; 6:10). God is not simply righteous by comparison to someone else: His righteousness is independent and incomparable. We say some people are good and some are bad, but the bad have some good in them, and the good all have some bad in them. Thus human righteousness is relative, one person compared to another. There is no absolute good or absolute bad person in human terms. But God’s righteousness is absolute and perfect. The righteousness under discussion is not self-righteousness. God’s perfect righteousness rejects human standards of self-righteousness (Isa. 64:6).

God’s righteousness is free from sin, but of man it is said that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). For ease of discussion we will call God’s perfect righteousness “Plus-R,” while man’s righteousness is said to be relative and is less than perfect, so we will use the term “Minus-R”. Plus-R (perfect righteousness) cannot have fellowship with Minus-R (relative righteousness). How can Plus-R ever find Minus-R acceptable? Plus-R simply cannot tolerate **any** deviation from perfection. To do so would be a compromise of Plus-R, and by definition that would render it no longer Plus-R.

Since man can never meet God’s perfect righteousness standard, and God cannot ever compromise His perfect standard, He had to find a way to satisfy His own perfect righteousness in relation to man. He does this by imputing His own righteousness to certain men.

**2 Cor. 5:21** For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

**Romans 3:21** Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

On what basis can He do this? On the basis of the Cross. We do not measure up to His perfect righteousness; yet we are “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24).

Being justified means we receive Plus-R from God – freely given. We do not work for it, we do not earn it, and we do not deserve it. It is credited to our account, when we believe in Jesus Christ, and that is GRACE! It is free to us, but like most things that are free, someone must pay for them, and

Jesus Christ picked up this tab at the Cross and purchased us from the slave market of sin.

God is righteous in His attitudes and actions (Deut. 32:4a; 2 Sam. 22:31a; Psa. 119:137b; 145:17; Dan 9:14; Rev. 19:2; 11). In the Revelation passage we see Jesus Christ waging war in righteousness. The believer can rely fully on the knowledge that whatever befalls him is consistent with God's righteous attitudes and actions on his behalf.

## **Justice**

The other half of God's holiness is His justice. The righteousness of God and the justice of God function together, each supports the other. Together they are called God's holiness or integrity. These two codependent attributes form the essence of God's personal and perfect moral code and that code's application in all matters. While God's righteousness as an attribute can stand alone as a perfect moral code, it needs the justice of God to see execution. And while the justice of God can stand alone, it needs the righteousness of God for a standard by which the justice of God acts.

Let's compare it to our modern legal system. The righteousness of God is the body of laws with which society is regulated. It is the law that says we must stop at red lights. It is the law that says we cannot commit a robbery. On the other hand the justice of God is both the court system that applies those laws and the police department that executes the court's judgments. It is the policeman that gives you the ticket for running the light and arrests you when you try to hold up a store. It is also the judge that fines you for the ticket and sentences you to prison for the robbery.

As part of His justice, God is fair; it is impossible for God to be unfair: "... for there is no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts" (2 Chron. 19:7b). God's judgments are perfect; therefore He is eliminated as a "patsy" for anyone or anything. Unlike a human judge who can make an error in judgment or allow emotions to cloud his judgment when applying the law, God can make no such error. His judgments are perfect and perfectly and fairly applied.

**Deut. 32:4** He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.

God can't be bribed. Do not think for a moment you can promise God something in exchange for some action on His part. His justice will not allow it. Blessing is based on capacity or need, not on promises of action on the part of man. I laugh when I hear of people in difficult situations who attempt to bribe God. "Get me out of this and I will go to church again, every week." God's justice is a perfect judge that cannot be bribed.

God's justice operates in the field of punitive activity. Under this concept, He is no respecter of persons (Rom. 2:11). In other words, God couldn't care less about your economic state or outward appearance; He looks inward to the soul. God has two avenues by which He expresses His justice to believers. To mature believers, God gives blessing, because they have capacity for blessing. To carnal or apostate believers, God's justice administers divine discipline (Heb. 12:6).

Key phrase: Justice administers what righteousness demands.

If a violation of God's righteousness has taken place, God's righteousness demands that God's justice act accordingly. This principle cannot be violated without compromising one or both of these two attributes. And the moment God violates or compromises one of His attributes, that attribute is no longer perfect. God will not, CANNOT, compromise His own attributes.

Were it not for the ministry of Jesus Christ on the Cross, God would have to compromise His justice in order to save us. Man is imperfect and, in this fallen state since the Garden, man cannot ever meet God's perfect righteous standard through his own efforts. Minus-R (relative human righteousness) cannot have fellowship with Plus-R (God's perfect righteousness). But through the vicarious, efficacious, spiritual death on the Cross, Jesus Christ received the guilt of the sinner upon Himself (Rom. 5:12; 6:23). The penalty for sin is death, and since no human could meet the standard, God had to find a substitute to satisfy His own perfect righteousness. The death of Christ on the Cross and the judgment of man's sins satisfied the justice of the Father and He is now free to pardon and justify the sinner who accepts His saving grace.

**Rom. 3:21** But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it — <sup>22</sup> the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who

believe. For there is no distinction: <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. <sup>26</sup> It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. <sup>27</sup> Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. <sup>28</sup> For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

God found a way to impute His perfect righteousness to us through the work of Christ on the Cross (2 Cor. 5:21). This righteousness is appropriated by man on the basis of faith alone (Ro. 3:21-22; 4:5-6; 13; 9:30; Phil. 3:9). With God's own righteousness in us, imputed at salvation, God's righteousness is satisfied (Plus-R can have fellowship with Plus-R), and He is justified in saving the believer.

God's justice administers what righteousness demands — salvation.

The unbeliever who fails to take advantage of the provisions of the Cross faces God's justice, also. If God's own righteousness (Plus-R) is not found in the person, God's perfect righteousness must condemn man's relative righteousness (Minus-R), and that person remains in condemnation. Understand we are born condemned on the basis of Adam's sin (1 Cor 15:22), and we heap our own personal sins on top. Failure to take advantage of the free gift offered by God on the basis of what Christ did on the cross means that person remains condemned.

So the work of Christ not only released the justice of the Father for total expression in eternity, but also made it possible for the Father's justice to remain intact in the Plan of God. God's justice upsets some; they cannot conceive of God as any other than a God of love, so how can He condemn anyone? Without an understanding of God's perfect righteousness and justice and how they cannot be compromised, their only point of contact becomes God's love. But God's love is not the point of contact with mankind; it is His justice. The unbeliever would do well to consider the warning in Hebrews 10:31: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."



## Love

God expresses His holiness toward the human race through His love. We say that God is love. “Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love” (1 John 4:8). To realize the personal, unchanging love of God is a supreme experience. And that love is manifested in both discipline and blessing. As parents, we discipline our children when they are out of line, because we love them and we want them to learn and demonstrate good moral behavior. In Scripture the Greek word for “chastise” has the connotation of training or learning. God uses chastisement to correct and teach us, just as we use it to correct and teach our own children. Out of the discipline is supposed to flow blessing. And that is exactly what Hebrews 12:11 tells us.

**Heb 12:11** For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

The word “love” is thrown around rather casually by mankind, especially when used as a verb. Man’s concept of love is very unlike God’s love. There is one huge difference between human love and God’s love. That difference is that in human love there is always something about the object of our love that makes the object — well, lovable. Human love depends on an emotional response to the object of the love.

What I just said is, with human love, the merit lies in the object of the love. With God’s love the merit is NOT found in the object but in the subject, the Person doing the loving, God Himself. There is no emotion in God’s love. God’s love depends entirely on His own character not how lovable we are.

In the case of human love, the object of that love has all the merit; something about them attracts us to them, and we emotionally respond to that. We love them because of who and/or what they are. But we humans are fallen and depraved, and there is little in us that God, in His perfect righteousness, can find to love. Yet “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son...” (John 3:16).

He certainly cannot love man on the basis of man’s merit. Nothing that man is or does can ever measure up to God’s perfect standard. God loves “the world” on the basis of His own personal integrity, in other words, His holiness — His perfect righteousness and perfect justice.

God's perfect righteousness demands that He deal fairly and appropriately with man, and furthermore, His righteousness itself cannot ever be compromised. God's justice executes what righteousness demands.

We are called to love our neighbor as ourselves (Lev 19:18; Matt 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31, 33; Luke 10:27; Rom 13:9-10; Gal 5:14; James 2:8)

**Gal 5:14** For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Since human love is based on the merit of the object, and very often our "neighbor" isn't all that lovable, it may be very difficult to express love toward him. Actually, man is completely incapable of expressing love of this divine nature on his own power, so how do we meet this command? Of our own ability, we don't. Instead, in the case of born again believers, divine love, God's own love, is manifested in the human heart by the Holy Spirit. It is God's love, not our own, we are called to express toward our neighbor.

**Romans 5:5** ...because the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit which was given unto us.

"Shed abroad" comes from the Greek word *ekcheo* which means to "pour out" or "shed forth." The love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit as a manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) in those "walking by means" of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16). There is no suggestion that divine love is a human product, but rather it is produced by the Holy Spirit. It is God's love produced in and out through the believer by the indwelling Spirit.

**John 17:20** "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. <sup>24</sup> Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me,

may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. <sup>25</sup> O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. <sup>26</sup> I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, **that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.**”

Such a feeling cannot be produced or successfully imitated by human effort. A human heart cannot produce divine love, but it can experience it. In the words of Louis Sperry Chafer, “To have a heart that feels the compassion of God is to drink the wine of heaven.”

Though in John 3:16 it says, “God so loved the world ...,” that love, though real on the part of God, is not personally experienced by the unsaved. This divine love we have been talking about is produced in the human heart by the Holy Spirit but only **when there is a right relationship** to the Spirit of God. We will explore this subject in more detail later.

The love of God is directed especially toward His born again children. “Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25). He loves his own even though they may be wondering away as revealed in the story of the “prodigal son” (Luke 15:11-32). “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:12). By divine compassion the Christian proves the reality of his eternal status before the world. “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34-35). Such love is a test of our brotherhood: “But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?” (1 John 3:16-17).

The love of God is eternal: “...having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (John 13:1).

The love of God is directed toward Israel: “...Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jer. 13:3).

The love of God is sacrificial: “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9).

God’s love is sacrificial in regard to life itself: “Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16).

God’s love is unique in all the universe. It depends on God’s own integrity and not on any merit of the object of that love. Human love is just a weak shadow of divine love that depends on how lovable the object of that love is.

### **Holiness as Expressed Through Love**

We have defined God’s holiness as comprising two of His attributes, righteousness and justice. God’s holiness is sometimes called God’s integrity or character. We also included God’s love as part of His holiness only in the sense that God expresses His holiness through His divine love.

God’s point of reference with man is not His love. Rather it is His justice. What His righteousness demands, His justice executes. God’s righteousness demands that He condemn sin. God’s perfect righteousness will allow no other option. To do so would compromise His perfect righteousness. And if His righteousness were ever compromised, He would no longer be perfect. Thus, God cannot ever “look the other way” or “wink” at sinfulness. He may **defer judgment** because of His patience and mercy, BUT eventually God is compelled to judge sin and condemn it.

Some who have a distorted understanding of God often ask, “How can a loving God condemn His own creation?” The answer is He has no choice. We should also understand that we are, in effect self-condemning. Adam and Eve were created in God’s image, perfect. There was no flaw in them. But we, you and I, were not created by God. We are the products of human generation. And because Adam and Eve fell from grace, that is they went from perfection to imperfection through their disobedience, we are children of the devil (John 8:44; 1 John 3:8-10).

**1 John 3:8** Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. <sup>9</sup>No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. <sup>10</sup>By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

These passages tell us there are two possible conditions we can find ourselves in: We are either children of the devil or children of God. Someone becomes a child of God through regeneration, being born again by putting our faith in what Jesus Christ did on the Cross instead of our own works (Tit. 3:5; Gal 2:16, Eph 2:8-9). We are born children of the devil, condemned at birth through our physical relationship to our fleshly father Adam (1 Cor. 15:21-22; Ro. 5:12-18).

Adam was created without a sin nature, but acquired one when he sinned. We are born with one (John 3:6; Ro. 8:5, 7; 3:23; 2 Peter 1:4; Eph. 2:3; Gal 5:19-21). God had no choice but to condemn Adam and Eve for their disobedience, and He has no choice but to condemn us as Adam's seed born with a sin nature. What the righteousness of God demands, the justice of God executes.

But God in His mercy and love has a solution for man to regain what was lost in the Garden. He sent a mediator, someone uniquely qualified to pay the price for sin. That mediator had to meet God's perfect standard to be qualified. For Israel He was pictured in the Levitical offerings when the bulls, sheep, and goats offered were required to be perfect and innocent. But the offerings of bulls and goats did not satisfy God's perfect righteousness. It was merely a "shadow" of what would, Jesus Christ as the perfect sacrifice (Heb. 10:1-10). Through faith in Christ we cast off our old self as children of the devil and become children of God (Eph 2:8-9; John 3:16; 5:24; 6:47; 20:31; 1 John 5:11-13; Ro. 8:16-17).

God's perfect righteousness was compelled to condemn Adam and Eve and all men who are their seed because of Adam's original sin and our inherited sin nature. We are born condemned already. The justice of God executes what the righteousness of God demands. God provided for redemption for all who will believe. And believing is all that is required.

But what about when little babies die or those without the mental capacity to make that decision for Christ? Condemnation must precede salvation. You cannot be saved unless you are first condemned to something to be saved from. That ought to make all sorts of logical sense, right? In the case of those without the capacity to make the required free will decision to trust in Christ, God is free and justified to save them, because they are first already condemned, and second, they do not have the opportunity to make the decision for Christ. God's righteousness is satisfied in this situation, and He can demonstrate mercy.

If condemnation must precede salvation, and a free will decision is required for salvation, then infant baptism does not remove the original sin. Only a decision for Christ will. But for those who die before they are able to make that decision or because of a lack of mental capacity will never be able to make that decision, God is justified in delivering them from hell and does so. This principle is clearly illustrated in the story of King David and the death of his son born of Bathsheba

**2 Sam. 12:15** And the Lord afflicted the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and he became sick. <sup>16</sup> David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. <sup>17</sup> And the elders of his house stood beside him, to raise him from the ground, but he would not, nor did he eat food with them. <sup>18</sup> On the seventh day the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said, "Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spoke to him, and he did not listen to us. How then can we say to him the child is dead? He may do himself some harm." <sup>19</sup> But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David understood that the child was dead. And David said to his servants, "Is the child dead?" They said, "He is dead." <sup>20</sup> Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. And he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. He then went to his own house. And when he asked, they set food before him, and he ate. <sup>21</sup> Then his servants said to him, "What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive; but when the child died, you arose and ate food." <sup>22</sup> He said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, 'Who knows whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' <sup>23</sup> But now he is dead. Why

should I fast? Can I bring him back again? **I shall go to him**, but he will not return to me.”

We should also note that God demonstrates two kinds of love toward mankind. We have seen God’s love as expressed in John 3:16, which we defined as a higher form of love, a divine love that depends on God’s personal integrity and not on how lovable the objects of that love are. This is very different from human love, which is responsive to something in the object of the love. With divine love the merit resides in the subject, God, but with human love the merit resides in the object.

But God does demonstrate a form of divine love that in some respects resembles human love. It is like human love only with respect to the fact that God loves certain men/women because there is some merit in them. We call the love that is based on God’s integrity His “impersonal love”. God demonstrates impersonal love to the entire human race in that Christ died for us (John 3:16). This second form of love, which is based on merit in the object, is called God’s “personal love”. It is directed to a select set of individuals.

Confused? I just spent a great deal of time demonstrating how there is no merit in man for God to love, so what gives here? There is indeed no merit in fallen man for God to love, but there is merit in man **after** he is born again. I am referring to the imputed righteousness of God given to the believer.

The believer at the moment of salvation has his account in heaven credited with God’s perfect righteousness. (Romans 4:1-22; 9:30; 2 Corinthians 5:20-21; and Philippians 3:9) This word translated “imputed,” “counted,” or “credited,” depending on the translation, is really an accounting term that means to credit to one’s account.

**Phil 3:9** and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—

That means fallen man with only his own imperfect and unacceptable righteousness that does not meet God’s perfect standard of righteousness is given or credited with God’s perfect righteousness at the moment of salvation. That does two things. First such a man, we call him a believer, is

saved because he is in possession of God's perfect righteousness through faith and, with such, becomes acceptable to God.

The second thing the believer gets as a result of the imputation of God's perfect righteousness is personal love from God. God loves His own righteousness, and that righteousness is found in the believer through imputation because of faith in the work of Christ on the Cross. God loves His own righteousness, and that righteousness is in the believer. That righteousness is the merit that God finds in the believer that He can demonstrate personal love towards.

The entire human race has God's impersonal love, which is based on His own personal integrity, but born again believers who are in possession of God's perfect righteousness are also objects of God's personal love. Pretty powerful stuff!

More to come in our study of the essence of God.