

Chapter Five

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

AFFIRMATION 5

*The finite minds of all human beings cannot comprehend every detail about God who is an infinite Being. Hence, to unravel the mystery of God, we must know Him by His attributes. Attributes are the characteristics or qualities belonging to someone. In relation to God, they are those characteristics that make God who He is. The attributes of God fall into two main groupings: **Essential** (non-communicable) and **Moral (communicable) Attributes**.*

THE TWO CATEGORIES OF ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

The attributes of God, the triune Godhead, Trinity are what distinguish him or divinity from creation. He is altogether the great and good Sovereign Lord (Lord God) of humanity (Ref. Jer. 32:16-27 v. 17, 27)!

The two main groupings of the attributes of God are:

- (a) **Essential (non-communicable)** and
- (b) **Moral (communicable) Attributes**.

(a). HIS ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES

They are those characteristics that belong to God only. They cannot belong to any of God's creatures; angelic or celestial or spirit beings and human beings. These **essential attributes** can never become attributes of man because man would then become God. These attributes are also known as **non-moral** or **incommunicable attributes** of God. These are the characteristics that stem out of His infinite nature and being. His infinity in relation to time we call **His eternity or eternality**, in relation to space **His omnipresence**, in relation to knowledge **His omniscience**, and in relation to power **His omnipotence**.

God is eternal, unchanging (immutable), all-present (omnipresent), all-knowing (omniscient), and all-powerful (omnipotent). Together, they reveal God as the great One, the Supreme Being who is Sovereign in all His ways and acts.

These are the exclusive characteristics of God that define Him as the only living and true God; where such characteristics of His nature and distinctive character altogether describe God to be the great God of the Universe. In Christ, however, believers can here

and now have a foretaste of divine power, love, glory, godliness and life to live for Him in the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13, 14; 2 Tim. 1:5-7, 14; 1 Pet. 2:3; 2 Pet. 1:1-4) until death (2 Cor. 5:1-8) or the day of redemption of the body (Rom. 8:23).

1. He is **Eternal [Everlasting]** - Never dies (Ex. 3:13, 14; Deut. 33:27; Ps. 90:2). God is eternal, meaning He had no beginning and His existence will never end. He is immortal and infinite, from everlasting to everlasting (Deut. 33:27; Ps 90:2; 1 Tim. 1:17). It means that God is without beginning and without end, for eternity compared with time literally means “forever but with identifiable no beginning”. God’s eternity or eternality extends backwards to infinity and forward to infinity, unending. Our God will still be there after everything has come and gone! This is why He said to Moses of His Name, “I AM” (Ex. 3:13, 14).

He is the great “I AM”, the Everlasting One; for everlasting compared with time literally means “forever”! Everything about Him and concerning Him is both eternal and also everlasting. It is everlasting for once it begins like with the Incarnation (Jn. 1:1-5, 14-18; Acts 1:11; Rev. 13:8) or the gospel (1 Pet. 1:23-25; Rev. 14:6); it is not time-bound. God is incomparable; there is no one like Him in works or being. He is unequaled and perfect (2 Sam. 7:22; Ps. 86:6; Is. 40:25; Matt. 5:48). God is inscrutable, unfathomable, unsearchable, and past finding out as far as understanding Him completely (Ps. 145:3; Is. 40:28; Rom. 11:33, 34).

2. He is **Immutable**- Unchanging (Ps. 102:26, 27; Num. 23:19; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8; Js. 1:17). God is immutable, meaning He is unchanging; this in turn means that God is absolutely reliable and trustworthy. Since God is everlasting, He is also Immutable, or He will never change. We can always depend on Him because He never changes. God does not need to change because He is perfect.
3. He is **Omnipotent** - All powerful (Gen. 18:14; 1Chr. 29:11; Ps. 62:11; Jer. 32:17, 27; Matt. 19:25, 26; Rom. 9:19-21; Eph. 3:20; Rev. 19:6). God is omnipotent; He is all-powerful and can do anything that pleases Him, but His actions will always be in accord with the rest of His character (Rev. 19:6).
4. He is **Omnipresent** - He is present everywhere at the same time being infinite Spirit. But this does not mean that God is everything (Ps. 139:7-13; Prov. 15:3; Jer. 23:23-24; Acts 17:27). So, nothing in the Universe can hide or get away from the presence of God, including His good, loyal angels and spirit beings in heaven, His enemies – Satan and his demons, the spiritual worlds and physical worlds, all the heavens, the abode of the dead, all human beings and his people. When we consider human beings created in His own image, God is present with us in some sense not only when we worship Him in church, but also in our home, at our job, under the sea and the depths of the earth or wherever we are in the Universe. In our good moments and evil times, we cannot hide from Him; for He is there to see (Gen. 6:3-7; Ex. 3:9-11).

5. He is **Omniscient** - Knowing all things. He knows the past, present, and future, including what we are thinking at any given moment God knows the even deepest secrets of our heart. God knows when we are right and when we are wrong. God known our needs even before we ask him (Ps 147:5; Is. 46:9-11; Matt. 10:30; Heb. 4:13; 1 Jn. 3:20).

God's Sovereignty, Infallibility, Infinity, Consistency and Constancy

God, the triune Godhead, is defined altogether and separately by his attributes, especially his essential attributes as God. The *eternality, immutability, omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience of God* ascribe and describe sovereignty, infallibility, infinity, consistency and constancy to Him in His being, nature, life, essence, character, eternal purposes and plans. **The Sovereignty of God** is the combination of His **omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent** non-communicable attributes. **The God who in Scripture is said to be omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent is also eternal and immutable or unalterable; thus, cannot be diminished, extended nor expanded.** He has not been, is not, and never will be - under any and even all imaginable circumstances – dead, localized, ignorant, or impotent. What he is, he always is, and will always be in His essential attributes as the only living and true God.

For instance, His immutability though clearly distinct from His eternality is both consistent with each other but also interrelated. God being eternal means that he always has existed and always will exist as the living One who is preceded by nothing and who shall be succeeded by nothing. However, in saying that God is immutable we mean that he is consistently the same in his eternal being; as the Being, who eternally is, and never changes.

Since God is the Creator of the Universe, His exclusive attribute of unchangeableness does not, however, suggest and even in any way to imply denial that there is change and development in God's *relations* to his finite creatures. His omnipotence, omnipotence and omnipresence together and separately make Him both immanent and transcendent while being infallible as an infinite Supreme Spirit Being, the Lord God Almighty (Jn. 4:23, 24; Rev. 11:17; 21:22). God is hence the only **Sovereign, Infallible, Infinite, Consistent and Constant** Supreme Being of all creatures including all the rational creatures such as humanity in the Universe He has created.

So then, His or such rational creatures, who or which are finite but not robots and then also being subject to change, have the right in the exercise of moral free-will to make responsible choices. It means then that, to say without qualification that God cannot change or that he can and often does change is at best not scriptural and hence unwise; and it is also at worst misleading. We ought to biblically conceive and thence formulate our concept of God's immutability in such a way that we do justice to every biblical

assertion concerning both His “being” and “becoming”, especially in his dealings with humankind. God is immutable in respect to:

- (1) His *essential being* (which is to say that God can neither gain nor lose attributes);
- (2) His *life and nature* (God is, for neither became nor is becoming; his life never began, nor will it ever end);
- (3) His *essence or form* (God is always a Trinity, eternally undivided or separated from each other);
- (4) His *moral character* (God can become neither better nor worse); and
- (5) His *eternal purpose or plan* (God’s eternal decree, or His promise on oath, is unalterable).

The right of use or lack of use of essential attributes

We must equally understand that God has the right not to use any of his attributes so long as that is consistent with his eternal purposes and plan. God, therefore, permitted evil in the universe not because he could not stop it or even avoid it altogether being omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. Rather he had an eternal perfect plan to deal with evil and sin, by Himself (through the eternal Son, who pre-existed as the Logos and the agency of the Holy Spirit), becoming the Ideal, Perfect Man in the incarnation of the God-Man Jesus Christ (Gen. 3:15; 12:1-3, 7, Matt. 1:16-25; Lk. 1:31-35; Jn. 1:1-3, 12-18, 31-36; 19:5, 30; Acts 3:14-16; Gal. 3:13-17; 4:4-6; Eph. 1:6-11; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 2:9-18; Rev. 13:8).

This is also why Jesus in his incarnation, as the only God-Man of the Universe, often suspended the use of the three “omnis” and finally his eternality and immutability as God to fulfill his divine assignment on earth to die on the cross of a tree (Phil. 2:5-11). He totally depended on the Father and the Holy Spirit in revealing the Trinity and fulfilling or performing his earthly assignments as God (Lk. 4:18-21; Jn. 8:28-58; 10:30; 14:1-11; Acts 1:1-3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 5:9; 9:14).

(b) HIS MORAL ATTRIBUTES

These are characteristics that belong to God in relation to His creatures. They are called **communicable attributes** because God intends man to possess them. They include Perfect:

- (1) Holiness,
- (2) Righteousness,
- (3) Love, and
- (4) Faithfulness; and other aspects of these attributes.

Together, they describe God as the good One who is perfect in glory. So, these non-essential characteristics assist to define Him as the only living and true God; where such

communicable characteristics of His nature and distinctive character altogether describe God to be the good God of the Universe.

- 1) **Perfect Holiness:** Absolute purity; such that He cannot tolerate sin (Ex. 3:2, 4-5; Lev. 19:2; 11:44-45; Is. 6:3; 1 Pet. 1:16). When one considers the holiness of God, we need to notice the three thoughts that underline the word “holy” but work together. *First*, it is the idea of separation, being withdrawn or set apart; *second*, brightness or brilliance; and *third*, moral majesty, purity, or cleanliness (Ex. 15:1-11; Is. 6:1-8; Ps. 99:9; Hab. 1:13). So, to say God is holy, means He is totally separated from all moral defilement and hostile toward it. God sees all evil but cannot look on it; for it angers Him (Hab. 1:13). God is referred to as a consuming fire regarding His holiness in dealing with evil (Heb. 12:29).
- 2) **Perfect Righteousness:** Righteousness is the Holy God acting in a **just (fair)** and **upright** manner towards His creatures (Deut. 32:4). God is holy, righteous and just; and He tries or tests the hearts and reins of all (Ps 7:9; 26:2; Jer. 11:20; 17:10; 20:12; Rev. 2:23 see Prov. 17:3; 1 Thess. 2:4). This justice is seen in both punishment and reward (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 2:7-11; Heb. 11:26). In chastening and even in judgment God always does right as the righteous God (Gen. 18:25; 2 Tim. 4:8); it is impossible for God as the Judge of all the earth to do wrong or not to do right (Gen. 18:25). God’s perfect righteousness is always at work in all temporary or eternal matters whether as punishment from His **wrath** (His **justifiable anger**) on sin (Rom. 1:18f; 1 Thess. 1:10; Heb. 10:26-31; Jd. 1:4-7) or as righteous reward for those who seek and serve Him (Rom. 3:21-26; Heb. 6:9-10; 11:6, 26; 12:1-11).

The righteousness of God must denote that self-respecting quality of holiness in God, that reaction of His nature against sin, which must find expression in condemnation of sin. Righteousness, in this sense, expresses itself in divine wrath, which is the reaction of God's holy nature against sin. **God is righteous** (2 Thess. 1:5, 6; 1 Jn. 2:29), hence means that He cannot and will not pass over wrongdoing. It is because of God’s righteousness and justice that, in order for our sins to be forgiven, Jesus had to experience God's wrath when our sins were placed upon Him (Ex. 9:27; Matt. 27:45-46; Rom. 3:21-25).

God is just; He is no respecter of persons in the sense of showing favoritism (Deut. 32:4; Ps 18:30). Since He knows everything, His justice will always be administered fairly (Ps. 139:1-5; Prov. 5:21).

God is upright; He is right, true and good in Himself and in all things including His ways (Deut. 32:4; Ps. 25:8; Hos. 14:9). He, therefore, always judges rightly

both in temporary earthly life and concerning eternal life or things (Gen. 18:25; Ps. 119:137; Is. 30:18; Rom. 3:21-26; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8).

The Wrath of God is always an anger that is *righteous, just and good*. It is an anger that stands against the sin and evil, violence and slaughter, immorality and injustices of men. It is an anger that abhors and hates sin and evil and that dishes out a just revenge and equal justice (Jn. 3:16-18, 34-36; 1 Thess. 1:9, 10; Rev. 15:1-5). However, it is an anger that is *deeply felt*; in fact, it must be felt, for evil and corruption must be opposed and erased from the face of the Earth if there is to be "new heavens and a new earth" (Is. 65:17; 2 Pet. 3:13). And God has promised new Heavens and a new Earth where righteousness and perfection dwell forever (Ps. 2:12; Matt. 3:7; Jn. 3:36; Rom. 1:18; 2:5, 8-9; 3:5-6; 5:9; Eph. 2:3; 5:6; Heb. 3:11; 2 Pet. 3:11-13; Rev. 21:1-7).

To this end, and on the merits of Jesus (Jn. 3:14-16; 4:34, 35; 6:25-38; Rom. 5:6-21; Heb. 2:9-14; 10:5ff), God is both the just and justifier par excellence of all who believe in Jesus for their eternal Salvation (Jn. 6:39, 40; Rom. 3:21-26; 8:28-39; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Eph. 1:3-14; Jd. 1-3, 24-25).

- 3) **Perfect Love (Agape):** The perfection of **affection** God has which moves Him to give Himself to His rational creatures continually. Love is an act of God's will. The love of God is expressed to man, not only in creation but also more perfectly and fully in redemption from sin (Deut. 7:6-8; Jer. 31:1-12; Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:5-6; 2 Cor. 13:11; 1 Jn. 3:1-3; 4:7, 8; 17-21; 5:1-12). The nature of God's love is that first it is **uninfluenced** (no adding to it, nothing gives rise to it, none diminishable and not extinguishable) by any external factors (Deut. 7:7-8; Jn. 3:13-16; Acts 10:34-44; Rom. 2:1-11; Eph. 2:1-10) and secondly, it is **eternal** (Deut. 7:1-10 vv. 6-8; Jer. 31:1-12 v. 3; Rom. 8:34-39; 1 Cor. 13:4-8; Eph. 1:4-8). *Thirdly*, though, God's love is a **holy love** that never conflicts with His holiness; it rather has drawing power to influence human hearts to positively respond to or receive this same kind of divine love (Jn. 12:20-33; Rom. 5:5-21; 8:18-39; 1 Jn. 4:17-21; Rev. 1:5, 6).

The other aspects of God's love are:

- a) **The Goodness of God:** It is the very nature of God and the means of the providential care of God for all His creatures (Ex. 33:19; Ps. 25:7; 36:5; 104:21; Matt. 5:45; 6:26; 2 Thess. 1:11). It sets God aside from His creatures as the only one full of beneficence as the source of the good through His creative genius (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31; Gal. 5:22). It is God's nature and character but when energized, expressing itself in perfect benevolence, active good (Matt. 5:45-48; 19:17); and it is the complete absence or the

very opposite of evil which is found defeating anything good in all men (Gen. 2:17; 3:22; Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1; Rom. 3:10-12; 7:13).

- b) ***The Grace of God:*** The undeserved, unearned and unmerited favour of God bestowed upon sinful men (Eph. 1:2-7; 2:5-8; 2 Tim. 1:2). God is gracious, and His grace includes His goodness, kindness, mercy, and love. If it were not for God's grace, His holiness would exclude every human being from His presence (Ex. 34:6). However, this is not the case, for He desires for each of us to know Him personally through His Son, Jesus Christ (Ex. 34:6; Ps 31:19; Jn. 3:16; 17:3; 1 Pet. 1:3).
- c) ***The Mercy of God:*** It is the pity of God upon the miserable condition of the sinner because of sin; and additionally, also His active desire to remove those miseries of the consequences of sin(s) (Ps. 102:13; Lk. 6:36; Rom. 9:23; 11:30-31; 15:9; 1 Cor. 7:15; 2 Cor. 4:1; Gal. 6:16; Eph. 2:4; 1 Tim. 1:2, 13, 16; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; 3:5; 4:14-16; Js. 5:11; 1 Pet. 1:3; 2:9, 10; Jd. 1:2, 20, 21). As the covenant-keeping God, He maintains kindness and mercy to those who love Him (Deut. 7:9). Under the New Covenant, the mercy of God operates based on grace, as the other side of a flip-coin; and is always available with grace at the throne of grace (Heb. 4:14-16). Special flow from God the Father and the Lord Jesus for Pastoral Care in the Pastoral Letters is the trio-combination of grace, mercy and peace (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; 2 Jn. 1:3).
- d) ***The Compassion of God:*** Compassion is God's deep, kindly sympathy and sorrow for the suffering of humanity through affliction or misfortune; with the urge or desire to help, to have mercy, and allow humans to find mercy. To be compassionate is also the very descriptive nature of the covenant-keeping God throughout the Scriptures (Ex. 33:19; Deut. 13:17, 18; 2Kgs. 13:23; Ps 78:38; 86:15; Is. 14:1; 30:18; 60:10; Jer. 12:15; 31:20; Lam. 3:22, 23, 32; Matt. 9:36; 14:14; Lk. 15:20; Rom. 9:14-16). The Lord's compassion is shown not because of any meritorious work the recipient had done; it was solely due to God's sovereign freedom within His omniscience to bestow it on whom He chose (Ex. 33:19; Rom. 9:15).

However, God has sovereignly chosen to have mercy on out of compassion on two types of people; namely: on those who fear Him as fulfilling the whole duty of man (Ps. 103:13; Eccl. 12:13, 14) and on those who confess and forsake their sin (Prov. 28:13). The compassion of God would, therefore, be always available to comfort, deliver and establish believers in Christ who obey and trust in God (2 Cor. 1:2-6, 18-22; Phil. 1:6, 19; 2:12-16). Such

obedience by first believing in Jesus as the Son of God and thereafter loving all the brethren in the unshakable kingdom (Acts 9:31; Phil. 2:12, 13; 1 Tim. 1:5; Heb. 12:27-29 v. 28; 1 Jn. 3:14-24).

e) **The kindness of God:** Kindness is the gentle benevolence of God (Ps. 31:21; 117:2; Is. 54:8, 10; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2; Eph. 2:7; Col. 3:12; Tit. 3:4-7). In the New Testament it often occurs with His philanthropy (Tit. 3:4), forbearance (Rom. 2:4 AMP), goodness (Gal. 5:22 AMP); and is the opposite of His severity or cutting something short and quickly (Rom. 11:22 AMP).

4) **Perfect Faithfulness:** God's faithfulness means that He is absolutely trustworthy, loyal, reliable, and true to His Word. God is true, sure, trustworthy, believable, and worthy of credit (Ps. 36:5; 89:1, 2, 5, 8, 24, 33; Prov. 14:5; Is. 8:2; Rev. 1:5; 2:13; 3:14). God cannot lie and hence dependable in nature and character (Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Ps. 89: 2, 33, 35, 138:2; Lam. 3:23; 1 Cor. 1:9; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:13; Tit. 1:2; Heb. 10:23; 11:11). God is faithful in all His ways and to all His promises (Gen. 32:4; 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 1 Thess. 5:24; Heb. 10:23; 11:11; 1 Jn. 1:9). Thus, God who has proven His faithfulness to Abraham has now in Christ confirmed His promises with oath as the two immutable things by which it was impossible for God to lie concerning Christ, the Son of God (2 Cor. 1:18-22; 2 Tim. 2:13; Heb. 6:9-20). Thus, if God is **faithful**, then God is also **truth**!

God is the **Truth** in His Person (Is. 45:5; Jn. 1:14; 3:33) and God is the **Truth** in His revelation and His salvation (Deut. 32:4; Ps. 69:13; 110:5; Is. 25:1; 38:18-19; Matt. 5:48; Jn. 3:16, 33; 14:6; Rom. 1:25; 1 Pet. 1:25; 1 Jn. 2:4, 20-27; 4:6; 5:6-10; 2 Jn. 1:1-4). But to assert the that God is **Truth** (Greek: alethia) implies that God is true (Greek: alethes meaning true, the opposite of false) and God is true (Greek: alethinos meaning true, genuine, real; the *opposite* of the unreal, the fictitious, the factitious, the counterfeit, the imaginary; the imperfect, defective, frail, uncertain) (1 Jn. 2:8).

To say God is Truth means a) *He is the true God in distinction to all other gods that are only idols* (Is. 37:15-20; 44:8-10; 1 Thess. 1:9; 1 Jn. 5:20, 21), b) *His Word, promises and revelation are reliable and trustworthy and cannot lie as mortal beings* (Num. 23:19; Jn. 14:1-2, 6; Rom. 3:3-4; Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18), and c) *He knows things as they are; for He is the beginning of all wisdom and knowledge towards truth and its availability to human beings* (Jn. 3:16, 25-36 v. 33; Eph. 1:3-14 v. 8; 1 Jn. 1:1-3, 5-7, 2:8, 20-27; 4:7-15; 5:6-9; 2 Jn. 1:1-11 vv. 3-4, 9).

God, however, shares these moral attributes with man (created in His image and likeness) as the ultimate purpose and design of God both at man's creation or

procreation (Gen. 1:26-28, 31; 2:1-25; 4:1, 2, 25; 3:16-24; 5:1-3; 9:6; Matt. 5:17-20, 45-48; 22:37-39; Acts 17:24-29) and for eternal redemption (Rom. 3:21-25; 5:17; 8:29, 30; 2 Cor. 5:14-21; Eph. 1:3-23; 4:20-24; 1 Thess. 2:12; 5:23, 24; 1 Pet. 1:15, 16; 1 Jn. 3:1-3; Rev. 19:6-8).

GOD'S ATTRIBUTES AND ETERNAL PURPOSES OR PLAN FOR MAN

The essential in addition to His non-essential attributes define Him as the only living and true God; where these characteristics of His nature and distinctive character altogether describe God to be the *great and good* God of the Universe. God is the Creator of the Universe; and all His attributes (both non-communicable and communicable) define Him as the God of eternal purposes with definitive pre-determined Will and definite plan for man (Eph. 1:3-14). Thus, God decided to create man in his own image and likeness to be His emissary and steward on earth (Gen. 1:1, 3-26-28, 31; 2:1-25). This eternal plan brought man into the drama of God; and hence introducing change and development in God's *relations* to human beings (Gen. 2:15-17; 3:9-22). His omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence together and separately make Him both immanent and transcendent while being infallible as an infinite Supreme Spirit Being, the Lord God Almighty (Jn. 4:23, 24; Rev. 11:17; 21:22).

In this eternal plan, man who was destined to inhabit only the earth, now can in Christ through the gospel become both citizens of the earth and then also of heaven (1 Cor. 15:45-49; 2 Cor. 5:1-21; Eph. 3:14-19; Phil. 3:17-21; Col. 3:1-3; 2 Pet. 3:11-18). Of course, it also means that people will ignore and choose being faithless in Christ (Jn. 6:39, 40) to live with their father, the Devil in darkness as slaves to sin (Jn. 8:34, 44; Rom. 1:18-32; Col. 1:13) and ultimate wrath (Matt. 25:41; 1 Thess. 1:10; Rev. 20:7-20; 21:7, 8; 22:14, 15).

SOME QUESTIONS ARISING FROM DILEMMAS RAISED ON GOD'S ATTRIBUTES

a) If God is truly great and good, why did he not stop all evil on Earth?

God created a perfect environment on Earth for man (Gen. 1:1-31; 2:4-17). However, God, created man in his image and likeness as a free moral agent, not a robot. Therefore, permitted evil in the universe not because he could not stop it or even avoid it altogether being omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent but as part of his eternal purposes. Man, was first on probation to freely make responsible choices to choose life or death in simply trust and obedience to God, his Maker (Gen. 2:15-17). Yet, amid such great felony and high treason by man (Gen. 3:1-9, 22), the great and good God had perfect, excellent redemptive gift package (Eph. 1:3-14; Js. 1:17)! God had provided eternal and great salvation to overthrow evil with death as the last enemy through Jesus

Christ, his only begotten Son, and the last Adam (Gen. 3:15, 19; Jn. 3:16-18; 1 Cor. 15:1-28, 45-49, 50-55; Eph. 3:1-21; Heb. 2:3, 4, 9-18; Rev. 13:8).

b) If God is truly loving would he really send men into Hell Fire?

God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1); but made heaven his eternal home and the earth to be inhabited by man (Is. 57:15). During man's probation, he chose at a point in time to obey the devil (Gen. 3:1-9) instead of trusting in the fear of God as his chief duty (Gen. 2:15-17; Eccl. 12:13, 14). The consequences are that apart from acquiring a depraved nature (Gen. 3:19; 5:1-3; Rom. 5:12), all men ultimately automatically had to take sides with the Devil as their ruler (Matt. 4:10; Jn. 12:31; Eph. 2:1-3; 6:12; 2 Thess. 2:1-12). So, unless one escapes judgment of condemnation through faith in Christ (Rom. 6:23; 1 Thess. 1:9, 10), he automatically rejects the love God, and thus fail to merit the justice and eternal home of the holy and righteous God (Jn. 14:1-11; Heb. 12:14). So therefore, the unbeliever, having rejected God's love and reproof of sin, naturally should spend eternity with Satan in Hell Fire, which was originally only eternally meant for him and his angels (Matt. 25:41; Jn. 3:16-18, 35-36; 16:7-11; Rev. 20:6-20).

Now, it must be noted that the very first things God deals with is fear due to loss of His glory (Gen. 3:9-15; Deut. 4:5-11, 23-40; 2 Tim. 1:6, 7; 1 Jn. 4:17-19) and asks of us gain fear as reverential and godly fear of Him derived from His love and awesome holiness (Ex. 20:20; Deut. 10:12; Acts 9:31; Phil. 2:12, 13; Heb. 12:28). This distinguishes the two kinds of fear. There is a *tormenting fear* or *timidity* (Heb. *yare*; Gk. *deilias*): the fear from the fall of man that defeats a person, that keeps a person from acting and doing what he should towards a holy God (Gen. 3:10); but in the kingdom, there is a *respectful, honoring fear* (Heb. *yirah*; Gk. *eulabeia*): the fear of God that arouses a person to reverence and obey God (Heb. 12:28).

In the Scriptures, apart from timidity ((Hebrew: *yare*; Greek: *deilias*)) there are various forms of fear (Heb. *pahad*; Gk. *phobos*) that exist in human life; but all fear must lead us to possess reverential fear (Hebrew: *yirah*; Greek: *eulabeia*) (Ex. 20:20). We must learn to fear only God and obey Him only (Gen. 22:12; Phil. 2:12, 13) as the duty of man (Deut. 17:13, 19; Eccl. 12:13, 14). Such fear is a quality of the Spirit of God (Is. 11:2, 3) and the product of God's Word (Ps. 11:38; Prov. 2:5). It undergirds all wisdom, knowledge and prudence (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9:10). It is even identified with wisdom itself (Job 28:28; Prov. 15:33) and when intertwined together with humility (as the essential character of Christ – see Phil. 2:5-11), it leads to riches, honor, and life (Prov. 22:4).

The fear of the Lord restrains people from sin (Gen. 20:11; Ex. 20:20; Neh. 5:9), gives confidence (Job 4:6; Prov. 14:26) and results in good sleep (Prov. 19:23). It leads to that assurance that God with the unshakable kingdom (Heb. 12:28) is surely in control (Heb.

13:6). It certainly helps kings or rulers and causes judges to act justly (2 Sam. 23:3; 2Chr. 19:9; Neh. 5:15). The fear of the Lord may nonetheless be lost by despair of one's own situation (Job 6:14) or envy of a sinner's (Prov. 23:17).

But how does reverential fear relate to the love of God? It is when we see the holiness and love of God intertwined; thus, leading us to appreciate and inculcate the fear of the Lord in all we do; while loving Him, serving Him, and obeying or keeping God's commands (Eccl. 12:13, 14; Matt. 22:37-39; 28:20; Mk. 12:26-31; Jn. 14:15; Heb. 12:24-29; 1 Jn. 4:17, 18). The truth is that, when thinking about God, it is wise to see love and holiness as perfectly intertwined; not to do so can lead sometimes to serious error. Many people in the world today and sadly even in today's Church present the love of God in such twisted ways that it has given rise to such half-truth sayings as: a) "God loves me as I am", b) "If God is truly love as we hear, then He loves me as I am, and whether I repent and go on from here or whether I stay the same, it makes no difference to His love for me", c) "God loves all people and will not take any into real Hell fire, for to do so is not the loving way" and d) many more.

Most of such sayings may seem entirely true, but they do not convey the entire truth. (And remember, it is only the entire truth that sets free (Jn. 8:31-32). Because though God is love and loves us as we are, He is also holy; and hence His holy love would not let us stay in sin and/or in stunted growth just remaining as we are (Rom. 5:6-21; 8:29, 30; 1 Pet. 2:1-3; Heb. 5:13, 14). No; just as Jesus grew (Lk. 2:40), we must be growing spiritually in grace, in the faith and to be like Christ (Eph. 4:11-13; Heb. 6:1-3; 1 Pet. 2:1-3; 2 Pet. 3:17, 18; 1 Jn. 2:12-14; 3:1-3)! We can be secure in the fact that God loves us just the way we are, but the holy love of God calls us to move ever closer to Him through the knowledge of His Son and cries out: "Be holy as I am holy." (1 Pet. 1:15, 16). We must, therefore, deal ruthlessly with fear and unbelief by embracing God's love (1 Jn. 4:17, 18), because the fearful and unbelieving at the last judgment will automatically find that their own choice of eternity is way to Hell having rejected God's love (Eccl. 12:13, 14; Rev. 21:8).

c) If God is truly immutable why does He Repent or Change His Mind?

God does not "change his mind" or "repent" in the way human beings do. The Hebrew word *nacham* often translated "change his mind" or "repent" in reference to both God and man, meaning to be sorry, to pity, to comfort, to avenge. The verb often means to be sorry or to regret; thus, the Lord was sorry that He had made people (Gen. 6:6). In the Scriptures altogether, however, *nacham* meaning to be sorry, pity, comfort, avenge, and repent actually has a rather wide range of meanings.

Repent *nacham* includes almost everything from experiencing emotional pain such as grief or sorrow (Gen. 6:6-7; Ex. 13:17; Jdg. 21:6, 15; 1 Sam. 15:11, 35; Job 42:6; Jer.

31:19), to the experience of being comforted (Gen. 24:67; 27:42; 37:35; 38:12; 2 Sam. 13:39 ; Ps. 77:3; 119:52; Is. 1:24; Jer. 31:15; Ezek. 5:13; 14:22; 31:16; 32:31), to the more extreme notion of relenting from or repudiating a course of action previously embraced (Deut. 32:36 cf. Ps. 135:14; Judg. 2:18; 2 Sam. 24:16 cf. 1 Chron. 21:15; Ps. 90:13; 106:45; Jer. 8:6; 20:16; 42:10), as well as retracting a statement or changing one's mind regarding a course of action (Ex. 32:12, 14; Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29 ; Ps. 110:4; Is. 57:6; Jer. 4:28; 15:6; 18:8,10; 26:3, 13, 19; Ezek. 24:14; Joel 2:13-14; Amos 7:3,6; Jonah 3:9-10; 4:2; Zech. 8:14).

This compels us to acknowledge the ambiguity of the English word *repent*; and cautions us to be careful in ascribing it to God. Human beings as sinners rather repent of *moral evil*; it is not God. God is law and absolute truth (Jn. 14:6; 18:38; 1 Jn. 2:3-11 vv. 7, 8; 4:1-6) and holds in His Word the law of God to be obeyed by all His moral creatures (Eccl. 12:13, 14). Such law of God is the whole of the divine requirements applicable for relationship at any time as a moral command (s) to be obeyed (Gen. 2:15-17; Ex. 20:20-22; Deut. 17:19; 29:29; 31:12; Ps. 1:2; 37:31; 119:1, 163, 165; Eccl. 12:13, 14; Matt. 5:17-20; 22:37-39; 28:18-20; Lk. 16:16; 24:44-47; Acts 5:29-32; 7:36-39; Rom. 7:22, 25; 8:7; 1 Jn. 2:3-6; 3:4-9, 21-24). We humans rather transgress God's law or reject His Will and law (1 Jn. 3:4-9); and we must acknowledge our sorrow for having done so and show repentance in our determination to change how we behave (2 Cor. 7:9, 10; 1 Jn. 1:5-10 vv. 7, 9).

Obviously, when *nacham* repent is used for God, it does not imply change for whatever else God's "repenting" of might mean simply regret; it does not mean He has sinned or made a mistake and is changing his ways. Then, He would not be or cease to be God who is always immutable! There is no pretense, variableness, shadow of turning, partiality, etc., with Him but absolute truth showing only veracity and reality with God (Acts 10:34; Phil. 1:18; 1 Tim. 5:21; Js. 1:17; 3:17). Let's read and examine the following Scriptures:

1 Sam. 15:10; "Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying",

1 Sam. 15:11; "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul *to be* king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night.

1 Sam. 15:28; "And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, *that is* better than thou."

1 Sam. 15:29; "And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he *is* not a man, that he should repent."

Num. 23:19; “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?”

In these peculiar cases where the Scriptures seem to suggest that God really changes his mind but that he at the same time is not man that repents as in 1 Sam. 15. In 1 Sam. 15:11, Scripture records that God “regretted” making Saul king; yet scripture in 1 Sam. 15:29 (and similarly in Num. 23:19) on the other hand, it is said that God cannot repent, “change his mind,” or “regret” an action he has taken. This seems a dilemma, yet the text, the context and the supra-text of the Bible Books or the entire Holy Bible provide tangible solution. Evidently concerning eternal salvation, God may show regret without repentance *ametameletos*; “For the free gifts and the calling of God *are* unregrettable.” (Rom. 11:29 LITV).

The Holy Scriptures thus defeats **Open theist scholars** (where **Open theism** is the belief that openly denies the immutability of God and the infallibility of Scripture asserting that God does not know the future and hence is likely to lose in the battle of evil without human assistance and cooperation); who by their error only try to throw doubt into the Christian Faith (Acts 20:29-30). For if God does repent, then God can also lie; but God cannot lie! Bible scholars use this parallelism from 1 Sam. 15:23 and Num. 23:19 on one side and 2 Tim. 2:13; Tit. 1:2; and Heb. 6:18 on the other to proof that God does not repent because he cannot indeed lie!

The dilemma is further resolved when we appeal to a common figure of speech known as *anthropopathia* or *anthropopathism* derived from the Greek word *anthropos*, “man,” plus *pathos*, “affection, or feeling”). Thus, an anthropopathism is a figure of speech in which certain human passions, feelings, mental activities, and so on are predicated of God in the Bible. This, of course, is related to the more common and well-known figure of speech called *anthropomorphism* (again, from the Greek word *anthropos*, “man” plus *morphe*, “form”), in which there are ascribed to God human body parts (e.g., eyes, ears, mouth, nostrils, hands, feet). For instance, we know well that the infinite God does not have *literal* hands like the finite human being; but only *figuratively* portrayed as such (Is. 59:1, 2). Thus, God is *figuratively portrayed* as “relenting” from a course of action or “changing his mind,” but in *literal fact* he does not.

Now, **Open theists** (who openly deny the immutability and infallibility of Scripture) often contend candidly that we adopt this approach of *anthropomorphism* to the problem texts of Scripture because of an extra biblical presupposition concerning the nature of God derived from the Greek ideal of perfection, as an alien philosophical criterion that is imposed on Scripture rather than allowing God’s Word to shape our concept of God himself. However, contrary to this assertion, most **evangelicals**

(Evangelical Christians and Pentecostals) appeal to *anthropopathism* because of what they believe Scripture explicitly teaches concerning the omniscience and immutability of God.

So, *first and foremost*, it is the “analogy of faith”, Scripture’s harmonious interpretation of itself which derives from only the Word, not Greek philosophical presuppositions, that governs their treatment of such problem texts. Hence, passages such as Num. 23:19 and the others are unequivocal: God is not a man. Therefore, he does not lie. He does not change his mind the way people do. He does not promise and then fail to fulfill. So, those who appeal to anthropopathism insist that we are justified in interpreting the unclear in the light of the clear and utilizing a figure of speech generally acknowledged as entirely legitimate.

Second, and even more importantly, we must recognize the difference between *unconditional* divine covenants or decrees together with promises on oath and then *conditional* divine covenants or decrees, promises, announcements or warnings. The former will occur irrespective of any other factors because they (all *unconditional* divine covenants) cannot fail (Heb. 6:9-20 v. 17, 18). The latter will or may not occur; dependent on the response(s) of the person or persons or nations to whom they (the *conditional* divine covenants) apply.

Occasionally, something explicit in the context in which they, divine covenants, show up in Scripture will indicate which of the two (*unconditional* or *conditional*) is in view. Most often, however, statements of divine intent are quite ambiguous and not easily discernible by even the messengers or preachers and prophets until the time appointed (Jer. 18:5-12; Matt. 11:25; Eph. 1:6-11; 3:1-13; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). Hence, it takes only the Spirit of God to resolve the dilemma appropriately but through the mystery of the gospel as truth revealed (Matt. 13:11-17; Jn. 16:12; 1 Cor. 2:6-13, 15-16).

In Romans chapter nine, the dilemma is fully explained by Paul in God’s dealings using the choice of Jacob (vv. 13-16), the case of Pharaoh (vv. 17-18) and others to show the constancy and consistency of God in his attributes. God’s nature and character here are fully exemplified as the interplay of God’s attributes in answer to His mercy and justice (Rom. 9:6-18). In exercising His mercy and justice there is foreknowledge through the attribute of omniscience exercised toward either the faithful or the faithless person or people (Rom. 9:19-26).

So then, to say biblically that God changes his mind is based not on his unchanging nature and character but only on his foreknowledge and covenantal relationships with his rational creatures. The great and good God of the universe designed only good for humanity. However, with human beings embracing evil, all consequential outcomes

from humanity's evil would attract seeming regret or supposedly repenting that appears scripturally as a change of God's mind of the One who is unchanging (Gen. 6:6; 1 Sam. 15:11, 29; Mal. 3:6).

The Church Age resolves all dilemmas through the Gospels, in the gospel and by the coming of the Holy Spirit

The dilemmas which have long existed are resolved first in the Gospels by the Ideal Person of Jesus Christ, the God-Man in displaying the constancy and consistency of God in His earthly life and ministry. God's nature and character as his attributes are fully displayed in the Sermon on the mount (Matt. 5; 6; 7 cf. Matt. 5:3-10, 17-20, 44-48; 6:9-13; 7:28, 29), and by direct references to the triune Godhead in Jn. 14:1-11, 15-23.

Furthermore, in the Church Age, every dilemma about God is resolved totally in the intermarriage of grace and faith through the gospel as interplay of God's attributes come together (Rom. 1:16, 17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38 cf. Hab. 2:1-4). We must bear in mind always that everything in Christianity thrives on a divine intermarriage of **grace** and **faith** (Acts 15:6-11; Heb. 11:6) which operate in the Name of the Lord and by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:11). Else there is no authentic Christianity (Rom. 4:16; 5:2; Eph. 2:8; 1 Tim. 1:14) nor Christian ministry (Rom. 1:5; 12:3; 1 Tim. 1:14).

The faith, therefore, hinges on an intermarriage of *grace* and *faith* that flow as a gift of God in His goodness (Rom. 2:4; Tit. 3:5-7). Such goodness out of the love of God is packaged in the mystery of the gospel (Rom. 1:3, 4, 16, 17; 16:25-27; Eph. 6:19, 20) to bring salvation based on the finished work of the Lord Jesus (Acts 11:18; Rom. 3:21-26; 4:16; 5:1, 2; Gal. 3:21-29; Eph. 2:8-10; Heb. 11:6).