

GRACE BIBLE CHURCH

Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries

Doctrine of Divine Essence

You really can't even begin to know God unless you understand His essence. In essence God is perfect! The Bible does not seek to prove the essence of God; it simply assumes it to be true. In fact the Bible teaches that only the fool denies His existence, Psa 14:1.

What is "divine essence"? Divine essence is the description of the characteristics that belong to all three members of the Godhead.

God is declared in many passages to be one God, Deu 6:4 ***"Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!"***

1Ti 2:5 ***"for there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."***

However the Bible clearly reveals that there are three to whom all the attributes of divine essence apply. The Trinity, or the fact that God is one God with three distinct personalities is taught in Isa 48:16, Mat 28:19, 2Co 13:14, 1Pe 1:12. Therefore, to deny the existence of the three members of the Trinity is to deny the credibility of scripture itself.

Before we begin, we must first of all recognize that man has certain limitations in dealing with the subject of God. Remember there are only three ways you can learn things or three systems of perception:

- 1) Rationalism
- 2) Empiricism
- 3) Faith, as in Hebrews 11:6

Everything that you have learned in life has been through one of these systems of perception. **Rationalism** simply means that the mind and the IQ are the criterion for reality. This is perception through reason! **Empiricism** brings the sensory system into the picture; this refers to perception through observation and experimentation! This is the scientific method. Reality in empiricism is what you smell, see, hear, taste, or feel. **Faith** is the means of perception which accepts an established truth as the basis of reality. To operate in faith there must be confidence or belief in the authority and truth of another! Faith says..."on the basis of the authority and the truth of the one stating the fact I believe that what is being said is true!" This means that to try to comprehend the doctrine of the trinity or the doctrine of divine essence by either rationalism or empiricism would inevitably result in rejection. They must be accepted on the authority and credibility of the word of God!

When the Bible reveals that God is one, it is no way contradictory to the concept of the Trinity. The oneness of God refers to His essence. God is one in essence. This means that all the characteristics of divine essence are resident in each member of the Godhead: **Sovereignty, Righteousness, Justice, Love, Eternal Life, Omniscience, Omnipresence, Omnipotence, Immutability, and Veracity**. All are possessed equally by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In their essence they are absolutely the same. However this is the only way in which God is one. Since each person in the Trinity possesses identical essence, these characteristics are what unite the three as one God.

Let's note briefly the characteristics of the essence of God. How can you love someone unless you know them? Obviously you cannot! Therefore knowing the characteristics of God will increase your love for Him.

First of all, God is sovereign. Sovereignty means that God is supreme in rule and has authority over all things. There is no higher authority in the universe than God! Deu 4:39, "***Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the Lord, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other,***" 1Sa 2:6-8; 1Ch 29:10-12. God is said to be king of heaven and earth, eternal,

infinite, and self-determining. Isa 46:10, ***"My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure."***

In harmony with His divine essence it's important to note that God will never use His sovereignty to coerce human volition. God honors our decisions, whether they are for Him or against Him! This means that we cannot blame God for anything that happens! The sovereign will of God for mankind is expressed entirely in one verse in the Bible, 1Ti 2:4 ***"He desires all men to be saved and to come unto the (epignosis) knowledge of the truth."*** The very fact that all men are not saved and that all believers do not come unto the epignosis knowledge of the truth reveals that although God is sovereign He will not violate or coerce human volition! All three members of the Trinity are ascribed sovereignty - the Father, Psa 83:18, the Son, Mat 28:18, and the Holy Spirit, 1Co 12:11.

God is also perfect righteousness! This means that He is absolute righteousness and holiness. The Bible teaches that there is no one holy like the Lord, 1Sa 2:2. Lev 19:2 ***"I the Lord your God am holy."*** God is not simply righteous by comparison with someone else; His righteousness is independent and incomparable. We call some people "good" and some people "bad," yet when we get to know people, we must admit that the bad people have some good in them and the good people have some bad in them. Now how do we make these evaluations? Well we have set up certain standards in our soul and by comparison we make evaluations! However God is totally perfect and we cannot even compare with His perfection and His righteousness. How can we who are imperfect ever have fellowship with God who is totally perfect? The answer is that God took cognizance of this fact and billions of years ago He made a provision to solve our problem. In 2Co 5:21, ***"He made him (the Lord Jesus Christ) who knew no sin to become a sin offering on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."***

Now, it's impossible to have perfect righteousness without having perfect character and a perfect personality. The key to personality is not charisma, or a sparkling intellect, the key to perfect holiness is righteousness. True righteousness does not look down its nose at

others who appear to be worse off than they are. God is not fooled by pseudo or phony righteousness. True righteousness is relaxed and is a very wonderful state to be in. The Bible also teaches in Deu 32:4, Psa 119:137, and in Rev 19:2 that God is also righteous in his attitudes and actions. Many times things happen in life that we do not understand; they seem to be unfair, but in the end you will find out that God was absolutely right and perfectly just in dealing with the situation the way that He did! Deu 32:4 states that **"He is the rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without injustice, righteous and upright is He."** 2Sa 22:31 **"As for God, His ways are blameless."** This means that as believers we can rely fully on the knowledge that whatever God does in our lives is consistent with His righteous attitudes and actions. God the Father is said to be perfect righteousness in Isa 51:8; God the Son is said to be holy, harmless, undefiled and perfectly righteous in Heb 7:26 and 1Jo 2:1. And, the very title of God the Holy Spirit signifies that He possesses this divine attribute as well!

God is also just. God's holiness includes His justice as well as His righteousness. As a part of God's justice, God is fair. It is impossible for God to be unfair, 2Ch 19:7, **"for the Lord our God will have no part in unrighteousness, or partiality, or the taking of bribes."** God is not a respecter of persons, Rom 2:11, **"for there is no partiality or respect of persons with God!"** There are two ways in which God expresses His justice to believers:

(1) To mature believers God expresses His justice in blessing.

(2) To carnal or apostate believers He expresses His justice through divine discipline as in Heb 12:6.

Justice always administers what righteousness demands! Justice means that in vindicating any believer, God cannot compromise His attributes. This means that because the Lord Jesus Christ satisfied the justice of God the Father, that God is now free to pardon and justify those who trust in His Son. It also means that God is equally free to condemn those who reject His Son's saving work on the cross as Joh 3:18 states. The justice of God is actually the guardian of His divine

essence. It was the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross that allowed the justice of God to release the one attribute that most individuals always focus in on, His love. The fact that God's justice is satisfied, frees God to love us and bless us. Therefore, His justice is the source of grace! Justice is the believer's point of contact with God! Many people cannot conceive of God as any other than a God of love, but justice is as important and as observable as any other characteristic of God's essence. God the Father is said to be just in Deu 32:4. God the Son is called the righteous judge in 2Ti 4:8 and God the H.S. convicts the world of this justice as noted in Joh 16:8.

God is also love, 1Jo 4:8, and since God is eternal and immutable His love is unchanging and enduring. The motive behind God's love is grace! The scriptures teach in Rom 8:38-39 that no matter how a believer fails, no matter what he does, God keeps on loving him. **God's love always depends on God's character - never on man's character!** God's love has no strings attached to it! God the Father is love 1Jo 4:8, God the Son is perfect love, Joh 15:13, God the H.S. produces this perfect love in us according to Gal 5:22 and Rom 5:5. So far God is sovereign, righteous, just, and loving.

God is also eternal life. He always was, always is, and always will be.

In Exo 3:14, He is called the great "***I am.***" There never was a time when God did not exist. God had neither a beginning nor does He have an end, Psa 90:1-2. This is very important to understand because technically speaking, there is a difference between eternal life and everlasting life. Eternal life is the life that only God possesses, whereas everlasting life is the life which, according to God's plan, members of the human race possess. Everlasting life has a beginning but no end. Eternal life has no beginning and no end. For both the believer and the unbeliever, eternity is everlasting. The unbeliever who has failed to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ will suffer everlasting punishment and regret, Mat 25:46. The believer, on the other hand, has the assurance of eternal life which is the life that God promised to give all those who believe upon His Son, Mat 25:46, Joh 8:51. The New Testament affirms that eternal life was with the Father, 1Jo 1:2. This same life is in His Son, 1Jo 5:11. This

is why the Lord Jesus Christ is described as the Alpha and the Omega in Rev 1:8, or the beginning and the end. God the Holy Spirit gives eternal life, Gal 6:8. In fact He is called the eternal Spirit in Heb 9:14.

Therefore, again we see the trinity each possessing the same divine attributes of divine essence. Where deity is concerned time is non-existent. God merely invented time for humanity, i.e., to accommodate the finite mind of man. Time is actually the boundary lines and the race that man has been placed within. Whether you realize it or not we are all slaves to time. Our lives, our jobs, our leisure are regulated by the clock. We think in terms of past, present, and future. We also think in terms of short or long periods of time, of years, months, days, hours, minutes, and even seconds. However our own lives are likened to vapor trails in Jam 4:13-14. We are here today and gone tomorrow. However the promise is that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

A sixth divine attribute, which once the believer comes to understand is a very comforting attribute, is God's omniscience. Omni = "**all**," science = "**knowledge**." God is all knowing; God knows all things. In Job 37:16, He is one who is perfect in knowledge. David described the omniscience of the Lord in a fantastic way in Psa 139:1-6, 12. God's knowledge is not based upon time; it is not related to or limited by time. We can usually go back and evaluate things that have happened in the past, see our failures and hopefully, learn from them. We can even speculate about the future and make some pretty accurate educated guesses. But none of us knows exactly what will happen tomorrow. We are all slaves to time. We are limited by time.

However, God is not limited, and therefore His knowledge is superimposed over time. We continue to learn as long as we live on this earth. God has never had to learn a thing. He has always known everything: every thought, every motive, every event and every action of every person who would ever live! And He knew this billions and billions of years before they existed. He knows the end from the beginning, Isa 46:8-11. Notice vs. 8, "***remember this and be assured, recall it to mind you transgressors.***" Assured means to

have assurance and **confidence**. This is why I said that to the believer who understands omniscience, it is a very comforting attribute to understand! It means that there is nothing in your life that could ever happen that God didn't know about billions and billions of years ago. Knowing about it, and being perfect, He provided a **perfect provision** and **perfect solution** for every problem we would ever face!

Our Lord shared this principle with His disciples when He said in Mat 10:29-30, "*Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And, yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father's knowledge, but the very hairs of your head are numbered.*" Now because He is omniscient, He knows what is best for those who trust in Him! We may not understand the adversities and the sufferings which come into our lives, yet in the end we will discover that God knew all along exactly what we needed and what was best for us! The Lord Jesus Christ said to Peter one day in Joh 13:7, "*What I'm doing you do not realize now, but you shall understand later on.*" No one in the human race can ever really understand in depth the principle of omniscience; we can only touch the surface!

As the apostle Paul said in Rom 11:33, "*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable are His ways.*" However, it is God's intention for every believer to come to understand everything in the Bible, and that is "in time!" Anything which God did not intend for us to know was not included in the canon of scripture. As Deu 29:29 says, "*The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and our children forever.*" Certainly, you will not understand the doctrinal content of the Bible all at once, for knowledge is built on knowledge, but if you stay with it long enough it can be done! And it should be done! Remember every book in the Bible was written by a human author who understood what he was recording.

All three members of the Godhead are omniscient. The Father is said to be omniscient and perfect in knowledge, Job 37:16, Mat 6:8; Mat 10:29-30, Act 1:24. The Son knows all things - Joh 18:4, Mat 9:44, Joh 2:25. God the H.S. is even called the Spirit of wisdom and

understanding, counsel and knowledge in Isa 11:2. And the Spirit searches all the deep things of God in 1Co 2:10. In 1Co 2:11 the Holy Spirit knows the thoughts of God the Father.

God is also omnipresence. This means that He is ever present. Jer 23:24, *"Can a man hide himself in hiding places, so I do not see him?" Declares the Lord. 'Do I not fill the heavens and the earth?' Declares the Lord."* God is present throughout the universe. He is immanent and transcendent. Transcendent simply means that He exists apart from the universe. This explains such phrases like 1Ki 8:27, *"the heavens cannot contain thee,"* or Isa 66:1, *"heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool."* The principle is, God is both in the heavens and the earth simultaneously. This explains why **God** had to become a **man**. Deity cannot reduce itself to one place; therefore He had to become true humanity. When the Lord Jesus Christ went to the cross, He did not bear our sins in His divine essence but as 1Pe 2:24 says, in His own body. Knowing these divine attributes increases your personal love for God!

It should be a sobering thought for the unbeliever to realize that he cannot escape the presence of God. Pro 15:3 *"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, watching the evil and the good."* Omnipresence should be a serious issue to the unbeliever, but for the believer it is very comforting. The believer can be assured that God will never leave him nor forsake him. Heb 13:5 for He himself has said, *"I will never desert you nor will I ever forsake you."* All three members of the trinity possess omnipresence as well. The Father in 2Ch 2:6 *"for the heaven and the highest heavens cannot contain him."* In Jer 23:23-24 the Father fills heaven and earth. The Son said in Mat 28:20 *"I am with you always even to the end of the age."* In fact, the indwelling of the Lord Jesus Christ is a reflection of His omnipresence as well. The Lord Jesus Christ said, **"I will be in you and in My Father"** - at the same time. How can He fulfill that unless He is omnipresent? The Holy Spirit is ever present, Psa 139:7.

God is also omnipotent! Omnipotence means all-powerful and limitless in ability. He is called God almighty as in Gen 17:1. Nothing is too difficult for Him says Gen 18:14. Psa 24:8 states He

is the king of glory, the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. In Isa 40:26 and Jer 27:4b-5, by His power or omnipotence He rules and upholds all things. In 1Ch 29:11 both riches and honor come from Him, and He does rule over all, and in His hand is power and might, and it lies in His hand to make great, and to strengthen everyone. Psa 66:7 says that He rules by His power or omnipotence forever. God's power is not manifested by muscle; His power is in His word. Whatever He says happens!

As Heb 1:3 says **He upholds all things by the word of His power.** This power is used by God to keep the believer safe for Him forever in 1Pe 1:5. God's power is not limited at all; however you must understand that all that happens is not from the power of God. God has allowed both angels and mankind to possess volition, and both angels and mankind have used that volition in a negative way. When we understand the omnipotence of God we will be assured that nothing is too hard for Him, Jer 32:7. Or as the Lord Jesus Christ said in Mat 19:26 *"with God all things are possible."* Job said, after he went through more suffering than anyone alive, *"I know that you can do all things,"* in Job 42:1.

All three members of the trinity possess omnipotence. God the Father does according to Mar 14:36, 1Pe 1:5. Jesus Christ is said to control history and uphold all things by the word of His power in Heb 1:3. The Lord Jesus Christ is the one who uses His omnipotence to raise us from the dead in Phi 3:21. By His power the Lord Jesus Christ healed the sick and forgave their sin in Luk 5:24. He raised the dead in 1Ki 7:22. He imparts eternal life to those who believe in Joh 10:28. God the H.S. is said to have all power and omnipotence in Rom 15:19. In fact, the H.S. is the one who brings His power on the believer in the Church-age in Act 1:8. As Zec 4:6 says, it's *"not by might nor by power but by My Spirit says the Lord."*

As justice is the guardian of divine essence and the beauty of all of God's attributes, omnipotence is that which gives life and action to the attributes of God. Now what kind of attitude should the believer have about the omnipotence of God? Well it is very comforting to know that it's this same power which keeps us saved and protects us.

This power should lead us to worship and adore such a wondrous, infinite perfect God who along with this power loves us with a divine love which will never change. As a member of the royal family of God and the future bride of Christ your worship and respect toward God is revealed by your **confidence** you have as a believer. You know nothing is too hard for him.

So far we have noted that God is sovereign, righteous, just, love, eternal life, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. God is also immutable! Immutability simply means that God is absolute stability. You never have to worry about God getting tired and weary or changing. As Isa said in Isa 40:28 *"do you not know? Have you not heard? The eternal God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable."* Isaiah is saying that the Lord's discernment and understanding is unsearchable. His immutability focuses in on His patience and longsuffering with each and every one of us!

Immutability ties all the divine attributes together. For instance because of His immutability, His love is unchangeable. His omnipotence or His power can never diminish. His glory can never change. His veracity which is his truth is immutable; according to Psa 119:89, His word is forever settled in heaven. Because of His immutability, His love is eternal. Jer 31:3 says *"I have loved thee with an everlasting love."* Whatever the attributes of God were before the universe was called into existence, they are precisely the same now and will remain that way forever.

As fallen creatures we are not only mutable, which means prone to change, but everything in us that is of the Adamic nature is opposed to God. As Jud 13 teaches without God we are like wild waves of the sea, casting upon their own shame like foam; wandering stars out of our orbit. Isa 57:20 says we are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, and there is no peace. In other words, fallen man is inconsistent, and self-contradictory even after he is saved; he has that conflict within. The Bible teaches that no human being is to be totally depended upon. Psa 146:1-5 says if we reject God's advice concerning this matter than we deserve to be deceived and disappointed by people.

People who like you today may hate you tomorrow, just like the multitude who cried "**Hosanna to the son of David,**" and then changed overnight to "**away with him, crucify him.**" Here is some sound Biblical advice that can serve as tremendous comfort. Human nature cannot be relied upon but God can! However unstable we may be, however our friends may prove, God does not change. When we have doctrine in the soul we have the only stabilizer in life. There is nothing in us that is stable. However, because of His immutability God is faithful. Actually, immutability is the character and essence of God and faithfulness is the expression of that character. Immutability is that which is within, faithfulness is that which is revealed without. God is faithful and his faithfulness stems from His immutability. Unfaithfulness is one of the most commonly committed sins today.

In the business world most men's word is of little value, although there are some rare exceptions. In the social world immorality in marriage and unfaithfulness is the norm and standard for society. Even in the church we are seeing on the part of spiritual leaders academic dishonesty and out-right manipulation. And, before you recall to mind all those who you think have been unfaithful, think of how many ways and times you have been unfaithful to people, and to the Lord Jesus Christ. By that I mean to His word and the fantastic privileges that have been entrusted to us. How refreshing it is to know that in spite of all this there is one who is faithful, faithful in all things, at all times, even unto the end! Deu 7:9, "***Know therefore that the Lord your God, He is God, the faithful God.***" This quality is essential to His being; without it He would not be God. 2Ti 2:13 states, "***if we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself.***" We may change toward Him but He will and cannot ever change toward us!

Now it is one thing to accept the [faithfulness of God](#) as truth it is another thing to act upon it. God is faithful to us and He is not only faithful to tell us the best but He is also faithful to tell us the worst. He has faithfully described the ruin that negative volition leads to. He has faithfully diagnosed the terrible results and effects of sin. God is faithful in all things. The Bible states many ways in which

God is faithful. For instance God is faithful in keeping his promises. 2Co 1:20, *"for as many as be the promises of God, in Him they are."* Num 23:19, *"God is not like man that He should lie, has He not said and He will do it, or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"* Think of all the rebellion that the children of Israel fell into and yet God was faithful. Many times they were faithless but He was faithful! Why? Well because Tit 1:2 tells us that it is impossible for Him to lie! In Heb 10:23, it states that He who promised is faithful. The permanence of God's character guarantees the fulfillment of his promises.

God is also faithful to forgive 1Jo 1:9. He does not forgive because we feel sorry for our sins or promise never to do them again. He forgives us because Christ has already paid the penalty for our sins. Thirdly, He is faithful in keeping us saved, 2Ti 2:12-13. God is faithful to us, and there is nothing we can do to lose our salvation because God is faithful. Since God did the saving work, He does the keeping. 1Th 5:24, *"Faithful is He who calls you, and He who also will bring it to pass."* The immediate reference here is to saints being preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is also faithful to deliver us from and in pressure or testing. 1Co 10:13, in 1Pe 4:19 to those who are going through some measure of suffering Peter says to entrust your soul to the *"faithful Creator"* who will do what is right!

He is faithful in stabilizing and protecting the believer, 2Th 3:1-5. He is faithful in the administration of His plan, 1Co 1:9. God is also faithful in disciplining His people. **He is faithful in what He withholds just like in what he gives.** He is faithful in sending sorrow as well as in giving joy. And, therefore the faithfulness of God is a truth to be acknowledged by us not only when we are at ease, but also when we are in trouble. To agree with this means that we humble ourselves before Him and realize that we fully deserve His correction. Instead of any murmuring or complaining, we thank Him for it. Psa 119:75, *"I know Lord that in your faithfulness you have afflicted me!"* God is not only faithful in stopping affliction but in sending it as well. Psa 89:33 *"even if they sin and rebel I will not deal falsely in my faithfulness."*

The Father is faithful in Jam 1:17, and the Lord Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever, Heb 13:8. God the Holy Spirit is faithful to indwell us, Joh 14:16, and to teach Bible doctrine to the believer, 1Co 2:13. Understanding these principles will preserve us from worry! To be worried and concerned is to reject this divine attribute. He doesn't change, and therefore 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. God is greatly honored when under trial or chastening we have proper thoughts toward Him and recognize His divine attributes in action. The sooner we trust Him in all of our affairs, being fully persuaded and convinced of His love toward us, the sooner we will find true satisfaction in life.

God is also veracity. Veracity means that God is absolute truth, Deu 32:4. If God is to be faithful to us, He must level with us. We must have all the facts concerning God as well as our relationship with Him. Therefore His veracity is manifested in His way, Psa 25:10, 86:15, Rev 15:3, His works, Psa 33:4, 111:7, 111:8, Dan 4:37, and in His word, 2Sa 7:28, 1Ki 17:24, Psa 19:14, 138:2, Joh 17:17, 2Co 6:7, Eph 1:13. The Father is absolute truth and veracity, Joh 7:28, Joh 17:3. The Lord Jesus Christ is absolute truth, Joh 14:6. God the H.S. is called the Spirit of truth, 1Jo 5:6.

When you thoroughly understand the doctrine of divine essence and apply it in adversity or prosperity, you will possess and maintain peace and [inner happiness](#) in every experience of life.

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