

THE
ONLY

God



For you
are great
and do
marvelous
deeds;
you alone
are God.

Psalm 86:10

AT SOME POINT IN OUR SPIRITUAL up-bringing we must face the truth—the stark and startling truth that there is only one being who deserves to be called ‘God.’ Oh, we may not use that precise appellation for anyone or anything else on earth, but, in our actions and by our conceit we accomplish much the same. We preen and strut as the Masters of our Domain, self-sufficient, self-aware and self-sustaining—so filled with self that were it truly hot air, we would have exploded years ago.

And even if we are not someone preoccupied with ourselves, the tendency is to elevate the familiar, while we disregard that which is not seen. Objects we can embrace, or at least hold in our hands, become far more precious to us than hazy philosophies about a mystical being we’ve never met. Sidetracked by our private reality, we find ourselves on a side road leading us toward even greater confusion.

But the truth is far more substantial, far more real than our own self-absorption or earthly infatuation. The truth is... God. Everything you heard about Him in Sunday School is really true. There really is a being like that—a spiritual being—and His name is God, Jehovah, Yahweh, Almighty.

“This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the Lord, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself.” Isaiah 44:24

And not only is He real, but He is the only one. You may search high and low, travel so far east that you catch yourself from the west, even rocket into the reaches of space, and you will not find another like Him. No created being, no imagined demigod, no fanciful pastiche of blended yearnings is worthy to lick the soles of His feet.

For He alone is God. He painted the heavens over our heads, and formed the earth at our feet. He alone is God, and no one else can claim that name or title. He alone breathed life into the first living thing, the first creature, the first man. He alone is God. He is jealous, and will not countenance pretenders. They will be the first to vanish when He inhales, and calls back everything to Himself.

He alone is God. For last and best of all, only He and no other redeemed mankind for

Aspects

Encouraging believers to know
God and His ways,
and to enjoy a more intimate
communion with Him

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Himself, bled and died Himself, out of love for those He, alone, created.

throne. For You, alone, are God. You made me, and formed me—and You, alone, gave me life everlasting.

Great Creator, I will not worship another. I will not share my affections with any pretender for Your

A SURE STRONGHOLD

You have forgotten God your Savior;
you have not remembered the Rock, your fortress. Isaiah 17:10a

But as for me, I shall sing of Thy strength;
Yes, I shall joyfully sing of Thy lovingkindness in the morning,
For Thou hast been my stronghold,
And a refuge in the day of my distress. Psalm 59:16 nasb

THE DAY ONE EXPERIENCES HIS FIRST EARTHQUAKE is the day one suddenly feels less confident about the strength and durability of the earth beneath one's feet.

Living in Southern California, I had experienced earthquakes before. But for the most part these had been mere 'shakers,' a passing sensation not unlike being shaken awake from deep slumber. But one day the earth beneath my feet turned fluid, and never again would I place absolute trust in soil, rock or cement.

I heard the sound first, one day standing in my office—the floor of which was a thick slab of concrete resting firmly on hard, flat soil. Like an approaching freight train, the low growl came out of the east. Before I could identify the curious sound, it grew in intensity and volume, coming at me like something huge and angry.

Then it passed beneath my feet. The layers of substrata, soil and concrete undulated and rolled like a throw rug being snapped by a spring-cleaning housewife. And quite unexpectedly I learned that the earth was really not what it seemed—that it could be sloshed about as easily as a bucketful of mud.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. 2 Peter 3:10

We may take cover in earth's ramparts of old soil and ancient stone barriers, for to our temporal sensibilities they are, indeed, the strongest thing we know. But there will come a day when they will crumble into dust, or be consumed by fire. There will come a day when nothing remains but the one absolute stronghold: God Himself.

But we need not wait for that day. We need not wait until every other alternative has been removed. Even while the earth beneath our feet and the walls of granite still seem firm and strong we can turn to the superior Rock, the exalted Wall of defense that will never be moved.

Like granite ramparts standing against the onslaught of the enemy, You, O Lord God, stand as my sure stronghold against all foes. Where could I go for protection and strength, except to You, my Strength and my Deliverer? Therefore, I shall sing of Thy strength.

"During an earthquake, the inhabitants of a small village were very much alarmed, but they were at the same time surprised at the calmness and apparent joy of an old lady whom they all knew. At length one of them, addressing the old lady, said, 'Ma'am, are you not afraid?' 'No,' said the woman, 'I rejoice to know that I have a God who can shake the world.'"

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

GIVER OF INSIGHT

"Who has put wisdom in the innermost being,
Or has given understanding to the mind?" Job 38:36

God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. 1 Kings 4:29

AMIND IS A TERRIBLE THING TO WASTE, and today, regrettably, there are minds being squandered and wasted at every turn. Today's 'wisdom' is defined by popular culture—which is an absurdity on the order of a certifiable idiot teaching advanced calculus. Today's wisdom is an abomination masquerading as light, and those who subscribe to it are courting their own intellectual demise.

God's wisdom not only is superior in quality to the counterfeit wisdom of the world, but it is superior in *quantity* as well. For God is the creator and dispenser of insight and discernment. His gift not only includes knowledge, but the ability to determine value and worth, the discernment necessary to judge right from wrong, the ability to glean buried wisdom where others might only skip off the surface.

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his

incomparably great power for us who believe. Ephesians 1:17-19a

Like praise, wisdom is a gift from God, acquired by the individual as a result of a close and maturing relationship with Him. But then, even that acquisition is secondary to the individual's understanding that *God's* wisdom—in place, in His possession—is superior. The object of worship is not to gain, but to serve; the object of our devotion is to draw from His wisdom and insight—not as a shopper acquires a new possession that then becomes his alone, but more as someone who is warmed by his close proximity to a fire. The person alongside the fire does not take possession of the fire's warmth, but benefits by remaining near its source.

We do not benefit from God's wisdom and insight by seeking to take it from Him, as a child might greedily snatch his present from a parent's outstretched hand, but by remaining close enough to continuously feel its radiating warmth.

God who is all wisdom, I acknowledge that any wisdom I might have has come from You. My understanding is a gift—one to be used to glorify Your name. I honor You as the source and gracious Giver of all insight and understanding.

AN ATTENTIVE PARENT

For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. Psalm 1:6

It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect. 2 Samuel 22:33

IT IS NOT ALWAYS CLEAR TO THE CHILD while it is being raised. The understanding may take years to develop—and maybe longer to appreciate. But the plain truth is that parents—even ones that are less than perfect—are essential, and even when the child spends much of his growing years rebelling against their discipline and rules, more often than not during his *adult* years he comes to appreciate the hard-learned lessons from his parents.

The good parent and the attentive child both know that it is a good system that works. It is a successful system created and ordained by God, for He not only invented it to be used by His children, but He designed it so well that He uses it Himself.

“What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.” Matthew 18:12-14

The Lord God watches over His children. As a loving parent to those who call upon His name, He makes Himself a part of their lives—whether they like it or not. He nags, He corrects,

and He disciplines. But also like a good parent, He cares, He encourages, and He soothes the fevered brow.

Heavenly Father, You are always here next to me, attentive to the path my feet take. Though Holy God—unsearchable, infinite—You condescend to take part in my life. Father, I praise Your gracious, attentive parenthood of my life.

A STRONG LOVE

Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God!
For Thou hast smitten all my enemies on the cheek;
Thou hast shattered the teeth of the wicked. Psalm 3:7 nasb

“The Lord your God is in your midst,
A victorious warrior.
He will exult over you with joy,
He will be quiet in His love,
He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.” Zephaniah 3:17 nasb

LOVE. WHAT A CHEAP WORD this has become. What a hollow sentiment that drips from the lips of the insincere. But then, we live in insincere times; it is the hallmark of this epoch.

The blatant insincerity of our times was revealed recently when a reporter breathlessly wrote about a “new tactic” being employed by the wily new president, George W. Bush. The ‘tactic’? Actually doing what he had said he would do. The point being made by the reporter that everyone—the press, the loyal opposition, et al—was being thrown off their stride by this devious new shenanigan of Bush being a man of his word. They didn’t know how to handle such a person.

Which is why the sincerity of the Lord is such a poor fit in this sorry world. When God says something, He means it—and when He says He loves someone, will stand with them through thick and thin, defend them, and share in their rejoicing, He means every word.

God’s love for man is something substantial. He backs his words with action.

Your arm, O Lord, is my strength, Your presence is my shield. You are a God whose love is more than an emotion, but is a powerful motivation acted upon every day. Your love, O Lord, is strong, active, and real. Through Your strength, and the power of Your Spirit, give me the courage to reply in kind.

The work of Christ on the cross did not influence God to love us, did not increase that love by one degree, did not open any fount of grace or mercy in His heart. He had loved us from old eternity, and needed nothing to stimulate that love. The cross is not responsible for God’s love; rather it was His love which conceived the cross as the one method by which we could be saved. A.W. Tozer

Stronger His love than death or hell;
Its riches are unsearchable;
The first-born sons of light
Desire in vain its depth to see;

They cannot reach the mystery,
The length, the breadth, the height.
Charles Wesley

HIS ENCOMPASSING GLORY

And one [seraph] called out to another and said,
“Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts,
The whole earth is full of His glory.” Isaiah 6:3 nasb

For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. Romans 1:20

IN A RECENT RERUN of a *Star Trek: Voyager* episode, the crew of the space ship was experiencing various anomalous ailments. One would suddenly age, another would begin to take on the physical characteristics of an alien ancestor heretofore buried deep in his DNA, and the captain had been suffering for some time from intense, debilitating headaches. All these strange maladies remained a mystery, until through a series of discoveries the truth was learned.

In fact, aliens had boarded the Voyager and were systematically conducting experiments on its crew. Because the aliens were ‘out of phase’ with the humans, the crew members were unaware of their presence—even the medical experiments being performed on them. But when adjustments were made so that a crew member could actually see the aliens and their handiwork, it was learned that many were walking around with odd contraptions affixed to their persons and, as in the case of the captain, some were experiencing headaches because a series of probes had been shoved into their heads. And around them all, but invisible to the naked eye, were all these aliens, scurrying about, conducting their scientific experiments.

There is a way in which God’s presence is like this—and a way in which it is not at all like this. God—in any of His forms: as Father, as Holy Spirit, as the Son—is continually about us, invisible but real. His presence is ‘out of phase’ with temporal flesh, but its effect is nonetheless felt. His reason for being there is, of course, more benevolent than the aliens in *Star Trek*: He is not there to conduct secret, hideous experiments, but to strengthen, teach, support, and sanctify.

Unlike the television story, however, He *wants* us to know He is there. Because God is spirit and not flesh, He may be invisible to our eyes, but he is anything but invisible to the rest of our senses. God has gone out of His way to display Himself to us.

One must go out of one’s way to miss God. His handiwork, His Spirit, His touch are all around us, waiting for our weaker senses to discover and embrace Him.

Holy Lord, I need not go far to discover Your presence. Everything around me shouts Your creative genius and measureless power. You are God; You are Creator; You are Lord—and Your brilliant glory fills the air around me, as the dawn replaces night with a new day.

MY SALVATION

“Behold, God is my salvation,
I will trust and not be afraid;
For the Lord God is my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation.” Isaiah 12:2 nasb

For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thessalonians 5:9

WHAT IS SO VERY HARD FOR SOME PEOPLE to lay hold of is the concept of *continuing* salvation—the salvation of *process* that follows the salvation event. The mortal spirit yearns for independence, self-sufficiency, so the ingrained human response after God, in Christ, saves us for eternal life with Him is, “Okay, thank You very much. Appreciate it. I luv ya, man. Now leave me alone.”

But we are not just saved *for* something, but *from* something, and part of what we are being saved from is still there, needing regular attention.

If we are teetering on the lip of the Grand Canyon, on the brink of plummeting to our

death, and a stranger happens along at just the right moment to grab hold and save us, our gratitude would certainly be effusive. We would grab his hand, thank him, pledge to him our firstborn, maybe even open our wallet for a reward, or buy him dinner. But chances are good that at the end of the day we would part company, never to see each other again.

In spiritual terms we are standing on the lip of the precipice when God comes along and snatches us to safety. Through Christ, God saves us from a certain, horrible death by giving us life in Him. But in physical terms, our entire life is a walk along that precipice. Even after God’s dramatic moment of salvation, the rest of our life

will need His attention. Clearly what is called for is not just a quick thank-you, but an ongoing relationship.

Because the quality of the process that follows does not change the effectiveness of the salvation event, many do not bother to pursue it. We have been saved from the fall, *fait accompli*. But the full experience of salvation includes a relationship with God that is daily invigorated by our communion with Him.

Our words of praise come from Him. Our determination to rise and meet each new day comes from Him. When we feel sad or lonely, He is the one who comforts and offers companionship. When tragedy strikes, it is He who pulls us out from our self-destructive spiral. When everyone else has fled, He remains.

Because we have nurtured the relationship, we are aware of His presence, and we gain strength. But if we have not pursued the relationship God offers, though we are 'saved' we are left feeling alone and neglected. We have not laid the groundwork to enjoy His ongoing work of salvation.

And though we may never plummet to our destruction, we spend our lives teetering on the brink.

Lord God, in truth it was only on the day of my salvation that my song first rose to Thee. For only then could I know the melody and words of Your saving grace. Father God, with respect and honor I bow before You—the One who lifted me up from the utter death of a life without You.

DEATH CONSUMED

He will swallow up death for all time,
And the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces,
And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth;
For the Lord has spoken. Isaiah 25:8 nasb

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true:
"Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" 1 Corinthians 15:54-55

FROM THE MOMENT THE FIRST MAN and first woman rejected God's preferred arrangement, children of this earth have been born with the smell of death about them. Left on its own, human existence is little more than an extended intermission between the Act One of birth, and the Act Two of the grave. Like the lowest beast, we are born, then, eventually, we die. In between are all the pleasant and unpleasant distractions of childhood and adulthood, adolescence and aging, fleeting joys and burdensome sorrows.

So with the bored cynicism of the wise Solomon, man could intone the liturgy of a fallen life—monotonous, droning...

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under
heaven:
a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal,

a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
a time to scatter stones and a time to
gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain,
a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

For everything in the human story there was a time, but surrounding it all was the time of birth, and the time of the grave. And there was nothing man could do about it.

So God did it. The one God, the only God. Because no one else could accomplish the necessary wonder, He did it Himself. He said, "Man is born in death, and there is no turning

back—except by the sacrifice of blood. I require blood, for the life is in the blood.”

First, through the Law of Sacrifice, God showed man the true face of sin, supplying man a template by which to compare himself to the righteousness of God and, ultimately, despair, for in the template man could see the wide gulf that separated the two. Then, after man saw how irreconcilably distant he was from God, the Lord supplied the solution to man’s despair: The Christ.

Now man, as before, would still be born with the stench of the grave about him. He would still begin the same journey toward death

and destruction that had plagued his kind since his father and mother had been ejected from the Garden. But now, for the first time, the destination could be changed; now there was the opportunity for *life*, instead of death, at the end of the long journey.

Now the inevitability of death had been destroyed.

O God, You are life eternal, so I have no fear of the grave. The grave is no more than a stepping stool into Your arms. I praise Your bountiful mercy, for it brings to this present, momentary life hope, assurance, and joy.

EXALTED SPLENDOR

This is what the LORD says, he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the LORD Almighty is his name. Jeremiah 31:35

O Lord, our Lord, How majestic is Thy name in all the earth,
Who hast displayed Thy splendor above the heavens! Psalm 8:1 nasb

FOR THE INDIVIDUAL IT ALL CONDENSES DOWN to one of two choices: either God is who He says He is, or He isn’t. Either He created all that is, or He didn’t. Either He is Lord, or He isn’t.

Man really cannot reduce Him down to something less than what He is. There can be no negotiation; He is not a politician, willing to compromise for the sake of getting along. You either accept or reject the full package.

And what a package it is! The Lord God presides over the universe and beyond—all of what we know of His creation and more. Indeed there is an intimacy about God the Father, but mostly there is a majestic grandeur.

He takes the breath away.

At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of

thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying:

“Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God Almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come.”
Revelation 4:2-8

Almighty God, You are above all! To see You high and exalted, reigning over Your creation, my pride withers; it vanishes as the dull gray light before the morning sun. Your arms reach out to encompass the heavens; Your name is the watchword of the universe. You reign in majesty!

Aspects

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