

# THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

## The Omniscience of God

### Lesson #3

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God is all knowing or omniscient. God's omniscience is closely related to His being everywhere present. We know things by experiencing them. God knows things because He knows everything. Yet having a perfect knowledge of some place is virtually the same as being there. It is a great comfort to know that God saw all of your sins before the foundation of the world, yet still, driven by love, sent the Lord Jesus Christ to earth to die for you! It is also comforting to know God also sees all the injustices in this world. For the unbeliever, the doctrine of God's omniscience is a terror. It is a doctrine they try not to think about. No wickedness of any kind or degree escapes the notice of the God who sees all and knows all. In this lesson we will consider the attribute of God's Omniscience and gain some understanding of how it applies to our lives.

#### I. DEFINITION OF GOD'S OMNIPOTENCE

A. Louis Berkhof says:

"The knowledge of God may be defined as that perfection of God whereby He, in an entirely unique manner, knows Himself and all things possible and actual in one eternal and most simple act."<sup>1</sup>

B. A. W. Pink notes:

"He knows everything: everything possible, everything actual; all events and all creatures, of the past, the present, and the future. He is perfectly acquainted with every detail in the life of every being in heaven, in earth, and in hell. . . Nothing escapes His notice, nothing can be hidden from Him, nothing is forgotten by Him. . . His knowledge is perfect. He never errs, never changes, never overlooks anything."<sup>2</sup>

C. Thomas Watson uses the following characteristics to describe the knowledge of God:

1. God knows whatever is knowable. He knows all future contingencies.
2. God's knowledge is primary i.e., He is the pattern, and the prototype of all knowledge.

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<sup>1</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, pg. 66.

<sup>2</sup> A. W. Pink, *The Attributes of God*, pg. 17.

3. God's knowledge is pure. It is not contaminated by any sin or evil.
4. God's knowledge is infinite as all things are intelligible to Him.
5. God's knowledge is infallible; there is no mistake in His knowledge.
6. God's knowledge is instantaneous. God knows all things past, present, future and possible all at once.
7. God's knowledge is retentive; He never loses any of His knowledge.<sup>3</sup>
8. Because of all of the above, God's knowledge is perfect.<sup>4</sup>

## II. THOUGHTS TO PONDER ABOUT GOD'S OMNISCIENCE

### A. A. W. Pink notes,

“There is no danger of the individual saint being overlooked amidst the multitude of supplications who daily and hourly present their various petitions, for an *infinite* Mind is as capable of paying the same attention to millions as if only one individual were seeking its attention. So too the lack of appropriate language, the inability to give expression to the deepest longing of the soul, will not jeopardize our prayers, for “It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear” (Isa. 65:24).”<sup>5</sup>

### B. A. W. Tozer says,

“God knows instantly and effortlessly all matter and all matters, all mind and every mind, all spirit and all spirits, all being and every being, all creaturehood and all creatures, every plurality and all pluralities, all law and every law, all relations, all causes, all thoughts, all mysteries, all enigmas, all feelings, all desires, every unuttered secret, all thrones, all dominions, all personalities, all things visible and invisible in heaven and earth, motion, space, time, life, death, good, evil, heaven, and hell.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah, in Jer. 31:34, speaking of the New Covenant which Jesus inaugurated by his death (Lk. 22:20), speaks of God “remembering our sins no more.” Jeremiah 31:34 is also quoted in Heb. 8:12 and 10:17. If God cannot forget anything, then why do the Scriptures say he “remembers our sins no more?” The phrase is an idiom or expression that means God chooses to act as if we had never sinned. Just as we can’t erase our memories when we forgive, God, being omniscient, can’t erase His. If God failed to know anything, He would cease being God. However, when God forgives, He chooses to act as if the sin never occurred. We are to forgive in the same way.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, pgs. 55-56.

<sup>5</sup> A. W. Pink, *The Attributes of God*, pgs. 18-19.

<sup>6</sup> A. W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*, pg. 56.

- C. God knows all things from eternity, and, therefore, perpetually knows them; the reason is because the Divine knowledge is infinite, and therefore, comprehends all knowable truths at once. An eternal knowledge comprehends in itself all time and beholds past and present in the same manner, and therefore his knowledge is immutable: by one simple knowledge he considers the infinite spaces of past and future.<sup>7</sup>

### III. SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT FOR GOD'S OMNISCIENCE

- A. Job 34:21-22 -- "For His eyes are upon the ways of a man, And He sees all his steps. 22 "There is no darkness or deep shadow Where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.
- B. Job 37:14-16 -- "Listen to this, O Job, Stand and consider the wonders of God. 15 "Do you know how God establishes them, And makes the lightning of His cloud to shine? 16 "Do you know about the layers of the thick clouds, The wonders of one perfect in knowledge, . . . ?
- C. I Sam. 16:7 -- But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."
- D. I Chron. 28:9 -- "As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever.
- E. II Chron. 16:9 -- "For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His."
- F. Psa. 139:7-12 -- Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. 9 If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, 10 Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me. 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, And the light around me will be night," 12 Even the darkness is not dark to You, And the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You.
- G. Psa. 147:5 -- Great is our Lord and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite.
- H. Prov. 5:21-- For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord, And He watches all his paths.

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<sup>7</sup> Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God*, vol. 1, pg. 323.

- I. Prov. 15:3 -- The eyes of the Lord are in every place, Watching the evil and the good.
- J. Jer. 16:17 -- "For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity concealed from My eyes.
- K. Matt. 9:4 -- And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, "Why are you thinking evil in your hearts?
- L. I Cor. 4:5 -- Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.
- M. Heb. 4:12-13 -- For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

#### IV. **ERRORS CONCERNING GOD'S OMNISCIENCE**

- A. Error -- The one great error concerning God's omniscience is to deny that He is omniscient. This denial may come in many forms and packages, but no matter how it is presented it is still a denial that God knows everything knowable.
- B. A. W. Pink in his work *The Attributes of God* has some good observations for why unbelievers despise the thought of an Omniscient God.

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

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8 A. W. Pink, *The Attributes of God*, pg.18.

V. **APPLICATION OF THE OMNISCIENCE OF GOD**

A. You cannot hide anything from God.

“Because God knows all things perfectly, He knows no thing better than any other thing, but all things equally well. He never discovers anything. He is never surprised, never amazed.” A. W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*, pg. 56.

B. God sees all that you do.

C. God knows all that you think.

D. God knows how weak you are.

“To think God is in this place would add wings to prayer, and oil to the flame of our devotion.” Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, pg. 59.

E. God knows what you are going through.

F. God knows if you truly love Him or not. (See John 21:17 & I Cor. 16:22)

G. God always hears your prayers, He knows what you will pray before you pray, He knows your heart and even if your lips and minds are inadequate to speak accurately, He hears and understands accurately.

“Though He be invisible to us, we are not so to Him. Neither the darkness of night, the closest curtains, nor the deepest dungeon can hide any sinner from the eyes of Omniscience.” A. W. Pink, *The Attributes of God*, pg. 17.

H. If God be all knowing, then religious hypocrisy is foolish.

I. Remember that God knows all of the prophecies and promises in His Word are sure to come to pass. (Luke 24:44)

J. A. W. Tozer says,

“That God knows you through and through can be a cause of shaking fear to the man that has something to hide -- some unforsaken sin, some secret crime committed against man or God.”<sup>9</sup>

“The whole of my life stood open to His view from the beginning. He foresaw my every fall, my every sin, my every backsliding; yet, nevertheless, fixed His heart upon me. Oh, how the realization of this should bow me in wonder and worship before Him!” A. W. Pink, *Attributes of God*, pg. 21.

K. Tozer also notes,

“No talebearer can inform on us, no enemy can make an accusation stick; no forgotten skeleton can come tumbling out of some hidden closet to abash us and expose our past; no unsuspected weakness in our characters can come to light

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10 A. W. Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*, pg. 57.

to turn God away from us, since He knew us utterly before we knew Him and called us to Himself in the full knowledge of everything that was against us.”<sup>10</sup>

- L. Jesus, as God, always existed. Being God, He knows all things. Yet in order to relate to us, to be an example to us, and to die as a sacrifice for us, He was born of a virgin. He did not enter into a virgin’s womb to become that He might gather information as a man, for He knew everything perfectly before the world began. He came to die for us as a man, so that He might save some and for all eternity demonstrate the glories of His perfect knowledge to us.
- M. Because God knows us perfectly, He knows what would please us most, and therefore can bless us perfectly in heaven forever!

LORD, Thou hast searched and seen me through; Thine eye commands with piercing view  
My rising and my resting hours, My heart and flesh, with all their powers.

My thoughts, before they are my own, Are to my God distinctly known;  
He knows the words I mean to speak, Ere from my opening lips they break.

Within Thy circling power I stand; On every side I find Thy hand;  
Awake, asleep, at home, abroad, I am surrounded still with God.

Amazing knowledge! vast and great! What large extent! What lofty height!  
My soul, with all the powers I boast, Is in the boundless prospect lost.

Oh, may these thoughts possess my breast, Wherever I rove, wherever I rest!  
Nor let my weaker passions dare, Consent to sin, for God is there.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* pg. 57.

<sup>11</sup> Isaac Watts, 1719, from C. H. Spurgeon, *Our Own Hymn Book: A Collection of Psalms and Hymns for Public, Social and Private Worship* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1883).