

Lesson 3

God is Omniscient

Since I have been preaching this series of messages on the person of God, many people have said to me, “These truths are wonderful, but I cannot grasp them all.” They say it in such a way that it seems as though they are ashamed that they do not understand God. This kind of a statement means they are beginning to understand something about God. If we think we understand God, we do not understand Him at all.

“Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. (Isa. 40:28)

Only when we begin to be baffled, awed and astonished at the mystery of the God of Scripture are we really beginning to understand Him. Understanding God means that we acknowledge that we will never grasp all there is to know about Him. Yet, as we see His greatness and perfection, we will fall on our faces and worship Him.

“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.” (Psa. 139:6)

In this message we are going to study about God’s attribute of knowledge. God is omniscient and perfect in knowledge.

“Do you know how the clouds hang poised, those wonders of him who is perfect in knowledge?” (Job 37:16)

As we contemplate God’s knowledge, if we find our minds going in circles, it simply shows that God is infinite and we are finite; He is Creator and we are creatures.

GOD’S KNOWLEDGE AND HIMSELF

The definition of omniscience is that God knows everything. God is perfect knowledge and He has absolutely no need to learn. God has never learned and cannot learn for He knows all things in Himself.

“Who has understood the mind of the LORD, or instructed him as his counselor? Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him, and who taught him the right way? Who was it that taught him knowledge or showed him the path of understanding? Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” (Isa. 40:13-14; Rom. 11:34)

If God could at any time or in any manner receive into His mind knowledge that He did not possess and had not possessed from eternity, He would be imperfect and less than God, for God is perfect.

God perfectly knows Himself, and being the source and author of all things, He knows all that can be known. God’s knowledge is innate in that it flows from Himself; it is immediate because it does not involve a process of reasoning; it is simultaneous for He knows all things all at once in their totality; it is complete in that nothing can be added or taken away from His knowledge.

God’s knowledge includes every possible item of knowledge concerning everything that exists or could have existed anywhere in the universe at any time in the past or that may exist in the centuries or ages yet to come. An infinite mind comprehends all things at once and consequently there is no “before” or “after” with God, but just the eternal now.

God never wonders about anything. He is never surprised or amazed and He never discovers anything, for He knows everything. 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 creature hood and all creatures, every plurality and all pluralities, all law and every law, all relations, all causes, all thoughts, all mysteries, all enigmas, all feeling, all desires, every unuttered secret, all thrones and dominions, all personalities, all things visible and invisible in heaven and in earth, motion, space, time, life, death, good, evil, heaven, and hell.” (The Knowledge of the Holy)

GOD’S KNOWLEDGE AND HIS PLAN

God’s plan (sometimes referred to as the Decree) was first thought out before it was put into action by a sovereign act of God’s will. God in His omniscience knew everything actual and possible. He had an infinite number of possible plans but He conceived one plan. This is the best plan and it brings the most glory to God.

“Says the Lord, who does these things that have been known for ages.” (Acts 15:18)

This explains how God can be certain of the future. God’s knowledge of the future is as complete as His knowledge of the past and the present because the future depends entirely upon Himself. What God has conceived, He has purposed. The future is certain because God’s plan is certain. Were it possible for something to occur apart from either the direct agency or permission of God, then something would be independent of His knowledge, and He would immediately cease to be Supreme.

God knows not only events, but also persons. He knows everything there is to know about every creature.

“Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” (Heb. 4:13)

How is this possible? Because it all is somehow related to the plan He has conceived. The skeptic and infidel now will say, “Aha! Does God then know and cause sin?” Absolutely not! God does know of sin, for nothing can be independent of God. If sin were independent of God, then He could have no control over it. However, God has permitted sin in His plan in such a way that He never causes it. God is not the author of sin. The Bible tells us that man is always responsible for sin and God is never responsible for it. Yet, in His sovereignty He has control over sin. How God can be sovereign and still not cause sin is a mystery to the human mind, but somehow in His omniscience He planned it that way.

GOD’S KNOWLEDGE AND THE UNBELIEVER

The omniscience of God is a frightening thought to the person who does not know God through Christ. A realization that God knows each person through and through can be a real threat to the man who has something to hide. Secret sin committed against God is not passed by or unknown.

“You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.”
(Psa. 90:8)

Man tends to rationalize and minimize his evil deeds, but God knows the heart. God knows the flimsiness of every pretext and never accepts the poor excuses given for sinful conduct. Someone has said, “Secret sin on earth is open scandal in heaven.”

“But they do not realize that I remember all their evil deeds. Their sins engulf them; they are always before me.” (Hosea 7:2)

The non-Christian hates the omniscience of God, and in his naiveté he thinks that he can hide his sinful actions from God. God sees everything and will judge men accordingly.

“Woe to those who go to great depths to hide their plans from the LORD, who do their work in darkness and think, “Who sees us? Who will know?” (Isa. 29:15)

“Does he who implanted the ear not hear? Does he who formed the eye not see? Does he who disciplines nations not punish? Does he who teaches man lack knowledge? The LORD knows the thoughts of man; he knows that they are futile.” (Psa. 94:9-11)

“For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.” (Eccles. 12:14)

The unsaved man tries to banish God from his thoughts, for he does not like the idea of God witnessing his sins, searching his heart and judging his deeds. Rest assured, no man will escape God's judgment and He will judge him out of His perfect knowledge; and there will be no man in his natural, unsaved state who will plead innocent. Each person will acknowledge his guilt before a holy God.

GOD'S KNOWLEDGE AND THE BELIEVER

When a believer first trusted Christ, all he knew was that he was under conviction and that he was sinful and separated from God. He had a great need to have the guilt and penalty of sin removed from his life. He gladly fled to Christ as his refuge, for Christ had promised to give him the forgiveness of sin and eternal life. In simple, child-like faith he trusted in Jesus Christ.

Later, as he began to read the Bible, he came to realize that God knew him before he was ever saved. He came to realize that all Christians were known by God from the eternal counsels.

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son” (Rom. 8:28-29a)

Notice carefully God says “those God foreknew,” not what God foreknew. This has to do with persons, not an act of faith. It does not say that God foreknew how men would believe, but that from all eternity He intimately knew those who would believe in Christ. God knew and loved the Christian before He ever called him to Himself. Think on this, Christian! He knew us when we hated Christ. He knew us when we spurned and mocked God. He knew us when we lived only for ourselves. When we were rebels and enemies, God knew us and waited patiently until that day on which He knew we would trust Christ and be saved. He knew and loved us long before we ever knew and loved Him. God knew us in eternity past that we might be conformed to His Son in eternity future. God knew our inborn treachery; yet for His own glory He chose to save us through Christ. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me!

The great Puritan preacher, John Newton, used to tell the story of the little old lady who would say, “Ah, sir, the Lord must have loved me before I was born, or else He would not have seen anything in me to love afterwards.”

One of the characteristics of God's knowledge is that He remembers everything. He does not forget. Things transacted a thousand years ago are as fresh to Him as if they were done but yesterday. Since God does not forget, it logically stands to reason that He would remember every sin that a person ever did before he trusted in Christ. But God does not remember the sins of those who accept His Son, for He says, ***“For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”*** (Heb. 8:12) Only God has the power to blot out sin from His mind and He does this on the basis of the death of His Son, Jesus Christ. Christian, this is a blessed truth! No matter how great your sins before you were saved, God has forgiven and forgotten them. As creatures you do not have the power to forget completely, but God does not remember your sins and sees you only as righteous in Christ. Society may not forget your sins, friends may not forget, and you may not forget yourself, but God has already forgotten them. Since God has forgiven and forgotten your sins, that is all that really matters, and you can walk uprightly and yet humbly in this corrupt world as sinners saved by grace.

GOD'S KNOWLEDGE AND CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

For the Christian it is a great comfort to realize that God knows him completely. God knows his thoughts, his actions, his words and his heart.

“For I know their works and their thoughts.” (Isa 66:18 KJV)

“Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.” (Psa. 139:4)

“The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” (1 Sam. 16:7)

The Christian views God's omniscience much differently than the non-Christian. The true believer knows he cannot fool God and appreciates this fact. Instead of God's omniscience being a threat to him, it is a comfort, for the Christian desires God to know all about him.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psa. 139:23-24)

It is such a comfort to know that in times of trouble, God knows all about it.

“But he knows the way that I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold.” (Job 23:10)

Our perplexities may confound our human reason, but God knows our way. In times of weariness, believers assure themselves because God understands their frail make-up. ***“For he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.”*** (Psa. 103:14)

In times of weakness, when we view the corruption in our hearts, we feel as though we have no grace in us. Yet God in His infinite knowledge can spy out grace where no human can. He can see grace hidden under corruption, for God knows the heart. God can see holiness in us when we cannot discern it ourselves. For the true believer God's omniscience becomes a real comfort.

CONCLUSION

For you without a personal relationship with Christ, I want you to understand that God knows all about you. You cannot hide anything from Him and you cannot run from His discerning eye. He knows your sin and He is going to judge you for it in eternity. However, God has provided a way of escape. He has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for sinful men and to grant them eternal life. God has declared that He will save any man who will trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. God has no other way to bring men to Himself except through Jesus Christ. If you will trust Christ, God will remember your sins no more.