

God is Infinite in Knowledge, Presence, Power, and Purity

1. God is infinite – without bounds or limits by anything other than Himself
 - a. As the only uncreated being, He is not limited by anything created
 - b. He does what He wills without rival
 - c. He knows all that exists, past through future, both actual and potential, because He is outside of time
 - d. David is dealing particularly with a few different aspects of this aspect of God’s greatness: Knowledge, Presence, Power, and Purity
2. Vv1-6 – God is Infinite in Knowledge and Understanding
 - a. God knows everything about me *completely*
 - i. The word “searched” means to explore, to investigate
 - ii. It is used of spying out cities and land (2 Sam 10:3, Judg 18:2), of tasting wine (Pr 23:30), of investigating a legal case (Job 29:16) and cross-examination (Pr 18:17).
 - iii. The idea is one of complete sight and understanding of the nooks and crannies, of the hidden places, of the complete lay of the land.
 - b. Hebrew poetry uses extreme opposites, polarities, to explain totality
 - i. Sit down and rise up
 - ii. My walking and my reclining
 - iii. The skies to the underworld
 - iv. Darkness and light
 - c. God even knows the unspoken thoughts and intentions of my inner consciousness
 - i. “You understand my intentions”
 1. This word, translated “thoughts” in the ESV, is used only here and in the book of Ecclesiastes, where it is translated “striving”, i.e. “after wind”
 2. Therefore, God knows what we want, what we strive for, what we desire, even if our wills or behaviors do not align
 - ii. God is intricately knowledgeable of our hearts’ desires and wants “from far away”
 1. In time
 2. In space
 3. In actuality
 - iii. This means that God not only knows facts about me, but understands them completely *even when I don’t understand them of myself*
 - d. God knows the means that use to achieve our intended goals
 - i. “You are familiar with all my paths”
 - ii. The LORD has ‘spent a lot of time’ on our paths
 - iii. Thus, God intimately knows the goals of our hearts, even unspoken ones, and the means which take (paths) to achieve those goals
 - iv. He knows it ALL
3. Vv7-12 – God is Infinite in Presence and Sight
 - a. It is marvelous not just that God knows everything from afar, but He knows everything because He is so intimately close
 - i. This is unnerving.
 - ii. There is a sense of discomfort in this truth
 - iii. In fact, in v8 he literally says, “if I descend into the underworld...Behold! YOU!”
 - b. Very, very poetic:
 - i. “if I go towards to the Dawn (east), and settle to the Sea (west)”
 - ii. As far as I could even impossibly go...He is there
 - c. If God’s knowledge is without limit, it is because God’s presence is without boundary

- d. Francis Thompson's exquisite poem, "The Hound of Heaven", is based upon this truth
4. Vv13-18 – God is Infinite in Power and Care
- a. God is not only sees and knows all my existence, but He is active in it.
 - i. He is the divine author of every page of my story, every character upon that page, every pen stroke belongs to His animating hand
 - ii. "You wrote my days before one of them existed"
 1. There is a temporal aspect here, too, which shows that God is not limited by time or events like we are
 2. He sees and knows and ordains all things, even our soulish things, before any of them were ever lived out
 - b. You created my inmost being, my soul
 - i. You wove me in totality – not merely physicality, but personhood, soul, the immaterial just as much as the material, and has set how the two shall relate to one another in personhood
 - c. Your eyes saw my embryo in the hidden place
 - i. God sees and knows and is active in the womb of every woman into whom He has placed a living soul
 - ii. There is strong biblical evidence here for the care and activity of God in the personhood of every embryonic human being
 1. The word for "inmost parts" is the Hebrew word for embryo
 2. "hidden place" is a Hebraism of the womb
 - iii. This stanza has laid its main emphasis on the pre-natal fashioning by God of each and every human being – a powerful and stark reminder of the value that God places on all human life, even embryonic, and of His careful knowledge and handling of our ends and our beginnings
5. Vv19-24 – God is Infinite in Purity and Person
- a. These verses remind us of the holiness, righteousness, and justice of God – they are personal attributes which David feels are assaulted by the wicked
 - i. It is a defensive response and resolve to an attack on the person of one whom David loves and delights in.
 - ii. David sees God as so pure and right and good that he becomes angry when God is belittled and attacked and used as a tool
 1. This anger is righteous because God is worthy of love, adoration, obedience, and delight because of all the previous wonderful things mentioned above – His infinite knowledge, infinite presence, and infinite power and care
 - iii. The referents are "men of blood" – those with malice in their intentions, who use the name of the LORD, but do so in order to use Him for their own pleasure, i.e. emptily
 1. David calls these men "haters" of the LORD, who take their stand against Him, i.e. enemies of the LORD whom David counts as his enemies as well – not brothers or kin or fellows, but as enemies
 - iv. How do you respond to injustice?
 1. What about when injustice is legislated and defended by those humans in power?
 2. How do you respond to injustice towards others?
 - v. The poet rightly wants God to put evil, injustice, malice, empty or deceptive words, to an end
 1. He wants righteousness and justice to roll on and clean everything up to the purity of God's own character
 - b. LET IT BEGIN WITH ME!

- i. Even while David calls for God to do away with sinful men, he immediately recognizes that evil is not just a category outside of himself, but also a possible category within himself
 1. “Search me!”
 - a. Know my “heart”
 - b. If there is any “disquieting thoughts”
 2. “See if there is any path which causes pain in me!”
 - a. Is there any path upon which I am walking, any habit of heart, or intentions or goals to which I am seeking, which would be a path of sorrow and grief
 - b. The Targum uses this word to describe idolatry – the path to sorrow and grief
 - c. See if there be any idolatry in my heart, any seeking of good outside of YHWH which will only lead to disappointment, abuse, and sorrow
 3. “Lead me in the eternal way!”
 - a. Rather than the path of sorrow, I want to walk in the path that will remain into eternity
 - b. This is a poetic contrast to path of sorrow because of unrighteousness and can be understood as “path of righteousness of the LORD”
- ii. When confronted with the infinite person of God, we must respond and be transformed by it
 1. We must learn to see injustice by others in the light of its relationship to the infinitely holy God
 2. We must learn to see injustice by ourselves in the light of its relationship to the infinitely holy God

God’s Comprehensive Personal Knowledge of Me is Inescapable

1. There is a sense of discomfort in the absolutely superior *differentness* of God’s knowledge.
 - a. There is an irreducible *powerlessness* to being observed and unable to hide or control what is known
 - b. “too high to attain” is literally “I am unable to endure”
 - i. David says that such knowledge is “away from me”
 - ii. There is a distinction which is discomfoting
 - c. “Where can I flee?”
 - i. David’s response to seeing the infinite knowledge that God has over him is to flee, to run away
 - ii. Shame, powerlessness, accountability?
 - iii. The absolute knowledge of God is overwhelming
2. It can be a threatening experience to be known – how much more so to be fully exposed to the eyes and understanding of someone who can see and understand *everything about your very heart and thoughts?!?*
 - a. With God, there is no defense, to pretense, no ability to deceive or put on airs
 - b. There is only the inescapable gaze and knowledge of the infinitely powerful God, and this deeply unnerves us
 - i. Why?
 - ii. Because we know that we are not even the way that we want to be, let alone what God commands us to be

- c. If we were holy and perfect, we would not fear the spying eye through the keyhole, but we are not holy, so we feel ashamed at our foibles truly being seen
 - i. To be truly seen is to be exposed, to be exposed is to be known, to be known is to be ashamed
 - ii. Why? Because we confuse our lovability with our loveliness, and assume that which Nature shows us, that ugliness is rejected and loveliness is pursued...so we try and hide the ugliness and are terrified of being found out
- 3. Yet, it is equally devastating not to be known at all
 - a. We are made to be known and to know others
 - b. There is something in the heart of every man which desires greatly to be known and understood
 - c. Therefore, every man wants to be known, but not fully known – what Jean Paul Sartre called “freedom”, the freedom to control what others know about you.
 - i. But this puts us in a terrible plight when we behold that God sees and knows *everything* about me, for it makes me vulnerable and exposed and without control
- 4. How does David move from discomfort to delight in God’s infinite and inescapable knowledge of him?

The Intentions of God *for Me* Make His Knowledge of Me Precious to My Soul

- 1. The only way that such inescapable vulnerability is bearable is if the gaze of the one who sees and knows *is for you*.
 - a. While it is overwhelmingly unbearable to be fully known by someone whom you don’t trust, it is equally overwhelmingly *lovely* to be fully known by someone whom you know loves you and is for you and will care for you even when they see the totality of your failures.
 - b. This is the idea of “naked and unashamed” in the garden of Eden, the way it was supposed to be
 - i. When Adam and Even sinned, they hid “because they realized that they were naked”
 - ii. They didn’t want to be known because they knew that they were ashamed because of their sin
- 2. You cannot really be loved by someone unless they know you, but there is always the threat and fear that the more someone knows you, the less they may want to love you
 - a. The thing that we want more than anything, to be loved, requires the thing which fear more than anything, to be known, because we are afraid that to be known will mean to be unloved
- 3. But, if the one who can see and know everything about you, to whom you are vulnerable and exposed, is believed by you to be loving and *for you*, then any exposing of sin and wickedness in you will be received with joy, not terror, and a rejection of those wicked things out of love for the one who knows you
- 4. V17 – “How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How mighty is their totality!”
- 5. There is a flow to this Psalm that leads to vv23-24, but it is rooted in v17 and the delight which David feels in being known and exposed and vulnerable *because he knows that God’s intentions are towards him, not away from him*.
 - a. Thus, there is a joy and embracing of God’s infinite knowledge and power and purity as delightful, precious, and valuable
 - i. I love that you know me to the depths! I delight that you see everything about me! It is precious to me that you know me like this!
 - b. “David has moved on from contemplating his own thoughts and their nakedness before God to considering Gods’ innumerable thoughts towards him. Such divine knowledge is not only wonderful, but precious, since it carries its own proof of infinite covenant, God will not leave the work of His own hands either to chance or to ultimate extinction.” – Derek Kidner

- c. “Precious” means something that is rare, something valuable and cherished
 - d. Not only are such thoughts rare and to be cherished, but there is a “mighty sum” of them, too!
 - i. Of all that David has seen and recognized in God’s person, His infinite knowledge, His infinite power, His infinite presence, it is the plain fact that God’s intentions are for him, and vastly for him, that makes David explode in delight and desire
 - ii. It is “we love because He first loved us” which John speaks
6. How does David arrive at this delight in the light of the unnerving knowledge and power of God?
- a. “I awake and I am still with you.” (v18)
 - i. The mercy of God to David, that the darkness has not swallowed him up, that he awakes and knows the LORD, is a comfort to his soul
 - b. From the darkness to the light, from the moments of weakest position, sleep, which always proclaims to us that we are limited and finite, for we must rest and sleep and turn off our thoughts and intentions and goals...yet God is still there and has not destroyed us in our sleep
 - i. This little mercy proclaims to David that God, for all His justice and holiness and infinity, is kind to him
 - c. In the vision given to John, known as the Revelation, there is an interesting concept communicated about Jesus – He is the light which eliminates the darkness
 - i. It says, “And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.” (Rev. 21:23)
 - d. This light of the Lamb, which eliminates the need for sun, moon, or stars to light and see and know what is true and real, illuminates the city of God because the Lamb’s light was extinguished for me and you.
 - i. Luke tells us that when Jesus was crucified, darkness fell upon the land for three hours as “the sun’s light failed” (Luke 23:44-45)
 - ii. It is the sacrifice of the infinite Son of God, the glory of God, in our place, for our sin and shame, the foolishness of our idolatry and the malice of our hearts, which proves to us that the Lord is for us.
 - 1. All the fears and anxieties that you feel about being known, truly known, He felt
 - 2. All the shame which you feel about your failures and sins and wicked thoughts, He bore upon that cross
 - 3. He was fully known as a sinner, as a wicked man, as the man of blood and enemy of God
 - iii. It is this truth which enables us, too, to “walk in the light as He is in the light, and so have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7)
 - 1. The blood of Jesus, His sacrifice for our foibles, our sins, our ugliness, completely covers our shame...all of it!
 - 2. Therefore, we can walk in the light, ugliness and weaknesses and foibles known, and thus be fellows together without pretense and glorying in the one who covers our shame
 - 3. We hide because we doubt the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Jesus, plain and simple.
 - 4. But if we believe that God knows us, and that God is for us, so radically for us that He covers our sin and shame with the blood of His own Son...then we are truly free to walk in the light
 - iv. This is how David can implore God to search him out, to discover everything, *and to let David know what He finds!*
 - 1. He knows that to be led in the way of life that matters, that will last, that is eternal and unshakable, is to be known by God and led by God.
 - 2. It is to walk in the light as He is in the light

- e. How shall we grow in delighting in God's knowledge of us?
 - i. We must begin by fearing God – the infinite one who sees and knows everything about us: we must be unnerved by His infinite knowledge
 - ii. We must then behold Jesus, God the Son, who mixes the greatness and majesty of the infinite God with the meekness and humility of that same God as one. In the words of Jonathan Edwards, we keep these two great thoughts concurrently:

“He is indeed possessed of infinite majesty, to inspire us with reverence and adoration; yet that majesty need not terrify us, for we behold it blended with humility, meekness, and sweet condescension. We may feel the most profound reverence and self-abasement, and yet our hearts be drawn forth sweetly and powerfully into an intimacy the most free, confidential, and delightful.

The dread, so naturally inspired by his greatness, is dispelled by the contemplation of his gentleness and humility; while the familiarity, which might otherwise arise from this view of the loveliness of his character merely, is ever prevented by the consciousness of his infinite majesty and glory; and the sight of all his perfections united fills us with sweet surprise and humble confidence, with reverential love and delightful adoration.” — Jonathan Edwards, *Works, Vol. 1*