

# UNIT 1: The Attributes of God

## Section 12: God's Knowledge

*Assigned Reading:*  
*A. W. Pink – The Attributes of God*  
*The Knowledge of God*

### Introduction:

Having discussed God's Aseity, Unity, and Immutability in our previous weeks, it is appropriate to move on in our discussion to attributes of God that are typically grouped together under the heading of God's Infinity or Infinitude. These help give fuller description of what we mean when we speak of God being "perfect" in His existence... He is not bound or restricted by anything, for everything is a creation of His. He is unlimited in regards to time, space, power, and knowledge. We'll be looking at each of these specifically in coming weeks: Eternality, Omnipresence, Omnipotence, and Omniscience.

This morning we will be studying God's Knowledge. We'll see what implications God's Infinitude has in our understanding of God's Cognition.

**Q1:** What does God know?

**Q2:** Are there any limits to God's Knowledge (are there things God cannot know)?

**Q3:** What implications can we draw from God's Omniscience?

### Outline:

#### **I. Defining God's Omniscience**

##### *A. Various Theologians*

1. Omniscience comes from two Latin words – *omni* "all" & *science* "knowledge"
2. **Pink**, "God knows everything: everything possible, everything actual; all events and all creatures, of the past, the present, and the future."
3. **Ryrie**, "God knows everything, things actual and possible, effortlessly and equally well."
4. **Grudem**, "God fully knows Himself and all things actual and possible in one simple and eternal act."
5. **Culver**, "God has perfect, immediate, knowledge of all events and things, whether actual or conditional upon the acts of 'free' beings; whether the events or things are only possible or actual; and whether they are past, present, or future."
6. **Tozer**, "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 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... He never discovers anything. He is never surprised, never amazed. He never wonders about anything nor (except when drawing men out for their own good) does He seek information or ask questions."

## B. The Scriptures

1. **Job 37:16** "Do you know about the layers of the thick clouds, The wonders of **one perfect in knowledge** [lit. complete/fullness in knowledge]
2. **1 John 3:20** in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and **knows all things**.
3. **Ps 147:5** Great is our Lord and abundant in strength; His understanding is infinite (**lit.** without number).
4. **Prov 15:3** The eyes of the LORD are in every place, Watching the evil and the good. (*see how omnipresence and omniscience hold together in this verse...*)
5. **Matt 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. <sup>30</sup> "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. (*see God's decree and knowledge together in these 2 verses...*)
6. **Rom 11:33-34** Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! <sup>34</sup> For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? (*see God's knowledge and wisdom spoken of together – God acts in light of all the facts and in accordance with what is His good pleasure*)
7. **Psalm 104:24** O LORD, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; The earth is full of Your possessions. (Creation done in God's wisdom)
8. **Acts 15:18 lit.** "known from eternity" (speaking of God's works)

## II. Discussing God's Omniscience

### A. Clarifications – Limitations?? Are there things God cannot know?

1. God does not deal in "possibilities or probabilities" but "certainties"
  - a. **This is not to say that He doesn't know what could have happened had He acted differently (He knows all of these perfectly as well), but to say that He knows with absolute certainty what actually does and will occur.**
  - b. **God knowing "all things possible:"**
    - (1) *David's prayer to the Lord regarding Saul's pursuit: 1 Sam 23:11-13* "Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down just as Your servant has heard? O LORD God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant." And the LORD said, "He will come down." <sup>12</sup> Then David said, "Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?" And the LORD said, "They will surrender you." <sup>13</sup> Then David and his men, about six hundred, arose and departed from Keilah, and they went wherever they could go. When it was told Saul that David had escaped from Keilah, he gave up the pursuit
    - (2) *Jesus' statement regarding Tyre, Sidon and Sodom: Matt 11:21-23* "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. <sup>22</sup> "Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. <sup>23</sup> "And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day.

- (3) *Elisha tells King Joash what would have happened had he struck the ground with the arrows more times: 2 Kings 13:19* So the man of God was angry with him and said, "You should have struck five or six times, then you would have struck Aram until you would have destroyed *it*. But now you shall strike Aram *only* three times."
- c. God knows all things He possibly could have created, but chose not to...
  - d. **Ps 139:6** *Such* knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is *too* high, I cannot attain to it.
2. God knows the future... (see connections with "God's Eternality" here as well)
    - a. **Isaiah 46:9-10** "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me,"<sup>10</sup> Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';
    - b. This is the basis for "predictive prophecy" – which the Bible is FULL of!
    - c. **Culver**, "God's knowledge is immediate awareness, not based on experience, deductions or inductions of fact or truth. His knowledge is not acquired knowledge, for God's knowledge of all things is eternal, present always in His mind."

### B. *The Argument from "Man's Free Will"*

1. God knowing all future events of "free moral agents" is thought to divest those creatures from being "truly free"
2. Some theologians explain that since God placed a "limit" on his power by making "free-willed creatures" he also must have limited His knowledge of the future.
3. Therefore recent attempts at upholding "man's free will" have resulted in defining omniscience as "God knowing all things knowable" – or "knowing all things that are proper objects of knowledge."
  - a. The "open theology" theologians believe that future actions of "free moral agents" CANNOT be known and therefore God can only think in terms of possibility and probability in regards to these actions...
  - b. The "middle knowledge" theologians explain that this element of God's knowledge is dependent upon His foreknowledge of the acts and decisions of free creatures rather than upon His decree – ultimately they explained that election was based upon "foreseen faith" not God's action or decree.
  - c. These types of discussion, though, are nothing new...
4. Augustine in speaking to these issues explained that God has given us "reasonable self-determination" – (note he did not use the term "free" which has to be defined in and of itself anyway)
  - a. By this, he meant that we think about our actions, decide how we will act and then follow through by acting in accordance with our decision.
  - b. It is not as if events occur regardless of what we decide or do, but rather occur because of what we decide and do...
  - c. However we square this with God's knowledge of our actions is something to be looked into further (our actions are not *absolutely* free, only God having that privilege), but the point is that our actions do carry with them consequences... whether good or bad...

5. Also, we must remember that “predictive prophecy” depends upon God’s ability to know the future – and that future includes the actions of men...
  - a. **Acts 2:23** this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.
  - b. **Lk 24:25-27** And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" <sup>27</sup> Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.
  - c. **Even events people attribute to “chance” are by God’s design – Prov 16:33** The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.
  - d. **Culver**, “The God of the Bible declares the end from the beginning – both because He planned it that way and because He has power to bring it to conclusion just as He planned it: and therefore knows all about it, down to the minutest detail.”
  - e. **God knows the future, for the future is dependent upon Him!**
  - f. **Pink**, “God’s knowledge does not arise from things because they are or will be, but because He has ordained them to be.”

### C. Practical Benefits

1. A word of warning...
  - a. We are utterly laid bare before the Lord. He not only sees our actions, but He knows our thoughts and intentions... there is nothing hidden from the Lord’s knowledge!
  - b. **Ps 139:1-4** For the choir director. A Psalm of David. O LORD, You have searched me and known *me*. <sup>2</sup> You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. <sup>3</sup> You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways. <sup>4</sup> Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, You know it all.
  - c. **Ezekiel 11:5** Then the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and He said to me, "Say, 'Thus says the LORD, "So you think, house of Israel, for I know your thoughts."
  - d. **Examples:**
    - (1) Adam and Eve “hiding” in the Garden
    - (2) Cain murdering Abel
    - (3) Sarah laughing in her tent
    - (4) Achan’s theft
    - (5) David’s adultery and murder
  - e. Our sins are laid bare before the Lord
    - (1) **Hosea 7:2** And they do not consider in their hearts That I remember all their wickedness. Now their deeds are all around them; They are before My face.
    - (2) **Psalm 90:8** You have placed our iniquities before You, Our secret *sins* in the light of Your presence.
  - f. Sobriety ought to characterize our position before the True God! He knows all!
  - g. **Heb 4:13** 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.
2. A word of comfort...

- a. **Psalm 139:16** Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained *for me*, When as yet there was not one of them.
  - b. God knew all my days before there were even one of them, and meanwhile having been saved, I know that God loves me in spite of it all...
  - c. Nothing could ever occur that would suddenly cause God to retract His purposes, He knew the sum of my life before it had begun – Wondrous Security in this!
  - d. **Tozer**, “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 a bash us and expose our past; no unsuspected weakness in our characters can come to light 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.”
  - e. **Peter understood Jesus’ omniscience – John 21:17** He said to him the third time, "Simon, *son* of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, **You know all things; You know that I love You.**" Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep.
3. In Prayer...
- a. **Pink**, “There is no danger of the individual saint being overlooked amidst the multitude of supplicants who daily and hourly present their various petitions, for an infinite Mind is as capable of paying attention 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.”
  - b. **Grudem**, “One can pray confidently, knowing that God will not grant something that is not good. Even though we are not wise enough to see all of the facts, or the results to which our ideas or planned actions may lead, we can trust God to know what is best.”
  - c. **God knows our needs: Matt 6:7-8** "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. <sup>8</sup> "So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.
  - d. **Is 65:24** "It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear.
4. God makes no mistakes...
- a. We as humans act unwisely often because we lack knowledge...
  - b. Ex) **See Israel - Hosea 4:6** My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.
  - c. We make choices based upon limited information, and therefore often must retract words said, modify projects begun, redirect the habits of our lives...
    - (1) **Our perspective can be distorted or limited...**
    - (2) **III**) Optical Illusions, Camera Photography, Water refraction
  - d. Since each of us are learning, this is a good thing, for we are only admitting that we are wiser today than we were yesterday!

- e. God, however, is not learning or growing for He is perfect! God's knowledge being perfect means that he never suffers from lack of foresight or distorted perspective
  - (1) God is always fully aware of everything.
  - (2) He does not have to reason to conclusions or ponder carefully before He answers, for He knows the end from the beginning, and he never learns or forgets anything
  - (3) **God does not struggle with recalling information as we do**
  - (4) **Is 43:25** "I will not remember your sins" – **Grudem**, "this means that God will never again let the knowledge of these sins play any part in the way He relates to us: He will "forget" them in His relationship to us."
- f. He always gives proper value to all things, for He knows the value of all things! He sees all things in their proper perspective – unlike the twisted, distorted view we have.

## 5. **Worship**

- a. While even the next few seconds are hidden from us... we do not know with certainty what tomorrow brings, but we find comfort knowing that God does! (see **Luke 12**)
- b. We ought to be in awe of the Lord!
- c. **Pink**, "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."