

# The Omniscience of God Part 1

Thomas Watson (1620-1686)

Heb. 4:13

## I. The Text Opened

### A. Hebrews 4:13

1. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Heb. 4:13).
2. Glorious things are spoken of God; he transcends our thoughts, and the praises of angels.
  - a) God's glory lies chiefly in his attributes, which are the several beams by which the divine nature shines forth.
  - b) Among other of his orient excellencies, this is not the least—"the Lord is a God of knowledge;" or as the Hebrew word is, "A God of knowledges."
  - c) He has a full idea and cognizance of all things; the world is to him a transparent body.
  - d) He makes a heart-anatomy.
    - (1) *"I am he who searches the thoughts and the heart."*
  - e) The clouds are no canopy, the night is no curtain—to draw between us and his sight.
    - (1) *"Even in darkness I cannot hide from you. To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are both alike to you."*

## II. The Doctrine from the Text

### A. DOCTRINE: There is not a word we whisper but God hears it.

1. "There is not a word in my tongue—but lo, O Lord, you know it altogether."
  - a) There is not the most subtle thought that comes into our mind—but God perceives it.
    - (1) *"I know their thoughts."*
    - (2) *Thoughts speak as loud in God's ears—as words do in ours. All our actions, though ever so subtly contrived, and secretly conducted, are visible to the eye of Omniscience.*
  - b) "I know their works."
    - (1) *Achan hid the Babylonish garment in the earth—but God brought it to light. Minerva was drawn in such curious colors, and so lively drawn, that whichever way one turned, Minerva's eyes were on him.*
    - (2) *Just so, whichever way we turn ourselves, God's eye is upon us!*
2. "Him who is perfect in knowledge."
  - a) God knows whatever is knowable; he knows future contingencies.
  - b) He foretold Israel's coming out of Babylon, and the virgin's conceiving.
  - c) By this the Lord proves the truth of his Godhead, against idol gods.
    - (1) *"Tell us the coming events, then we will know that you are gods."*
    - (2) *The perfection of God's knowledge is primary.*
    - (3) *He is the origin, the pattern, and prototype of all knowledge; others borrow their knowledge of him; the angels light their lamps at this glorious sun.*
3. God's knowledge is pure.
  - a) It is not contaminated with the object.

- (1) *Though God knows sin—yet it is to hate and punish it.*
- (2) *No evil can mix or incorporate with his knowledge, any more than the sun can be defiled with the vapors which arise from the earth.*
- (3) *God's knowledge is facile; it is without any difficulty.*
- (4) *We study and search for knowledge.*
  - (a) *Prov 2:2. "If you seek for her as for silver."*
  - (b) *The lamp of God's knowledge is so infinitely bright, that all things are intelligible to him.*
4. God's knowledge is infallible; there is no mistake in His knowledge.
  - a) Human knowledge is subject to error.
  - b) A physician may mistake the treatment of a disease; but God's knowledge is unerring.
  - c) He can neither deceive, nor be deceived.
    - (1) *He cannot deceive—because he is truth; nor be deceived—because He has infinite wisdom.*
5. God's knowledge is instantaneous.
  - a) Our knowledge is successive, one thing after another.
  - b) We argue from the effect to the cause.
  - c) God knows things past, present, and to come—at once; they are all before him in one entire prospect.
6. God's knowledge is retentive; he never loses any of his knowledge; he remembers as well as understands.
  - a) Many things elapse out of our minds—but God's knowledge is eternalized.
  - b) Things transacted a thousand years ago, are as fresh to him as if they were done but the last minute.
  - c) In this way he is perfect in knowledge.
7. But is it not said, "I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. Then I will know."
  - a) It could not be that God was ignorant; because there is mention made of a cry; but the Lord speaks there after the manner of a judge, who will first examine the cause before he passes the sentence.
  - b) When he is upon a work of justice he is not in a hurry, as if he did not care where he hits; but he goes straight against offenders.
    - (1) *'He lays judgement to the line, and righteousness to the plummet.'*
    - (2) *Hosea 13:12, "The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, his sin is hid."*
    - (3) *Not that his sin is hid from God—but his sin is hid; that is—the sins of Ephraim have been collected and stored away for punishment.*
    - (4) *That this is the meaning, is clear by the foregoing words, his iniquity is collected.*
    - (5) *As the clerk of the court binds up the indictments of malefactors in a bundle, and at the trial brings out the indictments and reads them in court; so God binds up men's sins in a bundle, and, at the day of judgment, this bundle shall be opened, and all their sins brought to light before men and angels!*
8. God is infinite in knowledge. He cannot but be so; for he who gives being to things, must needs have a clear inspection of them.
  - a) "He who planted the ear, shall he not hear? He who formed the eye, shall he not see?"
  - b) He who makes a watch or engine, knows all the workmanship in it. God, who made the heart, knows all its movements.

c) He is full of eyes, like Ezekiel's wheels, and, as Augustine says, Totus oculus, "All eye."

- (1) *It ought to be so; for he is the "Judge of all the world."*
- (2) *There are so many causes to be brought before him, and so many people to be tried, that he must have a perfect knowledge, or he could not do justice.*
- (3) *A human judge cannot proceed without a jury, the jury must search the cause, and give in the verdict; but God can judge without a jury.*
- (4) *He knows all things in and of himself, and needs no witnesses to inform him.*
- (5) *A human judge judges only matters of fact—but God judges the heart.*
- (6) *He not only judges wicked actions—but wicked designs.*
- (7) *He sees the treason of the heart, and punishes it.*

### III. The Text Applied

#### A. Use One

1. Is God infinite in knowledge?

- a) Is he light, and in him is there no darkness?
- b) Then how unlike are they to God who are darkness, and in whom is no light, who are destitute of knowledge, such as the heathen who never heard of God!
- c) And are there not many among us, who are no better than baptized heathen?
  - (1) *Who need to seek the first principles of the oracles of God.*
- d) It is sad, that after the sun of the gospel has shined so long in our horizon, that the veil should still be upon their heart.
- e) Such as are enveloped in ignorance cannot give God a reasonable service.
- f) Rom 12:2. Ignorance is the nurse of impiety.
- g) The schoolmen say, "Every sin is founded upon ignorance".
  - (1) *Jer 9:3, "They proceed from one evil to another, and they do not take Me into account."*
  - (2) *Where ignorance reigns in the understanding, lust rages in the affections.*
  - (3) *Prov 19:2, "That the mind be without knowledge, it is not good."*
  - (4) *Such have neither faith nor fear: no faith; for knowledge carries the torch before faith.*
    - (a) *"Those who know your name shall put their trust in you."*
    - (b) *A man can no more believe without knowledge, than the eye can see without light.*
    - (c) *He can have no fear of God; for how can they fear him whom they do not know?*
    - (d) *The covering of Haman's face was a sad warning of death.*
    - (e) *When people's minds are covered with ignorance, it is a covering of the face, which is a fatal forerunner of destruction.*
  - (i) *"The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's feeding-trough, but Israel does not know; My people do not understand." Isaiah 1:3*

#### B. Use Two

- 1. If God is a God of infinite knowledge, then see the folly of hypocrisy.
  - a) "Hypocrites do not actually do good, they merely make a show of it," Melanchthon said.
  - b) They carry it fair with men—but care not how bad their hearts are; they live in secret sin.

- c) "They say—How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?" Psalm 73:11.
- d) "What does God know? Can He judge through thick darkness?" Job 22:13.
- e) "God has forgotten, he hides his face, he will never see it."
  - (1) *But, "His understanding is infinite!"*
  - (2) *He has a window to look into men's hearts! He has a key to open up the heart; he beholds all the sinful workings of men's spirits, as in a glass bee-hive we can see the bees working in their combs.*
  - (3) *Matt 6:6, "Your Father who sees in secret." God sees in secret.*
  - (4) *As a merchant enters debts in his book, so God has his debt-book, in which he enters every sin.*
  - (5) *Jeroboam's wife disguised herself, so that the prophet would not know her; but he discerned her.*
    - (a) *"When Ahijah heard her footsteps at the door, he called out—Come in, wife of Jeroboam! Why are you pretending to be someone else? I have bad news for you!" 1 Kings 14:6.*
  - (6) *The hypocrite thinks to disguise and juggle with God—but God will unmask him.*
  - (7) *"God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing."*
  - (8) *"For they have done outrageous things in Israel; they have committed adultery with their neighbors' wives and in my name have spoken lies, which I did not tell them to do.*
  - (9) *I know it and am a witness to it—declares the Lord." Jeremiah 29:23*
- 2. Yes—but the hypocrite hopes he shall color over his sin, and make it look very good.
  - a) Absalom masks over his treason with the pretense of a religious vow.
  - b) Judas cloaks his envy at Christ, and his covetousness, with the pretense of "charity to the poor."
  - c) Jehu makes religion a cloak for his selfish design.
  - d) But God sees through these fig-leaves!
  - e) You may see a jade under his guilt trappings.
  - f) "My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from me, nor is their sin concealed from my eyes. Jeremiah 16:17.
  - g) He who has an eye to see—will find a hand to punish!

### c. Use Three

- 1. Is God so infinite in knowledge?
- 2. Then we should always feel as under his omniscient eye.
  - a) "We ought to live as if always in full view of God," Seneca.
- 3. Let us place David's prospect before our eye, "I have set the Lord always before me."
  - a) Seneca counseled Lucilius, that whatever he was doing, he should imagine some of the Roman nobles stood before him, and then he would do nothing dishonorable.
  - b) The consideration of God's omniscience would be preventive of much sin.
  - c) The eye of man will restrain from sin; and will not God's eyes much more?
  - d) "Will he even assault the queen right here in the palace, before my very eyes? the king roared." Esther 7:8.
  - e) Will we sin when our Judge looks on? Would men speak so vainly, if they considered God overheard them?

4. Latimer took heed to every word in his examination, when he heard the pen write behind the curtains.
  - a) Just so, what care would people have of their words, if they remembered that God heard, and his pen was writing everything down in heaven?
  - b) Would people commit immorality, if they believed God was a spectator of their wickedness, and would make them do penance in hell for it?
  - c) Would they defraud in their dealings, and use false weights, if they knew God saw them, and for making their weights lighter would make their damnation heavier?
5. Viewing ourselves as under the eye of God's omniscience, would cause reverence in the worship of God.
  - a) God sees the frame and demeanor of our hearts, when we come before him.
  - b) How would this call in our straggling thoughts?
  - c) How would it animate and invigorate duty?
  - d) It would make us put fire to the incense.
  - e) We must worship God with the utmost zeal and intenseness of spirit.
  - f) To think that God is in this place would add wings to prayer, and oil to the flame of our devotion!

#### D. Use Four

1. Is God's knowledge infinite?
  - a) Study sincerity, be what you seem.
  - b) "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 Samuel 16:7.
  - c) Men judge the heart by the actions. God judges the actions by the heart.
  - d) If the heart is sincere, God will see the faith and bear with the failing.
  - e) Asa had his blemishes—but his heart was right with God. God saw his sincerity, and pardoned his infirmity.
  - f) Sincerity in a Christian is like chastity in a wife, which excuses many failings.
  - g) Sincerity makes our duties acceptable, like musk among linen, which perfumes it.
  - h) As Jehu said to Jehonadab, "Is your heart right with me? And he said, It is. If it is—give me your hand; and he took him up into the chariot."
    - (1) *Just so, if God sees that our heart is right, that we love him, and aim at his glory—he says, "Give me your prayers and tears; now you shall come up with me into the chariot of glory!"*
    - (2) *Sincerity makes our services to be golden, and God will not cast away the gold, though it may lack some weight.*
    - (3) *Is God omniscient, and his eye chiefly upon the heart?*
    - (4) *Wear the belt of truth about you, and never leave it off.*

#### E. Use Five

1. Is God a God of infinite knowledge? Then there is comfort, (1.) To the saints in particular. (2.) To the church in general.
2. (1.) Comfort to saints in particular.
  - a) In case of private devotion.
  - b) Christian, you set hours apart for God, your thoughts run upon him as your treasure; God takes notice of every good thought.
  - c) "He had a book of remembrance written for those who thought upon his name."

d) You enter into your closet, and pray to your Father in secret; he hears every sigh and groan!

(1) *"My groaning is not hidden from you."*

e) You water the seed of your prayer with tears—God bottles every tear!

(1) *"You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book!" Psalm 56:8.*

f) When the secrets of all hearts shall be opened, God will make an honorable mention of the zeal and devotion of his people, and he himself will be the herald of their praises.

(1) *"Then shall every man have praise of God."*

g) The infiniteness of God's knowledge is a comfort, in the case of saints who have not a clear knowledge of themselves.

(1) *They find so much corruption, that they judge they have no grace.*

(2) *"If it is so—why am I thus? If I have grace, why is my heart in so dead and earthly a frame?"*

(3) *Oh remember, God is of infinite knowledge—he can spy grace where you cannot; he can see grace hidden under corruption, as the stars may be hidden behind a cloud. God can see that holiness in you, which you cannot discern in yourself.*

(a) *He can spy the flower of grace in you, though overtopped with weeds.*

(b) *"Because there is some good thing in him."*

(c) *God sees some good thing in His people—when they can see no good in themselves; and though they judge themselves harshly, He will forgive their sins and infirmities!*

(4) *It is comfort in respect of personal injuries.*

(5) *It is the saints' lot to suffer.*

(a) *The head being crowned with thorns, the feet must not tread upon roses.*

(b) *If saints find a real purgatory, it is in this life; but this is their comfort—that God sees the wrong which is done to them; the pupil of his eye is touched, and is he not sensible of it?*

(6) *Paul was scourged by cruel hands.*

(a) *"Thrice was I beaten with rods;" as if you should see a slave whip the king's son! God beholds it.*

(b) *"I know their sorrows."*

(c) *The wicked make wounds in the backs of the saints, and then pour in vinegar; but God writes down their cruelty.*

(d) *Believers are a part of Christ's mystical body; and for every drop of a saint's blood spilt—God puts a drop of wrath in his vial!*

h) (2.) Comfort to the church of God in general.

(1) *If God is a God of knowledge, he sees all the plots of the enemies against Zion, and can make them abortive.*

(2) *The wicked are treacherous, having borrowed their skill from the old serpent!*

(3) *They dig deep, to hide their counsels from God—but he sees them, and can easily counterwork them.*

(4) *The dragon is described with seven heads—to show how he plots against the church; but God is described with seven eyes—to show that he sees all the plots and stratagems of the enemies; and when they deal treacherously, he can easily confound them.*

(5) *"Come," says Pharaoh, "let us deal wisely."*

- (a) *But he never more played the fool, than when he thought to deal wisely.*
- (b) *"During the last watch of the night the Lord looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army, and threw it into confusion." Exodus 14:24.*
- (c) *How may this, like sap in the vine, comfort the church of God in her earthly state!*
- (d) *The Lord has an eye in all the councils and machinations of the enemy; he sees them in their efforts, and can blow them up in their own mine!*