

# The Strange and Wonderful Attributes of God

## Lesson #12 – God’s Omniscience, Omnipresence, and Omnipotence

These attributes are generally easily understood and are self-described by the words which name them. It seems that most Christians accept them without giving them much thought since they tend to be memorable and are most familiar.

### I. Definition of God’s Omniscience, Omnipresence, and Omnipotence

The prefix “omni” comes from the Latin *omnis* meaning “all”. Therefore anytime this prefix is attached to the front of a word, the meaning is all of that thing.

**Omniscience** is a combination of the prefix *omni* with the word *science*. Thus the definition of omniscience is that God holds all knowledge of all things with complete certainty, because He knows them by His own nature. He is the great “I AM”, always knowing everything in the present tense. There is no shortcoming in this complete knowledge that He holds based on His nature of relating to all things.

**Omnipresence** has the straight forward meaning that God is present everywhere. He is not absent from anywhere within His created orders. We always live our lives *Coram Deo*, before the face of God.

“To live *Coram Deo* is to live one’s entire life in the presence of God, under the authority of God, to the glory of God.” from R.C. Sproul, Blog of 5/27/15

We cannot hide from God or withhold any of our experiences or thoughts from Him. He sees all, hears all, feels all, smells all, tastes all, knows all, and remembers all.

**Omnipotence** has the meaning of all potent or all powerful. God has all capacity to effect His own created orders. All things within these created orders are under His complete control and authority. Nothing can occur that He did not intend to occur. He has every capacity and authority to determine the end state of all things that He has purposed.

#### Categorical Discussions:

**Is this an Existential or a Relational Category?** All three of these are existential attributes of the God of Scripture.

His **Omniscience** is existentially rooted in His existence in all dimensions, beyond what we even know of.

His **Omnipresence** refers to His presence throughout at least all of the dimensions that we experience, namely, length, width, height, and time. He certainly exists in dimensions that we don’t experience and can’t conceive of. We can’t even imagine these dimensions and we can’t know anything of them other than that God exists Transcendent above all the dimensions that we do experience.

His **Omnipotence** expresses His power to speak the universe into existence out of nothing (*ex-nihilo*). His power and authority extend throughout all matter, throughout the three physical dimensions of space, throughout all time, throughout the natural laws that He created, and throughout all of the energy in the universe. Clearly, whatever is beyond this universe, He also has full power and authority, including the spiritual reign of angels and demons.

**Is this an Incommunicable or a Communicable Category?** All three of these attributes of God are incommunicable attributes. We creatures cannot relate to, understand, or even imagine them within our own experience or with any capacity within ourselves.

**Problem Statement:** These attributes of God are relatively easy for most Christians to understand and even to accept because they are clearly taught without confusion in Scripture and the English phrases are clear and unambiguous to us. Our problem is that we have failed to meditate on these attributes and arrive at serious conclusions regarding what they ultimately mean. We have failed to understand the absolute nature of God’s sovereign rule over all that we are, that we know, and that we experience.

This act of serious meditation and consideration is essential for we Christians to understand the absolute Lordship of our God. We struggle to accept the idea that “*The fear of the LORD is the*

## The Strange and Wonderful Attributes of God

*beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.” Pr 1:7 We must become lovers of truth, and knowledge, and wisdom. We must seek to know our God in all that He has graciously revealed to us. We must be transformed by such knowledge.*

### II. Logic and Importance of God’s Omniscience, Omnipresence, and Omnipotence

Since God has all knowledge with certainty, is everywhere present at all times, and has all authority and power to control every atom and molecule in the universe, He is not without means to be entirely sovereign in His rule over the universe and all it contains. The same must be said of His sovereignty over the spiritual world of angels and demons. When we acknowledge God as Lord and Sovereign, we must acknowledge that this sovereignty is absolute and without limits. Nothing can stand against a God like this.

**Dan 4:34-35** *But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation. <sup>35</sup>All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'*

#### Consequences of God’s Omniscience, Omnipresence, and Omnipotence

Since we are clearly taught these attributes of God with the full authority of Scriptures, we must worship this God and not a lesser image of this God. The God of our faith is beyond our imagination, without limits, holding the full authority and capacity to be fully sovereign over everything that might cause us concern in this life. In light of this knowledge, our faith must be a faith of pure worship and confidence in the God of Scripture and His absolute ability and counsel to protect and glorify His own people.

#### Historicity of God’s Omniscience, Omnipresence, and Omnipotence

These three attributes of God extend back throughout the Old Testament. Men were not always faithful in acknowledging what was spoken of God, but they were known. They are clearly taught in both the Old Testament and the New. We men and women of faith have routinely not pursued a faith based on certain knowledge and it has left our faith weak and sometimes ineffectual.

These concepts were spoken of by the prophets, by Gentile pagans, and certainly by the Church Fathers, and yet we still struggle to have a faith solidly built on these attributes of our God.

### III. Scriptural Basis of God’s Omniscience, Omnipresence, and Omnipotence

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scriptures are quoted from the New American Standard Updated version (NASU) Some verses pertinent to this goal of knowing of God’s Omniscience, Omnipresence, and Omnipotence are:

**Job 26:10-14** *He has inscribed a circle on the surface of the waters at the boundary of light and darkness. <sup>11</sup>The pillars of heaven tremble and are amazed at His rebuke. <sup>12</sup>He quieted the sea with His power, and by His understanding He shattered Rahab. <sup>13</sup>By His breath the heavens are cleared; His hand has pierced the fleeing serpent. <sup>14</sup>Behold, these are the fringes of His ways; and how faint a word we hear of Him! But His mighty thunder, who can understand?* **Omnipotence**

**Job 31:1-4** *I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin? <sup>2</sup>And what is the portion of God from above or the heritage of the Almighty from on high? <sup>3</sup>Is it not calamity to the unjust and disaster to those who work iniquity? <sup>4</sup>Does He not see my ways and number all my steps?* **Omniscience & Omnipresence**

**Job 37:11-13** *Also with moisture He loads the thick cloud; He disperses the cloud of His lightning. <sup>12</sup>It changes direction, turning around by His guidance, that it may do whatever He commands it on the face of the inhabited earth. <sup>13</sup>Whether for correction, or for His world, or for lovingkindness, He causes it to happen.* **Omnipotence**

**Job 38-41 All** See 38:1-7; 38:19-21; 38:31-38; 39:19-25; 40:6-14; 41:1-5 **Omniscience & Omnipotence**

## The Strange and Wonderful Attributes of God

**Ps 139:1-18** 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. <sup>5</sup>You have enclosed me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. <sup>6</sup>Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain to it. **Omniscience**

<sup>7</sup>Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? <sup>8</sup>If I ascend to heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. <sup>9</sup>If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, <sup>10</sup>even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will lay hold of me. **Omnipresence**

<sup>11</sup>If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, and the light around me will be night," <sup>12</sup>Even the darkness is not dark to You, and the night is as bright as the day. Darkness and light are alike to You. **Omniscience**

<sup>13</sup>For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. <sup>14</sup>I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. **Omnipotence**

<sup>15</sup>My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; <sup>16</sup>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. <sup>17</sup>How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! <sup>18</sup>If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand. When I awake, I am still with You. **Omniscience, Omnipresence, Omnipotence**

**Isa 48:3** I declared the former things long ago and they went forth from My mouth, and I proclaimed them. Suddenly, I acted, and they came to pass. **Omnipotence**

**Dan 2:25-30** Then Arioch hurriedly brought Daniel into the king's presence and spoke to him as follows: "I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can make the interpretation known to the king!" <sup>26</sup>The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen and its interpretation?" <sup>27</sup>Daniel answered before the king and said, "As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians nor diviners are able to declare it to the king. <sup>28</sup>**However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries**, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed. <sup>29</sup>As for you, O king, while on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future; and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will take place. <sup>30</sup>But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind."

**Daniel reveals to Belteshazzar the future of the world history with a description of a Great Statue in vv. 31-35.** Following this revelation, Daniel explains the meaning of this Great Statue. **vv. 36-49**

**Omniscience**

**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. **Omniscience**

### IV. Important Points About God's Omniscience, Omnipresence, and Omnipotence

#### 1<sup>st</sup> How God's Omniscience, Omnipresence, and Omnipotence Relates to Other Attributes

These 3 attributes of God provide a context relating to Transcendence (Lesson # 6) that amplify all other attributes of God. Remembering how the Simpleness of God connects all of these attributes in One thing leads us to a truth about God by which we must say, of course God must be entirely Omnipresent (or Omnipotent, or Omniscient) or He would not be the God of Scripture.

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Why God's Omniscience, Omnipresence, and Omnipotence is Important to Our Faith

The promises of God are true and certain because God is faithful, but He is faithful, because He made those promises with "full knowledge", with intimate knowledge of the promised recipients, and with full power and authority to accomplish what He promised.

## The Strange and Wonderful Attributes of God

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Confessions or Creeds that Address God's Omniscience, Omnipresence, and Omnipotence

In Chapter 2 God and the Holy Trinity, Article 1 - The Lord our God is the one and only living and true God; whose subsistence is in and of Himself; who is infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but Himself; who is a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions; who only has immortality; who dwells in the light which no man can approach, who is immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, **in every way infinite**, most holy, most wise, most free, most absolute; **who works all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will**, for His own glory; who is most loving, gracious, merciful, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; who forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin; Who is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him; and who, at the same time, is most just and terrible in His judgements, hating all sin and who will by no means clear the guilty.

### 4<sup>th</sup> Errors/Heresies that Deny God's Omniscience, Omnipresence, and Omnipotence

Unitarians, Universalists, theological liberals, and many modern theological Arminians deny and/or ignore these teachings regarding the Godhead.

### Important Quotes

#### About God's Omniscience, Omnipresence, and Omnipotence

The power of God is that ability and strength whereby He can bring to pass whatsoever He pleases, whatsoever His infinite wisdom may direct, and whatsoever the infinite purity of His will may resolve . . . As holiness is the beauty of all God's attributes, **so power is that which gives life and action to all the perfections of the Divine nature. How vain would be the eternal counsels, if power did not step in to execute them.** Without power His mercy would be but feeble pity, His promises an empty sound, His threatenings a mere scarecrow. God's power is like Himself: infinite, eternal, incomprehensible; it can neither be checked, restrained, nor frustrated by the creature.

**Stephen Charnock**; from Pink's *The Attributes of God*; p. 58

The Scriptures teach that God has never learned anything from anyone. "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counsellor hath taught Him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and shewed to Him the way to understanding?" "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?" These rhetorical questions put by the prophet Isaiah and the apostle Paul declares that God has never learned. From there it is only a step to the conclusion that God cannot learn. **Could God at anytime 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 Himself. To think of a God who must sit at the feet of a teacher, even though that teacher be an archangel or a seraph, is to think of someone other than the Most High God, maker of heaven and earth. **A. W. Tozer**; *The Knowledge of the Holy*; p. 55

When you wish to do something evil, you retire from the public into your house where no enemy may see you; from those places of your house which are open and visible to the eyes of men you remove yourself into your room; even in your room you fear some witness from another quarter; you retire into your heart, there you meditate: He is more inward than your heart. Wherever, therefore, you shall have fled, there He is. From yourself, whither will you flee? But since there is One more inward even than yourself, there is no place where you may flee from God angry but to God reconciled. There is no place at all whither you may flee. Will you flee from Him? Flee unto Him.

**Herman Bavinck**; *The Doctrine of God*; from Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology; p. 177