

## Sunday, February 27, 2022 | The Immutable Characteristics of God

Psalms 139:1-18 | "The Allness God"

### Announcements:

- Funerals
    - o Ryan Stepan's Grandfather, Tuesday, 10am is viewing, 11am is service.
    - o Bruce Buck, Saturday, no viewing, but service will be at 11am.
  - VBS Wednesdays July 20<sup>th</sup>-August 10<sup>th</sup> with a church-wide picnic on August 14<sup>th</sup>.
  - Easter Sunday is April 17<sup>th</sup>. There'll be two services, 9:30am, and 11:00am. There will be no bible fellowship that morning.
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Last week, we kicked off a series called The Immutable Characteristics of God. This series is intended to give you a crash course into, exactly, God is. After all, it's pretty difficult to follow someone if you don't know who they are.

And though God has many attributes, and any one of them would've been an excellent place to start, we spoke about what it means when we say that God is immutable. "Immutable" means that God does not change. And there is nothing more reassuring than God's immutability. It is the nail upon which all the other attributes hang and, without its virtue, would render the rest of God's characteristics meaningless. This is why we started with God's immutability because if he did change, everything that we talk about today and in the coming weeks would be worthless. What value is there in believing that God is loving if he will, someday, stop being loving? Thus, **God's immutability means we have ever-lasting stability.** Life is defined by change for better and worse, and nothing is immune to its effects. Given enough time, rivers shift their banks, and even mountains alter their shape. But the Lord does not change. He is the one constant in the universe. What permanence we might perceive in this life is nothing more than a cheap imitation of our changeless God. Our world changes, but our God never does.

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Where we tackled only one of God's characteristics last week, today, I'm going to attempt to cover three in the same amount of time: omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence. To say things like "My God knows all things," or that, "My God is everywhere," or even, "There is nothing my God cannot do," we are speaking about what Tony Evans calls the "allness" of God.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Evans, Tony, *God Himself: A Journey Through His Attributes*, (Chicago, IL; Moody Publishers, 2020), p. 33.

“Omni” comes from the Latin term “omnis” (om-nēs), which translates to “all.” When used as a prefix, it indicates the “allness” of something. For instance, a microphone can either be omnidirectional, which means it can pick up sounds from all directions, or unidirectional, which means its ability to pick up sounds is limited to one direction. Or, we might speak of animals as being herbivores (plant-eaters; i.e., cows), carnivores (meat-eaters; i.e., lions), or omnivores (all-eaters; i.e., humans). Thus, to speak of the omni-attributes of God is to speak of God’s limitless, infinite, and unfathomable existence. This, in part, is what makes him God. He is not just the Ageless One but the Infinite One whose very existence knows no bounds (i.e., a bucket of water in the ocean).

Just as when we spoke of God's immutability, there is any number of places we could turn to in the Scriptures which speak of God’s allness. But, thankfully, there is actually a passage that speaks of not only God's omniscience and omnipresence but also his omnipotence, all three in one chapter.

**READ:** Psalm 139:1-6 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup>O Lord, you have searched me and known me! <sup>2</sup>You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. <sup>3</sup>You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. <sup>4</sup>Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. <sup>5</sup>You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. <sup>6</sup>Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

When we speak of God’s omniscience, we're saying that there is no logic that God cannot have because he knows all the principles.

David says that the Lord has thoroughly "searched" and "known" him. That God knows when David “sits down,” “rises up,” and understands every one of his thoughts even though they might be, metaphorically, “afar.” There is no “path” hidden from God's sight, David says, because our Lord is “acquainted” with every way. In fact, God's knowledge is so complete that He knows what David will say “even before” he speaks. David goes on to say that God's omniscience is so vast, so intact, and so unbroken that it is as if God himself has “hemmed” David in from “behind and before;” David is surrounded on all sides by God’s knowledge. And such “knowledge,” he says, “is too wonderful for me; it is [so] high that [he] cannot [understand] it.”

When it comes to understanding God, all we have is belief. Human reasoning falls short of fully grasping what it means when saying that God is “omniscient.” It doesn't make sense, really, but we still must believe it. Or, as Augustine once admonished, “Believe so that you may

understand.” To do otherwise would deny who God has revealed himself to be, and this is something we must ***never*** do. While reason has its place, it is always secondary to belief. We may not fully understand how it is that God knows everything, but we must believe it.

Interestingly, while God undoubtedly knows all things, he amazingly chooses to forget some things. Jeremiah the Prophet talks about a day when a new covenant will take hold of the world, and he declares that God will “...**forgive [our] iniquity, and [He] will remember [our] sin no more**” (cf. Jer. 31:34). **Meaning that the only thing an all-knowing God “cannot” remember is the sins of the forgiven.**

But David does not stop there. He talks about how God does not only know all things; He is also in every place (omnipresence).

**READ: Psalm 139:7-12 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? <sup>8</sup> If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! <sup>9</sup> If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, <sup>10</sup> Even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. <sup>11</sup> If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,” <sup>12</sup> even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.

**When we speak of God's "omnipresence," we're saying that there is no location that God cannot be because he is in all the places.**

David starts by asking two rhetorical questions: “Where shall I go from your Spirit?” and “Where shall I flee from your presence?” And the answer to both is a resounding, “NOWHERE!” There is no place that David can “go” where God's spirit is not already there, and there is no place that David can “flee” where God's presence is not already there. God is everywhere at all times, and there is no place that God isn't.

It will be like asking if there is a ***spot*** we could walk to where we'd no longer be on earth? No. Okay, suppose we were to get into a hot air balloon, and we started to float above the ground, would there ever be a ***point*** at which we'd leave the atmosphere? No. Okay, suppose you got into a rocket ship and blasted off into outer space, would there ever be a ***place*** you could travel to where you would no longer be in this universe? No. Every time we go beyond some boundary line of our existence, there has always been another frontier to discover. Our “world” keeps getting bigger and bigger, but every time our universe expands, our understanding of God expands along with it. God is bigger than our world and our galaxy (cf. 1 Ki. 8:26-27). Should we travel to the edges of the universe, we would find that God is already there.

Interestingly, David then moves beyond spatial terminology (i.e., “go” and “flee”) and starts to use spiritual language to illustrate that even if we were to traverse the non-physical realm, we still would not be able to get away from God’s presence. “If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.” No matter if David could buy a pair of “morning wings” to “fly” to “heaven” or travel to the deepest part of the “sea” and make his “bed in Sheol,” he would feel God’s presence as if he were led by the Lord’s “right hand” or as if God himself was holding him tight.

If God is in every place, this means his presence is both in heaven and in hell. We often think of hell as the Devil's domain. This is nonsense in the same way that if we were to assume a cage was the domain of some feral beast. In actuality, this world—our world—is Satan’s domain (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Jn. 5:19). And this means that demons no more want to go to hell than we do (cf. Lu. 8:31). Hell is a place of suffering in the same way that heaven is a place of satisfaction. But, understand me, both places personify aspects of God’s character. God is just, and so there must be a hell. God is merciful, and so there must be a heaven. And as such, both places manifest God's presence.

Yet, as clearly as we see in the light of day, God sees all things even though we may be in the darkest night (cf. Pro. 15:3). So much so that if David were to say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,” even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.” Metaphorically, God is light, and there is no evil darkness in him. However, the literal night is not dark to God.

While God is everywhere, he does not relate to everything the same way. Whether in heaven or hell, we could say that a person is in the presence of God and be perfectly/theologically correct. But only a fool cannot see that God's presence means something different depending on whether one finds themselves in heaven or hell. Conditional upon whether you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior or not will determine whether God interacts with you in a general sense or a relational sense. God is undoubtedly in all places, but he also chooses to limit his own existence based on how we interact with him. Thus, the only place an ever-present God cannot “go” are the hearts of those who do not want him there (cf. Isa. 29:13).

David then moves, lastly, to speak of God's omnipotence. After all, God is in every place and knows everything, but our God is also the God Almighty who can do all things.

**READ:** Psalm 139:13-16 (ESV)

<sup>13</sup> For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. <sup>14</sup> I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. <sup>15</sup> My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. <sup>16</sup> Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

When we speak of God's "**omnipotence**," we're saying that there is **no level** that God cannot attain because he wields **all** the **power**.

David says that he was “formed” not by the hands of chance or accident but by the hand of God. So much so that he can say of himself that he is “fearfully and wonderfully made” and that “wonderful are [God’s] works; my soul knows it very well.” This means that every piece of him had been thoughtfully “knitted” together in his “mother’s womb.” What’s more, David goes on to say that his “frame”—that is his blueprint—wasn’t a mystery that God had to work through. Long before his own mother knew what David would look or sound like, the Lord knew who David would be even though he was as yet in his “unformed substance.” So much so that the great psalmist could say that even before any earthly book knew his name, God had numbered all of David’s days in his own “book” before he ever started his first one here on planet earth (cf. Ac. 15:18).

Far from being haphazardly thrown together at the last minute, God made David with intentionality and purpose. Not one hair on his head was there by accident (cf. Mat. 10:30). Interestingly, scientists tell us that out of the 23 chromosomes in our DNA, we get the entirety of the human race. This means that God takes the formless mass of our genetic material and makes a unique individual at the moment of conception. And if God has poured the totality of his creative genius into making each and every human being, I think we can say with some assurance that no one is an accident.

Interestingly, there is a "limit" to what can do. James tells us that there is fighting and quarreling because we are a people driven by our passions (cf. Jam. 4:1-3). Human beings murder one another because they do not have enough. And we do not have enough because we do not ask God to provide. And, in those rare instances where we ask God to provide, we don't get what we ask for because we're asking for things against God's will. Meaning that **even though God is without limit when it comes to his power, the only thing an all-powerful God “cannot” do is that which is against his will** (cf. Ja. 4:1-3).

### So, WHAT'S THE TAKEAWAY?

God's "allness" means that He is all we'll ever need.

**READ:** Psalm 139:17-18 (ESV)

<sup>17</sup> How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! <sup>18</sup> If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you.

Towards the end of our passage, David says that God's allness was of so much comfort that the knowledge of them was "precious" and a "vast...sum." There is no knowledge my God does not already know. There is no place where my God will not be found. And there is nothing my God cannot do. He is already everything there is and will be everything I will need.

In light of what's going on in our world this week, I am grateful that God has our church in a series where we're learning about his attributes. My soul needed these reminders. For instance, since God is everywhere (omnipresence), who else could you turn to when you have nowhere else to go? Since God knows everything (omniscience), who else could you turn to when you do not know what to do? And since God has every power (omnipotence), who else could you turn to when you have no more strength to give?

### So, WHAT'S THE TAKEAWAY?

God's "allness"—omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence—means that He is all we'll ever need. The Lord ought to be the first one we turn to, not the last.

## Video Description

The Immutable Characteristics of God | Week 2 | “The Allness God”

TEXT: Psalms 139:1-18

Since God is **every**where (**omni**presence), who else could you turn to when you have nowhere else to go? Since God knows **every**thing (**omni**science), who else could you turn to when you do not know what to do? And since God has **every** power (**omni**potence), who else could you turn to when you have no more strength to give? God’s “**allness**”—**omni**science, **omni**presence, **omni**potence—means that He is **all** we’ll ever **need**. The Lord ought to be the first one we turn to, not the last.

Pastor’s manuscript can be found here: