



“Getting to Know God”

Section 2: What Can We Know About What God Is Like?

Unit 2.3: Life Beyond All Limits



I) The Laws of Our Limits

- Now that we have a better understanding of the total independence of God’s existence, and the unchangeable nature of His character, in this unit we will begin to explore the uniqueness of that character through several incommunicable attributes of God’s *greatness*. As previously discussed, the greatness of God in theological studies deals with His natural characteristics in relation to the created dimensions of time, space, and matter. Since God is *transcendent* over all His creation, these attributes reflect how God exceeds all created limits. Therefore, we must confess as we begin this study that although God calls us to seek a greater understanding of His nature, our thoughts and words are insufficient to speak of an unlimited God in limited human terms. When King Solomon reflected on this transcendence of God’s nature and work, he confessed in **Ecclesiastes 8:16-17**, “¹⁶ When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how neither day nor night do one’s eyes see sleep, ¹⁷ then I saw all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out.” This truth of a God who surpasses all our limits is perhaps best captured by seventh century theologian, Maximus the Confessor, who once famously stated, “*Whoever has seen God and has understood what he saw, has seen nothing.*”

II) His Majesty is Without Measure

- When we speak of the greatness of God, another word that is often used in Scripture to capture this concept is God’s *majesty*. As **Psalm 93:1-2** proclaims, “*The Lord reigns; he is robed in majesty.*” This majesty sets God apart as One who rules and reigns over His creation. The majesty of God is an ideal way to talk about God’s greatness because all His natural attributes are immeasurable and transcend every area of life we can observe and calculate to determine temporal value. We often measure *weight, distance, length, height, volume, energy, endurance, strength, speed, or sound* to determine something’s identity or relational worth. However, all of these quantities of measurement are only possible through the limits of the created order and God transcends them all. In the church today, we need to recapture this glorious truth of God’s unspeakable majesty, and we need to have a true vision of God’s greatness that goes beyond all limits of human measurement and leads us to worship Him.

III) To Infinity & Beyond

- Another way of discussing God’s transcendence over creation is to acknowledge that God is *infinite* in all of His attributes. In other words, God is limitless in every direction and through any observable human measure. We often talk about His infinite size or ability in theological discussions through the “*omni*’s” (His omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence). The word *omni* means “*universal*” and each of these areas demonstrate how God is above, outside of, and beyond all areas that we ourselves are limited in. Also, we must remember that in each of these attributes God’s possession of them is *instantaneous, comprehensive, inexhaustible, effortless, uncompromising, and unapproachable*. As the psalmist confesses in **Psalm 145:3**, “*Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.*” We encounter the infinite truths of God all over Scripture, including these words in **Job 11:7-10**, which illustrate the infinite and unsearchable greatness of the God we serve: “⁷ “Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty? ⁸ It is higher than heaven—what can you do? Deeper than Sheol—what can you know? ⁹ Its measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea. ¹⁰ If he passes through and imprisons and summons the court, who can turn him back?”

IV) Transcending all Time Restrictions

- Time is simply a measurement of the succession of events in created history. And although God uniquely interacts with finite creatures in moments of time, He Himself created time and stands completely outside of any of its restrictions. Therefore, we must see God as *eternal*, and seek to know Him through the lens of eternity. Scripture is saturated with this divine truth of God's eternity. As **Psalm 90:2** proclaims, *"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God."* **Isaiah 46:10** also states that God declares *"the end from the beginning"* and **Deuteronomy 33:27** reveals that God is an eternal *"dwelling place"* who shelters us in His *"everlasting arms."* Finally, we must also recognize that although we are finite creatures born in a distinct moment in time and space, we are also unceasing spiritual beings with an eternal future. God has given us all an inherent desire to seek an eternity beyond this temporal world. As **Ecclesiastes 3:11** states, *"¹¹ He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end."*

V) Surpassing all Spatial Boundaries

- As we shift our attention from the measurements of *time* to *space*, we must understand two terms that describe God's relation to spatial boundaries. First is God's *immensity*, which points to His transcendence over space. He transcends every space and boundary of created matter. The second term is God's *omnipresence*, which means that He also fills every space with His entire being. In simpler words, God is never *shut up, shut down, shut in, or shut out* of any place at any time. This glorious truth of God's immensity and omnipresence is declared in passages such as **Psalm 139:7-10** and **Jeremiah 23:24**. And, as Hildebert of Lavardin perfectly summarizes, *"God is over all things; under all things; outside all; within but not enclosed; without but not excluded; above but not raised up; below but not depressed; wholly above, presiding; wholly beneath, sustaining; wholly within, filling."*

VI) Knowing all that Can be Known

- We must also recognize that God is not only everywhere at all times, but He has complete and total knowledge of every letter and concept of truth that exists and can be known. What is even more remarkable is that God's knowledge is never learned and will never be forgotten. This reality is known as the *omniscience* of God. His omniscience means God knows everything that can be known, including what has been known, is now known, will be known, and could have been known but is not. The Bible is also full of precious passages that speak of God's divine knowledge in stark contrast to our limited, finite minds including **Isaiah 40:13**, **Romans 11:34**, and **1 Corinthians 2:16**.

VII) Possessing all Power & Ability

- If God is truly Almighty and is at all places and knows all things, He must also have the power and ability to do all things as our Creator and Sustainer. This exclusive, effortless, inexhaustible power that God has to govern the universe is known as the *omnipotence* of God. Once again, there are no shortage of passages in Holy Scripture to demonstrate God's unlimited power. Some of these verses include **Romans 1:20** where God's power is reflected in *creation*, and **Luke 18:27** where God's power is shown in the *salvation* of mankind. However, one passage that unites the idea of God's almighty power working in perfect harmony with His complete knowledge is found in **Psalm 147:5**, which states, *"Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure."*

VIII) Serving Him in Light of Our Limits

- When we see these limitless realities of our Creator, we should respond in a continual state of *humility*. This call to humility does not mean that we practice self-hatred, but instead that we see our fixed limitations in light of the unlimited God we serve. We have a limited perspective to see and understand the world, a limited amount of time and space to live and work, and a limited resource of power and abilities to complete our assignments. Therefore, we must seek the *unlimited grace* of God and rest in His inexhaustible resources to fulfill our purpose on this earth and glorify Him. May we remember that God's strength is made perfect in weakness (**2 Corinthians 12:9**), and may we rest in these words from Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier who said, *"Before me, even as behind, God is, and all is well."*