

A Lord's Day Snippet!

Biblical And Southern Studies

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Can creatures to perfection find
Th' eternal, uncreated Mind?
Or can the largest stretch of thought
Measure and search his nature out?

'Tis high as heav'n, 'tis deep as hell
And what can mortals know or tell?
His glory spreads beyond the sky,
And all the shining worlds on high.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

God is Incomprehensible but Knowable

The Almighty "... we cannot find him out."

Job 37:23

“We cannot find him out,” for He is incomprehensible or beyond our understanding as finite men. God cannot be found out—infinity. Man as finite cannot find Him out. God is *infinite* which means He is without limitations; God is *infinite* in duration, having neither beginning nor ending; He is also *infinite* in presence, or omnipresent, and His perfections are *infinite* [Webster]. Man, the created being is *finite* which means he is limited to time and space; thus, as fallen his limitation in knowledge is more limited and complicated than before the fall. John Calvin used the formula *finitum non capax infinitum*, “*the finite cannot grasp the infinite.*” Only the infinite God can know Himself infinitely; a finite person can only know God finitely. “God is self-existent and self-contained and knows what no creature can ever know—

Himself, perfectly” [Tozer]. The God who knows us completely can only be known by us incompletely. The Psalmist confessed, “O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.... For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.... Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it” (Ps. 139:1-2, 4, 6). Such knowledge is too extraordinary, for it is so high I cannot reach it. The perfections of God have a way of highlighting our own imperfections. God knows all things and can never come upon anything new! Thus, the Almighty is *never* surprised! The Lord never asks questions for His own information but for the revealing of man to himself!

So, when our text says God cannot be found out, we must realize how limited our knowledge and understanding are. A question arises, “Can we know God who is unknowable?” Here we should realize God’s unsearchableness. “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable” (Ps. 145:3). The magnitude of God’s being is beyond our searching for He is unsearchable. Why are we so limited? We were created, and fallen ones at that, thus finite. “Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite” (Ps. 147:5). There is no way of measuring God’s understanding. Paul spoke this of God. “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out” (Rom. 11:33)! Since our knowledge of God is limited, there is help from the Lord, “But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things

of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Cor. 2:10-12). We can know about God and His works for they "are freely given to us of God." We will never fully understand God, and it is true that we will never completely understand any attribute or doctrine of God. "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus" (Rom. 9:20)? This is saying men are limited.

"To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?... Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.... Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding" (Isa. 40:18, 21-22, 28). This God is infinite and obviously man is limited and cannot search God's "understanding." Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, even so God's ways are higher than our ways (Isa. 55:9).

The finite cannot know God as God is and knows Himself. The essence and being of God are beyond human comprehension. It is incorrect to say God cannot be understood, but it is accurate to say that He cannot be completely or exhaustively understood. We look through that dark glass. Can we "by searching find out God" (Job 11:7)? Joseph Caryl explained, "We may find God by searching, but we cannot find him out,

that is, we cannot find the utmost of God, as the next clause seems to explain, ‘Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?’” The answer is we cannot! “God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend” (Job 37:5). What God does we cannot comprehend. We may know something about God’s grace, His love, His power, His wisdom, etc., but we cannot understand or comprehend them fully or exhaustively. As David said and we noted earlier, such knowledge is too wonderful to be attained.

To say that God is incomprehensible is not the same as saying He cannot be known. The Bible is predicated upon the concept that God who was in the beginning is beyond human comprehension as Creator over creature. We cannot fathom the deep things of God; God can be known only as He makes Himself known. The secret things are His, but the things He reveals are for us and our children forever (Deut. 29:29). The reason God gave us the Bible is to make Himself known. “This is eternal life,” Jesus said, “that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou have sent” (John 17:3).

As mentioned earlier even in heaven the believer’s knowledge shall not be able to fully comprehend God. Yes, there we are free from our sin nature and free from an environment impacted by sin, but this does not mean we who are finite become infinite. Our knowledge will be increased, and we shall know as we are known even though now, we see through a glass darkly (1 Cor. 13:12). In heaven our knowledge as Christian people will be complete or full but that does not change us into God. We shall be like Christ for we shall see Him as He is.

Dr. R. C. Sproul explained, “When we die and go to heaven, we will experience a huge leap in our understanding and apprehension of God, when so much of the mist will be removed from the dim and dark mirror through which we now look. Yet even in heaven we will still be finite creatures. However glorified we will be, we will still be incapable of comprehending God completely.”