

God The Scientist

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[0 : 0 0] Now I want this morning to make some reference to Sam 139 that we were reading earlier on, but I also want to quote quite a lot of scripture today. So you need to hang with me as I quote a lot of scripture from different parts of the Bible. You don't need to look it up, I'll just give you the reference and I'll read it. But it's kind of taking in quite a lot of different things about this truth of who God is and God as the all-knowing one, the scientist. Now just before I start it's just very nice to see the Eglinton's coming in after having prayed for them. The twins are with us today so that's lovely and it's good to see them back with us and we praise God for that. Late as usual, but apart from that we praise God for that. Now one of the amazing things about life is, and we don't often speak about this, is how much we are driven or how much we are imprisoned by fear, even as Christians I think. It's a terrible thing and I think it stalks our lives. You might not think about it too much but I'm sure that can be the case. We're very afraid as Christians. Not as Christians but I think generally as people we're afraid, we're afraid of the unknown. You're afraid of how people will respond and react to you today or maybe in the weeks that lie ahead. You may be afraid of the future, you may be afraid of dying.

I don't suppose many of us are not afraid of dying if we're honest. That is the ultimate unknown at one level of course, not ultimately for Christians. You're afraid of looking stupid. You've done quizzes with someone that's really good at quizzes and how they make you feel stupid by having all the right answers. Don't like that. You're afraid of being found out sometimes. You're pressed that button, send on the email, you realise you've cc'd the person into that that you really didn't want them to hear or read what you were reading about them or a text that went to the wrong person and said the wrong things or afraid. Afraid of being found out about who we love, unrequited love and that person may be finding out we don't want that. Afraid of our sexuality, afraid of our fraud being found out, our lies or cheating, our affairs, our abuse. I'm sure there's a lot of famous people from the 70s just now who are afraid of being found out for sexual abuse that they seemed to be engaged in. We're afraid of big brother, we're afraid of rejection, we're afraid of people knowing things about us. You know, one of the worst things about a house break is the fact that someone's opened all your drawers and all your cupboards and dumped everything out. The fear of someone knowing and doing these things is horrible.

The fear of staring, I read about this this week and I thought how true it is, I'm going to quote something from a book that I was reading about, we're afraid of being stared at for too long. You can stare at things and you can stare at animals but you don't stare at other people because very shortly they'll become uneasy if you stare at them.

And interestingly Jean Paul Sartre, one of his best known books is plays called No Exit and there's four characters in a room with nothing to do but talk to and stare at each other and for him it's a symbol of hell. It's very interesting. In the closing lines of the play it becomes clear. He says, Garson stands at the mantelpiece stroking a bronze bust. He says, now, yes, now is the moment. I'm looking at this thing on the mantelpiece and I understand that I'm in hell. I tell you, everything's been thought out beforehand.

They knew I'd stand at the fireplace stroking this thing of bronze with all those eyes and tent on me. Devouring me, he swings abruptly. What? Only two of you. I thought there were more, many more laughs. So this is hell. I'd never have believed it. You remember all we were told about the torture chambers, the fire and brimstone, the burning marl, old wives tales. There's no need for red hot poker. Hell is the famous quotation other people.

[4 : 5 3] The point of interest here says the writer is fear of exposure. Where does it come from if not from a real and merited guilt arising from a rebellion against the only sovereign and holy God of the universe? So is that fear of exposure, that fear of being stared at, that fear of being looked at,

fear of a look going into our souls? So we close up, don't we? We have doors and we have locks and we have bolts and we have privacy so that people can't stare at us. We fear that level of intrusion into our lives. And we fear ignorance and so we crave knowledge because knowledge is power. And that's why science has become the new God that many people fall down and worship before because science apparently is all knowledge and yet really is it. Science only really tells us and measures and speaks about things that are already there. It doesn't give us anything new. It doesn't tell us anything new. It only helps us to understand what knowledge is already out there, what exists. And it's our servant at that level and we must always remember that. I think as Christians we're afraid of science. We shouldn't be afraid of science, we should embrace science. It's a great thing. It's the knowledge of God's creation, God's world. And it's nothing that

God doesn't already know. So fear is a great reality in many different ways in our lives. And I think the revelation of God and that's a very long introduction I'm sorry to come round to this whole theme of God and the nature of God. As God reveals himself in scripture it is a fearful revelation for us. Because the doctrine we're looking at today is kind of the coming together of a whole lot of different doctrines we've been looking at. We've looked at the fact that God exists. See he simply is, we've looked at the fact that he's unchanging.

We've looked at the fact that he's perfect, that he is one God yet he's trying this remarkable unique being. Last week we saw his set apartness, his holiness and what that means he's eternal. And today we're looking at the fact that he knows everything. He's omniscient is what the theologians will call it. Oh Lord you have searched me and know me. You know when I sit and when I rise. And the Sam is a kind of personal expression of that theological truth about the all-knowing nature of God, the omniscient nature of God. God and can I just unpack that for a moment? It's kind of self-explanatory, doesn't need that much unpacking. But it is that God has full self-knowledge. So we spend our lives trying to get to know each other better. Sorry trying to get to know ourselves better and each other better.

But it takes a lifetime and we never truly fully understand ourselves. But God has full self-knowledge of him. An infinite self-knowledge of himself, Father, Son and Holy Spirit in an open and full and exciting relationship. Absolutely clear. There's no secrets between Father, Son, Holy Spirit. There's nothing unknown between them. They're not exploring each other and they're not learning about each other. They know everything there is to know about each other. God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Full self-knowledge and amazing thing. And within that he also knows everything there is to know. And this of course for us is absolutely mind-blowing. It's mind-blowing that God knows everything there is to know.

[8 : 54] God 37, 16, do not know how the clouds have poised. Those wonders of him who has perfect knowledge. So it speaks of him who has absolutely perfect knowledge. 1 John 3, 20, if our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts and knows everything. Psalm 147, 4 and 5, he determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name. Great is our Lord and mighty in power. His understanding has no limit. He takes the stars and there's this lovely kind of poetic description of his knowledge that he knows the names of all the stars. Now reading this week, I found out that the stars, there's 70 million and then 22 nothings after that, 70 million. 22 nothings. That's how many stars there are.

That's more than, I think I mentioned this before, grains of sand throughout the world on planet earth. And there's this great description of the God who knows each one and names each one of these stars. Just his amazing knowledge. His all, it's beyond our comprehension isn't simply beyond our understanding that this is this great God who holds all knowledge before him that past, the present and the future within time, beyond time. He is all encompassing in his knowledge. That's what the Bible says. He says that he knows Psalm 44, our secrets.

If we'd forgotten the name of God, our spread out, our hands to the foreign God, would not God have discovered it since he knows the secrets of the heart. And of course, Psalm 139 speaks about that. That the Lord knows our thoughts, that the Lord has, you know, it's that picture of his searching Luke. That as we sit together here in worship, we do our very best to hide from one another at some levels, don't we? We certainly don't expose our hearts to one another. And yet we stand here absolutely before God and he knows completely the secrets of our heart and he searches our thoughts. He knows what we say before a word is in my tongue in Psalm 139. You know it completely, oh Lord. Matthew 8 speaks about him knowing what we need before we ask for it. And then the great verse from Isaiah, where he speaks about the end of time. Remember the

former things, things long ago.

I am God and there is no other. I am God. There's none like me. I make known the end from the beginning. I remember when I was fairly new in the ministry, well, 20 years ago, 24, 25 years ago, I must have said something in the pulpit about God knowing the beginning from the end. And some old man came out to me on the way out and shook my hand and he said, I think you'll find it's from the end to the beginning. He knows the end from the beginning and that's the quote and he knows the beginning from the end and that is what is revealed of God's all knowing omniscient, the scientist, the knowledgeable one, so that he knows your life, your destiny, your end, when it will end and how it will end. And he's told us to agree as Christians what our end will be. Our end is going to be that we are like Jesus. We are going to conform to the image of his son and that we will be perfected and that we will have life eternal with him. He's given us broad strokes of what our end will be. He hasn't given us the details, but he knows them absolutely, entirely and completely. You know, he doesn't and won't be and can't be surprised. He isn't sitting up in heaven today saying, well, I wonder which way, which direction people will go in and what will happen? What surprises are coming up? There is no Christmas for Jesus at that level. No surprise presents, nothing. He knows everything there is to know. That makes humans humanity afraid. Let me go back to the beginning. That is a fearful thought for humanity. Pro

Verbs 15 and verse three says, the eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good. Now that for many people is a fearful, absolutely terrifying thought, his piercing eyes looking through and seeing exactly who we are and what we are and what we are like and what our hearts are like today. Absolutely. You know, when someone has said that look, he gazes and someone looks and this is obviously a human point of view. He seemed to stare right through me as if someone looks at us in a way that he knows or they know or she knows exactly what we are thinking. They look right through me. It is kind of like that, that holiness that he knows our hearts and he knows our thoughts and that for us is exposure, isn't it? So we sit here today and we are exposed by God. His look exposes us so that we would say, just as we would say, don't look at me like that. Don't look at me like that as if you know things because that's exactly the kind of look that is spoken of in scripture. He sees the real person today. However much we try and dress up the real person and the real heart within us, he sees often our greed or our lust or our pride or our hatred or he sees our insecurity. He sees our guilt.

[14:53] He sees things and we simply don't like that. We don't like that exposure. We don't like him looking with that all knowing gaze. We find it hugely uncomfortable and so we do what Adam and Eve did at the very beginning when they had rebelled against God and when they sinned against God, they knew that they were naked and that's a hugely significant theological recognition then because it's not about not having clothes on as such. It's about the loss of innocence and it's also about the moral nakedness to which they had been exposed by God's look. What did they try to do? They tried to hide from God. It's all seeing, all knowing God. They thought they could just hide behind a bush and he wouldn't see what they'd done. He wouldn't find out and know that they'd rebelled against his goodness and his grace and his love and his tiny little command and there was that sense of rejection towards God. So as they hide, so often we hide, don't we? We live in a society which rejects God or reinvents God, a God who can't possibly know everything.

That's a ridiculous idea. So we reinvent a God who only knows a little and isn't quite so frightening, isn't quite so fearful or terrifying and we hide. We hide our moral guilt from him. We reject God. We run away from him. We avoid him completely. It's so often the case isn't it when we struggle that we avoid God. We close his boot, we close the word, we don't pray anymore. We avoid Christian company like the plague and we build walls.

We say no entry because we're afraid of God's all seeing eye and his all seeing knowledge and we just run and we think with our little fat legs that we can run away from God and if we keep running he'll not catch up and he'll not see and if we say we don't believe then it won't make any difference. We can just be morally irresponsible and we can pretend that God isn't there and that God doesn't see. We can deny him. Why do we do that? It is so irrational is it not? Was it not utterly irrational for Adam and Eve to hide from the eternal God who knows everything? Is it not irrational for you and for me to hide from God as if somehow he doesn't see us and as if somehow he doesn't know our thoughts and doesn't know our hearts and that we look you down the outside and think that is what will impress God and that the great thing about God and Adam and Eve's case, what did he do for them? Well it's the first signal of grace isn't it? He provides clothes. He provides clothing and

condemned them. He provided clothing for them. He says I know. Here have this. I know. I know exactly what you've done. But have this clothing. Was that an early recognition of sacrifice as they were given animal skins to wear the first sacrifice that pointed towards the great sacrifice? Well we don't really know but seems like a good idea. So what do we do with this fear? What do we do with this terror of God? This terror of one who knows and who sees and you know before whom we are exposed. Let's be honest today. Let us be honest for the short time we're together and not put up a facade and not put up a pretense and not stick our heads in the sand like ostriches. But let's listen and think through what it means the great verse of 1 John 4 verse 18. Perfect love casts out fear. That's what we do with this great fear of God. This fear of his exposure and of his knowledge and of his all seeing omniscience that we can't hide anything from him. We can know that perfect love casts out fear. In other words that fear can be replaced by worship. Fear can be replaced by worship. See God is love and God has come to deal with the root of your sins, root of your fears and of mine. And really sin is the root of all our fears. If you're insecure today and your own body and your own life, your own talents and your gifts that is a sin cursed root behind that. If you're fearful for your job, if you're fearful about the future, all of these things have come because of rebellion and sin. Perfect love casts out fear. There is no fear in Godhead. There's no fear in perfect love. Fear comes from sin because sin brings, what does sin bring with it? It brings division. It brings hatred which we read about in that Psalm, Psalm 139 and it brings death, the ultimate separation.

So fear can be replaced by worship when we come to terms with the truth. God reveals about ourselves, you know, that we are more horribly dark and brutal than we can ever imagine. [20 : 33] But we're more gloriously loved and forgiven by God's grace as we come to him in salvation. That's the amazing reality. We must face up to our fears if these fears are to be exposed and broken and if we are not to be enslaved by them anymore. The only way we can overcome these fears is to take them to the Lord Jesus Christ. How does that work? Well, he covered Adam and Eve, didn't he? Clothes. And he does exactly the same for us. He covers us. Beautifully spoken of in Isaiah 61, I delight greatly in the Lord. My soul rejoices in my God for He has clothed me with garments of salvation and I raid me in a robe of His righteousness.

That's how we can get rid of fear. That's how we can worship God rather than run from God and be afraid of Him because He covers us. When we hear His call and when we come to Him in repentance and faith, we become known by God and covered in His righteousness.

That's what salvation is. He says, I cover you, I clothe you with not your goodness, which is never going to be enough, but with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. And He has taken our sins on the cross. What's happened to Jesus? He's naked on the cross, isn't he? He's exposed to public shame. That's a physical reality, but it's speaking of much deeper spiritual truth. He's ripped apart and opened up and exposed. He's high up on a hill, exposed to the whole world to see Him. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, God's Son.

He's nailed to a tree for everyone to see, public shame and disgrace. He's exposed because He is taking our sin and He's taking our guilt and He is paying the price for that.

We preach 1 Corinthians 1-24, Christ crucified a stumbling block to Jews, foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called both Jews and Greeks the power and the wisdom, the knowledge of God. That's what it is from before this world that God knew right from before the creation of the world that this was the only way that we could know healing and hope and forgiveness is through Him covering us. So we're covered, that's what Jesus does. He covers us in His righteousness and fear is replaced by awe and by worship and by joy, so that we can come today to God and you can live your Christian life before God without any pretense. Isn't that great? You don't need to be a hypocrite before Him. You don't need to go into His presidency, well I've done five good things, three bad things, except me, will you? We don't need to bargain with Him. We don't need to impress Him because He's done it all for us. He's covered us in His righteousness and we are free from fear and we're free from death and we're free from trying to please God by our own goodness and righteousness. We don't need to be like Jehovah's Witnesses that stand at the top of Middlemidewok and see how many people will take their magazine and how many people they can speak to that might get them nearer to God's presence as long as they try very, very, very hard. How enslaving, how fearful is that because it's a false message, it's a false gospel. We have this gospel of Jesus Christ who covers us and when we're covered then we don't need to be hypocrites. We don't need to be hypocrites and yet so much of our lives we spend trying to pretend

to be what we're not. He covers us, that's why we can worship Him. And what's so great about that this morning? Well I don't know about you but what's absolutely great about that for me is that He knows the very worst I can be and yet He still chose to redeem me. He knows how we're formed and He remembers we are dust. So whatever happens in my life He knows because of His all omnipotent knowledge. He knows the very worst I can do and He still hasn't rejected me because I'm covered in the blood of Jesus Christ. I'm not paying my own way. You know have you often said that to people or people that are close to you if they really knew me? You know if that person really knew me they would hate me or they would. If they really knew what I was like.

[25 : 10] Well we can say that about God. See He does really know what you're like. He really knows the ugliness and the brutality and the horror of my heart and yet He redeems me. So He knows the very worst that is so liberating. He's paid the price. He's not going to retract His grace because we haven't done well today. That's not the gospel. We are covered in His righteousness. What freedom that brings? Freedom not to sin. Freedom to follow Him. But it's great too because He also knows our best, doesn't He? Maybe when no one else sees what we're doing for His glory and no one else gives us credit or people misjudge our motives and say ah you're not really doing that because you want this, that and the next thing and people don't understand what we're doing from our hearts and sometimes that's hard and that's hurtful. Particularly in a church context it's often the case and yet He knows our best. He knows the motives we've done things for and our identity is in Him and

He's the one who's our judge in that. It's what matters. We don't need to impress one another. We don't need to do well for one another. We don't need everyone to understand the motives we have. Impure and mixed though they are anyway. He knows the worst and He knows the best and He still loves you. As you respond to His call and as you come to Him and He knows what He's doing. For those God foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son that they might be the first born among many brothers and sisters.

Those He predestined, He also called, those He called, He also justified, those He justified, He also glorified. God knows what He's doing for you today. It isn't just an open future.

He is working out His promises within the mystery of the freedom of our will to bring us home to Himself. So, let's say very, very briefly we can know. Perfect love drives out fear and therefore we can know. You know, this is the omniscient God and He shares with us His knowledge. We can know Him. So today we can know this omniscient, this all-knowing God. Isn't that good? Don't you, you're attracted to someone who knows a lot at one level because you think they're important and powerful. Well, we can have belonged. We're created for Him and we can know His love even in the dark times without that crippling fear that often haunts us. Job 23:10, who went through harder times than job, but He knows the way I take when He has tested me. I will come forth as gold. I will come forth as gold.

He knows and He purposes and so we cry out to Him to sustain and help us. We can know His great love. He knows everything. What security, victory, peace. We don't need to hide today. We don't need to impress Him today. We don't need to be hypocrites. Can I say to you before God, your secret is out? He knows what you're like. He knows exactly what you're like today. Stop living a life of pretense. Come to Him with all the nakedness and openness of a heart that sees and understands this God who sees you and know that as you come to Him in repentance and faith, He loves and accepts you and transforms you. So know Him, we can know His word and His wisdom. Isn't that great? That He reveals Himself to us in His word. It's all omnipotent God and He shares with us His Holy Spirit so that we too can know things and we can know wisdom. The great thing is about this is one of God's attributes that are at least at one level. He shares with us some, He doesn't, but this

[29 : 14] He does. If any of you lack wisdom, knowledge, the knowledge of God, you should ask of God who gives generously to all without finding fault and it will be given to you. We don't need a university degree. We don't need to be clever clogs. We don't need to have lots of, lots of genes, intelligent genes within us. You know the men that turned the world upside down, they were the people who had been known to be with Jesus. They were uneducated, unschooled men and women. But they had God's wisdom and each of us prays the Lord, each of us can share and know that wisdom. It's not about natural intelligence for which I'm very grateful. It's about seeking a gift that He promises to share with us. You're struggling to know what to do. You're struggling about life. Seek His wisdom. He shares it and He wants us to have it. We can know Him, His word, His

wisdom and His people. As a people, we should be marked by the kind of knowledge that is reflected in an omniscient God. In other words, we should be a people that are marked by humility because we're not know-alls.

God forbid that there's any Christian here who thinks there are know-alls. We shouldn't be marked by honesty. We shouldn't be hypocrites with one another. We shouldn't be trying to impress one another and get across to people that we're better than we really are. I'm not saying we should expose the secrets of our hearts because love covers a multitude of sins. I'm not, that would be horrible. It would be pretty ugly. I wouldn't want to be part of the church where everyone was completely and utterly honest with one another in the sense of revealing all the sins and secrets and lusts and impurities of their heart. No thanks. But we should be honest in the sense of not trying to deceive one another. We should recognise that we're sinners together and that we're saved by grace together. That we're disciples together. That we're learning together. That we hunger for the word together.

That we pray together. We encourage one another together. That we're truthful and not liars together. That we're not... The church should never be a place in a community of fear. Isn't that an absolute contradiction? Isn't that the soaking of atheism into our group, into our community? If it's a place of fear, are you afraid of failure? Are you afraid of being rejected? Are you afraid of not being spoken to? Are you afraid of whatever it might be?

Isn't it terrible that church becomes a place, a community of fear for so many people? It shouldn't be. It shouldn't be a place of fear. It should be a place of love, a place of God's grace and a place of acceptance because that is a mark of our understanding the gospel.

It's a place of healing, of Christ confidence, of acceptance without hypocrisy. A place of worship where we worship an omniscient God. We don't want to worship a God who doesn't know because he's not worth worshipping. We want to worship a God in whom there is mystery in his all-seeing eye but in whom there is great comfort in his all-encompassing grace.

[32 : 56] Let's bow our heads and pray. Father God, help us to understand you more clearly. Your word does give us so many hints and clear indications of your omniscience. The scientist, the knowledgeable one, the creator, sovereign who is far beyond our ability in words to say or in understanding to share. We do pray, Lord God, that you would bless, that you would help us by your Holy Spirit to know more. When we are ignorant or afraid or doubting or full of fear today, that you would quell these fears and quench these doubts, that you'd fill us with your Holy Spirit and that you would give us the wisdom that we so desperately need for life and for living. Lord, that we would worship you better, more clearly and more passionately as we recognise your purity, your perfection, your all-seeing eye and your perfect knowledge. Lord, again we pray for our friends that we want to share the gospel with. We pray that increasingly we would spend that half hour for heaven's sake on a Sunday where we come to worship and just to recalibrate our lives and our thinking towards the gospel and towards the message of salvation. Help us we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.