

The Eye of the Beholder

Proverbs 15:3

It was in 1782 that Charles Thompson presented the final design for what would become the Great Seal of the United States. We find the two sides of its image located on the back of the dollar bill. On one side of the seal is the picture of the Bald Eagle representing liberty and freedom. We'll not take the time to discuss the significance of the Eagle.

On the other side of the Great Seal is a picture of the unfinished pyramid. Counting the rows of brick we find 13 rows depicting the 13 colonies that had formed a new and independent government. That it is unfinished shows a nation still developing. Atop the pyramid is a triangular shape with an eye. Around the triangle is a depiction of radiance or glory. The All Seeing Eye, as it is known, is symbolic of the protection afforded to this nation by the hand of divine providence. Above the eye is the Latin phrase "ANUIT COEPTIS".

The term ANNUIT means to favor or give nod to or assent.

The term COEPTIS means undertakings or endeavors.

The idea then is that Providence, referring to God, is looking down in favor over the undertakings of this new government and its people being built.

The All Seeing Eye though is not new to these United States. Throughout history and in various cultures and religions the All Seeing Eye has been used to symbolize the presence of deity.

In 1926 a new religion was formed in S. Vietnam called CaiDai. To them the all Seeing Eye is the highest plain where God exists.

Buddhism refers to it as the eye of the world.

Hinduism speaks of it in association with Lord Shiva – a major Hindu deity with great powers but is known to keep himself intoxicated and meditating through the use of a drug so that the world remains

safe from his anger. He is said to have authority over death, rebirth and immortality.

Medieval and Renaissance Europe used the symbol as an image of the trinity with its triangular shape.

But the origins of the All Seeing Eye date back to ancient Egyptian mythology. It was known as the Eye of Horus, a picture of protection, royal power and good health.

In mythology, after the death of Osiris, two brothers, Set and Horus, fought over the throne of their father. Set gouged out the left eye of Horus which was restored by another deity. After it had recovered, Horus offered it to Osiris in hopes of restoring his life. The eye of Horus then became a symbol of sacrifice, healing, restoration, and protection. Over time its symbolism came to depict the All Seeing nature of God.

In our verse today taken from **Proverbs 15:3**, the writer wants to convey a very important lesson to his son that no matter what you do or where you go, God is always watching, God takes notice, He observes everything. The passage conveys both a word of warning to watch what you do so that it does not offend a holy God as well as to convey a word of comfort that no matter what is going on in your life God is there observing, caring and guiding.

From this verse consider with me these two points -

The vision of God

The vigilance of God

I. THE VISION OF GOD

"The eyes of the Lord are everywhere..."

Proverbs 15:3a

It is important for us to understand that God is watching everything; in fact He is in every place. Nothing is outside of His vision. That concept is a bit hard for my tiny brain to comprehend when we as humans have limited eye sight. My vision is

limited to what the eye gate takes in. I can see to the back wall, but I cannot see through the back wall. I know there is a kitchen back there and I know where the stove and refrigerator are but I cannot right now see them.

If I am in the basement folding clothes and know David is in his playroom upstairs, I am unable to see what he's doing, even though I know that's where he is at.

If I'm watching the news of something happening in another part of the world, my vision is limited to what is captured by video camera and sent across the air waves. Without the camera I cannot see it. If a building is in the background, I can't see what is in the building unless the camera goes into that building.

When I gaze up at night and see the moon, I can't see the other side of the moon.

Looking through a telescope I may be able to take in more objects but I can't see beyond the range of the telescope.

With the Hubble telescope my vision is exponentially magnified, but I can only see what is before me. I can't at the same time see what's behind me or above me or below me. None of that is part of my vision. To view it I'd have to move the telescope.

If I hear a noise behind me and want to see what it is, when I turn I lose sight of what I was just looking at. God sees in all directions at the same time. It's called everywhere.

You might think he's a bit off his rocker, but the prophet Ezekiel describes a vision he had of the omnipresence of God as he describes a wheel within a wheel that was full of eyes. Today people would think he saw a UFO. Others might think he was hallucinating. But it is a clear depiction of the omnipresence of God, that He is everywhere at the same time and is able to see all that is going on everywhere at the same time.

There was one time in life I wish had that ability. When I was in college, we were putting some things

away in the gym after track practice. The baseball team was in a corner practicing timing for batting. All I heard was "oh no, look out." Just about the time my brain processed what my ears heard I felt the impact of the bat that had sailed half way across the gym as it collided with the back of my head. Now you're saying that explains everything. If I could see everywhere I would have seen it coming.

God's eyes are everywhere. His vision is not blocked by anything. God doesn't need x-ray machines. His vision isn't hindered by lead casing or concrete walls. Quite a few years ago, I applied for a position as a TSA agent. One of the tests we had to take was to view a picture of luggage as it would appear in a scanner on a conveyor belt. There were computer bags and briefcases and gym bags and purses and boxes and carry-on bags. The image would appear onscreen for roughly 10 seconds and in that time you had visually sift through all the contents from clothes to books to Grandma Bell's wads of yarn and count how many banned objects there were from knives to scissors to guns and so on.

If God couldn't see everywhere, He wouldn't be God. But He does, so He is. Yet some Scriptures give the impression that God doesn't know. That He is just as much in the dark as we might be.

Genesis 3:8-10 (Adam, where are you?)

Now it wasn't that God didn't know or hadn't seen what they had done. God knew because His eyes are everywhere, beholding the good and the bad. God knew where Adam was, but He wanted Adam to know where he was. Not in a physical sense like he was over by the blueberry bushes. If you are in the Mall or at an amusement park like Cedar Point or the Detroit Zoo, there will be big signs with a map of the park. A red dot on the map says "you are here." God didn't want Adam to know where he was in relationship to the rest of the garden; God wanted Adam to know where his heart was.

Genesis 16:1-8 (Asking Hagar where she had come from and where she was going) God sees everything. He knew what happened to Hagar. It had not escaped His eye.

In **I Samuel 10:20ff** when Saul was to be presented to the people of Israel as their king, he couldn't be found because he was hiding. Samuel asked the Lord where he was and the Lord told him that Saul was hiding in the baggage. God knew where he was because He sees everywhere, He even sees the motives of the heart. As a matter of fact, He looks into the recesses of the heart and into our motives.

I Samuel 16:5-7

God sees beyond the visible and sees the very intentions and motives of the heart. Nothing escapes His vision, even the very things that we think. We cannot hide from God as Jonah thought.

Jeremiah 23:24 **“Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?” declares the Lord. ‘Do not I fill heaven and earth?’ declares the Lord.”**

The great preacher/theologian A.W. Tozer describes the omnipresence of God in this way: “It sounds as if God were contained in heaven and earth. God fills heaven and earth just as the ocean fills a bucket which has been submerged in it a mile down. The bucket is full of the ocean, but the ocean fills the bucket in all directions. So when God says He fills heaven and earth, He does, but heaven and earth are submerged in God and all space is too.”

On writing to King Hiram to ask him for timber to build the temple Solomon wrote in a letter:

II Chronicles 2:6 **“But who is able to build a temple for Him, since the heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain Him?”**

Psalms 139:1-4, 7-13

God cannot be contained by the heavens, yet He is with me and sees my heart.

God sees everywhere implying that He must be everywhere. From Him nothing can be concealed. Scripture speaks to the vision of God. It also speaks to the vigilance of God.

II. THE VIGILANCE OF GOD

“The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.”

Proverbs 15:3

I don't know if that is of comfort to you or not, knowing that God is watching you – all the time. I believe it is comforting to know that because God sees everywhere and is everywhere that He knows and sees the trials I am going through. Those events don't take Him by surprise; they didn't catch Him off guard. He won't ever say “I didn't see that one coming.” It is comforting to know that when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death He is just as present with me as He is with you when you pass through your deep waters of life. He sees me on Thursday's when I sit down to prepare a message at the very same time He sees you on the same day standing in a checkout line at Meijer's or sitting at your desk taking a test or driving down the road headed to a doctor's appointment or sitting in your living room reading the paper. He is just as much with me right now as He is with believers in prison cells around the world who are there on account of their faith. He is not more or less concerned about some events or people than others. That should be of great comfort that His vision of us is not clouded by some other events right now going on somewhere else.

While that knowledge of God's presence with us seeing what we do or what we are going through may be of *comfort* to some it ought to be a *concern* to others, because He sees all and is everywhere. He takes notice when their deeds or thoughts are wicked. His eye observes them.

Proverbs 5:21 says the same thing: **“For a man’s ways are in full view of the Lord, and He examines all his paths.”**

Psalm 11:4 **“The Lord is in His holy temple; the Lord is on His heavenly throne. He observes the sons of men; His eyes examine them.”** He inspects us with an eye that critiques all we do. It’s as if we were walking around transparent.

I’ve had a little relapse in my back problem. I’m not sure what happened, but I was making lunches one morning and stooped to get something from the refrigerator and, no, it wasn’t a Twinkie. It just started hurting and it’s been very uncomfortable since then. I told Robyn it would be great if my body was transparent so the doctor could just look through me and see what’s causing the pain. The problem is he can’t do that. He has to rely on machines.

All our ways, even the intentions of our heart and mind are transparent before God, who sees everything. We cannot escape the scrutiny of the Lord. Such knowledge of His examining eyes should motivate us to live godly. Everything man does, everywhere man goes God closely examines it. His is a *continuous watchfulness* over our every step. That the living and Holy God sees everything I do and everywhere I go can be a concern. **Does that knowledge change then the places I go or the things I do, even the very things I think about?** It should. That God sees everywhere ought to motivate me to Christ like character. **But does it?**

Notice from the passage the two groups of people on whom God’s eyes are watchful.

God is vigilant toward the violent.

A. God is Vigilant Toward the Violent

“The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked...”

They are described as morally bad, evil, depraved. The idea that the writer of Proverbs is conveying isn’t just that God takes notice and does nothing with what He sees as if He were powerless to act. Instead, the inference is that God observes the actions of the wicked and acts to punish them.

Jeremiah 17:10, 13 **“I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve...O Lord, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you will be put to shame. Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the Lord, the spring of living water.”**

Psalm 11:5-7 **“The Lord examines the righteous, but the wicked and those who love violence His soul hates. On the wicked He will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur; a scorching wind will be their lot. For the Lord is righteous, He loves justice; upright men will see His face.”**

Like a watchman guarding the city, that’s how God watches over the affairs of man. He sees every action. That his eye is on the wicked ought to serve as a warning to them that God is taking note of their activities and their attitudes. Their actions will eventually incur the punishment of God, because He hates the wicked.

I Samuel 13:5-14 (when Saul offered the sacrifice)
I Samuel 15:10-11, 22-23 (when Saul spared Agag)
****Jeremiah 32:17-19**

Nothing is so dark, so dastardly, so devious, so despicable that God does not see. God will judge them for their wickedness, if not now, it will occur at the Great judgment to come. **Revelation 20:11-15** speaks of the final judgment that will fall on the wicked. *Nothing will escape His judgment. No one will escape His justice.* The sea and the earth and even hell itself will give up the wicked to stand before the One whose eye has been ever watchful observing their every deed and motive. At the

Great judgment He will bring them to ultimate and final judgment. They may think no one sees. But God does. He sees all.

He is the unseen presence at every dinner table.
 He is the unseen presence in every conversation.
 He is the unseen presence at every sporting event.
 He is the unseen presence on every assembly line,
 in every locker room, in every living room, in every
 classroom, in every board room.
 He needs no surveillance equipment or hidden
 cameras to record our actions.

Jeremiah 16:17-18 “My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from Me, nor is their sin concealed from My eyes. I will repay them double for their wickedness and their sin, because they have defiled my land with the lifeless forms of their vile images and have filled My inheritance with their detestable idols.”

That God will repay double for their wickedness means that His judgment will be complete and satisfy His justice.

But there is yet hope for those wicked who are still living. God brought about judgment on their sin when Christ was nailed to the cross. He bore God's penalty for them. All they need to do is repent and by faith be saved, accept the gift of salvation by trusting Christ as Savior, believe that Jesus' blood covered their wickedness. Maybe that's you today.

God's watchfulness over the violent will result in His judgment. We might agree that we're glad God is keeping record of the wicked around the world. We may even wish that He would punish them now. “Don't wait Lord, bring it on. Give them what they deserve.” We might agree that Osama bin Laden got what was coming to him. And so did Saddam Hussein and Bernie Madoff. There are scores more who kidnap and rape and murder and steal. Does God see those atrocities? Yes He does. His eyes are everywhere. None of it goes unnoticed, nor will

it go unpunished. **Isaiah 57:21** so poignantly reminds that **“there is no peace for the wicked.”**

We might be prone to sit smugly back in our Christianity and think that God doesn't need to keep watch over us, after all we're on His team. We're the least of His troubles. The fact of the matter is that God also has His eye on us. He not only keeps a vigilant eye on the violent, He also keeps a vigilant eye on the virtuous.

B. God is Vigilant Toward the Virtuous

“The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.”

God sees where we are. David and I sometimes play a little game when Robyn comes home. We'll be downstairs when we hear her coming down the steps. We quickly grab a blanket and throw it over our heads to hide, pretending she won't see us. She plays along, but she really knows where we are. So does God.

II Chronicles 16:9

Psalm 33:18-22

Psalm 34:15-18

Psalm 121:1-4

Isaiah 40:27-31

God's eye is also on you, believer. He sees what you do. He knows right where you are. **Does that bring comfort? Do we live knowing God is present with us and sees all we do, even the motives of our heart? When we pray, do we pray with a sense of the nearness of God or do we sometimes feel like God is distant?**

The distance isn't God. He isn't somehow absent on an errand, or present but preoccupied. We've already been reminded that God is present with us where ever we go. His Word has promised that He won't leave or forsake us. As a matter of fact, according to **Psalm 17:8**, we are the apple of God's eye. When we think that God is calling out to find

out where we are it's not because He doesn't know, it's because He wants us to know where we are, that we have wandered from Him. The distance certainly is not in space, but rather in character. When I recognize that I have sin, I'm like Peter who told the Lord to get away because he was a sinful man. Our sin creates that feeling of distance or separation. Confession restores that feeling of separation, but God hasn't left. When we experience the closeness of God it is because our character is working to become like His. Enoch is a good example of this closeness with God. Enoch had nothing to hide from God and Scripture says He walked with God.

God not only sees when I stray from Him and is always ready to restore that closeness when I confess my sin, He also observes the good things I do, He sees my desire to be like Him, He sees my heart of worship and takes note of every expression of praise and thanks. He takes note of every tear and the hurt we encounter, the pain we experience. **Psalm 33:18** tells me that God sees those who fear Him, who hope in Him and His unfailing love. Nothing misses His watchful eye on us. He sees the righteous and will reward accordingly.

What greater reward can we imagine than to be able to be in the presence of the One who was present with us throughout all our life? What greater reward is there than to be able to see the face of Jesus who took the punishment for my sins?

What are you going through today where you need to be reminded that God sees what you're going through? Can you give Him thanks that He sees and knows and hasn't abandoned you? If we ever ask where God is when we encounter the storms of life, if we listen, He will say, I'm right here next to you, I see everything that's going on.

The story is told of a young family who lost a young wife and mother through a tragic death. The first night after the funeral service, the little

daughter couldn't sleep so she went to her father's bedroom and asked if she could sleep with him. He agreed, and she climbed into bed. She still couldn't sleep, and through the darkness her voice came, "Daddy, is your face turned toward me?"

Let the wisdom of our ancient Proverb ring strong today in modern times **"The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good."**

Cameras only record a point in time and a point in space. They cannot record everything and everyone all the time. God is able see everything because He is everywhere. Job responded to his accusers in this way: **"Does He not see my ways and count my every step?" Job 31:4**

God is watching. Remember that we will be rewarded for righteousness. Let it motivate us to godly living. And give Him thanks that He is always with us. For those who do not follow God, He sees them as well and will incur His judgment. We all are in the eye of the beholder.

Hebrews 4:13 "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."

How does God see you today?