Excerpts from

*Lectures on the Book of Proverbs*

by

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**Proverbs 15:3** -- "The eyes of Yahweh are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good."

I need hardly say that all such language is figurative. "God is a *spirit*" (John 4:24). Describing Him with corporeal organs must be understood in harmony with this declaration. By "the eyes" of Yahweh we are to understand His *capacity of discernment*. The nature of this discernment is altogether incomprehensible to us, and thus the necessity arises for the use of such figures. Were language used directly expressing the functions and operations of *spirit* simply as such, we should be utterly incapable of understanding it. How God, the eternal Mind, is present every moment in every place, in the exercise of all His infinite perfections, is a matter which involves mysteries far beyond our powers of comprehension. The attempt to understand them will ever force from us the devout exclamation, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it" (Ps. 139:6).

"The eyes of Yahweh are in every place" expresses the unceasing inspection by the divine Being of all creatures in the universe at the same moment. There is no person or object, nothing whatever that exists—alive or dead, spirit or matter, intelligent or unintelligent, active or inert—that is ever, even for a single instant, hidden from His gaze.

Without expounding on the attribute of omniscience generally, I will confine myself to the light in which it is here brought before us—*the divine acquaintance with the ways of men*. This is indispensable to God’s both governing and judging the world. As regards governing, His administration could not go on without it. There would be immediate and inextricable confusion. Equally essential is it to enlightened and impartial judgment. God must *know* in order that He *may judge*. He must *know all* in order that He *may judge all*. And He cannot know all except by a constant, universal, uninterrupted supervision and by the most perfectly *intimate* acquaintance with the minds and hearts, as well as the words and actions, of men.

We are here reminded that this knowledge of God extends to both the *evil* and the *good*. Nor is the difference between the two ever overlooked by Him, although it may at times *appear* as if it did. He does not always take note of a man’s character in the distribution of temporal blessings, or in crosses and trials. The evil are not at all more the objects of His favor when they prosper, nor are the good less so when they suffer. His eyes still look with displeasure upon the former and with favor upon the latter. On the evil He frowns, when to their self-flattering but deluded fancy He may seem to smile. On the good He smiles, when to their unbelieving minds He may seem to frown. But for the good, the days of darkness through which they are called to pass shall all terminate in the light of that "blessed day that knows no morrow," while the light of the other’s temporary prosperity shall end in "the blackness of darkness forever" (Ps. 11:4-7).
To those who are living without God, what a solemn thought it is that nothing is concealed!
When they think they have successfully hidden their evil deeds from the view of men, God sees. How often is this description by Job realized:

The murderer rises with the light; he kills the poor and needy; and in the night he is like a thief. The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, saying, "No eye will see me"; and he disguises his face. In the dark they break into houses which they marked for themselves in the daytime; they do not know the light. For the morning is the same to them as the shadow of death; if someone recognizes them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death (Job 24:14-17).

Ah, the sad and fatal mistake--"No eye will see me." There is an eye that sees, an eye that is of incomparably greater consequence to him than the collective eyes of all the universe. Yes, and there is one morning coming that shall be infinitely more alarming to him than any that ever dawned upon him in the prosecution of his wicked course here. It is a morning when he shall indeed be "in the terrors of the shadow of death"--that eventful morning when the trump of God shall sound the summons to His bar of justice; when all who are in the graves will hear the voice of the Son of God and shall come forth, they who have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they who have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5:25-29). Then "God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Eccl. 12:14).

The truth stated in this verse is, at the same time, a source of joy unspeakable to the good, that is, the people of God. Is it not a delightful thought, Christian friends, that the ever-watchful eye of your heavenly Father is over all your concerns, and that His gracious and all-wise providence unceasingly superintends everything relating to your present and your future well-being? Note the minute particularity of the divine regard to his people's interests: "The very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matt. 10:30). God's eyes are the eyes of faithful love and vigilant care. They are not the eyes of keen scrutiny detecting guilt, but the eyes of tender kindness furnishing supply in need, guidance in perplexity, and protection in danger.

"The eyes of Yahweh are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry" (Ps. 34:15). Is not this a comfort? You feel sympathy with the tears of a lost child, and with the joy of that child when home again. Yet no child of God can ever be out of God's sight, whatever the unbelieving doubts and suspicions may tempt him to fear. He may cease for a time to see God, but God does not cease to see him. It is our duty to maintain a firm faith in the constant superintendence of our heavenly Father and to delight ourselves in God.

Yet while there is reason for rejoicing, there is reason at the same time for solemn awe. Oh, the thought of having God's eye unceasingly upon us, the eye of Him who is the "high and lofty one, who inhabits eternity" (Isa. 57:15), who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness" (Hab. 1:13), and who "is light, and in whom is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5)!

Proverbs 15:19 -- "The way of the lazy man is like a hedge of thorns, but the way of the upright is a highway."

The slothful fancies anything as a reason for sitting still, any obstacle or difficulty as an apology
for lazy inaction. And not merely does he anticipate obstacles to his beginning, he is ever
discovering more of them as reasons for quitting. He finds further exertion to be vain. There is
no point continuing for all is "a hedge of thorns," at once annoying and impracticable. The
expectation of ever accomplishing his end is quite utopian; and since he must give up at some
point, it would be wise to quit now rather than expend more useless toil. And he will argue this
with no little plausibility, for "the lazy man is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can
answer sensibly" (Prov. 26:16).

On the other hand, the way of the righteous (of him who under the influence of right principles is
set on the right discharge of duty) is made plain. The way is paved. God, whom he serves,
makes obstacles diminish and disappear before him. Those he feared might prove insuperable
lessen and vanish as he nears them. He is surprised to find how they give way. When obstacles
are encountered, he looks at them in all their discouraging magnitude while looking to God at
the same time--to God who "gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He
increases strength" (Isa. 40:29). In the strength of God he goes on and perseveres to the end.
Difficulties are thus surmounted, the way becomes increasingly plain. The hedge of thorns is
cleared away, darkness is made light before him and crooked things straight (Isa. 42:16).

In the whole of your spiritual warfare, brethren, put your trust in God, the divine captain of your
salvation. He leads you to victory; do not shrink from following Him. He will never leave you.
Let no unworthy and dastardly fears tempt you to leave Him. Let no difficulties or dangers in
the way daunt you. Press after His banner. With His righteousness to justify you and his
strength to protect and save you, you shall be more than conquerors!

Sinners, beware of laxness concerning your soul’s salvation. I do not ask you to be busy in
working out salvation for yourselves. No, that is a work of which the honor belongs to another;
the Son of God is the only Saviour. You are not to save yourselves but to come to Christ for
salvation. Do not let any false impression of difficulties and obstacles frighten you from the
attempt. There is no such thing; it is all an illusion. If there are obstacles in the path, they have
been put there by yourselves, for there are none--no not one--put there by God. He has cleared
all away! There is no hedge of thorns between you and Christ. On the ground of his finished
work on Calvary--the work that justifies the ungodly--God stands ready to receive you for Christ's
sake. Believe what the Bible testifies of him to be divine truth; and with a spirit of need,
simplicity, confidence, self-renouncing humility, and grateful joy, cast yourselves without fear or
misgiving on the riches of his grace--"for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him"
(Rom. 10:12).

Proverbs 15:26 -- "The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to Yahweh, but the words of
the pure are pleasant."

Consider, dear sinner, that there is not one thought that passes through your mind which escapes
God's notice, even should it pass with the speed of an arrow of light. Your most secret fantasies,
your most momentary wishes and purposes, ideas never uttered, designs never executed--all are
naked to His view. Though circumstances have prevented the execution of any purpose, this does
not in the least mitigate the criminality of the intention. Of the good that David intended to do,
God said, "You did well in that it was in your heart" (2 Chr. 6:8). And so the evil that is in the
The law is *spiritual*. "Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:28). That unchaste thought is an abomination to the Lord. "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15). That thought of malice and envy (the embryo of murder) is an abomination to the Lord. The heart may thus be steeped in impurity and indictable for a brother's blood while no overt act has revealed its hidden secrets to men.

"But the words of the pure are pleasant." The pure stand in contrast with the wicked. They have been the acceptable worshipers of Yahweh in every age. In them the promise of the New Covenant has been fulfilled, Yahweh having written his laws in their hearts, having taken away the stony heart out of their flesh and given them a heart of flesh, a new heart, and put within them a right spirit (Ezek. 11:19,20). They have purified their souls in obeying the truth. They have been washed and sanctified.

The child of God may have little else in his power than that of holy conversation. Other means of usefulness may not, in providence, have been conferred on him. He may have little wealth, little authority, little influence. The very attempts which he makes at doing good--through the only means in his power--may fail. But even the attempt is pleasant, being made with an eye to the divine glory and a benevolent wish to advance the happiness of fellow-creatures. What he speaks for God, however humble the manner of it and however lowly the company to whom it is uttered, God approves and records: "So a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear Yahweh and who meditate on His name" (Mal. 3:16). Their words may not be uttered in the society and in the ears of the great, but if they are pure words proceeding from a pure heart, they are more acceptable to God than the words of the mighty and noble coming from hearts not right with Him.