

Psalm 14
There is no God

Introduction

Another Psalm concerned with relationship with God and the way in which, when God is rejected, the whole of man's life is influenced by it. He flouts God's Law and oppresses his people. Plan to look at teaching of Psalm as whole but then to return to first verse and see fuller meaning of what fool says – **"There is no God"**.

Teaching of Psalm as a whole

Begins with rejection of God in heart. That inevitably influences way of life and behaviour. Some people think it doesn't matter what they believe as long as their life is alright. In fact, belief and behaviour are closely linked. When people not believe in God or even theoretically believes in God, but not acknowledge his authority, i.e. "practical atheists", certain results follow.

They are corrupt, their deeds are vile. There is no one who does good (v1). None understand or seek God. All are corrupt (though may be religious). **There is no one who does good, not even one** (v3). Sin enters mind, affections, will. It has an effect in what people do, say and think. And in failure to do, say and think right things. Sins of omission as well as commission.

But you say "some people do good and kind things". Only up to a point – more readily to friends than to enemies – in other words, kind to those who are kind to them. Strong element of self on very many acts of kindness. Self-interest, self-importance, self-congratulation, self-pleasing. Even the motives for good deeds can be defective – not done out of love, nor to glorify God and know him. Augustine said "Good deeds are splendid sins". And even the kindest people, until born again, have no love for God or interest in his will or authority or word. Indeed they persecute God's people. May not put them to death, but they ridicule and sneer at their faith and resent them secretly because so often not agree with them and their lives are shown up. So Psalm ends with plea for God to rescue his people and cause them again to rejoice and be glad.

This Psalm is one of great statements about man's condition and it is given from God's perspective, as he **looks down from heaven on the sons of men** (v2). It is God's verdict, not mine or yours, concerning our lives. Quoted by Paul in Romans 3 in his indictment of human race, thus showing need of salvation in Christ. Omniscient God sees all – and, not least, the heart. Moody asked – if a photographer set up business in town to photograph hearts, how many customers would he get? Many appear alright on outside but not want inner life to be examined.

Now we return to main concern i.e. the fool and his statement.

The fool who speaks in his heart

The Hebrew word for fool is the same as is used by Abigail, Nabal's wife **He is just like his name – his name is Fool** (1 Samuel 25:25). Meaning of "fool" – he is superficial person who does not think. In contrast with wise man who has understanding. Not think clearly, acts impetuously, not considering consequences.

Amazing how shallow many people are in rejection of Christian faith. If only they worked as hard in studying Christian evidences and claims of Christ as they do for an examination. According to this Psalm, those who reject God are utter fools. They say in their heart that there is no God. Not just influenced by thought but by heart – the seat of desires. Governed by what they like and want to do. Listen only to their desires. More convenient not to believe in God. If they did, and took God seriously, would have to change way of living. That would be highly inconvenient. Cf "If I solved your problem, would you then repent of sin and self-centredness, receive Christ as Saviour and obey Him as Lord and Master?"

The problem is with the will, not the intellect. Heart and desires exercise great power over decisions and outlook, and would cause us to reject idea of a being who is greater than ourselves to whom we must submit. If we pride ourselves in our wisdom, we are actually mad. People listen to desires rather than to a sense which is within everyman i.e. a sense of God. People try to stifle it but in every human being there is a sense of God. Belief that at the back of everything there is great unseen God. Anthropology about most primitive people – this sense is revealed. Many worshipped stones or trees – but the sense was there. So with modern society. Worship of pop idols, sportsmen, TV full of "religion" – things that people worship and absorb them. "Some call him God, others call him Shankly" (Liverpool football manager).

Then all aware of voice of conscience. Aware of it. Makes us miserable. Gives us feeling that we are answerable to something outside us. We can choose to reject it. To reject these facts is the mark of the fool.

People say we are too educated to believe Christian Gospel. But unbelief is found in uneducated people and ignorant people, and more so. Religion is more popular among intelligent people of "Christian church that is too middle class". Some people say "scientists don't believe". Yet some of the greatest scientists have been and still are believers. Science is neutral. It's about what, not why. Proportionally more science and medical students than arts students are evangelical Christians.

People are so often governed by something else rather than understanding. Sometimes people object to belief in God because of the pain and suffering in the world. Yet never consider God permits these things for own reasons. Adversity permitted to bring us back to God (Psalm 119: 67, 71), to make people think seriously about God for the first time in their lives. Someone once said "God puts us on our back to make us look up". C.S.Lewis wrote: "God whispers in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world."

Other considerations about God's existence. If no God, how do we explain this amazing universe? Result of accident and chance? Consider the vastness, intricacies, and marvellous beauties of universe, facts unearthed by various branches of science.

More likely that explosion in factory making printing press could produce volume of Shakespeare plays, than this world could be produced by chance.

Or consider remarkable story of continuance and persistence of Jews over generations. According to Frederick the Great of Prussia's chaplain "Jews are proof of inspiration of Bible". Or remarkable fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy in New Testament. But above all fact of Christ himself. How do men explain him? Claims – forgives sins, judge of all men, give life of peace, his death a ransom, "I am" bread, resurrection, way, truth, life. Trilemma – either he was a liar, a lunatic, or Lord. Is the most remarkably ethical system in the world the product of a liar? Is the most amazing and influential character in history a lunatic? Then he must be Lord.

His Resurrection is one of the best-established facts of history. Start of Christian church and her persistence down ages. Revivals that have taken place. Remarkable moral transformation in men's characters and whole societies when people have turned to Christ in faith.

People rarely consider these things. Draw conclusions on flimsiest evidence and not hesitate to risk whole eternal future on what is really wishful thinking and ignorance and prejudice. No wonder **The fool has said.**

And think of what they lose. Nothing comparable to Christian life, "life lived in fellowship with God is the pleasantest life in all the world" (Matthew Henry). Life lived by people who have done greatest good in world. Full and satisfying. **He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things** (Psalm 107:9). While godless life is empty and meaningless with nothing to look forward to. Also refusal of free pardon bought at so dear a price. Future of Christian life is glory in Christ's presence. God **rewards those who earnestly seek him** (Hebrews 11:6). **The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge** (Proverbs 1:7).