

PSALM 14

1 The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.

Only a fool says there is no God; and, in these days, we are surrounded by fools and this is proof #1. It's popular nowadays to tell the world you don't believe in God. Take for example this recent commentary by Penn Jillette of Penn & Teller:

*I believe that there is no God. I'm beyond atheism. Atheism is not believing in God. Not believing in God is easy — you can't prove a negative, so there's no work to do. * * * Believing there is no God means the suffering I've seen in my family, and indeed all the suffering in the world, isn't caused by an omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent force that isn't bothered to help or is just testing us, but rather something we all may be able to help others with in the future. No God means the possibility of less suffering in the future.*

Before his death a while back, Stephen Hawking, reportedly one of the smartest human beings ever to walk on this planet, boldly announced “there is no God.” If you Google the question, you will find that scientists calculate there is a 67% chance that God exists. And on and on it goes.

Let's consider a few passages that give light on what is meant when Scripture speaks of a “fool.” **But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh, What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.”** (Job 2:10). **Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O Lord, and that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name.** (Psalm 74:18). In other words, sinners are termed “fools” because they think and act contrary to right reason.

When these people say there is no God, they are expressing their life's philosophy that there is no moral government of God, there is no God that concerns himself with the affairs of mankind and there is no God that observes and recompenses men's actions according to their quality. Paul well describes these people in Romans 1 verses 20-22: **For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.**

This powerful verse closes with a terse word picture of these God-deniers: Corrupt; abominable; no good. Those words are clear and easy to understand but please consider this brief survey of other writings to aid in understanding. **[T]here is none that doeth good, no, not one."** (Romans 3:12). **The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.** (Genesis 6:11, 12). And as for abominable, consider these words from Dr. Gill:

*every sinful action is abominable in the sight of God; but there are some sins more abominable than others; there are abominable idolatries, and abominable lusts, such as were committed in Sodom; and it may be these are pointed at here, and which are usually committed by such who like not to retain God in their knowledge; see Romans 1:28 **[And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge]** (which is just another way of saying there is no God, wouldn't you say?).*

²The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.

The picture here is of one who leans forward or bends at the waist to look as from a window. **Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?** (Song 6:10). Of course, God sees and knows all things but this language is to accommodate human

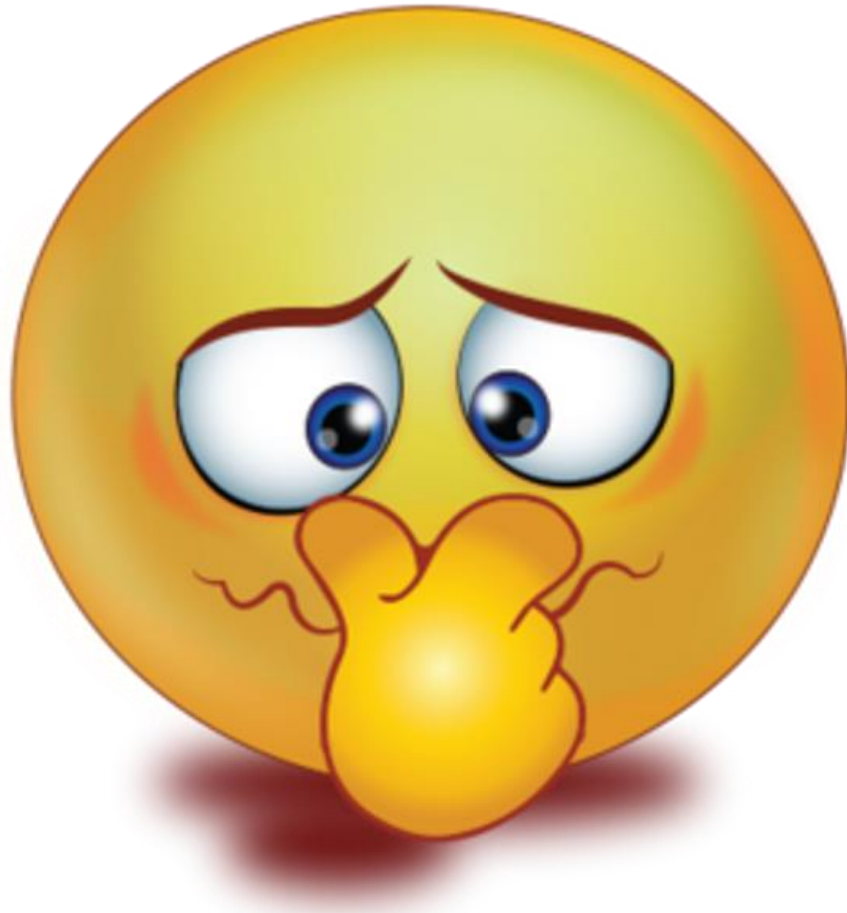
understanding. The picture is of one who is earnestly and diligently seeking *as from a watchtower, or other elevated place of observation, the Lord is represented as gazing intently upon men.* (Treasury of David).

And what is the Lord looking for? Answer: Those who are different from the individuals described in the first verse, that is, the fools. And beyond that, the Lord is seeking those who truly know God, who believe on him so as to love, fear, obey and trust him, and those that diligently and regularly seek God. This is all in direct opposition to the atheistic thoughts and reasonings of wicked men.

³They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

The result of this “gazing intently” is grim. This verse presents a bleak picture. This language would suggest that everybody in fact does not go to heaven. That God does not love everybody and for sure there is no universal salvation. As a mass of humanity, and with rare exception, they have “gone aside” -- they **have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them.** (Exodus 32:8).

As a direct and immediate consequence of going aside, these people have become “filthy”, the idea being they are stinking or rotten, or sharp, spoiled or sour as happens with milk. The word translated “filthy” is found only in this verse and the following two verses: **How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?** (Job 15:16). **Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.** (Psalm 53:3). What a fine mess results when the fool says there is no God. And we truly do find ourselves in the middle of just such a scene.



Concerning the closing phrase of this verse, I give you Barnes: *There is none that doeth good, no, not one - Nothing could more clearly express the idea of universal depravity than this expression. It is not merely that no one could be found who did good, but the expression is repeated to give emphasis to the statement. This entire passage is quoted in Romans 3:10-12, in proof of the doctrine of universal depravity.*

⁴ Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD.

Are these people crazy, harassing and persecuting the people of God? Are they so senseless as not to perceive the consequences of their behavior? Matthew Poole posits the question this way: *Have the workers of iniquity lost their wits? have they neither religion nor common discretion? either of which would teach them not to make themselves so hateful to the all-seeing and almighty God, and to all men.*

But in seeking to answer this rhetorical question, we must remember this unique term “workers of iniquity” suggests that not only are such persons God-forsaken and especially depraved, but they make it their life’s work to do iniquity. They are busy bees about it all. They are working at it with all their intellectual and physical might.

And what is it that they are so mightily employed with: Two things –

1. Consuming the people of God; and,
2. Not calling upon God.

When it says they eat up the Lord’s people that means their devouring of those folks is as regular a part of their lives as arranging for the preparation and consumption of their meals. They do so with as much delight, greediness and constancy as their regular meals, and with as little regret and remorse. Jamieson-Fausset-Brown says they do so *with beastly fury*; like when one is ravenous for food. **There is a generation whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.** (Proverbs 30:14). **[T]hey came out as a whirlwind to scatter me: their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly.** (Habakkuk 3:14).

And what means this not calling “upon the Lord?” These people are not only guilty of gross injustice and oppression, but they are guilty of horrid impiety and contempt for the great shepherd of the sheep, whose goodness they deny and whose worship they wholly neglect and despise. Consider this fine summary by The Treasury of David: *As pikes in a pond eat up little fish, as eagles prey on smaller birds, as wolves rend the sheep of the pasture, so sinners naturally*

and as a matter of course persecute, malign, and mock the followers of the Lord Jesus. While thus preying, they forswear all praying, and in this act consistently, for how could they hope to be heard while their hands are full of blood?

⁵ There were they in great fear: for God is in the generation of the righteous.

Look over there at them; there they are – in great fear. Right there where they hang out; when they least expected it, terror overtook them. These wicked people, in the middle of their schemes, plans, intrigues and pleasures, the hand of God seizes them and they are struck with great fear. At the height of their tyranny and prosperous impiety, God strikes them with a panic fear – they “feared a fear” the Hebrew puts it.

There they are; take a look at them and learn. **There were they in great fear, where no fear was: for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee: thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them.** (Psalm 53:5).

The balance of this verse tells us where this great fear comes from. God is in the midst of his people. He will not desert them, but will graciously and quickly deliver them.

When the text speaks of a generation of the righteous, the reference is to the children of God. **This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.** (Psalm 24:6). **If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children.** (Psalm 73:15). **His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed.** (Psalm 112:2). We feel our weakness down deep, but God’s true word for it -- we are mighty upon this earth.

To close on this verse, consider these sentiments from The Treasury of David: *This makes the company of godly men so irksome to the wicked because they perceive that God is with them. Shut their eyes as they may, they cannot but perceive the image of God in the*

character of his truly gracious people, nor can they fail to see that he works for their deliverance. Like Haman, they instinctively feel a trembling when they see God's Mordecais. Even though the saint may be in a mean position, mourning at the gate where the persecutor rejoices in state, the sinner feels the influence of the believer's true nobility and quails before it, for God is there. Let scoffers beware, for they persecute the Lord Jesus when they molest his people; the union is very close between God and his people, it amounts to a mysterious indwelling, for God is in the generation of the righteous.

⁶Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the LORD is his refuge.

Here we deal with the attitude and behavior of the wicked towards the message and preaching of the Lord's chosen. They despise that preaching; they treat it with derision, contempt and scorn; they mock it and laugh at it. This they do even though, in truth, that counsel is good advice, the best of counsel, and happy are they that take it.

And why is this shaming of the counsel of the poor? Answer: Because the Lord is their refuge. Because the godly live by faith in God's promises and providence, these people are reduced to such unwise action. *The special point and butt of their jest seems to be the confidence of the godly in their Lord.* (Treasury of David).

The sentiment of this short but potent verse is well presented at Psalm 22:7-8: **All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, he trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.**

⁷Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

By far, the keenest discussion of this verse is presented by Gill, the potent portions of which follow:

*O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!.... By whom is meant the Messiah, the Saviour of Israel, of all the elect of God, whether Jews or Gentiles; and who is so called, because the salvation of them was put into his hands, and he undertook it; and because he is the Captain and Author of it, and it is in him, and in no other. He was to come out of Zion, * * * **

When the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people. The people of God are, in their unregeneracy, in a state of captivity to sin, Satan, and the law; the work of the Messiah, when he came, was to proclaim liberty to the captives, to set them free, to deliver them from their spiritual bondage: and this Christ has done; he has redeemed his people from all their sins, and from the curse of the law, and from the power of Satan, and has led captivity captive; and which has justly occasioned great joy in the redeemed ones, according to this prophecy:

Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad; that is, the posterity of Jacob and Israel; not his natural, but spiritual seed, such who are the true sons of Jacob, Israelites indeed; these having faith and hope in the plenteous redemption of Christ, rejoice in the view of their interest in it; they the song of redeeming love now, and these ransomed ones will hereafter come to Zion with joy, and everlasting joy upon their heads. The Jews refer this to the times of the Messiah (c).

Here are two passages of Scripture that Gill provides with the foregoing discussion that may be helpful:

And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. (Romans 11:26-27).

But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them. (Matthew 13:16-17).

The doctrine of spiritual Israel's redemption or salvation by Christ was very well known by the ancient patriarchs, including David as manifested by his various Psalm writings. So we find Peter

addressing it: **Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.** (1 Peter 1:10-12).

And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen. (Luke 24:52-53).

The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars; yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. (Psalm 29:4, 5).