

PSALM 14

It does not appear upon what occasion this psalm was penned nor whether upon any particular occasion. Some say David penned it when Saul persecuted him; others, when Absalom rebelled against him. But they are mere conjectures, which have not certainty enough to warrant us to expound the psalm by them. The apostle, in quoting part of this psalm (~~ROM~~ Romans 3:10, etc.) to prove that Jews and Gentiles are all under sin (v. 9) and that all the world is guilty before God (v. 19), leads us to understand it, in general, as a description of the depravity of human nature, the sinfulness of the sin we are conceived and born in, and the deplorable corruption of a great part of mankind, even of the world that lies in wickedness, ~~1~~ John 5:19. But as in those psalms which are designed to discover our remedy in Christ there is commonly an allusion to David himself, yea, and some passages that are to be understood primarily of him (as in Psalm 2, 16, 22, and others), so in this psalm, which is designed to discover our wound by sin, there is an allusion to David's enemies and persecutors, and other oppressors of good men at that time, to whom some passages have an immediate reference. In all the psalms from the 3rd to this (except the 8th) David had been complaining of those that hated and persecuted him, insulted him and abused him; now here he traces all those bitter streams to the fountain, the general corruption of nature, and sees that not his enemies only, but all the children of men, were thus corrupted. Here is,

- I.** A charge exhibited against a wicked world (v. 1).
- II.** The proof of the charge (v. 2, 3).
- III.** A serious expostulation with sinners, especially with persecutors, upon it (v. 4-6).
- IV.** A believing prayer for the salvation of Israel and a joyful expectation of it (v. 7).

PSALM 14:1-3

HUMAN DEPRAVITY

To the chief musician. A psalm of David.

If we apply our hearts as Solomon did (²⁰⁷⁵Ecclesiastes 7:25) *to search out the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness*, these verses will assist us in the search and will show us that sin is exceedingly sinful. Sin is the disease of mankind, and it appears here to be malignant and epidemic.

1. See how malignant it is (v. 1) in two things: —

(1.) The contempt it puts upon the honour of God: for there is something of practical atheism at the bottom of all sin. *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.* We are sometimes tempted to think, “Surely there never was so much atheism and profaneness as there is in our days;” but we see the former days were no better; even in David's time there were those who had arrived at such a height of impiety as to deny the very being of a God and the first and self-evident principles of religion. Observe,

[1.] The sinner here described. He is one that *saith in his heart, There is no God*; he is an atheist. “There is no *Elohim*, no Judge or governor of the world, no providence presiding over the affairs of men.” They cannot doubt of the being of God, but will question his dominion. He says this *in his heart*; it is not his judgment, but his imagination. He cannot satisfy himself that there is none, but he wishes there were none, and pleases himself with the fancy that it is possible there may be none. He cannot be sure there is one, and therefore he is willing to think there is none. He dares not speak it out, lest he be confuted, and so undeceived, but he whispers it secretly *in his heart*, for the silencing of the clamours of his conscience and the emboldening of himself in his evil ways.

[2.] The character of this sinner. He is a fool; he is simple and unwise, and this is an evidence of it; he is wicked and profane, and this is the cause of it. Note, Atheistical thoughts are very foolish wicked thoughts, and they are at the bottom of a great deal of the wickedness that is in this world. The word of God is a *discerner of these thoughts*, and puts a just brand on him that harbours them. *Nabal is his name, and folly is with him*; for he thinks against the clearest light, against his own knowledge and

convictions, and the common sentiments of all the wise and sober part of mankind. No man will say, *There is no God* till he is so hardened in sin that it has become his interest that there should be none to call him to an account.

(2.) The disgrace and debasement it puts upon the nature of man. Sinners are corrupt, quite degenerated from what man was in his innocent estate: *They have become filthy* (v. 3), putrid. All their faculties are so disordered that they have become odious to their Maker and utterly incapable of answering the ends of their creation. *They are corrupt* indeed; for,

[1.] They do no good, but are the unprofitable burdens of the earth; they do God no service, bring him no honour, nor do themselves any real kindness.

[2.] They do a great deal of hurt. *They have done abominable works*, for such all sinful works are. Sin is an abomination to God; it is that *abominable thing which he hates* (²⁴⁰⁴Jeremiah 44:4), and, sooner or later, it will be so to the sinner; it will be *found to be hateful* (⁴³⁸²Psalm 36:2), an *abomination of desolation*, that is, making desolate, ⁴²⁴⁵Matthew 24:15. This follows upon their saying, *There is no God*; for those that *profess they know God, but in works deny him, are abominable, and to every good work reprobate*, ³⁰¹⁵Titus 1:16.

2. See how epidemic this disease is; it has infected the whole race of mankind. To prove this, God himself is here brought in for a witness, and he is an eye-witness, v. 2, 3. Observe,

(1.) His enquiry: *The Lord looked down from heaven*, a place of prospect, which commands this lower world; thence, with an all-seeing eye, he took a view of all *the children of men*, and the question was, *Whether there were any among them that did understand* themselves aright, their duty and interests, and did seek God and set him before them. He that made this search was not only one that could find out a good man if he was to be found, though ever so obscure, but one that would be glad to find out one, and would be sure to take notice of him, as of Noah in the old world.

(2.) The result of this enquiry, v. 3. Upon search, upon his search, it appeared, *They have all gone aside*, the apostasy is universal, *there is none that doeth good, no, not one*, till the free and mighty grace of God has wrought a change. Whatever good is in any of the children of men, or is

done by them, it is not of themselves; it is God's work in them. When God had made the world he looked upon his own work, and *all was very good* (~~003~~Genesis 1:31); but, some time after, he looked upon man's work, and, behold, all was very bad (~~005~~Genesis 6:5), every operation of the thought of man's heart was evil, only evil, and that continually. They have gone aside from the right of their duty, the way that leads to happiness, and have turned into the paths of the destroyer.

In singing this let us lament the corruption of our own nature, and see what need we have of the grace of God; and, since that which is born of the flesh is flesh, let us not marvel that we are told we must be born again.

~~344~~PSALM 14:4-7

HUMAN DEPRAVITY

In these verses the psalmist endeavours,

I. To convince sinners of the evil and danger of the way they are in, how secure soever they are in that way. Three things he shows them, which, it may be, they are not very willing to see — their wickedness, their folly, and their danger, while they are apt to believe themselves very wise, and good, and safe. See here,

1. Their wickedness. This is described in four instances: —

(1.) They are themselves *workers of iniquity*; they design it, they practise it, and take as much pleasure in it as ever any man did in his business.

(2.) They *eat up God's people* with as much greediness *as they eat bread*, such an innate and inveterate enmity they have to them, and so heartily do they desire their ruin, because they really hate God, whose people they are. It is meat and drink to persecutors to be doing mischief; it is as agreeable to them as their necessary food. They eat up God's people easily, daily, securely, without either check of conscience when they do it or remorse of conscience when they have done it; as Joseph's brethren *cast him into a pit* and then *sat down to eat bread*, ~~0152~~Genesis 37:24, 25. See ~~300~~Micah 3:2, 3.

(3.) They *call not upon the Lord*. Note, Those that care not for God's people, for God's poor, care not for God himself, but live in contempt of

him. The reason why people run into all manner of wickedness, even the worst, is because they do not call upon God for his grace. What good can be expected from those that live without prayer?

(4.) They *shame the counsel of the poor*, and upbraid them with making God their refuge, as David's enemies upbraided him, ~~END~~ Psalm 11:1. Note, Those are very wicked indeed, and have a great deal to answer for, who not only shake off religion, and live without it themselves, but say and do what they can to put others out of conceit with it that are well-inclined — with the duties of it, as if they were mean, melancholy, and unprofitable, and with the privileges of it, as if they were insufficient to make a man safe and happy. Those that banter religion and religious people will find, to their cost, it is ill jesting with edged-tools and dangerous persecuting those that make God their refuge. *Be you not mockers, lest your bands be made strong.* He shows them,

2. Their folly: *They have no knowledge*; this is obvious, for if they had any knowledge of God, if they did rightly understand themselves, and would but consider things as men, they would not be so abusive and barbarous as they are to the people of God.

3. Their danger (v. 5): *There were they in great fear.* There, where they ate up God's people, their own consciences condemned what they did, and filled them with secret terrors; they sweetly sucked the blood of the saints, but in their bowels it is turned, and become the gall of asps. Many instances there have been of proud and cruel persecutors who have been made like Pashur, *Magormissabibs — terrors to themselves* and all about them. Those that will not fear God perhaps may be made to fear at the shaking of a leaf.

II. He endeavours to comfort the people of God,

1. With what they have. They have God's presence (v. 5): *He is in the generation of the righteous.* They have his protection (v. 6): *The Lord is their refuge.* This is as much their security as it is the terror of their enemies, who may jeer them for their confidence in God, but cannot jeer them out of it. In the judgment-day it will add to the terror and confusion of sinners to see God own the generation of the righteous, which they have hated and bantered.

2. With what they hope for; and that is the *salvation of Israel*, v. 7. When David was driven out by Absalom and his rebellious accomplices, he comforted himself with an assurance that god would in due time *turn again his captivity*, to the joy of all his good subjects. But surely this pleasing prospect looks further. He had, in the beginning of the psalm, lamented the general corruption of mankind; and, in the melancholy view of that, wishes for the salvation which should be wrought out by the Redeemer, who was expected *co come to Zion, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob*, ~~6126~~ Romans 11:26. The world is bad; O that the Messiah would come and change its character! There is a universal corruption; O for the times of reformation! Those will be as joyful times as these are melancholy ones. Then shall God *turn again the captivity of his people*; for the Redeemer shall *ascend on high, and lead captivity captive*, and Jacob shall then rejoice. The triumphs of Zion's King will be the joys of Zion's children. The second coming of Christ, finally to extinguish the dominion of sin and Satan, will be the completing of this salvation, which is the hope, and will be the joy, of every Israelite indeed. With the assurance of that we should, in singing this, comfort ourselves and one another, with reference to the present sins of sinners and sufferings of saints.