

Psalm 14-18 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

The Psalms are the hymnbook of Israel.

They are honest & unfiltered expressions of emotion that run the gamut from exuberant praise to discouraged depression.

Psalm 14

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

With some of the Psalms, we know the situation in David's life that prompted it.

Others we can make a good guess at because of the content of the Psalm.

Some, like this one, give us no clue to when or why it was written.

What's clear is that David is amazed by the foolishness of those who live without regard toward God.

He sees people in positions of power who act as though they will never have to give account to God one day for what they've done.

But as he contemplates this foolishness, he realizes that there's a **tendency** toward that kind of foolishness in everyone, even those who believe in God sometimes forget Him.

¹ The fool has said in his heart, "*There is no God.*"

Then, about these fools David says -

They are corrupt, They have done abominable works, There is none who does good.

The fool is not the man or woman who simply lacks knowledge.

This isn't the uneducated or ill-informed.

Foolishness isn't a problem of the intellect, it's a **moral** problem.

The fool doesn't deny God in his **thinking**, his **head**; he denies Him in his **heart, with his will**.

The problem with the atheist isn't that he/she **CAN'T** believe in God, it's that they **WON'T** believe.

They don't **want** there to be a God to whom they must answer.

This desire drives them to make up fancy arguments in an attempt to talk themselves into believing what they want to be true.

I can stick my finger in my ears & squeeze my eyes shut during a lightning storm & shout loud & long that it's sunny & dry -0 and that won't make it so.

That's what the atheist does with all his fancy verbal dance.

The New Atheists admit this!

Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, have all admitted that they don't WANT the God of the Bible to be real because they don't want anyone telling them what to do!

And these are the guys who are coming up with the main atheist ammo today that millions are now gobbling up.

Because they deny God so that they don't have to answer to Him, they then pursue with a vengeance the very things they don't want to answer for – and that's why David says they are corrupt workers of that which is abominable.

² The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men,
To see if there are any who understand, who seek God.

³ They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt;
There is none who does good, No, not one.

The Apostle Paul quotes these verses in Romans 3 to confine everyone under sin.

Is it really as bad as David says? Is there **none** who does good?

Well – be careful to see whose evaluation is being recounted here – V. 2

The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men –

This is the diagnosis of God as He sees into the very heart of man.

When comparing one person to another, our analysis may see what looks like good.

But God sees beyond **what's** done to **why** it's done.

No matter HOW pure someone's motive might be in doing a good thing, because they're fallen, there's always going to be an element of **self-interest** attached to it.

David's point is that **there are moments** when even those who believe in God slip into the same thinking as the fool who denies God, times when those who are otherwise godly, **forget** Him and act as though He does not see.

Every time we yield to temptation & chose to sin, we play the fool.

4 Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge,
Who eat up my people *as* they eat bread, And do not call on the Lord?

Is a **lack of knowledge** the cause of evil? Of course not.

The problem is moral, not intellectual.

The root of sin is the denial of God.

They don't call on the Lord because they demand to remain **independent** of Him.

5 There they are in great fear, For God *is* with the generation of the righteous.

The end of fools who reject God is terror.

They come in the end to great fear because they realize too late that though they've lived their lives without regard for God, in the end they've not been able to avoid Him.

Thomas Paine was an atheist whose book *The Age of Reason* was THE atheist manifesto of that day. As he neared death, he said - "I would give worlds if I had them, that *The Age of Reason* had never been published. O Lord, help me! Christ, help me!" Filled with terror at the idea of being alone when he died he cried, "No, don't leave; stay with me! Send even a child to stay with me; for I am on the edge of Hell here alone. If ever the Devil had an agent, I have been [him]."

On his deathbed atheist **Sir Thomas Scott** said: "Until this moment, I thought there was neither God nor hell; now I know and feel that there are both, and I am doomed to perdition by the just judgment of the Almighty!"

M.F. Rich came to the end with the last words - "Terrible horrors hang over my soul! I have given my immortality for gold; and its weight sinks me into a hopeless, helpless Hell!"

Sir Francis Newport, head of what was called an English **infidel** club last words were: "You need not tell me there is no God for I know there is one, and that I am in His presence! You need not tell me there is no hell. I feel myself already slipping. Wretches, cease your idle talk about there being hope for me! I know I am lost forever!" Then he cried out, "Oh, that fire! Oh, the insufferable pangs of hell!" and died. The famous French atheist **Voltaire** who did such damage to Faith said: "I am abandoned by God and man; I will give you half of what I am worth if you will give me six more months' life." He said this his Doctor who told him it could not be done. Then Voltaire said, "Then I shall die and go to hell!"

These last words of fools reveal the tenuous nature of unbelief.

Contrast them with the last words of believers like the Apostle Paul who said with the note of victory that he'd run his race & looked forward to his reward.

He said, "Oh death, where is your sting? Oh Hades, where is your victory?"

Or how about Stephen, the first martyr, as the stones pummeled his body, he gazed into heaven and with a shout of victory released his spirit to the Lord.

6 You [the wicked fools] shame the counsel of the poor, But the Lord *is* his refuge.

One of the abominable sins of the wicked is their abuse of the poor.

So God will defend them & exact His vengeance on those who mistreat them.

7 Oh, that the salvation of Israel *would come* out of Zion!

When the Lord brings back the captivity of His people, Let Jacob rejoice *and* Israel be glad.

David penned this because he was grieved over the conduct of wicked men who thought they could do what they wanted & get away with it.

He yearns for the day when evil is put down.

Psalm 15

A Psalm of David.

1 Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle?

Who can hang out with You? Then he repeats it

Who may dwell in Your holy hill?

Remember that in Hebrew, the poetic sense is conveyed by **repetition of thought**, not sounds.

David asks what kind of person enjoys unbroken fellowship with God.

2 He who walks uprightly,

His/her lifestyle complies with God's Word.

And works righteousness,

The one who does what's right.

And speaks the truth in his heart;

Deceit isn't tolerated.

But notice where truth is located here – in the heart.

Truth isn't limited to the words we speak with our lips.

It's the conversation we carry on in our hearts.

In Luke 6:45, Jesus said that it was out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.

Truth in the heart comes from being indwelt by the Spirit of Truth – the Holy Spirit.

Then the Holy Spirit takes the Word of God and edits & alters our thoughts & our motives so that truth takes root deep inside us.

This is something we need to consider tonight – does we speak the truth IN OUR HEARTS?

Or is our internal conversation a seething caldron of dark lies, desires, fantasies, plots conspiracies, bitterness, anger, lust, greed, envy, gossip?

This is the one who maintains communion with the Lord. [so pray]

³ He *who* does not backbite with his tongue,

Backbite – what a great word-picture for gossip.

Nor does evil to his neighbor,

The context here is speech – so he doesn't slander his neighbor.

Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend;

He isn't a tale-bearer. He doesn't repeat gossip or malicious stories.

⁴ In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the Lord;

This is something we need to pay attention to because modern pop culture has done a good job of separating a person's talent from their morality.

Utterly perverse musicians & movie stars who take every opportunity to spew verbal filth are idolized by millions of Christians because they're talented entertainers.

But David says those who maintain unbroken fellowship with God despise the vile.

Not hate them – but abhor that about them that sets them against God.

The heroes of believers ought not be entertainers but those who honor & respect for God has made them a unique expression of spiritual salt & light.

He *who* swears to his own hurt and does not change;

Because that truth he/she is speaking in the heart is so strong, they'd rather suffer a personal setback than ever let a promise or pledge be broken.

⁵ He *who* does not put out his money at usury,

Exorbitant interest.

In other words, he won't let the misfortune of others becomes the cause of his profit.

Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.

He won't bend justice for his own interests.

He who does these *things* shall never be moved.

Because his foundation is God.

Psalm 16

A Michtam of David.

We have no idea what a "miktam" was.

Since the word is close to a word which means "to cover" some think this might have been a prayer said in secret, with the hands over the mouth to conceal the words.

We find it in front of Psalms 56-60 as well, where the words there do give the sense that they may have been spoken in a whisper.

¹ Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust.

David is in distress and cries out for God's saving power.

Anyone who's read 1 & second Samuel knows David was regularly in some kind of dangerous trial.

² *O my soul*, you have said to the Lord, "You *are* my Lord, My goodness is nothing apart from You."

This is great: David talks to himself; "*O my soul*, you have said to the Lord,"

He's ***reasoning*** it out, carrying on an internal conversation.

This is the essence of what we read earlier about *speaking the truth in your heart*.
David realized that apart from faith in God & dependence on Him, his goodness meant nothing.

³ As for the saints who *are* on the earth, “They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight.”
Not only did David delight in the Lord, he took delight in all those who trusted in God.

⁴ Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten *after* another *god*; Their drink offerings of blood I will not offer, Nor take up their names on my lips.
While David identifies with the godly, he refuses to take part with the wicked who engage in disgusting acts of evil.

⁵ O Lord, *You are* the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You maintain my lot.

⁶ The lines have fallen to me in pleasant *places*; Yes, I have a good inheritance.
As the youngest son of many brothers, David had little to no inheritance coming to him from his father Jesse.
But he didn’t look to land near Bethlehem as his inheritance.
His inheritance was in heaven and was glorious because it was more than land, it was a Person – God!
When David considered the lines, the borders of what was his through faith in God, he counted himself an *eternally rich* man.

⁷ I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel; My heart also instructs me in the night seasons.
David had known many challenges & difficulty times during his life.

He had some wise counselors; Ahithophel, Nathan, & Hushai, who’d given great counsel over the years.
But David never depended on these guys ultimately for advice.

The greatest source of guidance was the Lord.
That’s a good reminder to us – to seek the Lord for direction and look to the leading of the Spirit, rather than what people say.

Sure – the Bible says there’s wise in seeking the counsel of a multitude of counselors.

But is God one of them?

Is He the most important of them?

Do we seek Him FIRST, then after hearing all the others’ advice, do we take it all to Him Last and let Him have the final word?

⁸ I have set the Lord always before me;
David in no way meant this like the pagan would set their idols up in their shrines.

He meant he’d always made his relationship with God the main thing.

Everything he did was for the glory of God.

Because *He is* at my right hand I shall not be moved.

⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope.
David believed in the resurrection of the body.

There are some liberal scholars who say the idea of the resurrection didn’t come till hundreds of years after David.

But he expresses a HOPE in the body’s resurrection here.

As we saw when studying Job, the oldest book of the Bible, even Job expressed his belief in the resurrection when he said, “I know that my Redeemer lives & He will stand at last on the Earth. Then, even though my body is destroyed, my eyes *will* see Him.”

[Job 19:25-26]

So clearly is this an expression of belief in the resurrection, it gets quoted in Acts as prophetic of Jesus’ resurrection -

¹⁰ For You will not leave my soul in Sheol [grave], Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption [the decay of death].

¹¹ You will show me the path of life; In Your presence *is* fullness of joy; At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore.

The right hand is the place of favor.

At God’s right hand is eternal pleasure & in His presence is the fullness of joy – perfect joy.

The desire for pleasure & happiness is what drives most people & shapes the choices they make.

If they would only realize *everything* they’re looking for is found in fellowship with God.

There's no regret in loving & serving God.

There's great regret in *not* doing so – but no one who's ever had intimate fellowship with Jesus has regretted it.

Psalm 17

A Prayer of David.

This Psalm is similar to 16. The difference is that the enemy was pressing in a little closer now so David is a bit more urgent in his request for the Lord's help.

1 Hear a just cause, O Lord, Attend to my cry; Give ear to my prayer *which is* not from deceitful lips.

2 Let my vindication come from Your presence; Let Your eyes look on the things that are upright.

3 You have tested my heart; You have visited *me* in the night; You have tried me and have found nothing; I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.

David was wise enough to know that sometimes trouble comes to bring us to repentance.

So when this trial began, he'd asked the Spirit to convict him of where he'd erred.

No create sin had been revealed so David asks God to defend & protect him.

4 Concerning the works of men, By the word of Your lips, I have kept away from the paths of the destroyer.

David had obeyed the command of God to stay away from those who conspire to do evil.

5 Uphold my steps in Your paths, *That* my footsteps may not slip.

6 I have called upon You, for You will hear me, O God; Incline Your ear to me, *and* hear my speech.

7 Show Your marvelous lovingkindness by Your right hand, O You who save those who trust *in You* From those who rise up *against them*.

8 Keep me as the apple of Your eye; Hide me under the shadow of Your wings,

9 From the wicked who oppress me, *From* my deadly enemies who surround me.

This phrase "apple of the eye" means – pupil of the eye.

How careful & zealous are we about protecting our eyes?

David ask God to protect him like that.

10 They have closed up their fat *hearts*; With their mouths they speak proudly.

11 They have now surrounded us in our steps; They have set their eyes, crouching down to the earth,

12 As a lion is eager to tear his prey, And like a young lion lurking in secret places.

The evil are like a pack of predators who've grown fat & lazy & think everything is going to go their way because they are so strong & so clever, while the godly seem weak & not nearly as sophisticated as they are.

The problem is, these fat, lazy evil people as usual discount God from their plans.

13 Arise, O Lord, Confront him, cast him down; Deliver my life from the wicked with Your sword,

14 With Your hand from men, O Lord,

Now watch, for David turns from praying for protection from the schemes of the wicked, to the recognition that God still wants to bless them to – if they will but be content with what He plans for them.

From men of the world *who have* their portion in *this* life,

That's one of the main characteristics of the ungodly, they think only of the temporal, never of the eternal.

And whose belly You fill with Your hidden treasure. They are satisfied with children, And leave the rest of their *possession* for their babes.

Even though they live for this world, God provides for them in His grace.

Though it's a grace they are blind to & refuse to acknowledge, still God's grace sends the rain & the sun.

Even the wicked have their families & know that kind of love.

15 As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.

So this Psalm ends as the previous, with a confident affirmation of the resurrection.

Psalm 18

To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David The Servant of the Lord, Who Spoke to the Lord The Words of This Song on the Day that the Lord Delivered Him from the Hand of All His Enemies and from the Hand of Saul.

This Psalm is found in 2 Samuel 22 after David was finally seated on the throne of Israel.

And He Said:

¹ I will love You, O Lord, my strength.

² The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;
My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;

My shield and the horn [strength] of my salvation, my stronghold.

This is a great Psalm to memorize, especially today when so much that people have looked to is shaking.

IN the end, there's only one sure foundation, one unchanging pillar to cling to – GOD!

³ I will call upon the Lord, *who is worthy* to be praised; So shall I [that's how I'll] be saved from my enemies.

⁴ The pangs of death surrounded me, And the floods of ungodliness made me afraid.

⁵ The sorrows of Sheol surrounded me; The snares of death confronted me.

David spent years on the run from Saul & in some crazy-bad situations.

That he survived them is a miracle.

Don't think that David was this guy who never feared or was tempted to despair.

He admits here that there were times when he wanted to give up and was terrified.

But he always came through into a renewed faith in God – who always rescued Him.

⁶ In my distress I called upon the Lord, And cried out to my God; He heard my voice from His temple,
And my cry came before Him, *even* to His ears.

⁷ Then the earth shook and trembled; The foundations of the hills also quaked and were shaken, Because
He was angry.

⁸ Smoke went up from His nostrils, And devouring fire from His mouth; Coals were kindled by it.

⁹ He bowed the heavens also, and came down With darkness under His feet.

¹⁰ And He rode upon a cherub, and flew; He flew upon the wings of the wind.

¹¹ He made darkness His secret place; His canopy around Him *was* dark waters *And* thick clouds of the
skies.

¹² From the brightness before Him, His thick clouds passed with hailstones and coals of fire.

¹³ The Lord thundered from heaven, And the Most High uttered His voice, Hailstones and coals of fire.

¹⁴ He sent out His arrows and scattered the foe, Lightnings in abundance, and He vanquished them.

David paints a picture of the battle that was going on in the spiritual realm while the earthly contest was going on,
on Earth.

We have a hard time relating to what battle was like in the ancient world because everything is so
automated & distant today.

But for most of history, until just a hundred years ago, battle was very personal, a face to face conflict that
was utter, terror-filled chaos!

It was literally a life & death struggle, hand to hand & face to face.

No one came out of battle clean.

At the end of the day, you were drenched in blood from head to foot.

It was loud, raucous, vicious, & hideously smelly.

Battle filled all five of the sense with things people ought never, ever have to experience.

David takes what he knows of Earthly battle and projects it into the spiritual realm and the contest going on there
between the forces of God & the forces of the devil.

¹⁵ Then the channels of the sea were seen, The foundations of the world were uncovered
At Your rebuke, O Lord, At the blast of the breath of Your nostrils.

¹⁶ He sent from above, He took me; He drew me out of many waters.

¹⁷ He delivered me from my strong enemy, From those who hated me, For they were too strong for me.

David had been in way too many military engagements where the odds were against him to think that he'd
survived by luck or superior skill.

He knew had it not been for God's miraculous protection, he'd be long dead.

- 18 They confronted me in the day of my calamity, But the Lord was my support.
19 He also brought me out into a broad place; He delivered me because He delighted in me.
20 The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness; According to the cleanness of my hands
He has recompensed me.
21 For I have kept the ways of the Lord, And have not wickedly departed from my God.
22 For all His judgments *were* before me, And I did not put away His statutes from me.
23 I was also blameless before Him, And I kept myself from my iniquity.
24 Therefore the Lord has recompensed me according to my righteousness, According to the cleanness of
my hands in His sight.

Please understand David isn't claiming moral perfection.

He means he's wholly devoted to God & refuses to justify himself apart from his faith in the Lord.

25 With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; With a blameless man You will show Yourself
blameless;

26 With the pure You will show Yourself pure; And with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd.

God is merciful to the merciful.

He's seen for the holy God He is by those who desire holiness.

But to those who think they can hide from God, God will reveal Himself smarter than they.

27 For You will save the humble people, But will bring down haughty looks.

28 For You will light my lamp; The Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.

29 For by You I can run against a troop, By my God I can leap over a wall.

David drew his confidence from the Lord, not himself.

That's why he was able to go against the giant – Goliath.

30 *As for* God, His way *is* perfect; The word of the Lord is proven; He *is* a shield to all who trust in Him.

31 For who *is* God, except the Lord? And who *is* a rock, except our God?

32 *It is* God who arms me with strength, And makes my way perfect [complete].

33 He makes my feet like the *feet of* deer, And sets me on my high places.

Sure steps, even in difficult places. [Big horn sheep]

34 He teaches my hands to make war, So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.

Besides everything else David was, he was a skilled warrior.

And though battle was never the kind of thing one WANTS to do, sometimes, to combat evil, it **has** to be entered. [“War is NOT the answer” – sometimes it is!]

David understood this – so when it came time to fight, he fought **well**.

You & I are locked in a spiritual contest with evil forces that aren't going to negotiate peace with us.

It's all out war and we are called to battle.

Too often from both myself & from others what I hear in the midst of the fight is whining.

We need to shake it off and fight on – like David.

Lord – teach my hands to make war. Strengthen me to bend a **bow of bronze**.

[**Agincourt** – Friday October 25, 1415, northern France. Henry V's brought France to her knees, English, 8000;
7000 longbowmen = French 40,000; 10,000 knights & men at arms.]

35 You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; Your right hand has held me up, Your gentleness
has made me great.

36 You enlarged my path under me, So my feet did not slip.

37 I have pursued my enemies and overtaken them; Neither did I turn back again till they were destroyed.

38 I have wounded them, So that they could not rise; They have fallen under my feet.

39 For You have armed me with strength for the battle; You have subdued under me those who rose up
against me.

Certainly as Paul wrote of the armor of God, he had this Psalm in mind.

40 You have also given me the necks of my enemies, So that I destroyed those who hated me.
[Moses at the Red Sea]

41 They cried out, but *there was* none to save; *Even* to the Lord, but He did not answer them.

42 Then I beat them as fine as the dust before the wind; I cast them out like dirt in the streets.

43 You have delivered me from the strivings of the people; You have made me the head of the nations; A people I have not known shall serve me.

44 As soon as they hear of me they obey me; The foreigners submit to me.

45 The foreigners fade away, And come frightened from their hideouts.

David wrote this at the outset of his reign as king.

He knew his mission was to secure the borders of Israel and establish the nation as the premier kingdom of the day – which is precisely what he did over the next 30 years.

46 The Lord lives! Blessed *be* my Rock! Let the God of my salvation be exalted.

47 *It is God* who avenges me, And subdues the peoples under me;

48 He delivers me from my enemies. You also lift me up above those who rise against me; You have delivered me from the violent man.

49 Therefore I will give thanks to You, O Lord, among the Gentiles, And sing praises to Your name.

50 Great deliverance He gives to His king, And shows mercy to His anointed, To David and his descendants forevermore.

David now realized that it was through his descendants that the long hoped for Savior would come.