

Session 2

September 8, 2024

PURPOSE ABANDONED

Psalm 8:1-6; 14:1-7

Potential. The word is filled with promise, as in, “He has such great potential...” But it is also riddled with doubt. “...It’s a shame he didn’t live up to it.” And so it is with mankind. God created the world so that His greatest creation would have a place to live out his greatest potential. It’s a shame we couldn’t live up to it! David authored both Psalm 8 and Psalm 14. In Psalm 8, we see man’s great potential. In Psalm 14, we see man’s great folly.

Man’s rightful place (8:1-6). Here, the King James shines: “*O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!*” The first Lord is *Yahweh*, the Lord’s covenant-keeper name. The second Lord is *Adonai*, best translated as “master.” But it’s the second phrase that carries such emotion. His name is magnificent, and His authority stretches throughout creation, from the earth to the heavens. So profound is His majesty, that simple and innocent children proclaim it even when God’s enemies do not (v. 2; see Matt. 21:16). It is against this backdrop of God’s magnificence that David compares the station of man. I can’t help but picture him as a boy, on the hillsides of Bethlehem, stretched in the dewy grass above his sheep, gazing at the stars. Who can walk out in the star-filled night (v. 3), take in such endless galaxies, and not feel terribly tiny and incredibly insignificant? (v. 4). And that’s the point! Yet man, in all of his frailty, is the crown jewel of creation. We were made in God’s image (v. 5) and given special honor. And our Creator—in His infinite and ever-surprising wisdom (or whimsy?)—for some reason, put us in charge of the place! For reflection: *How do you reconcile God’s sovereignty with man’s folly? Did mankind let God down? Or is man’s sinfulness somehow part of God’s wise plan? What do you think?*

Man’s wrongful pride (14:1-3). In direct contrast to God’s display of magnificence in Psalm 8, David records the atheist’s display of foolishness: “There is no God.” I have often taught that an atheist is not an intellectual, but a liar. And he is lying to himself! The God-denier is a fool for several reasons. First, the atheist denies the clear teaching of Scripture. Romans 1 makes it clear that creation itself demonstrates there is a God, as does man’s own conscious; what I call the “hole in our soul” that bears witness internally that there is indeed a God (see Rom. 1:18ff). Second, the atheist is foolish because he will one day face the judgment of our God, who loved the same people that deny Him! In reality, the atheist is troubled about God. If one acknowledges God, he is then accountable to Him, and thus required to submit to Him. Adrian Rogers used to say, “An atheist cannot find God for the same reason a thief cannot find a policeman!” The remaining verses (some of which are quoted by Paul in Romans 3), describe what I call the “sinfulness of sin.” Yet all this depravity stems from verse 1, the notion that no God exists, and if He does, He is impotent against us. For reflection: *Remember, when all is said and done, there is really only one sin: pride. It got Lucifer kicked out of heaven (Is. 14). It got Adam and Eve kicked out of the garden (Gen. 3). And it’s the issue we all struggle with every day. Deep down, we all want to be God!*

God’s righteous retribution (14:4-7). The downward slide of this Psalm comes to its lowest level in verse 4. The God-deniers simply don’t get it. Because they prey on the righteous and

because they refuse to call upon the One who can save them, they run headlong into God's judgement. The remaining verses form the Psalm's happy ending. Notice both a promise and a plea. The promise comes in verses 5-6. The days of the foolish are numbered, and God's judgement is certain. The plea comes in verse 7. David speaks for all of God's people here. His passionate disapproval of the foolish is turned to an anxious awaiting for God to demonstrate not only His existence...but His righteous retribution. For reflection: *Do you think all lost people are God-deniers? Or does God make special allowances for the innocent? If so, who qualifies as innocent?*