

Psalms 10, 14

Psalms 10:16-18 The Lord is King forever and ever; The nations have perished out of His land. Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will prepare their heart; You will cause Your ear to hear, to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may oppress no more.

Today, we have two Psalms that each address the problem of practical atheism. The atheism that we think about most often is philosophical. This is the premise that our existence can be explained as a result of natural laws that have no author. The concept of philosophical atheism does not exist in the Bible. The Bible knows that God is, the question in the air is that of human response to our maker.

Psalms 10: The emotional journey of this Psalm begins with hands thrown up and with a cry to God that seems to get no response. The question, “Why do You stand afar off, O Lord? Why do You hide in times of trouble?”

The complaint is then expressed, The wicked who oppress the poor do so without remorse. They boast of all their heart desires, they bless the greedy and renounce the Lord. The God factor is absent from their thoughts. These people always seem to prosper. They are untouched by any opposition. Their words are filled with

cursing, deceit, and oppression. They do nothing but cause trouble and iniquity. They conspire against the poor and seek to victimize them for their own profit. They negate the possibility that they might be held accountable for their wrongs by saying, “God has forgotten; He hides His face; He will never see.”

These observations lead to a renewal of prayer and the seeking of intervention from the Lord. This turning to God with the problem is an act of faith. It comes from the certainty that God is and that He is able to assert Himself into the affairs of men and change the outcomes. The Psalmist relies on what is known of the character and being of God. “...You observe trouble and grief... You are the helper of the fatherless...”

The journey that began with uncertainty and doubt concludes with assurance, “The Lord is King forever and ever.” Though the temporal experience of God’s quietness is disconcerting, the ultimate experience of His justice is certain, “You will ... do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may oppress no more.”

Psalms 14: “The fool hath said in his heart, *‘There is no God.’*” Notice that the “There is” is in italics which indicates that the words are supplied by the translator. This is a necessary practice whose purpose is to produce a readable translation but sometimes it is fair to question these insertions. In this case, without the insertion

we would read, “The fool hath said in his heart, “No God.” The difference is between a philosophical and a practical atheism. Most of us would never assert that God does not exist but we would all admit that we face the temptation to deny God’s will in certain aspects of our lives and choose to disobey what we know to be His will. This would not be possible for us if we were in the presence of the God whom we deny. Our denial of God’s will is a practical atheism that is every bit as dangerous as the philosophical kind – maybe more so since it is subtle and we often enter into the attitude unaware that we have slipped into a place of spiritual darkness.

The foolishness of the position expressed by “No God” is set forth by the contrast between the description, “They are corrupt. They have done abominable works, There is none who does good.” With the “Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand who seek God.” How foolish is it when people choose evil when the God to whom we must all give an account sees it all?

The Psalmist wonders if all the people who choose evil are simply ignorant. What other premise would explain the short-sightedness of their behavior? Remember Jesus’ words, “Father forgive them, they know not what they do.” Turn instead to the recognition of God’s righteous character. Long for His salvation and glory!