

(Start by asking three people why God is real to them)

Psalm 14

My God Is Real

(t/h - m: 11 Feb 18)

Charles Spurgeon, one of the greatest preachers in the history of the church, once said: The proper study of the Christian is the Godhead. *The highest science and mightiest philosophy which can ever engage the attention of the Christian is the person, nature, work and existence of the great God whom we call Father.* From time immemorial, humans have been filled with questions about life, death, meaning, love, hate, good and evil. But there are two questions that must be answered before any other question is asked. The first question is: *Is God created in the image of man, or is man created in the image of God?* That question determines whether life is an appointment or just an accident. And the second question is: Does God know me, and can I know God? This morning I want us to consider the basic question of the reality of God!

One day in a primary school art class, a little boy was drawing a picture and his teacher asked: Jimmy, what are you drawing? Jimmy looked up from behind his half-finished master piece and said; I'm drawing a picture of God. The teacher said: But Jimmy, no one knows what God looks like. Jimmy replied: They will when I'm finished! I hope we have a better picture of God as we go through the Psalms over the coming weeks.

The first thing we should note about God is that *some deny God's existence. The fool has said in his heart, there is no God (v1)*. The psalmist refers to the atheist as a fool and I agree with this. I find it strange that so many intelligent people spend so much of their time trying to convince others that God doesn't exist. This world is full of brilliant fools, people who can see a car and believe in the manufacturer, those who can see a portrait and believe in the artist. They can read a book and believe in the author but they see creation and refuse to believe in the Creator!

I heard about an atheist who was complaining to someone and said: *These Christians have all the holidays with their Easter and their Christmas. I think there ought to be a holiday for atheists.* The other person kindly suggested: *Why don't you try the 1st of April?* This joke could have been written by the psalmist who said: *The fool has said in his heart that there is no God.*

The psalmist is right in calling the person who denies the existence of God a fool. But the biggest fool is not the person who says they don't believe in God, the biggest fool is the person who says they believe in God, but doesn't live like it. Let me describe such a person: They will call themselves Christians but they never pray to God or live or work for Him. The foolish Christian will say they believe the Bible is God's Word, but never read or obey it. The foolish Christian will say that heaven and hell are real, but they won't tell others how to get to heaven or avoid hell. I'm sure you get the idea here!

In Psalm 14, the fool first speaks about God, then God speaks about the fool. ***They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no not one (v3).*** The word corrupt in Hebrew, literally means *soured milk or food that's gone off*. When I look at Britain today, I suspect that atheists are better evangelists than Christians because they will tell anyone who will listen that there is no God, and in doing so, they corrupt people with their message. We'll never understand atheism until we accept that atheism is not so much a mental problem as a moral problem. The atheist isn't someone who can't believe, they are people who won't believe. They don't have a head problem but a heart problem!

They are corrupt and have done abominable works, there is none who does good (v1). God takes a spiritual x-ray of the heart of the unbeliever and discovers that the atheist denies God because God is a threat to those who want to be their own God. Consider this: If there is no God then there is no good. Therefore, there is not judgement or hell.

If there's no judgement or the consequences of hell, then we can live anyway we choose without repercussions or consequences. And we can think of ourselves as supreme and we get away with anything! The Russian philosopher Dostoevski wrote: *If God does not exist then everything is permissible.*

The scriptures tell us that there are three characteristics of anyone who denies the reality of God. First: ***The foolish are marked by ignorance.*** *The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of man to see if there are any who understand, who seek God (v2).* Without God there are two things we will never know. We will never know truly how to live, and we will never know how to die. Without God, we will never understand what's wrong with our world, not how to make it right.

The foolish are marked by intolerance. *Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people as they eat bread? (v4).* Not only does the unbeliever attack the person of God, they attack the people of God. The more we love God, the more this world will hate us. Jesus said in John 15: ***If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.***

And: ***The foolish are marked by indifference.*** ***And do not call on the Lord (v4).*** The reason why an atheist can't find God is the same reason why a thief can't find a policeman; they don't want to! An atheist doesn't want to find God because if they do, they will have to change the way they live! The problem with the atheist is not their faith, the problem is that if they even give a moment's thought to the reality of God, they will be challenged to think about something other than themselves. V1 of Psalm 14 tells us the unbeliever does not see through the eyes in their head, but we can only know God through the eyes in our heart. The reality of God is only truly known by a heartfelt faith.

It's true that when it comes to God in His reality, we walk by faith and not by sight. But that's all right because *faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Heb 11)*. And I can say without shame that I would rather live by faith than to die in doubt. W.O Saunders was an atheist and he wrote these words in the American Magazine. They will break your heart, but they illustrate the truth of this message: *I'd like to introduce you to one of the loneliest and unhappiest individuals on earth...the man who doesn't believe in God. I can introduce you to such a man because I myself am one, and in introducing myself you shall have an introduction to the agnostic or sceptic in your own neighbourhood, for he is everywhere in the land. You'll be surprised to know that the agnostic envies your faith in God, your settled belief in a heaven after life, and your blessed assurance that you'll meet with your loved ones in an afterlife where there'll be neither sadness nor pain. He'd give anything to be able to embrace that faith and be comforted by it, but for him there is only the grave and the persistence of matter.*

The agnostic may face life with a smile and a heroic attitude. He may put on a brave face but he is not happy. He stands in awe and reverence before the vastness and majesty of the universe, knowing not whence he came, nor why. He is appalled at the stupendousness of space and the infinitude of time, humiliated by the infinite smallness of himself, cognisant of his own frailty, weakness and brevity. Certainly, he sometimes longs for a staff to lean on. And like the Christian, he too carries a cross. For him, this earth is but a tricky raft adrift in the unfathomable waters of eternity with no horizon in sight. His heart aches for every precious life upon on the raft which is drifting, drifting, drifting to where, no one knows.

I don't know about you, but what that man has described sounds hideous: A life without meaning; not knowing where he came from or where he is going. Living a life without being able to explain the purpose for his being. Without any comfort or hope for his future. A life as the agnostic says, just drifting without a clear destination.

What this man has described sounds like a living hell. And I am so glad that I am able to say that I believe in God. But more than that, I know God through my Saviour Jesus Christ, His Son. And I can say today, and I hope you can say this with me; that my God is real! ***Praise God and Amen.***

(1605 words)