

## DOES PAUL WRITE THAT PSALM 14 LITERALLY SAYS THAT NOT ONE IS GOOD?

Romans 3 quotes Psalm 14 in part. We cite it in full.

The fool says in his heart that there is no God. They are corrupt and they do terrible things and there is no one that does good. The Lord looks down from Heaven to see if there are any that act wisely among the children of men. To see if there are any that seek God. But they have all gone astray and they are all corrupt the same. There is not one that does good - not a single one. Do they know nothing at all those evildoers who eat up my people as they eat bread and do not call upon the Lord? There they shall be in great terror for God is with the righteous generation. You would ruin the plans of the poor but the poor have refuge in the Lord. O that deliverance for Israel would come out of Zion! Israel shall be gladdened and Jacob shall find joy when the Lord restores the fortunes of his people.

It is talking about how God sees people not us.

Psalm 14 seems to say that nobody ever really does right in the eyes of God. Some argue that you can't take that too literally for it refers to God's people who are victimised by those who never do good. Paul uses the Psalm when seemingly trying to tell us that everybody needs God's forgiveness for everybody sins all the time. Those who deny that all sin all the time say the Psalm is only emotive poetry and is not dogmatic theology. But it could be both!

One argument against the Psalm condemning everybody is how other Psalms such as 11:5 which says there are righteous people, 33:1 which tells the good to rejoice and Psalm 84:11 says God gives good things to those who walk the right path. But if we are in the pit of evil and God can lift us out and we cannot do it ourselves that confirms the psalm.

The Psalm puts its condemnations in a framework. It starts off by calling those who say there is no God fools. They are the ones who have no good points according to many. But it can be said that everybody rejects God and denies him in that sense at some point. You can argue that language is dangerous and the Bible knows that so its condemnation is thought to be the literal truth.

A commentary reads, "The meaning of the words in the beginning of verse 3 :הדין הכל סר יהיו in English "everyone has gone astray" in the context of the psalm is that no one from among the nations protests the atrocities perpetrated by his leaders against Israel (see Rashi)". This actually shows that not only in context is the Psalm saying nobody does the right thing but they are gravely bad. Paul correctly used the Psalm as proof that all we do is tainted with deep rebellion against God.

It is said that Paul has misread this Psalm. The Psalm is said to have two groups in mind. One group is the fool, corrupt and evil. The other is the righteous, Israel and poor. The Psalm is said to promise that the righteous will be delivered not the wicked whereas Paul thought that the wicked would be delivered from sin. The point of him looking for quotes to say that all on earth were bad was so to be able to say that God would save sinners. He was saying the opposite of the Psalm. He used the quotes to argue that Jews and Gentiles were just as bad as one another and there was no difference in their sinfulness and need for salvation (Romans 3:9). So it seems Paul distorted the Psalm. He knew the Old Testament too well for it to have been a mistake.

If Paul distorted a Psalm that denies that all are necessarily sinful to cherry pick it to get an out of context statement to make it say the opposite then he clearly did believe that there was no such thing as a good person on earth. The righteous in the Psalm would mean people who did sin but who were repentant and who were now reformed and good thanks to God. But Paul doesn't want to see that at all. He did teach total depravity.

It might be argued that Paul was a prophet and so was giving the correct meaning of the Psalm before the Psalm was corrupted by Jewish copyists. This safeguards his infallibility and his integrity.

It might be argued that the righteous poor in the Psalm are hypothetical. In that case, the Psalmist is not saying there really are righteous people but saying what would happen if there were! This is what Christians would have to believe.

There is no valid way to get around what Paul wrote. Liberal Christian nonsense tries to water it down. It says all are empty of God until God does something.

