

Thrive: Living on Purpose
Session 2- Purpose Abandoned
September 8, 2024

The Point: God created us with purpose, but our sin keeps us from living out that purpose.

Session Passages: Psalms 8:1-6; 14:1-7

Psalm 8:1-6

Connection to the Point. The psalmist marveled at God's creation and was astonished at the status He gave humanity.

Context. Psalm 8 is one of seventy-three psalms attributed to King David. The instructions to the choir director chief Musician to use a *Gittith* probably indicate that this psalm was to be sung by a group accompanied by an instrument similar to a lyre; the *Gittith* likely derived its name from the Philistine city of Gath. The psalm praises God for what He has done in creating the world and placing humanity over it as His stewards.

O LORD, our Lord (v. 1). The first title for God, *LORD (YahwehJehovah [or Yahweh])*, is His personal, covenant name which He revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:14-15). It emphasizes God's eternity and self-sufficiency. *Lord (adon)* means one who has authority over another. When used of God it acknowledges God as the greatest power and the highest authority.

Magnificent Majestic Excellent (v. 1). The Hebrew word (*addir*) can also be translated as "mighty," "majestic magnificent," "noble," "stately," and "excellent magnificent." It comes from a root (*adar*) that means something superior to something else. God is above all and incomparable to all He has created, including humanity.

Name (v. 1). "The truth of God's character is focused in His name. The divine name reveals God's power, authority, and holiness."¹

Throughout the earth . . . the heavens In all the earth . . . the heavens In all the earth . . . the heavens (v. 1). The majesty of God is proclaimed by all creation, which owes its existence to Him. Yahweh is Lord over the oceans (Ps. 93:4) and mountains (65:5-6). The heavens themselves declared the glory of God and proclaim His works (19:1). He controls the circuit of the sun (vv. 4-6). The heavens were made by the word of the Lord and the stars came into being through the breath of His mouth (33:6). He spoke and the world came into existence (vv. 8-9). God set the earth on its foundation (104:5) and caused the mountains to rise and valleys to fall (v. 8). He set the moon in the sky to signal the times and seasons (v. 19).

Your majesty Your glory Thy glory (v. 1). The term (*hod*) means "splendor," "glorymajesty," and "strength." It can refer to human vitality (Prov. 5:9), the majestic strength of a horse in battle (Zech. 10:3), and the splendor of a growing plant (Hos. 14:6). The term also is associated with authority (Num. 27:20) and the bestowing of honors (Dan. 11:21). God's divine glory is displayed in the heavens which He has made.

From the mouths of infants and nursing babies Through the praise of children and infants Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings (v. 2). Two of the smallest and most vulnerable in society are *infants* very young *children-babes*—those who have finished the weaning process, and *babies/infants sucklings*—those who are still nursing. Their voices praise God as well and attest to His creative power. Here they are contrasted with God's adversaries, the enemy and the avenger who represent human power and prideful arrogance.

Established a stronghold (v. 2). The Hebrew term for *establish* (*yasad*) means “to lay a foundation.” *Stronghold* (*oz*) literally means “strength,” either physical strength or personal, social, and political strength. The praise of God’s name and majesty from the mouths of the weakest of all humanity is more powerful than the assaults of God’s most determined enemies. The Lord is pleased to use the weak to confound the strong and to accomplish His purposes (1 Cor. 1:26-31; 2 Cor. 12:8-10). **Ordained strength** (v. 2). The Hebrew term for *ordained* (*yasad*) means “to lay a foundation.” *Strength* (*oz*) literally refers to either physical strength or personal, social, and political strength. The praise of God’s name and majesty from the mouths of the weakest of all humanity is more powerful than the assaults of God’s most determined enemies. The Lord is pleased to use the weak to confound the strong and to accomplish His purposes (1 Cor. 1:26-31; 2 Cor. 12:8-10).

Adversaries Enemies (v. 2). The Hebrew term (*tsarar*) has the meaning of “to show hostility toward,” “to besiege,” and “oppress.” Such individuals oppose God and His purposes and scoff at Him and His people (Ps. 42:10). God will eventually bring justice upon His adversaries, most fully on the Day of the Lord, when He will forever silence the **enemyfoe** (*oyeb*, also meaning “to be hostile toward”) and the **avenger** (*naqam*; those who take the judgment/vengeance of God into their own hands).

Work of your fingers The work of thy fingers (v. 3). God is spirit. He does not have actual fingers. This is known as an anthropomorphism, attributing human characteristics or behaviors to God to explain who He is and what He does. Here it is used to paint a picture of God creating the universe.

Human being Mankind Man (v. 4). David contrasted God’s creation with human beings, emphasizing humanity’s seeming inconsequence when compared to the heavens, the moon, and the stars (vv. 3-4). Yet human beings are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) and have been given the responsibilities of caring for God’s creation as His stewards/representatives (1:28; 2:15; 9:1-2). God gave human beings an exalted place over His creation with accompanying moral responsibilities. Adam and Eve’s sin (chap. 3) did not nullify this role.

Son of man Human beings (v. 4). In this passage, the phrase *son of manhuman beings* is parallel to *human beingmankindman*. It refers to all the descendants of Adam. The prophet Daniel used the term as a reference to a future Messianic figure who would be given dominion over every people and nation (Dan. 7:13-14, “son of man”), and Jesus used the term for Himself as being that Messianic figure (Matt. 26:64, “Son of Man”).

Little less than God A little lower than the angels (v. 5). Bible translators are divided over how the term translated as *Godthe angels* (*elohim*) should be rendered. *Elohim* can refer to a variety of spiritual beings depending on the context. Some translate it as “the angels” or “heavenly beings,” while others translate it as “God.” It occurs over 2600 times in the Old Testament and is translated as “God” over 2000 times. When used for God it carries the sense that He is unique among the *elohim*; none can compare with Him.

The phrase *little less than Goda little lower than the angels* emphasizes humanity’s exalted position above the rest of God’s creation. However, humanity remains below the status of the angels and that of God Himself. While made in God’s image (Gen. 1:26-27), humanity is in no way equal to God.

Crowned (v. 5). In addition to “to crown,” the Hebrew term (*atar*) can also mean “to surround” or “close in upon.” *Atar* is used of God surrounding the righteous with His favor like a shield (Ps. 5:12). In another of his psalms, David described how God had redeemed his life from destruction and crowned him with faithful love and compassion (103:4). Similarly, in Psalm 8 David wrote that in placing humanity in their exalted position as His stewards over creation, God had bestowed upon them glory and honorhonour befitting their status.

RulerRulersThou madest him to have dominion (v. 6). As His stewards, humans express the authority God has given them as they live out the purpose which God gave them—to exercise beneficial dominion over His

creation (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15,19; 9:1-2). Humanity's glory, honor, and rule express not our independence from but rather our dependence upon God since all we have, including our very lives, comes from the Lord.

Under his feet Under their feet (v. 6). This phrase expresses the same idea of the first part of verse 6 but using different words. God has placed His creation under humanity's feet in the sense of giving them authority and dominion over creation as His stewards. This is detailed in verses 7-8, which list sheepflocks, oxenherds, wild animals, fish, and birds as being under humanity's authority. The phrase *under his feet under their feet* can also refer to the symbolic act of a victorious warrior placing his foot on the neck of a defeated enemy. This symbolism appears most powerfully in reference to Jesus being victorious over all His enemies and reigning over His eternal kingdom (Ps. 110:1-2; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; Eph. 1:20-23).

Psalm 14:1-3

Connection to the Point. Every human being is a sinner who has turned away from God.

Context: Psalm 14 was also written by King David. It details how the godless reject God's law (vv. 1-3) and oppress God's people (vv. 4-7). This portrait of the ungodly is placed between Psalm 13 which is a plea to God for deliverance from one's enemies and Psalm 15 which is a description of the godly.

Fool (v. 1). The *fool* is the opposite of a wise person who fears the Lord (Prov. 1:7). The fool denies the existence of God; he rejects God, treating Him and His name with contempt (Ps. 74:18). The term for *fool* (*nabal*) means "senseless." It describes someone who has a closed mind in relation to God, godly living, and ethical behavior. He is characterized by immorality and this is expressed in the way he lives and how he treats others. Abigail's husband, Nabal, demonstrated such foolishness in how he treated David and his men who had protected Nabal's sheep while the animals were grazing in the wilderness (1 Sam. 25).

In his heart (v. 1). The Hebrew word for *heart* (*leb*) literally refers to the internal organ, but is also used in reference to the totality of a person's inner being as well as to his emotions, mind, and will. The hardness of the fool's heart is seen in the act of defiance which flows out of the center of his being, "**There's no God There is no God**" (see Prov. 19:3).

Corrupt (v. 1). The fool is *corrupt* (*shachath*). The Hebrew term means "to destroy" or "bring to ruin." Through his godless behavior and lifestyle, the fool destroys himself and brings grievous harm to others.

Vile Abominable (v. 1). *Vile Abominable* (*ta ab*) can also be translated "abhorrent" or "detestable." The fool's actions are vile abominable because they are offenses against God. The term also includes ethical sins against other people. King Ahab of Israel was described as having committed "detestable acts" "behaved in the vilest manner" by worshiping idols "did very abominably in following idols" (1 Kings 21:26).

No one who does good There is none that doeth good (v. 1). This statement does not mean that no one has the capacity to do good, but rather that because of our fallen nature even our best deeds are tainted with sin. Isaiah noted, "All our righteous acts are like a polluted garment All our righteous acts are like filthy rags all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6). Similarly, Paul wrote in Romans that no one seeks God and in our fallen state (prior to salvation) we are enslaved to sin (Rom. 3:9-20; 6:17). Only those works of believers done through the indwelling Holy Spirit are ultimately acceptable before God (Gal. 5:13-25).

Wise . . . seeks God Any who understand . . . seek God (v. 2). The Hebrew term for *wise understand* (*sakal*) refers to one who has those who have insight and understanding, particularly in relation to God and godly living. The wise person *seeks* God. The wise *seek* God. The term (*darash*) means "to search for and inquire about." To *seek* someone is to look for him or her passionately. It can also be translated as "study." The wise

person fears the Lord (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7) which leads to an understanding of and relationship with God and brings about a lifestyle characterized by godly living (Prov. 9:10). **Any that did understand, and seek God** (v. 2). The Hebrew term for *understand* (*sakal*) refers to one who has insight and understanding, particularly in relation to God and godly living. The wise are those who *seek* God. The term (*darash*) means “to search for and inquire about.” To *seek* someone is to look for him or her passionately. It can also be translated as “study.” The wise person fears the Lord (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7) which leads to an understanding of and relationship with God and translates into a lifestyle characterized by godly living (Prov. 9:10).

All have turned away All are gone aside (v. 3). People by nature are spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1-6), separated from God (Rom. 5:10), and do not seek Him (3:9-18). While all people have turned away from God, in Jesus Christ God has taken the initiative to seek sinners with the gospel of salvation (Matt. 18:12; Luke 19:10). Jesus has given His disciples the same role as His ambassadors who are to go into the world to proclaim the need for people to repent of their sins and accept the offer of salvation in Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19-20; 2 Cor. 5:18-21).

Psalm 14:4-7

Connection to the Point. Dread awaits sinners, but God offers refuge for those who turn back to Him.

Evildoers (v. 4). This term is parallel with the “fool” in verse 1. The word emphasizes the moral quality of a person’s actions, which in this context are evil. Because the evildoers’ hearts are corrupted and evil (v. 3), their actions reflect their inner condition. **Workers of iniquity** (v. 4). This phrase is parallel with the “fool” in verse 1. It emphasizes these people’s evil actions. Because their hearts are corrupted and evil, their actions reflect their inner condition.

Understand Know Knowledge (v. 4). The word for *understand* (*yada*) literally means “to know.” This term is used to describe how God watches over the way of the righteous (Ps. 1:6; 37:18) and knows the hearts and actions of the unrighteous (Isa. 44:18). It is also used in the sense of being acquainted with someone (Gen. 29:5; 2 Sam. 1:5) as well as not knowing someone (Ex. 1:8). In the context of Psalm 14, it describes a lack of understanding about God. However, the problem is not just intellectual but relational. Evildoers will not seek after God; they have intentionally turned away from Him.

Consume my people Devour my people Eat up my people (v. 4). The term *consumedevour* (*akal*) literally means “to eat.” It for *eat up* (*akal*) figuratively means to *consumedevour* in the sense of “to destroy.” Evildoers seek to consume God’s people with their evil deeds. They cheat, harm, persecute, and oppress them (Ps. 27:2; Prov. 30:14). Instead of seeking God to meet their needs, evildoers attempt to meet their needs by taking from others. To the wicked, such actions are as natural as a ravenously hungry person devouring a meal of bread.

Call on the LORD Call not upon the LORD (v. 4). To *call on* (*qara*) is to call out to someone, in this case to God. Those who call out to God recognize their need for God in their lives and seek Him by calling on the Lord in prayer (34:6). The Lord promises to answer and save those who call out to Him (145:18-20). The fool does not call upon the Lord because he does not believe in his heart that he needs the Lord. In Romans, Paul wrote that all those who call out to God (in repentance and faith), confessing Jesus is Lord and believing God raised Him from the dead, will be saved (Rom. 10:9-13; see Joel 2:32).

Filled with dread Overwhelmed with dread In great fear (v. 5). The defiance and complacency of evildoers workers of iniquity and fools has its consequences. Rejecting God and refusing a relationship with Him ultimately leads to judgment. While evildoers may terrorize the people of God for a time, in the end they will be filled with dread because **God is with those who are righteous God is present in the company of the righteous God is in the generation of the righteous**, meaning those who live in relationship with Him and seek

to live according to His standards. An attack on God's people is an attack on God Himself (Acts 9:1-5). The term *dreadfear* (*pachad*) means "to be afraid," "to tremble," and "to live in terror." God's judgment will fall on all evildoers, in this life and/or ultimately at the final judgment (Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 20:11-15). Believers today have no reason to dread, since God has forgiven their sins, reconciling them to Himself through Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:17-19).

You sinners frustrate the plans of the oppressed**You evildoers frustrate the plans of the poor****Yea have shamed the counsel of the poor** (v. 6). The *oppressed/poor* refers to the poor, the needy, the humble, and the afflicted, in this case God's people who are suffering. The term is parallel to the "righteous" (v. 5). *Sinners/Evildoers* is parallel with the "fool" (v. 1) and the "evildoers" (v. 4). Those who do not acknowledge God often also actively oppose those who live righteously.

Refuge (v. 6). A *refuge* (*machaseh*) is a shelter, literally or figurative, which the weak and vulnerable enter for protection. Hope and trust are associated with this word. God is the righteous people's place of protection and source of security against the attacks of the wicked. This does not mean that bad things will never happen to believers, but it does mean that they can cry out to and seek the Lord in times of trouble (Ps. 46). He will walk with them through the trials and tribulations of life (Isa. 43:2), giving them strength and endurance to withstand these experiences (40:31; 1 Cor. 10:13).

Deliverance Salvation (v. 7). The word (*yeshuah*) means "salvation." When used of God, the term normally refers to rescue by God from earthly oppressors and dangers (Isa. 33:2), but sometimes refers to salvation in the spiritual sense (49:6)—deliverance from guilt, sin, and punishment.

Zion (v. 7). The term can refer to the hill south of Jerusalem which was fortified by the Jebusites and captured by King David (2 Sam. 5:7). It was also known as "the city of David/the City of David" (1 Kings 8:1) and "the city of our God" (Ps. 48:1-2), the place where God dwelt (9:11). *Zion* also was synonymous with the city of Jerusalem (Ps. 135:21; Isa. 40:9; Mic. 3:12) and the entire nation (Ps. 126:1; Jer. 50:4-5). In the context of Psalm 14, *Zion* is the place where God dwells and from which the deliverance of His people comes.

Restores the fortunes Restores his people (v. 7). The term for *restores* (*shub*) has the basic meaning of "turn" in the sense of "return." Figuratively it is used of repentance and the restoration of a relationship with God (Jer. 3:7; Isa. 10:21). God would restore His people's fortunes/people for the better from the opposition they faced for believing in Him and living righteously. God's people could rejoice and be glad, for God would deliver them. **Bringeth back the captivity of his people** (v. 7). The captivity of his people can also be translated "his captive people." The term for *bringeth back* (*shub*) has the basic meaning of "turn" in the sense of "return." Figuratively it is used of repentance and the restoration of a relationship with God (Isa. 10:21; Jer. 3:7). God would eventually deliver His people from the opposition they faced for believing in Him and living righteously. God's people could rejoice and be glad, for God would deliver them.

Jacob . . . Israel (v. 7). Jacob was the son of the patriarch Isaac and the grandson of Abraham. God changed Jacob's name to Israel (Gen. 32:22-31), which reflected the change in Jacob from a deceiver to a man of God. In the Old Testament, both *Jacob* and *Israel* are used as identifiers for the Israelites.

1. Brad Creed, "Names of God," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, gen. ed. Chad Brand, rev. (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2015), 1143.