

“The Fool”

Psalm 14

When D. L. Moody was conducting evangelistic meetings, he frequently faced hecklers who were in violent disagreement with him. In the final service of one campaign, an usher handed the famous preacher a note as he entered the auditorium. It was actually from an atheist who had been giving Mr. Moody a great deal of trouble. The evangelist, however, supposed that it was an announcement, so he quieted the large audience and prepared to read it. Opening the folded piece of paper he found scrawled in large print only one word: "Fool!" The colorful preacher was equal to the occasion. Said Moody, "I have just been handed a memo which contains the single word - 'Fool'. This is most unusual. I've often heard of those who have written letters and forgotten to sign their names, but this is the first time I've ever heard of anyone who signed his name and then forgot to write the letter!" Taking advantage of the unique situation, Moody promptly changed his sermon text to Psalm 14:1 "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God!"

The word for "fool" here (נָבִיל) is translated "vile" in Isaiah 32:5-6. Webster's 1828 dictionary defines this word, as used in this way, as "morally base or impure; sinful; depraved by sin; wicked; hateful in the sight of God and of good men." Another word translated "fool" in the Old Testament (פֶּסֶל) means to act foolishly or do foolish things, especially in relation to God's Word. The most common word translated "fool" (פֶּסֶל), found mostly in the book of Proverbs, is referring to those without wisdom, or more specifically, those without Christ.

All of that to say, if God calls a person a “fool” as is found in this psalm, and throughout the book of Proverbs, He is simply saying they have chosen to defy God and follow their own path. In application for today, what’s described here is an unbeliever in need of salvation that chooses to ignore the grace of God, and because of that their life is in opposition of God and His people.

The fool is described in this text, and in Psalm 53 where the psalmist repeats this psalm almost verbatim.

I. HE HEART IS WITHOUT GOD – VS. 1A

A. Even if he doesn’t say it out loud (which he will eventually if it’s in his heart), it’s what the intent of the heart is that God will judge, as much as the action.

[Ecclesiastes 12:14](#)

¹⁴ For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

[1 Corinthians 4:5](#)

⁵ Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.

B. The phrase “in his heart” speaks volumes, not just for the “fool,” but for us that are saved as well. That thought is found throughout the Bible. A look at a few of those will be helpful for us, even as believers, to know that we should not lose sight of the fact that “as [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov.

23:7).

Let me say, as I've said before, the term "heart" and "mind" are quite often synonymous in the Bible, so when we consider the term "heart" here, keep that in mind.

1. God can, and does, put in us, "in our heart" the ability to do things for Him. Solomon is an illustration of this, as is Daniel in the Old Testament.

1 Kings 3:9 [Solomon speaking]

⁹ Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?

1 Kings 3:12 [the LORD speaking]

¹² Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee.

1 Kings 10:24

²⁴ And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart.

2. God can, and does, read our "heart" – our mind, our thoughts.

Genesis 18:12-15

¹² Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?

¹³ And the LORD said unto Abraham,

Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?

¹⁴ Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

¹⁵ Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh.

3. We show what's in our hearts (our minds) by what we say and do. The next psalm that we will consider shows this so we will consider this in further detail when we look at that psalm.

Psalm 15:1-3

¹ LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

² He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

³ He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

Psalm 55:21

²¹ The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.

4. We can, and often do, have idols in our heart. This one should concern all of us. Consider this: what consumes our thoughts?

Ezekiel 14:3-4

³ Son of man, these men have set up their

idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them?

⁴ Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols;

Ezekiel 14:7

⁷ For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to enquire of him concerning me; I the LORD will answer him by myself:

Although this is speaking in a literal sense, that the men spoken of were consumed with the worship of false gods, we can apply this to our lives today and what consumes our thoughts. "They laid them [idols] on their minds, busied their thoughts and filled their affections with them" (Cambridge notes).

C. "There is no God" – of course, thinking or believing that, or saying that doesn't make Him cease to exist. What this is saying is that the fool doesn't care if there is a God or not – he is going to live his life his way.

II. HIS ACTIONS ARE WITHOUT GOOD – VS. 1B-3

A. *"They are corrupt" – they have corrupt natures. Every person without Christ is corrupt. This is the term used for mankind in Noah's day that precipitated God destroying the world with a flood.*

Genesis 6:11-12

¹¹ The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.

¹² And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

B. *"They have done abominable works" – being corrupt and allowing that sinfulness to go unchecked will lead to more and more "abominable works" – whatever is repulsive to the mind or offensive to the senses (Webster).*

C. *"There is none that doeth good" – this is repeated in Rom. 3:10-12 and is a defining point for all of mankind that without Christ and His righteousness, we are not good, nor can we be good.*

Isaiah 64:6

⁶ But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Romans 3:10-12

¹⁰ As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

¹¹ There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

¹² They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that

doeth good, no, not one.

D. Verse two and three show that when God considered man on his own merit, without the work of Christ, to see if it were possible that they could come to Him by any other way, He found they would never be able to be justified on their own. He always knew this – this text isn't here to show God one day figured this out. It's here so we can know that there was no other way for us to be redeemed.

III. HIS SPEECH IS WITHOUT GAIN – VS. 4

A. Found in the last portion of the verse – "and call not upon the LORD." It is without beneficial gain for righteousness.

B. The first part of the verse is a question pointing back to the previous verses and considers them to be workers of iniquity without any knowledge of who God is or what He wants. They are devoted to the works of the flesh and its pleasures.

C. In that devotion, as the second portion of the verse shows, they have a desire to do all they can every day, as a normal behavior, as normal as eating bread, to stop the workers of righteousness. Their desire, because they are Satan's workers, is to stop the believer from speaking of their Savior by any means possible.

D. Because they don't call upon the LORD,

their language is used to accomplish their task. The principle of opposites is in view in this verse. Whatever is opposite of calling upon the LORD is what they called upon for their gain rather than the gain of others.

IV. HIS END IS WITHOUT GLORY – VS. 5-7

- A. "There were they in great fear" – The word "there" speaks to time, not just place. "Then, when God's long-suffering changes into wrath, terror at His judgement seizes them and they tremble through and through" (K&D).***
- B. "For God is in the generation of the righteous" – the glory was with the ones with whom the LORD dwelt.***
- C. "Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor" – speaking to the fool, to the worker of iniquity, they had treated with derision the "counsel," the plan they followed in serving the Lord.***
- D. "Because the LORD is his refuge" – this is why they were shamed, why they were mocked and ridiculed. Anytime we, who the world considers "poor," whether literally without finances and possessions, or more figuratively, poor in worldly intelligence and culture, choose to follow the LORD, showing to the world around us that we look to Him for refuge from that very world, we will be "shamed."***
- E. Verse seven is either a prophecy of the***

return from Babylon after the captivity, which some people teach, or more probably a look back on the historical account of the deliverance from Egypt in the Exodus. It can also be that it was the psalmist's plea that God would deliver the righteous from the world around them that had taken His people captive spiritually, just like is happening today.

Conclusion: The last three verses of this psalm contrast with the first four. The first four are negative and portray the lost of the world as God sees them. The last three show that even though the unsaved around us are corrupt and against the child of God, God is "our refuge" – He is all we need to battle the enemy.