

WHO IS A FOOL IN GOD'S EYES?

Psalm 14: 1-7 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Every person who has ever lived, has at one time or another, been a fool, or played the fool, being seen as a fool in God's eyes. Perhaps, as believers today, there is no greater foolishness than to live outside of praising the Lord or outside of a life of faith. Charles Spurgeon once said, "Wash your face every morning in a bath of praise." 365 years ago, the commentator, John Trapp wrote, "God lets out His mercies to us for the rent of our praise, and He is content that we may have the benefit of those mercies so that He may have the glory." Beloved, a heart that will not praise the Lord is a heart without faith, and such a heart soon becomes a fool in God's eyes. To have a heart without faith is to be a fool in God's eyes. Robert J. Morgan, in a lecture to a Torchbearers Conference in Sweden, spoke some powerful words we all need. "We don't know why God allows problems, but we know He intends to use them to heighten our maturity and to deepen our faith... Trials and troubles are dumbbells and treadmills for the soul. They develop strength and stamina. Trials beef up our faith for the great challenges ahead of us... Faith has a cumulative quality to it. We amass and garner it. We grow it and lay it in store for future times. Our faith grows stronger through the seasons of life... Faith is believing that what the Lord has said to us will be accomplished, being fully persuaded that God has the power to do what He has promised, believing that things will happen just as He has told us. When we take our morning shower, we assume there's going to be water, preferably hot water... Driving to work, we proceed through green lights, assuming they are red for intersecting traffic. Even the sincerest atheist lives by faith, not only in his atheistic philosophy, but in the very processes and procedures of everyday life.

Every person in the world has faith, but how foolish we must be in God's eyes when we believe more in our hot water heater working or in the city supply of water than in Him. How foolish we must be before His eyes when we trust the timer on a traffic light and the planned rhythm of traffic lights more than we trust in God. It's not our prerogative ever to call anyone a fool. Jesus warns us in Matthew 5: 22, "Whoever shall say, 'You fool' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell." Never should any of us ever dare to judge another as a fool. Such judgment belongs only to the Lord. Nevertheless, when God Himself, calls us or others a fool, it is worth noting carefully. When God inspires His servants the prophets or the apostles to call people fools, it is most instructive to see just why. Today, I hope to deal with all seven verses of Psalm 14, but I tell you, this subject of who God calls a fool is at the heart of what will be a mixture of an exegetical message and a topical message. God has reminded me in His Word of five

situations, two in the lives of unbelievers and three in the lives of believers, when He sees us as fools. Know today, that if God points out to you that you are a fool, it is because He is putting His finger on something He longs to change. God can redeem us from being fools or foolish when we repent of our sin. Open yourself up today to God's searchlight. If you aren't open to God examining your heart, you are playing the fool. What are these (5) ways we can play the fool in God's eyes as He sees us?

GOD SEES AS FOOLS UNBELIEVERS WHO SAY IN THEIR HEART,

"THERE IS NO GOD!" (I.) Notice verse 1—"The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They (that means such fools) they are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good." This is a true but terrible picture of fallen human nature. But God goes further. Verses 2, 3 continues, "The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one." This universal corruption spoken of by David is due to the denial of God. By the denial of God in our lives, we are not necessarily to understand only as formal atheism, but moral perversity that leaves God out of our reckoning, and orders our life regardless of God's claims or His call in our lives. Every one of us who does this, no matter how good we are horizontally with each other, we can have a crookedness in us, perpendicularly, and both believers and unbelievers can play the fool and at that moment in our lives, be seen in God's estimate as a fool.

Now the words corrupt and abominable in verse 1 describe the world before the flood in Genesis 6: 5,6. There we read, "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him to His heart." Beloved, when our lives are lived in sharp contrast to God's desire, we are astray, our lives have gone putrid, sour, no good. When God sees man's wickedness, it is more than a grievous disappointment to Him. That isn't the end of the matter. The hurt we inflict on ourselves and others is also inflicted on Him. Whether speaking of an unbeliever or a believer in Jesus, prayerlessness is practical atheism. In that light, any of us can become in practice, foolish and atheistic. David goes farther in verse 4 saying, "Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers who eat up my people as they eat bread and do not call upon the Lord." There it is—not calling on the Lord is practical atheism. Now be assured that this verdict on sinful man is the foundation of Paul's mighty words in Romans 3: 10-12, saying, "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;

no one does good, not even one.” Paul goes on to say, in Romans 3: 13-18, that the picture is worse, as he goes back to quote Psalm 5:9 and he goes on to quote Psalm 10: 7 and Isaiah 59: 7ff, and he closes quoting Psalm 36: 1. Putting the picture together of a fool, Paul quotes David and Isaiah saying, “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery. And the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.” That is the picture of an unbelieving fool.

The Hebrew word for fool in Psalm 14: 1 is **nabal**. Nabal means stupid, wicked, impious, irreverent, or profane. An atheist is in God’s eyes a fool. To deny there is a God is to believe in something no one will ever believe in hell. One poet said, “On earth are atheists many, in hell, there is not any.” John Trapp, in 1647, said, “An atheist has lost the sap of wisdom.” Yet, who are many of the professors teaching across America in our universities? They are those who are robbing the life and the sap out of education. Young people, I urge you as you go off to college, ‘Don’t be fooled by those whom God calls fools.’ Don’t be fooled by PhD’s who have missed the primer of all true education. The sap of wisdom is gone from a nabal, one whom God calls a fool. Don’t let such a professor try to crack your faith. For such nabals, PhD only means phenomenal dud. Secondly,

GOD SEES AS FOOLS UNBELIEVERS WHO EXCHANGE THE GLORY OF GOD FOR A LESSER GOD. (II.)

Notice verse 3 of Psalm 14. “They have all turned aside. The Hebrew word for turn or gone aside is **suwr**. Suwr has a host of meanings. Suwr means to turn off the way, to remove, to depart, to rebel, to revolt, to go sour, to withdraw, to be without, to take off, or even to behead. Fools who behead God in essence by exchanging His glory for a lesser god or idol have gone aside. Paul, in Romans 1: 18-25 talks about those ‘who suppress the truth, who are without excuse, who claiming to wise, became fools exchanging the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things...exchanging the truth of God for a lie and worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen!’ Ten years ago in a January 2nd article in Newsweek in 2002, Kenneth Woodard identified the new religion in America—this belief that has turned aside from God. He called the new religion “tolerance for believing whatever we desire.” Writing in a way that God would brand him a nabal or fool, he wrote, and I quote, “The ancient Israelites should have been more inclusive in regard to idol worship; those who brought the images of Baal into the temple of God were exhibiting interfaith sensitivity. The early Christians should have recognized the value of Roman paganism; adding emperor worship would have made their faith more tolerant.

And today, he wrote, Christians should indeed affirm the great teachings of Islam, the faith of the terrorist attackers.” Beloved, the world would have us to become fools, embracing all religions as right. It isn’t tolerant, but it is true, and Jesus said it, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man comes to the Father, but by Me.” Paul tells us that by maintaining our stand for Jesus, we are not fools in God’s eyes, but I Corinthians 4: 10 tells us that “we are fools for Christ’s sake.” To be an unbelieving fool is awful, but as we turn to numbers 3, 4, 5, to be a believer who is seen by God as a fool is beyond awful. What is number 3?

GOD SEES AS FOOLS BELIEVERS WHO REPAY GOD’S FAITHFULNESS WITH DESERTING HIM. (III.)

It is likely that David in verses 4-6 is speaking of the Egyptians who –v. 4, ate up God’s people as they ate bread and would not call upon the Lord. Then in verse 5, speaking of the Red Sea, there they were in great terror, drowning in the Red Sea, for God is with the generation of the righteous. Verse 6 speaks of Pharaoh and all Egypt’s shame for the plans of the poor to go worship God in the wilderness. But for the poor who know the Lord, the Lord is his refuge.” God did deliver the children of Israel. They were His people He brought out of Egypt. Yet, turn with me to Deuteronomy 32: 6-18. Notice Moses as he calls the delivered people of Israel by the same name David later called the Egyptians—nabal—fools, foolish and senseless people. In essence, Moses says here, To the Father who carried you, fed you, nursed you, who bore you in His arms, to rebel and spurn Him, to desert Him is unthinkably foolish. It is base ingratitude. Is that how you repay God faithfulness to you, by becoming fools. Isaiah 1: 2, 3 is the same picture, saying, “Children have I, the Lord, reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master’s crib, but Israel does not know, My people do not understand.” Go back to our text in Psalm 14. Has the Lord been our refuge over and over in the past, placing in terror those who have come against us? Do we now or have we been becoming fools in God’s sight by repaying the Lord by deserting Him? I see a gulf of thousands of years as David cries out in verse 7, “Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion! Salvation came in the Exodus. That’s what we celebrated in our Seder meal—God’s deliverance and His Passover. But what happened to Israel after she was delivered? In David’s day, he was again like the Israelites in bondage in Egypt, once again praying for salvation for Israel. Why? It was because the delivered saints, God’s people had repaid God’s faithfulness to them by deserting Him for idols. Fourthly, who are these believers whom God sees as fools?

GOD SEES AS FOOLS BELIEVERS WHO SPEAK FOR GOD WHEN GOD HAS NOT SPOKEN TO THEM. (IV.)

Notice verse 5. I read David’s awesome

words, “For God is with the generation of the righteous.” Yet these people God delivered He had to discipline and send into bondage again, into captivity due to idolatry and especially due to their rejection of the word and authority of the Lord in exchange for made up—man-made authority. Just before God took the nation of Judah into captivity in Babylon, Ezekiel the prophet, in Ezekiel 13: 1-3, spoke about God’s people whom He once before had delivered out of captivity in Egypt. We read, “The word of the Lord came to me: “Son of man, prophesy against the prophets who are prophesying from their own hearts: Hear the Word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God, “Woe to the nabal—the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing.” Beloved, when we preach or teach or counsel our own ideas and not what God has spoken, we become fools in God’s eyes, foolish children, foolish preachers or foolish prophets. When we read into God’s Word our own ideas, God sees us as fools. When we see God’s answers in His holy Word, but we seek a second opinion from those who depart from the Word, we are in God’s sight, fools, foolish children.

When we differ with a passage of scripture that is against our bias, God sees us as fools, for we are speaking what He has not spoken. When we say things we have heard somewhere and attribute them to God and repeat it until we believe it is true, God sees us as nabal, fools, foolish children. When we explain away passages of scripture we don’t like by saying they are culturally different and irrelevant, of no import today, God sees us as nabal, fools, foolish children. Why? He tells us His Word is forever settled in heaven. (Psalm 119: 89) When I began the ministry 45 years ago in 1967, I was taught that John 13 was a cultural thing about washing feet as Jesus calls us to do. I was told it was not to be done today because people wear shoes and take daily baths and showers and it is no longer relevant. I am so glad that one day I took the plunge and just took God’s Word at face value in John 13: 1-17. If I am a fool in the sight of the world or of many believers, I accept that label as a fool for Christ’s sake. Now I have washed hundreds of believer’s feet as God has urged me in my spirit and by His Word. Can we symbolically wash each other’s feet by doing lowly acts of servant-hood for others? Absolutely, we can. But does that mean we are justified to ignore the words of Jesus to do as He did and wash each other’s feet? Beloved, I have a caution for us—Hear it. Never say glibly or lightly, “God has spoken to me, no matter what your reason is, whether it is to add some umph to back your opinion or to triumph another opinion. Don’t ever do it. To say God has spoken when He has not spoken makes you or me a fool in God’s estimate, foolish children who sorely need to repent. Fifthly, and lastly,

GOD SEES AS FOOLS BELIEVERS WHO REFUSE TO BELIEVE ALL THE WORD OF GOD. (V.) Notice Psalm 14: 7, the last part of the verse. “When

the Lord restores the fortunes of His people, Let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.” Not over three years ago, I sat in a convention hall and listened to the main speakers tell hundreds of us as pastors that God restoring Israel to her land in 1948 was not the fulfillment of prophecy in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and here in Psalm 14. I literally gasped. If you would know the different seminaries these professors represented, you would gasp. I choose not to mention them because I do not believe these professors represented their seminaries well or gave the majority report. David tells us that the final dispersion or captivity of Jacob, Judah and Israel will turn around—and when that happens, Let Jacob rejoice! Let Israel be glad! Can true believers refuse to believe all that the Word of God speaks? Yes!

Turn with me to the words of the risen Lord in Luke 24: 25-27. Jesus on the road to Emmaus on Resurrection Sunday was speaking to wonderful followers of Him but whose hearts were broken by the crucifixion. Listen to Jesus’ words. Could He or should He speak them to us? “O foolish ones and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory? And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted to the/explained to them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.” How can we be fools in Christ’s estimate? It’s not that we don’t believe the Word of the Lord. We do. It’s just that we don’t believe all of it. We can so easily become foolish, nabal, and the Greek word Jesus used is **anoetos**. It means those who cannot control their lusts and passions, or those who are void of understanding or those who refuse to consider the Word of the Lord. God is rebuking those blindly following isms, be it Arminianism, Calvinism, dispensationalism, covenantalism, and others that put God in a theological box. These isms bind us foolishly to a theological prejudice or style or desire or experience. Beloved, is there any part of the Word that you downplay while you emphasize another? Are there certain parts of the Word you like and teach and others you ignore or look over and refuse to believe or teach? God will always be God and break out of our man-made theological boxes. He is God. “Every word of God is tested—it proves true; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words lest He rebuke you and you be found a liar.” Revelation 22: 18, 19 declares, I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book; If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes away from the words of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.” II Timothy 3: 16 says, “All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. To oppose one verse is to be a foolish child in God’s eyes. God forbid. Keith Green sings, “Don’t be a fool. Don’t open up and expose yourself to one of Satan’s wicked lies.” I love you.