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What Makes a Man a Fool; Psalm 14

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Introduction - There are a couple of interesting facts about Psalm 14 that set it apart from the rest of the psalms. First, Psalm 14 essentially appears again as Psalm 53 in almost verbatim form. Turn quickly to Psalm 53. You can easily and quickly note that the words are almost the same. Why would the same song be included twice in the same hymnbook? I would suggest a compositional answer. The Psalms are songs strategically placed in order to tell a story. The individual psalms could be viewed as individual chapters. There is a flow. Psalm 53, even though almost the same as Psalm 14, is placed between 52 and 54 for a reason. And Psalm 14 is found following Psalm 13 for a reason. Look at 13:4. These enemies of David believe they have triumphed over David and thus over David's God. Psalm 14 reveals the foolish and tragic error in their thinking.

Psalm 14:1 is often used in reply to atheism, the belief that there is no god at all, that the universe, including humanity, is simply a random mix of molecules and chance. Religion is simply a crutch for the weak-minded. At this point, an appeal is made to Psalm 14:1 in order to state the absurdity of such an explanation of the universe from the grounds of pure naturalism. That use of Psalm 14:1 is not inappropriate for Psalm 19 defends it.

However, Psalm 14 not only exposes the absurdity of atheism but of practical atheism as well. Practical atheism is not an intellectual stance against belief in a higher being, practical atheism means to live your life as though there is no higher being. David's point in this song is that practical atheism is utter foolishness. What makes a man a fool? There are three answers given in this psalm.

I. Living Without God (vv1-3)

A) v1 shows us that living without God catapults one into a life of evil and immorality. If there is no moral authority outside of us, we become a morality to ourselves. It is the explanation for all the irrational barbaric stories found in the book of Judges, "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." If everyone becomes their own standard, there is no standard. The result is moral confusion and chaos.

1. We are experiencing the same confusion and chaos in our own day of relativism, where everyone's opinion is their own personal truth and is not to be questioned or judged. That works fine in the tower of academia but it fails miserably in the arena of life. That's why a terrorist, acting on his religious beliefs, is still viewed from those outside of radical Islam as evil and wrong. That's why a marriage arranged for a 6 year old girl, is still viewed from those outside of Hindu culture as morally wrong. Examples of moral evil exists while simultaneously being approved by its adherents, therefore proving relativism is wrong. Living without God catapults one into a life of evil and immorality.
 2. If you have a large, growing number of people who have relegated God to the sideline or to the private realm, occasionally they will all land and agree on the same point of evil and immorality. Then a cultural shift takes place, as is happening in our day on several fronts, and that becomes an even greater challenge to the church. Because in that scenario, even in a culture that touts relativism and tolerance, the Christian view becomes intolerable and even evil. That's what happens when you live without God.
- B) v2 shows us that living without God, however, does not remove God. Just because society pushes God aside that doesn't mean that God is now on the sideline! He's still God. He's still in control. He's still working out His plans and His purposes for His glory and the good of His people.
- C) v3 shows us that God finds people in the state in which they actually exist. You see how v3 is a repetition of v1? V1 says this is how people are apart from God. V3 says, God has looked upon them, and yes, that's exactly how they are.
1. Now, we don't think we are this way - at all. No. We are good. Even God will see things our way. We'll be our own judges. We're not corrupt; we're right!
 2. And God looks down from heaven upon all those who live without Him and He sees that all have turned, all have become corrupt, not even one does good.
 3. The foolishness here is to believe that our self-assessment outweighs and will prevail over God's assessment of us.
 4. You find these words again in the NT. Paul uses this part of Psalm 14 in Romans 3 to describe how everyone, Jew and Gentile, is a sinner. This is who we are when we live without God.
- II. Warring Against God (vv4-6)

- A) To live without God is to rage against God, to fight against God, to be at enmity with God. To embrace a life void of God is to take up arms against God, and the clearest manifestation of the war against God is the war of the unbeliever against the people of God. v4.
1. Persecution comes in many forms from mocking and maligning to raping, kidnapping, and killing God's people for their beliefs.
 2. Where does all this rage originate? God's people are the remaining bearers of His light, His Gospel, His truth. You can't remove God from society by simply denying Him. If you want Him gone, you have to remove His people as well or at least sideline them as religious fanatics who are out of touch and backward.
- B) The second evidence of warring against God is the total neglect and absence of any true worship of the Lord. (v4b)
- C) v5 shows us that there is another reason for their rage against God's people. There is a fear within the soul of the unbeliever, he can't explain it, he may not even be aware of it, but its there. Its the fear that the God of the Bible just may indeed have the last say and not him. Therefore, he fights with all his might to prove that he is mightier than God.
1. As he fights against God's people, he fights against God, and that gives rise to fear, which gives rise to rage because God's presence with His people is absolutely true.
 2. In fact, God is so united with His people that God considers any action taken toward His people, whether good or bad, as action directed straight to Him.
 3. Remember Saul's conversion in Acts 9. Saul believed he was going about doing the work of God by persecuting and imprisoning the followers of Jesus. On his way to capture Christians in Damascus, Jesus appears to him on the road, and he says, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Saul said, "Who are you Lord?" And Jesus said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."
 4. The people of God are never alone, and while persecution may cause us to fear, the greater fear is for those who fight against God.
- D) v6 The war against God always includes the attempt to shame God's people because their refuge is God. God's people don't trust in might or the sword or popular influence or political power. God's people trust in God. And when unbelievers appear to triumph by using these other means, their first recourse is to shame God's people for being so naive as to think running to God is going to make a difference.
1. The tragic foolishness of this shame is that the truth of Scripture, the truth of Christ, the truth of the final day of judgement all testify to the

very same reality, that is, that running to God is the difference that makes all the difference in the world and in eternity.

III. Missing the Salvation of God (v7)

A) v7 is a prayer on behalf of the believer and the prayer itself reveals the greatest sign that a man is a fool is that he misses salvation.

B) Note that all three aspects of this prayer will be answered. The context in which this psalm was written may be referring to a temporal deliverance from God's enemies that could be described as salvation, as restoration, and as resulting in joy. But the application of this passage is for all believers and is eschatological. All three of these will be fully realized by the people of God upon the Lord's return.

1. Salvation, full, complete, and final, will come for all of God's people, all of true Israel.
2. Full, complete, final restoration of all of God's promises will be realized. Notice it says "when" not "if" or "hopefully" but "when". This is faith-filled prayer, confident in the promise of God in Christ.
3. Full, complete, final, and overflowing joy and gladness await the people of God when salvation is completed.

C) Final note - the fool who lives without God and wars against God will miss every one of these; salvation, restoration, and everlasting joy.

Conclusion - What makes a man a fool is for him to believe he will have the last say and not God. That he will conquer God. That he can live without God and not face God as his judge for doing so. So what makes a man wise? To believe all that God is for us in Christ. Faith, while mocked as foolery, is actually the opposite of foolishness.