

“The Foolishness of Unbelief”
Psalms 14, 53
(Preached at Trinity, December 27, 2009)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Human beings have always had a thirst for knowledge. We are always learning, always inventing, always increasing our knowledge. And we’ve always been proud of our long list innovations.
The wheel revolutionized travel – 3500 b.c.
The bow and arrow revolutionized military warfare thousands of years ago.
The gun in the 14th century
The printing press – 1454
Lightbulb 1848
The internal combustion engine - 1859
Aspirin – 1899
Penicillin – 1928
Refrigeration, the airplane, the modern computer, cell phones
2. Yes, we are proud of our knowledge. We love learning new things.
Acts 17:21 – “(For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)”
3. Yet, with all of our knowledge and understanding there is a truth that strikes us at the heart of our pride. Human beings are fools. It would be more proper to credit them with madness than intelligence. Human beings are fools for their forgetfulness of God.
John Calvin: David does not bring against his enemies the charge of common foolishness, but rather inveighs against the folly and insane hardihood of those whom the world accounts eminent for their wisdom. It is therefore important for us to know, that however much the world applaud these crafty and scoffing characters, who allow themselves to indulge to any extent in wickedness, the Holy Spirit condemns them as being fools; for there is no stupidity more brutish than forgetfulness of God.”
4. Man has rejected the most important knowledge a man can know. He does not know God.
 - A. This is after God has made Himself plainly known.
Romans 1:19 – “Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them.”
 - B. They purposely suppress this glorious truth.
Romans 1:18 – “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold (*suppress*) the truth in unrighteousness;”
5. This is the basis of **Psalm 14**.
Psalm 14:1 – “The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God.*”
 - A. There is no wisdom apart from a knowledge of God. To reject Him is to reject the source of our being, the source of all knowledge, the source of all wisdom.
Years later David’s son will pen this truth:

Proverbs 1:7 – “The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge: *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

^{NAS} **Proverbs 9:10** – “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”

- B. To embrace and trust in the living and true God is the starting place of true knowledge – the beginning of wisdom.
6. Instead of embracing God they deny Him, perhaps not openly with their tongue but inwardly in their heart and outwardly by their actions.
Psalm 14:1 – “The fool hath said in his heart . . .” – in the core of his life he lives as though God does not exist.
- A. His affections are not upon God. His passions are drawn aside after other lovers.
 B. His mind is not right towards God. In fact he is not in his right mind at all. He is insane. Can you imagine denying the one through whom we live and move and have our being; the very source of life? It is depravity at its very worst. It is insanity.
7. This doesn’t mean they are not religious. Most people are religious. It doesn’t mean their consciences are completely dead. They may be drawn even into the Christian religion, but they will not submit themselves entirely to God. In all likelihood David is talking about Israel in this psalm – a people who had turned from God.
8. The superscription of **Psalm 14** is identical with **Psalm 13** – a simple reference to the chief musician and reference to David as the author.
Psalm 14, by the way, is almost identical to **Psalm 53**.
9. Again, David is probably speaking particularly of Israel and their unrighteousness. This is what he was surrounded with. Their lives were being lived in contempt of God. But this isn’t just a Jewish problem.
 A. In the NT Paul uses this passage to remind us that it is a universal problem. It is an epidemic. Sin has infected all.
Romans 3:9-12 – “What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; 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.”
 B. David says in **Verse 1** – “*there is none that doeth good.*”
Psalm 14:3 – “They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: *there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*”
10. This psalm is divided into two simple parts. **Verses 1-6** describe the attributes of those living in unbelief. Then in the final verse, **Verse 7**, David gives a plea for the salvation of the poor fools living in unbelief.
- I. David describes the attributes of those in unbelief
 A. They are corrupt – **Verse 1**
 1. The word here refers to something that destroys or causes to go to ruin
 2. Although created in the image of God with a great capacity for creativity, human beings destroy everything they touch
 a. Look at television and the movies
 b. Look at what many do with the internet

- c. Look at what the absence of leadership has caused in our country and around the world.
3. They do all manner of “abominable works”
4. **Verse 3** describes them as “filthy”
 - a. Literally the word means, “to stink.”
 - b. They have become “morally corrupt” – they are morally bankrupt
Job 15:16 – “How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?”
 - c. They have little regard for that which is holy or righteous. They put God and His rule far from their minds.
5. They are void of moral goodness - “*there is none that doeth good*”
- B. They try to exclude God from every aspect of life **Verses 2-3a**
 1. In **Verse 2** God is brought onto the scene to testify to the truths David is speaking –
 - a. God looks, He sees, He takes notice – nothing can be hid from Him
 - b. He is describes as sitting on His throne – from heaven
 - c. The scene strikes us with His majesty and glory
“The LORD looked down from heaven”
 - d. What God sees is a terrible plague of sin – all have rebelled against Him
 2. None possess true understanding – spiritual understanding.
 - a. None of them know God
 - b. With sin comes a horrible blindness, a loss of discernment
Lost humanity is wondering in a cloud of darkness.
 - c. Divine light shines upon all men - yet they are unable to comprehend it - Why? - Because they are blind
John 1:4-5 - "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not"
 - c. Lost men are void of spiritual intelligence, spiritual insight, spiritual wisdom.
 - d. True understanding and knowledge results in seeking after God
 3. None seek God
 - a. They will not have Him as God. They will not have Him alone as their treasure.
 - b. Instead of seeking God the do the opposite. They flee from Him, deny Him, oppose Him
They are all gone aside
 - c. Because of his spiritual death or spiritual depravity the lost man has no desire for God.
Verse 4 – “and call not upon God”
 4. “No not one” – not even one – It is universal
 - a. No one seeks God simply because they don’t see any value in God. Not only do we not seek God. We do our best to avoid Him.
 - b. People seek religion but they don’t seek God.
 - c. No man seeks God, no man has any desire to submit to God because they perceive it is far better for them to live without God.

- C. They devour the righteous – **Verse 4, 6**
Psalm 14:4 – “Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD.”
Psalm 14:6 – “Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the LORD *is* his refuge.”
1. **Verse 4** begins with a rhetorical question – he has already established that they have no knowledge. Now David gives a great example – they devour those who are the most worthy of honor – God’s people.
 2. Calvin: “they have overthrown all order, so that they no longer make any distinction between right and wrong, and have no regard for honesty, nor love of humanity.”
 3. Lost humanity hate God and they hate His people. The Millions of martyrs validate David’s words – the wicked consume the righteous like bread.
 4. They mock believers when they see believers suffering while they are prospering. They misperceive God’s rich grace upon His elect. They fail to recognize true prosperity. They mock the believer’s unfailing trust of God especially as it appears God is inattentive to their needs.
 5. Notice the righteous are called the poor. They are poor in spirit claiming nothing but Christ, yet in this they have received the greatest of wealth. They have become heirs of all things.
- D. They are filled with great fear – **Verse 5**
1. Everything on this earth is temporary and passing
It is characterized by loss.
 2. The lost man is terrified of loss – loss of goods, loss of love, loss of life. Having forsaken God he is left all alone in this world. They fear even when there is no cause for fear
Leviticus 26:17 – “And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you.”
 3. Sometimes their consciences prick their hearts and the terrors of hell strike them with fear, yet they remain unchanged
 4. They have great cause for fear and alarm because God is against them
Psalm 53:5 – “There were they in great fear, *where* no fear was: for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth *against* thee: thou hast put *them* to shame, because God hath despised them.”
 - a. This is why it is so foolish to deny God
 - b. Who would want such a mighty God against them?
 5. Contrast this with God’s people
Psalm 14:5-6 – “for God *is* in the generation of the righteous. ⁶ Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the LORD *is* his refuge.”

- II. David's hope for God's ultimate deliverance from the wickedness of this world
- A. This is a hope not only for personal deliverance but also a plea for the salvation of the lost.
1. David, like Paul many hundreds of years later, longed to see then end of all wickedness. – **Verse 7** –
“Oh that the salvation of Israel *were come* out of Zion!”
 2. This would be a cause for great rejoicing
- B. If none not even one seek after God then what's the point of **Verse 7**?
1. In fact, doesn't this mean that even David is lost and hopeless?
 2. The point is, salvation is impossible for men because no one has a heart for God, all hate and despise Him. We need a new heart.
Mark 10:26-27 – “And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? ²⁷ And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men *it is* impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.”
- C. David is longing for salvation to come out of Zion
1. Zion is the metaphorical dwelling place of God
 2. By “salvation” David is speaking of deliverance – the deliverance of Israel. Deliverance from what? Deliverance from the wickedness that has engulfed them.
 3. But as the Apostle Paul states this is a universal problem. All of humanity needs this deliverance
- D. “when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.”
1. David is not talking about his personal wanderings at the time of Saul of his exile at the hand of Absalom. Nor is he prophesying about the scattering of Israel by the Assyrians or the captivity of Judah at the hands of the Babylonians. His mind has in mind the whole of humanity and the filling of the church.
 2. Calvin: “by expressing his desire for the deliverance of Israel, we are taught that he was chiefly anxious about the welfare of the whole body of the Church, and that his thoughts were more occupied about this than about himself individually.”

Conclusion:

1. Wickedness is all around us. We live in a world of fools. How weary we grow of the foolishness. May God grant us to live separate and apart from the insanity. May we pray continually that God will save the wicked from their own folly.
2. May God grant us the great joy of seeing them come to faith in Christ. “Jacob shall rejoice and Israel shall be glad.”