

What Is a Fool?

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[0 : 00] Psalm 14, would you please stand with me as we honor the reading of God's word together.

! There is no God. They are corrupt. They do abominable deeds.

There is none who does good. 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. Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers who eat up my people as they eat bread and do not call upon the Lord? There they are in great terror, for God is with the generation of the righteous. You would shame the plans of the poor, but the Lord is his refuge.

[1 : 14] Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion when the Lord restores the fortunes of his people. Let Jacob rejoice. Let Israel be glad.

May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? What comes to mind when you think of the word fool?

Maybe you're thinking of someone who is silly or goofy or just not very smart. A Google search on the word fool gives this definition.

A person who acts unwisely or imprudently. A silly person. If you looked up synonyms on Google for the word fool, you'd see words like lunatic, moron, idiot, and dunce.

If you click on the images that Google provides for a fool, you'd primarily see pictures of clowns and court jesters. People who act silly or foolish to entertain others.

[2 : 32] In the early 19th century, students who had a difficult time learning or who caused disruptions in class were placed in a corner and they were fitted with a dunce cap, a big pointed clown hat.

Could you imagine teachers doing that today? I'm sure some would like to. I know my seventh grade Spanish teacher would have enjoyed putting me in that hat in a corner.

All this to say, when we think of someone who is foolish, we think of someone who is unintelligent. But that's not how the Bible, how God defines a foolish person.

According to the Bible, a foolish person is not someone who necessarily lacks intelligence, but rather is someone who lacks wisdom. There's a difference between intelligence and wisdom.

Albert Einstein was intelligent. And he said, a clever person solves a problem, a wise person avoids it. And he didn't mean that a wise person knows how to get out of solving a problem.

[3 : 46] I think what he meant by that is that a wise person knows how to avoid creating problems that need to be solved. So I was thinking about this last week.

I was going home and there was an oversized load, a big semi-truck that was stuck under the bridge on Adams. An intelligent person would know how to get that oversized load out, which apparently they did.

But a wise person would have known, hey, let's not go that way. Because that could create a problem. In that sense, the wise person is the person who not only knows God's Word intelligently, but they obey God's Word.

And they're wise as a result of that. They avoid the problems that sin creates. The Bible describes a fool as someone who lacks wisdom because they disregard God and His Word.

As Jesus concluded His Sermon on the Mount, He used an illustration to compare a wise person with a foolish person.

[4 : 52] He said, The house in Jesus' words, the wise person with a wise person with a wise person with a wise person.

The wise person is the one who trusts in Jesus for salvation and then lives their life in obedience to Him, in obedience to His Word.

In Luke 12, 13 through 21, Jesus told a parable about a rich fool. It says, And he said, And he said, The rich man in Jesus' parable demonstrated in time.

He said, A foolish person is the one who lives as if God doesn't exist.

Psalm 14 marks a change in David. In Psalm 3 through 13, David expressed his sorrow over the suffering he'd endured at the hands of wicked men.

[7 : 39] And in those psalms, he expresses that. And he also expresses his need for God. And he calls out to Him for help. And then he will affirm his faith in the Lord in whom he takes refuge. In Psalm 14, David traces all of those problems that he's experienced, that he's endured at the hands of wicked men.

And he traces them back to their source, sin. Which infects all of us. Matthew Henry said in the Psalms 3 to this one, 14, In Psalm 14, With a hope that God will provide what his people need.

Salvation. Living on the other side of the cross, we know that Jesus Christ is the Savior who brought this salvation that David prayed for and that David longed for.

But like David, we won't long for a Savior. We will not long for Jesus and desire to live our lives in obedience to Him until we understand our sin like David understood his.

If you're a Christian, you're a Christian. If you're a Christian, you might be thinking, well, I know God exists. But do you truly live every day of your life and every moment within those days as if God exists?

[9 : 34] The Israelites were religious. The Pharisees believed God existed. Yet Jesus often revealed their hypocrisy and He called them fools.

And though they saw Jesus do things that no other man could do, and though they heard Him teach with power and authority like no other man had, they rejected Jesus, they rejected His claims to be God's Son, God in human flesh.

They denied the truth of His existence. So you can be religious. You can believe God exists, but how you live reveals what you truly believe about God in your heart.

You may realize today that you are the fool who says in their heart there is no God. And if God has revealed that or reveals that to you today through His Word, understand that there's also hope.

that God can make you wise. If you're here this morning and you don't believe in God at all, or maybe you're confused about who God is.

[10 : 48] There's a lot of different religions in the world. They all say different things about who God is. Well, friend, God has brought you here today to clear up your confusion and reveal the truth to you about who He is.

And I hope that today God makes you wise by revealing the problem we all share, which is sin, and the only hope we have to be saved from sin, which is Jesus Christ.

A foolish person is someone who lives as if God doesn't exist. And so four words will help us recognize who the foolish are, and then point us to where true wisdom comes from.

The first word is identifying, identifying the foolish. The beginning of verse 1, again, David says, the fool says in his heart there is no God.

In the Bible, the heart is used metaphorically as the location of a person's thoughts. It's the place where moral decisions are made. Proverbs 16.9 says, the heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.

[11 : 57] Now, there's a problem about the human heart, because we read in Jeremiah 17.19 that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick. Who can understand it?

When the Pharisees and scribes rebuked Jesus' disciples for breaking their traditions regarding food, Jesus rebuked them by quoting Isaiah 29.13 to them.

He said, Later, he explained to his disciples in Matthew 15.17 through 20, Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled?

But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone. When a fool speaks to themselves in their heart, they knowingly and they consciously deny the existence of God, even though, like the Pharisees, they may be dedicated to keeping and following their religious customs and practices.

[13 : 23] But God sees through all of that, and foolish people can't fool God. While an atheist today is defined as someone who has rejected the existence of God and any kind of spiritual, eternal life that exists outside of this material world, they aren't the kind of atheists that David has in mind in verse 1.

The Jews were surrounded by pagan nations who worshipped idols. When the Jewish people strayed from God, it wasn't because they had suddenly become enlightened by some philosophical teaching that denied the supernatural.

They were enticed by their own sinful desires to chase after idols they could manipulate and they could control. They were lured by false religions and false gods who did not call sin what God, the one true God, called sin.

They were religious atheists. They were practical atheists. They were like the people Job described as he questioned why the wicked prosper while faithful men suffer.

Job 21, 13 through 15. They spend their days in prosperity and in peace they go down to Sheol.

They say to God, depart from us. We do not desire the knowledge of your ways.

[14 : 49] What is the Almighty that we should serve Him? And what profit do we get in prayer to Him? There's a lot of people who live like that today. People who think, I don't need God in order to live a happy life.

Or I don't desire a God who calls what I like and what I love sin. We also have people in the church today who call themselves Christians and worship God with their lips, but functionally deny His existence in their homes, in their workplaces, in their plans, and how they choose to spend their time.

Truthfully, when we sin, what we are doing, in effect, is denying the existence of God. We act as if God doesn't see it, or that God doesn't care about it, or that He's satisfied with being our Lord on Sunday, but how we live Monday through Saturday doesn't matter to Him, so long as we're in church.

So when we read the first part of Psalm 14.1, our first instinct shouldn't be to identify fools with atheists, but anyone and everyone who is without Christ as their Lord and Savior.

David further identifies the fool by what they do. He says they are corrupt. In Hebrew, corrupt, that word corrupt means to spoil or to ruin. The corrupted heart says there is no God, and as a result of that, they sin in actions, in deeds.

[16 : 36] They do abominable deeds, David says. When people deny God's existence, they deny His authority as lawgiver and the one who determines right and wrong, what is good and what is evil, what is true and what is false.

In Romans 1, Paul elaborates on the fool who denies God's existence and what that denial encourages them to believe and to do.

This is a lengthy passage, but it's important for us to hear this morning. Romans 1, 21 through 32. For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Therefore, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.

[17 : 46] Amen. For this reason, God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature. And the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another.

Men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them, but give approval to those who practice them.

The fool is identified as someone who says in their heart, there is no God, they are corrupted by sin, and as a result, they behave as if God doesn't exist.

[18 : 57] They act as if they aren't accountable to Him. The way a person behaves, the way they live, reveals what they truly believe about God in their heart.

I'm sure we've all got someone, maybe, or some group of people in our minds when we think about this truth and that it pertains to them.

And it does. It does concern them. But it also concerns you and me. Because look at what David says next at the end of verse 1.

There is none who does good. Uh-oh. There is none who does good. David isn't just talking about those people.

He's talking about all people. The Bible says we are all born with a sin nature, and sin reduces us all to fools.

[20 : 03] All of us fall short of God's holy standard. Even if God has been gracious to save you, the sin nature still remains, which means you are capable of doing foolish things.

And living in foolish ways, sin makes us act stupid. It gives us a sort of God amnesia.

We conveniently forget that God sees what we keep hidden. Sinful thoughts produce sinful actions that hurt us and hurt the people God commands us to love.

The essence of foolishness is thinking and behaving as if there is no God. And we're all guilty of doing that.

The difference, though, between a Christian and an unbeliever at this point is that a Christian knows that what they're doing is sin, and they repent of that sin, and they seek God's forgiveness for it.

[21 : 11] David does that. He agrees with God about what he says about sin. He knows he's a sinner. And he takes God's point of view as he imagines, as he explains God looking down on the world and what he sees.

And so that leads us to the second word, which is investigation. Investigating the foolish. Though the foolish might deny God, that doesn't make him any less real. God is omniscient.

God knows all things. He sees all things. He sees what you do in public. He sees what you do in private. He knows our deeds, and he knows the motivation behind what we do.

He knows our thoughts. He knows everything. In verse 2, David describes how God investigates people whom he's created in his image. The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man to see if there are any who understand, who seek after him.

I think this is important. God isn't described as looking up as if he's beneath us. God isn't described as looking over as if he's our equal or our peer.

[22 : 25] He looks down on us. He is exalted over us. He reigns over us as righteous king and judge. Have you ever heard someone say to you, only God can judge me.

They say that as if God won't judge them, but he will, and he judges righteously.

This isn't the first time in Scripture that Scripture talks about God looking down on humanity in judgment. In the book of Genesis, God looked down three separate times, three separate occasions to investigate what was happening in the world.

In Genesis 6, 11 through 13, God looked down on the earth and saw it was corrupt. God told Noah that he would destroy it, the world, in judgment with a flood.

In Genesis 11, 5 through 7, God looked down on humanity to investigate the construction of the Tower of Babel, which people made to symbolize their power and their greatness.

[23 : 37] In judgment, God confused their languages. God also looked down at the sin of homosexuality and immorality that was taking place in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

And in judgment, he destroyed those cities with fire from heaven. If you're thinking maybe that the God of the Old Testament is not the same as the God of the New Testament who doesn't judge anyone anymore, then listen to the words of Jesus in Matthew 12, 36 through 37.

I tell you, on the day of judgment, people will give an account for every careless word they speak.

For by your words, you will be justified and by your words, you will be condemned.

The slip of a tongue a careless word using God's name in vain is a violation of his holiness and invites his judgment and incurs his wrath.

God investigates humanity in verse 2, looking to see if anyone seeks after him. And verse 3 reveals his findings. They have all turned aside.

[24 : 49] Together they have become corrupt. There is none who does good, not even one. Three words are important for us to consider here in verse 3. All together, none.

The Bible teaches us that everyone is born spiritually dead as a result of Adam and Eve's sin in the garden. Psalm 51, 5. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me. Ephesians 2, 1 through 3 says, And you, speaking of Christians, prior to their salvation, were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work and the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

The Bible says that we are born sinful and also that we love sin more than God. Jesus said in John 3, 19, And this is the judgment.

The light has come into the world and the people love the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. Thus, we don't seek the one true, holy God as God reveals in Psalm 14, 2 through 3.

[26 : 17] Instead, we suppress the truth of God as Romans 1, 18 says, For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

In this condition, we reject the good news, the gospel, what God has done to set us free from our slavery to sin and death. 1 Corinthians 1, 18 through 21, For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.

For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart. Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

For since in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. God's given us everything.

He's given us life. He's given us what we need to sustain our lives. He's given us creation to enjoy. He's told us how to live our lives so that we can find satisfaction in this world.

[27 : 31] He's sent his son to atone for our sins, to make us righteous, to set us free from slavery to sin and give us eternal life.

Yet David goes on to reveal the ignorance of the foolish in not understanding this, which brings us to the third word, which is the ignorance of the foolish. Have they no knowledge?

All the evildoers who eat up my people as they eat bread and do not call upon the Lord. The fool turns their back to God. They think the answer to what's broken within them and the world around them can't be found in God calling for his help or that all of our problems can be found in other places, in ourselves or in our world other than the God who created us.

In Old Testament times and still today, bread was something people ate every day. Wicked people, foolish people, devour those who know the answer to what ails us all.

Instead of listening, they ridicule, they criticize, they hate what God loves. They hate God's people for speaking the truth. It's interesting that so much of the world's hatred is directed towards Christians, towards Christianity and the morals and the values that we live by more than any other group of people.

[29 : 04] Why is that? Why don't we see atheists attack the beliefs of other religions? Verses 5 through 6 tell us, there they are in great terror for God is with the generation of the righteous.

You would shame the plans of the poor, but the Lord is his refuge. In Romans 2, Paul talks about how the Jews thought they were saved by possessing the law of God.

But he makes it plain to them that mere possession of the law doesn't save anyone because God has written his law on everyone's hearts.

Romans 2, 14 through 16. For when Gentiles, this is anybody who's not a Jew, who did not have the law by nature, do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.

They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness and their conflicting thoughts accused or even excused them on that day when according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.

[30 : 14] People have an instinctive sense of right and wrong. Evolution can't teach us this. In fact, it's contrary to the thought of the survival of the fittest.

Unbelievers rage against Christianity because deep down inside, they know that what we believe is true.

And they live in fear of that truth. When I was in eighth grade, I had a science teacher who had, like, literally, I would have thought he had eyes in the back of his head.

He saw everything. He saw when students were passing notes. He saw when kids were chewing up wads of paper to shoot at each other.

He heard things that I couldn't even hear, whispers from our classmates. He saw everything, and he didn't let anybody get away with anything. I remember he was going to be gone for a few days, and he told us that while I'm gone, I expect you to behave as if I'm here.

[31 : 27] I expect you to act as if the substitute teacher is me, not to misbehave, not to act in ways that I wouldn't let you act and to treat her with respect or whoever the substitute was.

So he left, and our substitute teacher came, and some of us heeded his instruction, but many of us didn't. acting as if our teacher was never going to come back.

After that first day, the thought was kind of like, maybe he won't ever come back. They suppressed his instruction. They passed notes.

They shot spit wads. They snuck out of the room. But our teacher did come back, and there were consequences for those who rejected his instruction.

The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5.10, For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

[32 : 35] Those who live as if God doesn't exist, they know he exists. Deep down, they know he exists, but they want to suppress that truth.

They want to rather live ignorantly of the fate they know deep down inside awaits them. But there is hope. Now we come to the fourth word.

Intercession for the foolish. Verse 7. Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion. When the Lord restores the fortunes of his people, let Jacob rejoice.

Let Israel be glad. David looked around, and he saw the misery of a world of people who denied God.

He looked around and saw the foolishness of those who thought it was wise to reject God and live as if God didn't exist. He looked within himself, and he saw that he was prone to do the same.

[33 : 38] And so he ends his psalm with a fervent prayer, a prayer for salvation. And the Hebrew word here for salvation is Yeshua.

Yeshua is the Hebrew pronunciation of Jesus. Jesus. When Jesus was born, when he came in his incarnation, he was given the name salvation because he would save his people from their sins.

And through his sinless life, his death, and his resurrection, Jesus restores what sin ruined. When people, when we were foolish enough to say there is no God, when we were foolish enough to live as if God did not exist, God came down.

While we were not seeking for him, he sought us. After Jesus saw Zacchaeus up in a sycamore tree, Zacchaeus thought he was seeking Jesus, but in reality, we see it was Jesus who was seeking him, and Jesus invited himself over to Zacchaeus' house, this tax collector who everybody hated and who was a known sinner in his community.

And he ate with Zacchaeus, and no doubt he shared the truth of who he was with Zacchaeus. And as a result of that meeting, Zacchaeus was radically changed. He repented of his sins.

[35 : 14] He paid back all that he had stolen and then some. His faith in Jesus changed his life, changed the way that he lived, changed the way that he viewed the world, prompting Jesus to say to him in Luke 19, 9 through 10, today salvation has come to this house since he also is a son of Abraham, for the son of man came to seek and to save the lost.

And Christ's salvation has come, wisdom has come, and so much more. 1 Corinthians 1, 27 through 31 says, But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise.

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

And because of him, you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that as it is written, let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord. A fool says in their heart that there is no God. God investigates, he looks and he sees that there's none who's righteous. There's none who truly seeks after him.

[36 : 39] But in his grace and in his love, he chose to send his only son to seek and to save the lost.

To be the wisdom of God for us. To help us to see our sin and our desperate need for salvation. And not only did he reveal that to us, but he solved our problem.

He lived the sinless life that we couldn't live and he willingly died on the cross for our sins. And there on the cross, he endured the wrath of the Father for the sins that we've committed against him.

And he died. But he rose again on the third day, demonstrating that all that he said about himself was true, that his sacrifice was sufficient, and that there is eternal life through faith in him, in him alone.

The truly wise person is the person whom God opens their eyes, their heart, their mind to see that I am a sinner. I need a Savior.

[38 : 03] And then who by his grace reveals to them that he's provided that Savior. And in wisdom, they humbly acknowledge their need and they repent of their sin and they turn to Christ in faith.

And then as a result of that transformation, they continue to live their life pursuing him, obeying him because they know that he is truly the wise man.

So how do we adjust according to what we've read? A wise person lives for the Lord. A wise person considers the Lord at all times and all that they do and all that they say and all of their plans.

So let me ask you some questions. Do you live for the Lord? Are you really doing that today? Do you act as if he doesn't see, that he doesn't hear, that he doesn't know?

You can fool others. You can even fool yourself into thinking that God can't see what you are keeping hidden. But he sees it.

[39 : 15] He knows about it. Don't be foolish. Repent of it. Turn it over to God. Be wise in living your life for the true wise man.

God sees all. He hears all. He knows all. And a wise person lives their life with the realization that Jesus is always with them.

So let me ask you some more questions. If Jesus went to work with you tomorrow and sat down with you at your desk or behind the counter or wherever you work, would you change how you live? Would you change what you say? If Jesus was riding next to you in the car on your way home from work, would you probably change how you drive?

would you change what you say? Would you change what you're listening to? If Jesus followed you home and he stayed at your house, would there be rooms you wouldn't want him to see?

[40 : 29] Would there be things in your refrigerator you wouldn't want him to see? Would there be places in your house you wouldn't want him to walk through? Would there be things that you plan to watch that you'd no longer be comfortable watching?

With him around? Would you say what you say to your spouse? Would you talk to your wife or your husband differently? Would you parent and discipline your kids differently?

Look, we're not saved by the law. I'm not trying to encourage you just to do good things. That doesn't save you. But the Bible says that true wisdom is the person who is trusted in Jesus Christ for their Savior and understands that God is with them always.

And they're careful about what they say and they're careful about what they do. They're mindful of the plans that they make because they know that sin ruins. Sin creates problems.

Sin is not good for them. And so, they seek to be obedient to the Lord. Bodie Bauckham passed away this past week.

[41 : 47] We thank God for his life. We praise the Lord and we're thankful that Bodie is with him but it's another big loss for the church. I want to end by sharing a quote from him.

He said, the gospel is about much more than how we get saved and go to heaven. The gospel is about the work of Christ saturating every aspect of our lives.

And the truly wise person, the gospel saturates every aspect of their lives. What they do in public, what they do in private, what they do alone, what they do with others.

Be wise by seeking after the true wise man, Jesus Christ, and living your life for him. Let's pray.

Lord, we've seen in your word the reality of our condition apart from your grace, apart from your salvation to save us.

Lord, that we are all foolish to reject you, to think that we can live our lives for ourselves in ways that are better than your ways.

[43 : 13] And Lord, even for those of us whom you have been gracious to save, there's times where we live foolishly thinking that that we know better than you or that we're smarter than you or that we can keep things hidden from you without realizing, Lord, that you in your grace to save us have caused your spirit to indwell us and that you are with us always until the end of the age.

You see how we act, you see what we say, you see what we do, and yet, Lord, we praise you that you're so gracious to keep us and to preserve us, Lord, to help us to realize the folly of our ways and to forgive us and to remind us of the way that we should go.

So God, I pray for those who are in this room this morning who are hearing this sermon and they haven't believed in you, Lord, I pray that in your grace you've revealed to them the reality of who you are, the desperate need that they're in for salvation and that you would turn them to faith in Jesus Christ, your Son.

Lord, for those of us who you have saved, God, I pray that we would be more thoughtful about how we spend our times, how we make our decisions with what we do and what we say, that we would avoid sin in our lives, that we would seek to put it to death because we know that it's bad for us, it's bad for those that we love, and Lord, you've called us to be a light, to let our light shine to this world, and God, we need to be more serious about being obedient to you, that we would have more of those opportunities to show them a better way, and so, Lord, we pray for your help.

Thank you, God, that through you we are able to be wise. God, encourage us to live in the wisdom of Christ, in whose name we pray, amen. Amen.