

# Psalm 14 • Those Who Reject the Lord

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Psalm chapter 14. We've made the point in our study thus far in the Psalms that going through the Psalms teaches us a lot about prayer. And for those of you like me, who can use all the help I can get praying, the Psalms are really an important school to be in. And I really do consider the Psalms school in prayer. The school of prayer. How about that?

To go through the Psalms, to learn from the Psalms, to see what, why David said the things that he did. Why he considered it important. One of the things that impresses me so much about the Psalms is David's love for God. And his love for God's agenda rather than his own.

And it's a very natural thing for us to have our own agenda in life. And what I mean by that is our own desire, our own wishes, our own wants. Certainly that's part of living. But David approached life and approached prayer with an emphasis on God's heart and love for God, the things that God loved, the people that God loved. And it stands in such sharp contrast to what we're seeing today, in our culture today.

I don't know if you're noticing, but there is an increase in this idea of self-love. And it's been around for a while. We've been hearing people say it and we've been hearing people talk about it as it relates to, you have to, things like you have to learn to love yourself before you can love others. Which is completely untrue.

But I'm seeing this coming up more and more and more. Self-love, self-love, self-love. Learn to love yourself. You got to learn to love yourself and so forth. And the thing that's really important about that is number one, this is what Paul prophesied in 2 Timothy. We looked at this passage last Sunday. He wrote to Timothy and he said, in the last days, people will be lovers of themselves rather than lovers of God. (2 Timothy 3:1-2)

And you might think to yourself, well, okay, what is the big deal about just loving yourself? I mean, why is that necessarily a problem? Somebody might even ask, well, is it a sin to love yourself? Well, that's the wrong question. The real question is, what self-love produces in our life. Because when self becomes

the focus of our attention, then we begin to live for the things that gratify self, such as pleasure.

Paul even said in his passage to Timothy, when he said, they will, people will be lovers of self, he went on to say lovers of pleasure. (2 Timothy 3:4) And you see, that's a byproduct of the love of self. It comes out of it. Because the more I focus on me, the more I want to make me happy. And of course, pleasure makes me happy. And so I'm going to run after personal pleasure, right?

Here's the problem. And this is where, this is why it becomes such an issue. Somebody, again, somebody might say, well, what's the big deal? Why can't you love yourself? Well, here's the big deal. The one we love is the one we serve. It's really as simple as that. The one we love is the one we serve.

And I'm not suggesting or advocating, self-hatred by any stretch of the imagination. I'm simply saying that when love for God becomes prominent in our lives, even paramount, then He becomes the focus of why we live, why we love, why we speak, why we act, why we make money, why I work hard to make money. It's for the Lord. And we start seeing what we have in our lives, what we are given and so forth, as things from the Lord.

This is David. This is the lesson that I get from David as I go through the Psalms. This intense focus on the person of God, the love of God, the agenda of God, pleasing God, serving God. Having a heart that longs after the things that God's heart longs after.

Psalm chapter 14, which is all about those who reject the Lord, begins with that very famous statement in verse 1 that says,

*"The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'" (ESV)*

And by the way *"There is"* actually added in the Hebrew for you and I to make the sentence make more sense. It essentially says, *"The fool says in his heart, no God."* And that makes sense on its own too. Because it's almost like the fool is saying in that sense, I just, okay, life fine, but no God.

It's, it isn't necessarily meaning that he's denying God's existence, although that is certainly part of what we see, but he's saying, regardless of that, I don't want God in my life. But of course we know that there's a lot of people who denied the presence of God as well.

By the way, "*The fool*," what is that? What exactly does that mean? Well, the Hebrew word for "fool" means "someone who is morally deficient." Okay. Morally deficient. And so that suggests that the person who chooses to reject the existence of God, or to say, "no God," is doing so out of a desire to sin rather than intellectual problems, like people love to say.

People love to say to me, well, I just, I have intellectual problems, with God. It's just, there's things about the Bible, there's things about God, I just have intellectual problems, pastor Paul. I just want to know, I want you to know that. I got these intellectual problems.

But what's interesting about what David says, is he says, it's the fool who says in his heart that there is no God. It's the morally deficient. The morally deficient. In other words, the one who morally wants to live the way they want. And this is exactly what we find in The New Testament. The New Testament agrees with it. The Apostle John wrote this in his gospel, John. Let me put it on the screen out of the NIV. It says,

**John 3:19 (NIV)**

*"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness..."*

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It's just simple. Did this mean that people can't see the light? No, It just means they choose to reject it because they just love the darkness.

And here's the deal. Here's the deal that we all have to understand. The heart of man is drawn to darkness. You need to understand that, going into it. Because if you don't understand that as a Christian, you're going to be sorely disappointed when it plays itself out in your life.

And this happens sometimes in, in the lives of brand new believers. Somebody comes to Christ and they go through that time of just that effervescent joy all over the place. And then they fall headlong into some of the same garbage that they were wallowing in before they knew Jesus, And they're like, pastor, what happened? What happened?

Listen the heart longs after darkness. And that is the that sinful nature. And frankly, the more we embrace the darkness, the more we're drawn to embrace the darkness. It's like the snowball effect.

Think of it this way, here we are living apart from Christ focusing on embracing the darkness, what do you suppose a person like that... What do you suppose their response is going to be when somebody comes along who knows Jesus and wants to tell them about the light of Christ? Somebody is literally living in that constant embrace of darkness and somebody comes along and says, what do you know about Jesus? Can I tell you about him? And what's their response? It's like, I don't want to hear that! And they reject it. They want nothing to do with it. And so they go on to justify their choice by saying stupid things like, there is no God, when they know full well that there is.

And that's why John goes on to say, let me put the rest of it from John chapter 3,

**John 3:20 (NIV)**

*"Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed."*

*"Everyone who does evil (John writes,) hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed."*

People don't want to come into the light, right? Because they've been embracing darkness. They're living in the midst of that darkness. They have no desire to come into the light. And they don't want their deeds exposed.

Have you ever thought about why people don't want their deeds exposed? Have you ever thought about why people get angry when we talk about Jesus? Or talk about the light of His presence and things that are right and wrong? Boy, we come into this culture that wallows in darkness and we start talking about right and wrong. It's like, how dare you talk about morality in the world in which we live.

If you ever wonder why people get so angry and they're just so... They lose their temper. Well, I believe that there's an innate knowledge in all human beings that knows that the love of darkness is wrong. We know it deep down. We can suppress it, but we know it. And we don't like being reminded of those things that we're trying to suppress, in the back of our hearts, which is, that's wrong.

Living in darkness is wrong, and it leads to death. We don't want to hear it. And we'll even tell people they're abusing us by saying it. And so again, we suppress it by just saying, there is no God, there's no God. Don't tell me there's a God. There's no God that exists. Final judgment and all that garbage. It's... Don't even talk about that. That's ridiculous!

And the reason people say that, is because they know He's the ultimate judge. They know He is. It is innate. It is part of the fingerprint of God that remains in humanity. We were created in God's image. And even though we're out there living in the darkness. And doing our best to suppress any sort of an understanding of the light. We know, that we know, that we know things are wrong. We have the conscience. There's other elements of things that bring us to that place of understanding. We just don't like hearing about it.

In fact, who of us wants to hear what David goes on to say in the rest of verse 1. Look what he says after *"The fool says in his heart, There is no God."* He says, *"They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is none who does good."* That's a great message. Why don't we put it on a t-shirt and just see how people react.

People don't want to hear. And you know what? I don't blame them. I don't blame people for not wanting to hear this. By the way, this is called the bad news. It's not fun to think about the reality of the situation.

David backs up in verse 2 as we keep going in this Psalm. He repeats the judgment of the Lord in verse 2. This time from God's perspective he says,

*"The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God."*

What does he find? Verse 3,

*"They have all turned aside; (They've all turned aside) together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one."*

There's the report. There's our report card, you guys. Isn't it wonderful? It's fairly bleak, I have to say. God's observation on the sons of men is that we have all turned aside. Not one has escaped the corruption of sin. Therefore, goodness is not to be found among the sons of man.

And by the way, the apostle Paul used this very portion of this very Psalm when he wrote to the Romans and argued for the sinful condition of man. Let me put this on the screen for you. From Romans chapter 3, one of my favorite passages. He says,

### **Romans 3:9-12**

*What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away; they have together become worthless; and there is no one who does good, not even one."*

*"What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. (And then to underscore that, he says,) As it is written: (and then quotes Psalm 14) "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away; they have together become worthless; and there is no one who does good, not even one."*

And that's a fairly inclusive statement, is it not? I mean, how many good people are there? There are none. Of course, that agrees with what Jesus said, during His public ministry, when a young man came along to Him and said, good teacher, what good thing must I do to have eternal life? And Jesus said, (why are you...) Why do you call me good? There's no one good, but God. (Mark 10:18) And that's a fairly inclusive statement, is it not?

And He, in that statement right there, Jesus answered his question. He didn't hear it, but He answered his question. There's no one good. So, if there's no one good, there's no good thing you can do. Right? That already answers the question. Of course, he didn't get it. And so they had to go on and have their conversation.

The point is there's no one good. And that's a slap in the face to our own sense of our own humanity, apart from Christ. And in fact, somebody might even object to some of these inclusive statements. Where it says, for example, no one seeks God. I mean, somebody could realistically stand up and say, well, now, wait a minute, I did. There was a point in my life when I was living as an unbeliever.

And then there was a... I don't know, some series of circumstances that took place. And I just got curious and I started picking up a Bible and I started reading it. And then I started asking people questions. What's this all about? And do you get this? And how can I know more? And I started seeking God. I started wanting to know more.

So, how does that apply to David's all-inclusive statement, "no one seeks God?" Well, here's the answer to that. We forget that it's only through the work of the

Holy Spirit, that we do question or seek after God. Left to your own devices you would not.

What David is outlining here is man in his base condition apart from any grace of God. Now when the grace of God comes into our lives we will do all kinds of things to move toward God. But it's because of His grace. Let me show you the statement from John 6:44.

**John 6:44 (ESV)**

*"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day."*

*"No one (Jesus speaking here, no one) can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day."*

What is Jesus saying? It's a work of the Spirit. It's a work of God's Spirit in our lives through the Father, that we even have, that we're even drawn to a sense of questioning or a sense of seeking. Okay? Apart from that... No. No. And that's humbling. That's humbling.

People, let me say it clearly. There is nothing in you and me that desires to know or serve God. Nothing apart from Him. Nothing. Nothing in my flesh that wants to know God or seek after God. It is only through the drawing work of God the Father through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

Next comes a question in verse 4. He says,

*"Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers who eat up my people as they eat bread and do not call upon the Lord."*

This is an interesting question. Because as David thinks about the way of godless people. People who are foolish again, morally deficient, and have rejected God. He thinks about the ways that they're always attacking those who do love the Lord, who have come to a saving knowledge of the Lord.

And the psalmist wonders here incredulously whether these people have any knowledge at all. In other words, don't they realize that their persecution of God's people is going to increase their judgment from the Lord. And here they are denying the Lord on the one hand, and then persecuting the Lord's people on the other.

And then David goes on as he does in many of his prayers and speaks a word of faith here in verse 5. He says,

*"There they are in great terror, (meaning there in the judgment of the Lord) for God is with the generation of the righteous.*

*6 You would shame the plans of the poor, but the Lord is his refuge."*

And this is where David expresses his trust in God. And he speaks of God's ultimate judgment as if it were already meted out.

And he says in 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."*

And so this final verse is a looking toward and a longing sort of a way for the day to come when the Lord will deliver His people. And they will rejoice in untold blessing.