

**“Overwhelmed with Dread”
Psalm 14; Luke 15:1-10**

1 The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.”
They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.
2The LORD looks down from heaven on all mankind
to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God.
3 All have turned away, all have become corrupt;
there is no one who does good, not even one.
4 Do all these evildoers know nothing?
They devour my people as though eating bread;
they never call on the LORD.
5 But there they are, overwhelmed with dread,
for God is present in the company of the righteous.
6 You evildoers frustrate the plans of the poor,
but the LORD is their refuge.
7 Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion!
When the LORD restores his people, let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad!

Introduction

Two boys were talking after Sunday school. It was a strong lesson about the Devil. One said to the other, “What do you think about all this Satan stuff?” The other boy replied, “Well, you know how Santa Claus turned out. It’s probably just your dad.” “Yeah, it’s probably just my dad.” (Remember how Church Lady played with the close spelling of Santa and Satan? “Mm... isn’t that special”).

The Bible describes the reality of evil in this world and in human beings. Psalm 14 along with its duplicate Psalm 53 is already enough to go on. In one of his letters, Paul gives joyful thanks to the Father, who has “rescued us from the dominion of darkness.” Examples of this “darkness” in the fallen human experience are too numerous to recount or even list.

In 1953, Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay climbed the 29,035-foot peak of Mount Everest. Thanks to Nepal’s lifting its tight restrictions on climbing the legendary mountain, more than 4,000 people have reached the summit of the world’s tallest mountain, most paying around \$45,000 for the experience. One result of this commercial influx has been the erosion of the traditional moral code of mountaineering. In the rush to the top, amateurs who have paid a fortune will do anything it takes to get to the summit, including abandoning other climbers.

Thirty-four-year-old engineer from Cleveland, David Sharp managed to reach the summit on his own. However, he ran out of oxygen on the way back down. As he lay dying, forty climbers passed him by, too eager to achieve their own goals to take a chance on offering their oxygen to someone else. David Sharp froze to death.

One seasoned mountaineer says that passing people who are dying is not uncommon. “Unfortunately,

there are those who say, ‘It’s not my problem. I’ve spent all this money, and I’m going to the summit.’”

This attitude has produced disgust in many climbers, including Sir Edmund Hillary. “On my expedition, there was no way you’d have left a man under a rock to die.” Without God, it is easy to say, “It’s not my problem.”

I. “No God?” (vs. 1) the denial of god

So, Psalm 14 begins, “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ The fool has no perception of moral or ethical claims. As 19th century Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky said, “If there is no God, everything is permitted.” It says, “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.”

This is similar to Noah’s world just prior to the flood. It says, “God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways” (Genesis 6:12). And, the last verse of the book of Judges, “In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit” (Judges 21:25). Like, “Hey, it’s a free country. I can do anything I want.”

Not just the Old Testament but also the New: Jesus said, “The things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander” (Matthew 15:18-19).

When the Lord speaks of the human problem, the dilemma of sin, although surely he is not pleased, I am sure that he is quite saddened by it all. For when God is ignored or rejected, the outcome isn’t good.

A study of 70,000 U.S. college and high school students shows more than 70% admit to cheating. It shows about a 50% hike since 1963. The Duke University report also indicated that Internet plagiarism has quadrupled in the past few years. A separate poll of 25,000 high schoolers found that nearly half agreed that “A person has to lie or cheat sometimes in order to succeed.”

II. The “No Good” (vs. 2-6)the depravity of man

The psalm continues in verse 2: “The LORD looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned away, all have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.”

In the first three chapters of Romans, Paul articulates the idea of “total depravity.” Our sinful nature touches every aspect of life. Chapter 1:18 - “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters,

insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy.”

And at some level, this less-than-stellar description applies to all of us. Chapter 2, verse 1 - “You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.”

Paul knows and quotes this psalm in Romans 3. As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”

There’s a theory that Beethoven may have poisoned himself. William Walsh, a scientist from Illinois, studied strands of hair from Beethoven’s body. It had one hundred times the normal amount of lead. Beethoven’s untimely death at the age of fifty-seven was due to lead poisoning.

You see, Beethoven’s lead poisoning may have come from the mineral spa he went to for relaxation. The very thing he thought was bringing him relief was slowly poisoning him to death. Spiritual poison is like that. As people engage in practices and embrace ideas that are spiritually poisonous, they may think it’s okay, it’s my life, you only go around once in life. But in reality, they’re gradually being poisoned to death.

III. “Be Glad” (vs. 5-7) longing for salvation

Wow! That’s a whole lot of bad news. But the psalm finishes with a glimpse of hope. “But there they are, overwhelmed with dread; for God is present in the company of the righteous. You evildoers frustrate the plans of the poor, but the LORD is their refuge. Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion! When the LORD restores his people, let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad!”

Another psalm calls out, “Do not let the oppressed retreat in disgrace; may the poor and needy praise your name. Rise up, O God, and defend your cause; remember how fools mock you all day long. Do not ignore the clamor of your adversaries, the uproar of your enemies, which rises continually.”

Praise God that we have the opportunity to live on this side of redemptive history. The Lord has “defended his cause” and has not “ignored the uproar of his enemies.” In his sacrificial death and his astonishing resurrection, Jesus has conquered sin and death for anyone who believes and trusts in him – even a fool like me! The messianic longing at the end of Psalm 14 has been fulfilled.

Conclusion

Isaiah proclaims God’s word, saying, “There is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other” (Isaiah 45:22). And Paul urges Pastor Timothy and the early church, “First of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— that we may live peaceful and quiet lives

in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (I Timothy 2:1-4).

Yes, “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ But there they are, overwhelmed with dread. Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion! When the LORD restores his people, let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad!”

Years ago, I heard Noel Paul Stookey (of Peter, Paul and Mary) sing a song, “Be Ye Glad.” Here are some of the lyrics:

In these days of confused situations/ In these nights of a restless remorse,
When the heart and the soul of the nation/ lay wounded and cold as a corpse.
From the grave of the innocent Adam/ comes a song bringing joy to the sad.
Oh your cry has been heard and the ransom/ has been paid up in full, Be Ye Glad.
Be Ye Glad, Oh, Be Ye Glad/ Every debt that you ever had
Has been paid up in full by the grace of the Lord/ Be Ye Glad, Be Ye Glad, Be Ye Glad.
Let us pray together.

Luke 15:1-10

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” Then Jesus told them this parable:

“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

“Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn’t she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’ In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”