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"For the director of music. Of David. Fools say in their hearts, "There is no God." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good." Psalms 14:1

Main Idea: We have a desperate need for God that fools refuse to see. The person who has no sense or refuses to have morals, whose heart is consumed with pride and contempt to God and others, will tell themselves and voice to others, "There is no God". These foolish people fear conviction and hate truth. It is not they can't understand; it is that they refuse to understand. In this refusal, they can be wicked. When we push God out of the way, we have no accountability. Without accountability, we engage in whatever pleases us; we live however we like. We can be corrupt and do not care what is fair and good as long as we are pleased. By our own choosing, we have placed the blinders upon our hearts just so we can do as we please, hurt who we want, and take what we want. Even so, God *is* still there. He looks at us and seeks those of us who will receive Him. Yet, God can't find anyone who meets that criteria. We all are sinners. We all fall short of His entrance exam; we alone are not worthy to just call upon Him as Lord. He knows depravity, hate, deception, greed and corruption. But, God will be present with His righteousness and remove any fear or dread. God is our refuge and Hope, our Salvation. God will restore us onto salvation.

Contexts and Background:

This Psalm, and individual lament, is quoted by Paul in Romans 3 and duplicated in Psalm 53. It is a contrast between those who are righteous by revering and trusting God and those who are contemptuous of God by acting foolishly with immorality (Psalm 24:6).

This Psalm is attributed to David and his frustration with stupid people. This is a Psalm that shows humanity's depravity with no hope for morality, let alone salvation without God's intervention. Our hope, our salvation comes by Christ's redemption. This, perhaps, takes place while David was on the run from Saul and encounters a great woman of faith, Abigail, and her extremely foolish husband, Nabal. David and his men worked for Nabal and were owed financial compensation for saving his sheep and servants from harm. When Nabal cheated David, Nabal ventured upon a dark path of greed from pride. He thought, "*What could David do?*". Abigail intervened to save the day. This action of Abigail's is a prime example for us that character from the Word and the example of our living Lord is the ultimate force we have for good outside of the Spirit Himself. Character lays the foundation of what is right and what is truth in action (1 Sam 25; Prov. 17:13; 20:22; 24:29).

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

Verses 1-3: The folly of evil people. A spirit of ungodliness invades by flouting God's precepts and then oppressing His people. Thus, to do wrong, one needs to first seek to nullify God's presence and be in contempt of Him and anyone or thing that represents Him. It is not about denying that God exists, which may be in their words; rather, it refers to His power over them.

- *Fool / without shame.* This means reckless folly, while the person thinks and acts as if they are wise. There are two kinds of fools. One entertains like a "court fool"; the other is described here: those who do immoral actions and do not feel anything they did was wrong. This is a term that means one's moral judgment is extremely irrational or imprudent and is evident in their thoughts and decisions. It has nothing to do with intellect; rather, this is about a passion to be independent from God. Such a person either refuses to revere and honor God or denies the true reality of the universe and the Nature of God and humanity's place in order that they might live as they please without moral constraints or feelings of shame. To stop playing the fool moves our thinking and focus to God, having faith and confidence in Christ our Lord (1 Sam. 25; Ecc. 2:14; Psalm 10:4; 73:11; Rom. 1:22; 3:10).
- *Heart.* This refers to the inner being of who we are, the center of one's thinking and morality. This is the center of us from where our emotions, thoughts, and motivations emanate. Every human has a conscience

to know what is good or bad, but not all know God (Psalm 4:7-8; 32:7-9; 34:1-8; Proverbs 4:23; 15:13; John 15:11; 17:13; 2 Cor. 12:9; 1 Peter 4:13-19; 1 Thess. 5:18; James 1:1-4; Heb. 10:34).

- *There is no God.* A denial of the existence of God and irresponsible defiance. This is more of a “practical atheism,” that it is not based on rational thinking; rather, these are false convictions usually rooted in a belief that God does not care or due to one’s insolence--“so I can do as I please”. Rational arguments, even with proof, will not satisfy such a debased will. They would rather disobey, no matter what the consequences, than trust in God and be in His refuge for eternity. In other places in Scripture, it is also impatience in God’s work and intervention or thinking their intellect or desire is superior to God and godly people. When we reject God, we are destined to live life unfulfilled and frustrated. Know this, we have no excuse (Psalm 10:4-11; 19:1; 36:1; Job 21; Rom. 1:19-22).
- *Corrupt / gone aside.* This means rotten to the core like very bad fruit. This is a lack of morality and or refusing to do what is right in order to profit oneself. This is about having malice because of no thought of God.
- *Vile / abominable / filthy.* This is arrogance and materialistic selfishness like Nabal (1 Sam 25).
- *No one who does good / act wisely / righteous.* This is a rationale that a person thinks they are wiser than God and thus can justify their behaviors accordingly. This can also mean they love to do evil, as in wicked. This means the depravity of humanity, that we can’t do good or know God without His intervention, as in the work of our Lord and the presence of His Holy Spirit (1 Kings 8:46; Psalm 130:3; 143:2; Job 9:2; Ecc. 7:20; Rom. 3:10-12; 23).
- *LORD looks down.* God is our Witness and Judge and deserves our reverence and affection. He does not get this from us. As in the days of Noah, when humanity fell to utter depravity and refused to be saved, God found none except Noah and his family. God is overwhelmed with humanity's evils (Psalm 53:3; Rom. 3:11-18).
- *Seek God.* The fallen nature of humanity blocks any attempt or desire to know God, let alone place Him first in their lives. Beware! Do not ignore God. There will be an accounting for us all--judgment!! Beware, do not to live for the creatures and the created while ignoring the Creator (Psalm 15)!
- *Turned away / aside.* This is about those who knew God and His goodness, yet walked away (now called “backslide”). This is about hearts full of blindness and ignorance so they can be wicked and not fear accountability (Jer. 2:19; 3:22).

Verses 4-7: The people who seek God, meaning placing Him first and foremost in their lives no matter what. Such as these can take comfort that the righteous Lord is on the throne.

- *Evildoers.* A criminal. God will expose the folly of the wicked.
- *Know nothing / no knowledge.* The ability to discriminate and yet refuse to do so or a failure to plan ahead. Intellectual arrogance will lead to destruction; it is an extreme insult to God. To never call on the LORD. It is humanity's desire to seek the tangible; God is revealed in intangible ways, hence the making of the golden calf (1 Cor. 2:14).
- *Devour.* Meaning to exploit people without any care or guilt, just like eating a meal. The application is they live by their own means and violence and do not rely on the Lord (Psalm 10:2-4).
- *Overwhelmed / panic.* This is about being overtaken by one’s emotions, usually fear of the “what if”, whether real or imagined. Here, it is the dread of an angry deity that does have power over them and they angered it (Psalm 53:5; Prov. 30:20; Isa. 2:19; Rev. 6:15).
- *Dread / terror.* Evil people know that judgment is coming one day; yet, for a time, they does not care until it is upon them (Joel 2:11; Mal. 3:2). God's wrath and righteousness are a reality; Christ covers our sin for us

(Zeph. 1:14-18; Na. 1:6; Mal. 3:2; Rom. 1:18; 3:9-23; 6:23; Rev.19:15). (Psalm 53:5; Isa. 2:19; Rev. 6:15). People think they can hide themselves from God's wrath; but, it will not work, for God is all seeing and all knowing (Judg. 6:2; Isa. 2:10-20; 13:6; Jer. 4:29; Hosea 10:8).

- *God is present.* There is hope and assurance when our trust is in Christ. He is our hope even when the very foundations of the universe are collapsing around and under us. When our hope is in Christ, nothing can shake us (Luke 12:32-34; 1 Cor. 7:29-31; Heb. 12:25-29).
- *Righteous.* In the Old Testament, this means those who obey the Torah; moreover, who trust and obey God, having a heart for Him and seeking His forgiveness. Here, it refers to those who honor God and live their lives faithfully, in all that they do, according to His precepts (1 Sam. 26:23; Psalm 1:5; 82:1; Isa. 40:13-14; 1 John 3:7-12).
- *Poor.* God's children who are the victims of injustice without the resources to get themselves out of it, like a *refuge*. Also, means dependent on God as in poor in spirit (Matt. 5).
- *Refuge.* Means intimate protection and closeness, that we have a relationship with God. God knows our deepest needs. He alone is our shield and defense. God is being compared to a safe haven. God is the One we can come to; the sinful one who seeks evil has no place to go. God is ultimately in charge and in control and can disrupt any plans of anyone at any time, including the wicked (Gen, 50:20; Psalm 7:1-2; 91:4; Nahum 1:7; Acts 2:22-24).
- *Zion.* Where God chose to reveal His presence and work. This is synonymous with Jerusalem and Israel and also refers to the people of Israel, as Jews who are the people of God and points to God's future rule on earth (Psalm 9:13-14; Isaiah 62:11-12; Micah 4:1-2; John 12:1-19).
- *LORD restores.* Like the Israel's return after the exile in Babylon, the land was healed, the Temple rebuilt, and so forth. This does not necessarily mean a return of one's wealth or goods; rather, it is a restoration of wellbeing and being in the presence of God. A trust in God has a reassurance that transcends a materialistic fulfillment (Eze. 16:53; Zep. 2:7; Psalm 126: Rom. 8:19-25; 11).
- *Jacob rejoice / be glad.* *Jacob* is another name for Israel. Here meaning joyful hope, our unshakable confidence in God (Psalm 32:7-9; 34:1-8; Proverbs 4:23; 15:13; John 15:11; 17:13; 2 Cor. 12:9; 1 Peter 4:13-19; 1 Thess. 5:18; James 1:1-4; Heb 10:34).

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

The good news for those who are faithful is that God deals with fools. The bad news for fools is that God deals with them. We have a choice to act in evil or with goodness; to act with our sinful motivations or with the precepts that God calls us to, which is far better than what we can usually see at the moment. As Christians with the Living Lord empowering us, let us choose to be even better in our relationships, opportunities, and situations. Who we are and how we think upon ourselves and God will determine what we do. The result will be character. Our growth in Christ will make us who we are, which will be the character we present to God and others.

How do we get overwhelmed as Christians? We get overwhelmed when we do not exercise our faith. We become consumed with doubt and distrust; we lose our trust and hope that God is in control! Distress comes from a collision between our expectations and experiences while ignoring God's promises, causing a wreck of unanchored stress. We cannot just expect God to get us through without any effort on our part. To grow, we have to struggle and work it out as David did (Phil. 2). It is the struggle that helps us--that builds us and forms us. Without it, there is no growth, no real impacting faith, honest character, genuine patience, or maturity (Job. Rom. 2 Cor. 1:9; 1 Peter 1:6-7). When we do not rely on God, we are really neglecting ourselves because instead of helping Him out, we are insulting Him (Job 23:10; 36:5; Prov. 3:5-6; 20:30; Rom. 5:3-5; 8:28-29; Phil 1:27-30; 1 Thess. 5:16-18).

Christian Life Principle: When we think, “There is no God”, we set ourselves, as in our flaws, sinful wants, extremely limited understanding and thinking, and our lack of insight, to be our god in life. Meanwhile, The One True God, Who is perfect in all things and True, Who remains Sovereign, is ignored. If our view of God becomes distorted, so will our behaviors. That is to trade a truth for a lie, to rationalize our behaviors by attacking our very Creator and Savior!

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions, see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. How do you react to the two kinds of fools, one who entertains and the one who is wicked?
2. Why would wicked people feel that their actions were not wrong? What causes some people who have no wisdom or refuse to have scruples to be as they are?
3. Have you ever considered that atheism has more to do with hating God’s power over them than denying that God exists?
4. Read 1 Samuel 25, how does this passage parallel this Psalm? What do you think were Nabal’s motivations? How do his actions show us how many people today are?
5. Have you had a desperate need for God? Why is it that fools refuse to submit to God?
6. How do our hearts become consumed with pride and contempt to God and others?
7. Do you believe some people refuse to understand God or godly things, so they can be wicked?
8. When we push God out of the way, how will our lives be like? What can happen to accountability? Would that lead to engage in whatever please?
9. What can you do to make sure you do not place blinders on ourselves or our hearts just so we can do as we please?
10. What does it mean to you that God is our refuge and Hope, our Salvation? How can this help you grow in faith and maturity?
11. What can you do to make sure you do not cause hurt to yourself or others just so to get what you want and take what you want?
12. How will being arrogant with faith cause a person to fall, backslide, or sin? How will confidence in Christ, grow you in faith and Christian maturity?