

**Psalm 14 - God came to save fools**  
Sign Title: Jesus came to save the fools

**November 13, 2011**

Good morning Faith family. It is not quite Christmas. In fact, it is not even Thanksgiving. I had to juggle some things around in our December calendar. As a result, I needed to bump one message from our Christmas series to this morning. We always say Christmas seems to come sooner every year. Now, even your pastor is making you feel that way.

So while this message is a little early, let it serve as an appetizer for the rest of the series in December. For Christmas last year, we did a series titled, *Christmas from the Book of Revelation*. We looked at snapshots of Christ from that exciting book. For Christmas this year, we are entering a series called, *Christmas from the Book of Psalms*. We will look at snapshots from this ancient song book. We have a lot to cover so let's dive right in.

Today, you can find support groups for just about anything. There are support groups if you struggle with alcohol or drug addiction. There are support groups for those who have gone through a divorce and support groups for those who are still single. There are support groups for the overworked and support groups for the unemployed. While support groups are good, today, they are proliferating like rabbits. It appears you can find a support for just about anything... even for things you never expected.

I recently ran across an online support group called, "The Clergy Project." This is a support group for pastors. It is not for any pastor but only for pastors who are atheists. Before this last week, I didn't think the words *pastor* and

*atheist* belonged in the same sentence! As one pastor on the site wrote, “I am an active Methodist pastor who is also an atheist. Every week I feel like a fraud. Every week I struggle with the fact that I’m lying when I stand before my congregation.” If that is the case, why hasn’t he left? Later in his bio he explains he hasn’t left the church because he is still looking for a comfortable exit strategy. In my opinion, he left a comfortable exit strategy a long time ago! Of course, the web site asked if you would kindly click the *like* button on their Facebook page. I didn’t.<sup>1</sup>

The last people we would consider atheists are pastors. While most pastors are hopefully not struggling to believe in God, many people, even some who attend church, are struggling to believe in God’s existence. Do you think the Bible has anything to say about atheism? The Bible does talk to those who don’t believe in God’s existence. This morning, we will study one of those passages in the book of Psalms. It is Psalm 14.

### Psalm 14

#### **The fool says there is no God.**

The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.”... Psalm 14:1 (ESV)

Right up front these are God’s word to those who claim atheism. They are fools. While all atheists are fools, not all atheists are the same. There are different types of atheists.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.christianpost.com/news/atheists-form-support-group-for-nonbelieving-pastors-58252/>

## Intellectual atheists are fools.

Intellectual atheists are people like Mark Twain, Bill Mahre, Steven Hawking (who helped underwrite the *Clergy Project* web site) and Jodie Foster. Intellectual atheists are everywhere. Our kids are indoctrinated with intellectual atheism at school when they learn evolutionary theory.

Interestingly, I have noticed that intellectual atheists have a little bit of an attitude problem. Let me quote two intellectual atheists to show you what I mean. Ernest Hemingway put it this way, “All thinking men are atheists.” I think that means he believes the rest of us are not thinking people. To come up with that conclusion I was doing some thinking so I don’t agree with him. Jodie Foster put it this way, “How can you ask me to believe in God when there is absolutely no evidence that I can see?” I would come to the exact opposite conclusion. How can you not believe in God when there is so much evidence to see?

Why is it that some people can look at a sunset and see ample evidence for God’s existence, while others can look at the same sunset and see no evidence that God is behind it all?

The answer to that question is found in Psalm 14:1. It is found in the meaning of the word *fool*. The word *fool* doesn’t mean someone is stupid or they have a low IQ. A fool, like Stephen Hawking, can be a brilliant fool. The word fool in Psalm 14 is the Hebrew is the word *nabal*. You might remember the biblical story Abigail and Nabal. The poor guy was literally named, “the fool,” and he lived up to his name. The word *fool doesn’t refer to someone’s intellect but to their will*. It means they are stubborn, unteachable, obstinate and intolerant. The

Psalmist says anyone who says there is no God is just a stubborn, unteachable, intolerant person who has an authority problem. The Bible says atheists are fools not because there is a lack of evidence but because there is a problem with their will. They have a stubborn refusal to accept the conclusions of the evidence. Paul says the same thing.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 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... Romans 1:18–23 (ESV)

Atheists are fools not because of a lack of evidence but because of a stubborn refusal to look at the evidence. When the will is bent against God, people become increasingly futile in their thinking and their hearts become darker. Rather than becoming smarter, when people rebel against the evidence of God's existence they become fools! The English transliteration for the Greek word *fool* used in Romans is literally the word *moron*. Here you have biblical precedence for calling somebody a moron, though I wouldn't recommend it.

### **Practical atheists are fools.**

While this Psalm is an answer to intellectual atheists, in its original context, it was targeted to the practical atheists. It is targeting people who say they believe in God but they live like he doesn't exist. Practical atheists are people whose lives do not match up to their claims. The practical atheist is

someone who knows all about God, but they don't want God messing with their plans for their life.

Practical atheists may even go to Faith University (Sunday School class) and be involved in a small group Bible study. Practical atheists may help out on Wednesday night at Awana. They make the claims of following Christ but when you look at their spending habits, their sexual habits, their marital habits, and their parenting habits, what do you end up concluding? They are living as if God doesn't exist. They are fools!

Let me give you some more examples. Does attending church every weekend sound a bit restrictive? After all, Sunday morning is a great time for golf. The greens are open because everyone else is in church. Sunday morning is a great time to be on the lake. Sunday morning is also a nice time to snowmobile in the winter. Some people tell me that Sunday morning is their only time to sleep past 10:30 a.m. Attending church every weekend sounds too restrictive for the practical atheist. They claim to comprehend God's incredible and undeserved love for them. They claim to understand that Jesus died in their place for their sins. But right now, the weekends are mine. God, get out of my way. Are you a practical atheist when it comes to your church attendance?

The practical atheist claims to love God but they keep lying to their friends, their parents, their boss and those in authority over them. They can spin lies faster than a Chinese clothing factory.

The practical atheist claims to believe in God but giving 10% of their check sounds over the top. They will remind you, we are in a struggling economy.

They have bills to pay. They have new car payments to make. They can't afford to tithe.

Let's look at this from a different angle. The practical atheist is someone who tithes but says the other 90% is theirs and God better keep his hands off of it.

The practical atheist claims to want to honor God above all things but they are messing around with their girlfriend. They are doing everything but one final act. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 5:2 we are to be people of purity and treat younger women like our sister. If you wouldn't do it with your sister, don't do it with your girlfriend. Are you are a practical atheist? If God is convicting you, respond to him by repenting and confessing your sin. That is what the Christian life is about. It is conviction, repentance and clinging to the grace of God through Christ.

Some of you have felt pretty good so far. You are not an intellectual atheist. You have disconnects between your faith and life but you are repenting of them. You feel pretty good. News flash. God says everyone is a fool.

**God says everyone is a fool.**

...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. Psalm 14:1–3 (ESV)

When I first read Psalm 14, I was excited. I was excited to listen to God give it to the atheists and tell them they were a bunch of fools. The problem is that after the first verse, I realized the Psalm is talking about me. Everyone is a

fool. The outspoken intellectual atheists are only one kind of fool. Those who claim to love Christ but live in a way that doesn't match up to their claims are another kind of fool. Psalm 14 tells us all human beings, apart from the wisdom of God, are fools. If there is any doubt about this, let's turn to Romans 3 where Paul quotes Psalm 14.

What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." Romans 3:9–12 (ESV)

Sound familiar? Paul is saying Psalm 14 applies to everybody. A fool is everyone who is born in this world and chooses to live in sinful rebellion against God. That is all of us.

Everyone is in rebellion against God. Our hearts are in deep-seated rebellion against God. Borrowing from five other Old Testament passages, Paul hammers this point home in Romans 3.

"Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips." "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known." "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Romans 3:13–18 (ESV)

The first three chapters of Romans are a great for understanding the human problem. Those chapters make two fundamental assertions.

- 1) **We are alienated from God.** We were born alienated from God and because of that, we are under the penalty of sin. We justly deserve the wrath of God.
- 2) **We cannot turn to God.** We are all fools. *Everyone knows God exists because the evidence is before us in creation. However, because of what*

*happened in the Garden of Eden, our will is so deeply damaged that while we can choose what to cook for breakfast in the morning, we cannot choose to seek after God.* According to the Bible, everyone apart from God's grace through Christ is stuck being a fool.

Some of you think we have a free will and we can choose God to save ourselves. That is not true. The Bible doesn't say we have a free will. It says we have a will that can make moral choices for which we will be held accountable. But our will is so deeply damaged that we can not choose to seek after God. Apart from God's grace in our life we will always be fools.

Some of you are thoroughly confused. You thought you chose God. The truth is God chose you so you could choose him. That is the way it happens in Scripture. Let's look at some examples.

### **Where does the Bible tell me I cannot turn to God?**

#### **The book of John**

The book of John is full of statements that affirm this.

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. John 6:44 (ESV)

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all... John 6:63 (ESV)

Who takes the first step to bring us to God? God does. He hunts the sinner down and out of his free and undeserved mercy draws us to himself.

#### **The Emmaus Road shows us how we recognize Jesus.**

After the death of Jesus, two of his disciples were walking to a village named Emmaus. It is about 7 miles from Jerusalem. They were talking about the stunning turn of events in Jerusalem. At the beginning of the week, the



crowd hailed Jesus as king in the triumphal entry. At the end of the week, he was crucified. As they were walking and talking, the risen Jesus came up and walked beside them. He asked them what they were discussing. Cleopas, one of the disciples, asked if he was the only one in Jerusalem who didn't know about these events. Apparently he thought Jesus was not checking his social media.

What makes this story strange is the disciples didn't recognize they were talking to Jesus. They walked and talked with him all afternoon and still didn't recognize him. Why couldn't they grasp the obvious? Was it because they were filled with grief? Did they all need a serious trip to the optometrist? The Bible doesn't leave us with those options, it tells us why.

**But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. Luke 24:16 (ESV)**

God simply did not let them perceive it was the risen Jesus they were talking to. Jesus engaged with them in conversation about what the Old Testament Scriptures taught about himself for the rest of the day. Jesus even joined them for dinner. It wasn't until one point in the meal when the light went on for them.

**When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. Luke 24:30–31 (ESV)**

What happened? Their eyes were opened by God. It was only because God opened their eyes that they recognized Jesus. Did they choose to open their eyes or did God open their eyes to recognize Jesus for who he actually is? You tell me.

## The Damascus Road shows us how salvation begins.

A third example comes from the apostle Paul. If you read about him in the beginning of Acts, he was the Osama Bin Laden of his day that hunted Christians down and dragged them off to prison. It was a pretty good gig until God changed his plans in Acts 9.

But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." Acts 9:1–5 (ESV)

A little later, Ananias needed some special prompting from God to even talk with Paul because Ananias was so afraid of him. Look what God says to Ananias.

But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel." Acts 9:15 (ESV)

Who chose who? Paul was acting like a fool until God laid him out flat. The disciples on the Emmaus Road were clueless they were talking to Jesus until God opened their eyes. Some of you hate the doctrine of Predestination. My friends, you should be on your knees thanking God for it. We are all fools who know God exists, but because we are so dead in sin, we cannot even lift a finger to turn to God unless he chooses to hunt us down and save us. Salvation begins with God choosing to save the fools.

Everyone has a Damascus or an Emmaus road conversion experience, maybe a little less dramatic but essentially the same. Either God hunts us down

on the Damascus Road of life as we are going about our foolish rebellious business or we are not opposed to God but are clueless to who he is, until God opens our eyes. Why does he do this for us? Not because we deserved it but to show his mercy and compassion that we do not deserve.

For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. Romans 9:15–16 (ESV)

Psalm 14 tells us that apart from God seeking us and reaching out to us, there is no way we could know him. We would live like fools forever. This is why Jesus came. Jesus is God the Father’s plan to save the fools.

**Jesus is salvation for fools.**

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. Psalm 14:7 (ESV)

Jesus is the hope of the fool. Psalm 14:7 says the hope for the fools will come from Zion. What is Zion? Zion is the hilly region Jerusalem was built on. In David’s day, it was about 14 acres in size. In Jesus’ day, it had grown to 500 acres. Today, it is about 50 square miles. Zion was where the redeemer would redeem the fools. How do we know that?

“And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression,” declares the Lord. Isaiah 59:20 (ESV)

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. Zechariah 9:9 (ESV)

We know Zechariah 9:9 applies to Jesus because Matthew 21 tells us it does.

Jesus didn't come to be a good moral example. He didn't come to teach us a class on ethics and morality. He came to save fools who were so dead in their sin that while there is plenty of evidence about God in creation, we cannot turn to God unless God does a supernatural work in our life. We are so bent in our foolishness that apart from an Emmaus Road experience or a Damascus Road experience, we can't turn to him. My friends, apart from the grace of God, we are fools.

There are three things that hit us from this passage.

- 1) **If you know God, don't be a fool and live like a practical atheist.** That is most of us. When we know what God says in his word about his will, but intentionally choose to do our own thing, that is being a fool. There is no question about it. When we know God's will and go our own way, that is being a stubborn, hard-hearted, obstinate fool who won't submit to God's authority. If that is you, repent today.
- 2) **This Psalm helps us understand why atheists can't see God.** It explains why atheists like Jodie Foster can be very intelligent but look at creation and see no evidence for God's existence. Others of us can look at the same evidence and wonder how people can't see God. Apart from God doing a supernatural work in a heart, we are so dead in sin that we cannot even lift a finger to turn to God.

What are we to do about that? Share the truth about Jesus in as clear a way as we can, that is our responsibility. Then we pray for God to do his part, to soften the heart of the fool, so he/she can turn to Jesus.

3) **This Psalm calls fools to turn to Christ today.** I know everybody here does not love Christ. I know a number of you come because your parents make you or your wife is forcing you. You think Christians are cute religious people, but you don't seriously believe Jesus died on the cross to save you from your sin.

Psalm 14 is calling you to repent of your sin and trust in Jesus today. Stop being a fool. This morning, for the first time, can you begin to see Christ for who he is? Ask Christ's death on the cross to be the payment for your sin and ask Christ to be in charge of your life today. If God is working on your heart right now, make that decision.



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