

• The fool has no place for God in his life

1. Consider the person David calls a fool

• He is controlled by his wicked heart

• His behaviour is affected

• His understanding is affected

• His ambitions are affected

• Then the whole of society is affected

• These foolish people then become persecutors

• Prayerlessness is foolishness

2. The fool's destiny

The fool says in his heart, 'No God!' It is not so much that he or she is denying the existence of God. It is more that there are people who do not want to bring God into their lives. 'No God!' is their plan for their lives.

1. **Consider the person David calls a fool.** The Bible's diagnosis of the problem of the human race focuses on what it calls **the heart** ¹. He is talking about everyone who says 'No God'. There are various aspects of the human character: the sense of God ², the conscience, the remainder of the image of God. But the fool does not listen to any of this. He is controlled by his heart. The trouble with the human race is not our circumstances; it is not in our intellect. There are rich sinners and poor sinners. Money is not the problem, but the state of the human heart. There are clever sinners and not-so-clever sinners, but the situation of men and women is not affected by learning or cleverness; it is controlled by the wickedness of the heart!

But what begins in the heart affects **behaviour**. The reason why we do things that we do things

¹The fool says in his heart, "No God!"
They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds,
there is none who does good.

2. Then **the understanding** is affected. The fool might think he is wise - but he is not!

^{2a,b}The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man,
to see if there are any who understand,....

All of our ideas about God go wrong from the very moment we are born. We 'are estranged from the womb'; we 'astray from birth, speaking lies'. This is why the first thing that needs to happen if anyone is to find salvation is that God bring us to repentance – a change of mind, a new understanding that makes us amend our ways.

What begins in the heart affects the ambitions; David's psalm continues:

^{2c}... who seek after God.

God can find no one who is ambitious to know him more.

What begins in the hearts of men and women then affects **the whole of society**.

³They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt;
there is none who does good, not even one.

Notice the word 'all' and 'together'. The entire human race goes astray together. People influence each other; they move like a flock of sheep. 'All we like sheep have gone astray', says the Bible.

These foolish people then become persecutors.

⁴Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers
who eat up my people as they eat bread
and do not call upon the Lord?

Is there anything more foolish than becoming a persecutor of other people? The godless person is not entirely rational.

The godless person is a fool because he or she is prayerless! They 'do not call upon the Lord', says verse 4.

2. **The fool is destined to be put down and disgraced.** David suddenly puts to us a different picture.

⁵But see how they are in great terror,
for God is with the generation of the righteous.

¹ see
Genesis 6:5;
Psalm 51:10;
Jeremiah
17:9; Matthew
15:18-19

² Romans
1:18-32

• God allows the wicked to prevail a long time but not forever

3. The Lord brings salvation and restores the fortunes of His people

(i) In Judgement

• Babylon and Rome

(ii) In spiritual renewal

• God renews the heart

• Entirely the work of God

• Brings life in the Spirit

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

Most of God's people are poor. James 2:5 says 'Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world?' God allows the wicked to prevail for a long time, but then he has a habit of suddenly rescuing and blessing his people. This is what David prays for.

⁷Oh, 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.

There is such a thing as salvation! It comes from Zion – from the place where Jesus died on the cross. Zion is where salvation comes from. Jesus died in Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Christians in Jerusalem. The gospel message went out from Jerusalem. Salvation comes from Zion.

The wicked are often powerful but their power does not last for ever. *When the Lord restores the fortunes of his people, let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.* ¹ There are two ways at least in which this can happen. It can happen (i) in judgement. There comes times when God wipes out of existence a wicked civilisation. It has happened many times in the story of the human race. In Israel's history Nebuchadnezzar's empire was defeated, but Israel continued.

¹ 14:7

The Romans conquered Israel but Jesus died and rose again whether the Romans liked it or not. The Spirit was poured out. God restored the fortunes of his people.

It can happen (ii) in spiritual revival. That is the time when God pours out his Spirit and the fortunes of his people are changed.

What happens when God restores the fortunes of his people is that many men and women are given a new heart. This is the promise of the Bible. God renews the heart, implanting a new principle of desire, purpose, and action. Jesus' phrase 'born of water and the Spirit' ¹ looks back to Ezekiel 36:25-27, where God is pictured as symbolically cleansing persons from sin's pollution (by water) and bestowing a 'new heart' by putting his Spirit within them. Jesus' point is that there is no exercise of faith in himself as the supernatural Saviour, no repentance, and no true discipleship apart from this new birth.

¹ John 3:5

Regeneration or new birth is a matter of being given a new heart. It is entirely the work of God the Holy Spirit. It raises the elect among the spiritually dead to new life in Christ ¹. Regeneration is a transition from spiritual death to spiritual life, and to conscious, intentional, active faith in Christ. New birth brings the gift of the Spirit. It brings 'spirit' into our lives. *'But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any person has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his'* ². The fool speaks folly in his heart - but salvation gives us a new heart!

¹ Ephesians 2:1-10

² Romans 8:9



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