

19. The Book of Psalms 14:1-7

No God or Know God!

a message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
(9-28-25)

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Psalm 14 was written by David who introduces the psalm with the words, ***"The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'"***

There's some debate as to what David is actually saying here—is the person he has in mind a *theoretical* atheist or a *practical* atheist? You see, a theoretical atheist simply denies the existence of God—whereas a practical atheist believes God exists, but then goes on to live, practically speaking, as if there is no God.

- Now, you might be thinking, *"Why would people believe that the person David is speaking about could be a practical as opposed to a theoretical atheist?"*

Because in the Hebrew the phrase ***"There is"*** is in italics which means it doesn't appear in the original Hebrew but was added to the text by the translators to help *clarify* what they believed David was actually saying—namely that ***'God doesn't exist.'***

That's theoretical atheism—a formal denial of God's existence.

- But if we take the statement exactly as it appears in the literal Hebrew it reads, **"No God"**—as in ***"The fool has said in his heart 'no God!'"***

That would make the person David has in mind a *'practical atheist.'*

As one author defined the term,

"Practical atheism involves a disconnection between a professed faith in God and one's daily life and decisions. For example, someone who believes in God but lives according to their own wisdom and desires, rather than God's commands, is living as a practical atheist."

Listen, I think a person is a fool who doesn't believe in the existence of God—no doubt about it. There is just too much evidence that points to the existence of an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-wise Creator God (Psalm 19:1).

So yes, to reject the existence of the God of the Bible would make a person a fool.

But in my mind, any person who believes that God *does* exist but then goes on to live their life as if He doesn't is the biggest fool of all. (Explain)

Psalm 14 (NKJV)

¹ The fool has said in his heart, ***"There is no God."*** They are corrupt, They have done abominable works, There is none who does good. ² The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, To see if there are any who understand, who seek God. ³ They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt; ***There is none who does good, No, not one.*** ⁴ Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, Who eat up my people as

they eat bread, And do not call on the Lord? ⁵ There they are in great fear, For God *is* with the generation of the righteous. ⁶ You shame the counsel of the poor, But the Lord *is* his refuge. ⁷ Oh, that the salvation of Israel *would come out of Zion! When the Lord brings back the captivity of His people, Let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad.*

Notice that David (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) says that the fool has said in his “**heart**” there is no God—not in his head.

Unbelief is not an intellectual issue—
or in other words, it often isn’t the result of a lack of information.

I know that (not only because the Holy Spirit tells us that in verse 1)—but also because if it was then all we would need to do is give unbelievers the facts about Jesus and the gospel and they would immediately believe in Him and be saved.

But we all know that’s not the case—even though we are prone to believe that it is. In other words, we tend to beat ourselves up and blame *our* gospel presentation as being faulty because the person we witnessed to didn’t get saved.

So, we walk away thinking, it must be our fault, we didn’t give them enough information or failed to phrase our presentation of the gospel in just the right way because if we did, they would have accepted Jesus! **But that is absolutely untrue—a person’s salvation doesn’t happen in the head; it happens in the heart!**

Romans 10:9 (NKJV)

⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

And so, David (writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) tells us that unbelief is a matter of the heart—a person *chooses* to believe or not believe of their own free will.

Unbelief is a choice—a choice often rooted in rebellion—as Jesus said—

John 3:19–21 (NLT)

¹⁹ And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. ²⁰ All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. ²¹ But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.”

Now, let me say that I was drawn to Psalm 14 (Psalm 53 is almost identical to it)—but I was drawn to it because Paul the apostle quotes from it in the greatest theological treatise in the Bible on how to be saved—the Book of Romans:

Romans 3:10–12 (NKJV)

¹⁰ As it is written: “*There is none righteous, no, not one;* ¹¹ *There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.* ¹² *They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.*”

“There is none righteous [but Jesus], no, not one...There is none who does good, no, not one.” (verses 10, 12)

This statement runs contrary to what most people think about themselves—that they are basically ‘good people.’

The Bible acknowledges this—*“Most men will proclaim each his own goodness...”* (Proverbs 20:6)

Back in 1981, Rabbi Harold Kushner wrote a book entitled, *“When Bad Things Happen to Good People.”*

His book struck a chord with the public because it shot up to the top of the N.Y. Times bestseller list practically overnight and stayed there for over a year—and since it was first published has sold over 4 million copies. Apparently, a lot of people wrestle with this problem because they see themselves as ‘good’ people.

So much so that when bad things happen to them,
they lash out at God for being unfair to them—
“I’m a good person, this shouldn’t be happening to me!”

This forces people to conclude that either there is no God—or that He isn’t a good and loving God after all. But there’s a third possibility which is the one the Bible sets forth—that a good, loving, all-powerful God created a good world for mankind to live in—a world free of sin, suffering, corruption, evil and death.

He gave man a good thing called ‘free-will’ (because He didn’t want robots)—and it was man who exercised his free-will in rebellion against his Creator.

At that moment the Fall occurred, and sin entered the world through the sin of Adam—which was then passed down to all of his descendants (the whole human race) down through the centuries—up to and including the present day. The result was the corruption of God’s good creation which resulted in a world of evil.

➤ Some ask, *“Did God create evil?”*—and the answer to that is **NO!**

Evil is a corruption of what was created *good* (like rust on a car or rot in a tree)—God didn’t create evil; evil came about thru man’s sin.

Augustine in 400 A.D. said,

“To say God created everything, evil is something, therefore God created evil, is to miss the real nature of evil. God is the author of everything, we accept that premise, but evil is not ‘a thing,’ it is a lack in a thing, hence it does not follow that God is the author of evil.”

At a certain college, there was a professor with a reputation for being tough on Christians. At the first class every semester, he asked if anyone was a Christian and proceeded to degrade and mock their statement of faith.

One semester, he asked the question, and a young man raised his hand when asked if anyone was a Christian. The professor asked, *“Did God make everything, young man?”* *“Yes, he did, sir,”* the young man replied.

The professor responded, *“If God made everything, then God made evil, and if we can only create from within ourselves, then God is evil.”*

The student didn’t have a response, and the professor was happy to have once again proved the Christian faith to be a myth.

Then another man raised his hand and asked, *“May I ask you something, sir?”*

“Yes you may,” responded the professor. The young man stood up and said *“Sir, is there such thing as cold?”*

"Of course there is, what kind of a question is that? Haven't you ever been cold?"

The young man replied, *"Actually, sir, cold does not exist. What we consider to be cold, is really only the absence of heat. Absolute zero is when there is absolutely no heat, but cold does not really exist. We have only created that term to describe how we feel when heat is not there."*

The young man continued, *"Sir, is there such thing as darkness?"*

Once again, the professor responded, *"Of course there is."*

And once again, the student replied, *"Actually, sir, darkness does not exist. Darkness is really only the absence of light. Darkness is only a term man developed to describe what happens when there is no light present."*

Finally, the young man asked, *"Sir, is there such thing as evil?"*

The professor responded, *"Of course. We have rapes, murders and violence everywhere in the world, those things are evil."*

The student replied, *"Actually sir, evil does not exist. Evil is a term man developed to describe the absence of God. God did not create evil. It isn't like truth, or love, which exist as virtues like heat and light. Evil is simply the state where God is not present, like cold without heat or darkness without light."*

The professor had nothing to say."

And so let me say it again, evil is a corruption of what was originally created good, to be 'good' (Genesis 1:31)—God didn't create evil; evil came about thru man's sin. However, God isn't opposed to using the evil (and its ensuing consequences) to bring about His ultimate purposes (the redemption of sinners and the establishment of His Kingdom).

The bottom line is—**God doesn't promote evil—He permits evil—and then only till Jesus returns** (Revelation 19). He permits what is bad to bring about what is good—the ultimate good of defeating evil and redeeming fallen sinners who come to Him by faith.

Look, if this world was all there is, then I would have to agree with Rabbi Kushner... But the Bible tells us that this life is nothing more than a *prelude* to eternity—a *preparation* for what is to come:

2 Corinthians 4:17–18 (NKJV)

¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸ while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

Job said, *"When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold."* (Job 23:10)

You see, the real flaw in Rabbi Kushner's book *"When Bad Things Happen to Good People"* is that it was based on a faulty premise—which will always lead to a faulty conclusion.

The faulty premise is that—*"There are good people in the world for bad things to happen to!"*

This is exactly opposite of what the Scriptures teach (Romans 3:10-12) and makes God the 'bad guy' and makes man the innocent victim of a cruel, uncaring God. (Explain)

If your *theology* (your understanding of God) is built on a faulty *anthropology* (that man is basically good and his environment makes him do bad things)—if that’s your anthropology then it is going to distort and even destroy your theology (either there is no God or He exists but is a mean, uncaring God not the God of love and kindness the Bible presents Him to be).

Let’s look again at Paul’s indictment of fallen, unbelieving people who want to live in rebellion against God and His laws—

Romans 3:10–18 (NKJV)

¹⁰ As it is written: “*There is none righteous, no, not one;*” ¹¹ *There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.* ¹² *They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.*” ¹³ “*Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit*”; “*The poison of asps is under their lips*”; ¹⁴ “*Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.*” ¹⁵ “*Their feet are swift to shed blood;*” ¹⁶ *Destruction and misery are in their ways;* ¹⁷ *And the way of peace they have not known.*” ¹⁸ “*There is no fear of God before their eyes.*”

This is the most thorough presentation on the depravity of man you’ll find anywhere in the Bible.

➤ Of course, it immediately begs the question—“*How can God love me if I’m this bad?*”

First of all, the passage isn’t accusing every member of the human race of having committed all of these sins—it’s teaching that the roots of all sin (our fallen sinful nature) is in all of us.

In some people those roots don’t produce a lot of evil fruit, but in others they do—they bear a lot of sin and wicked living. But don’t fall into the trap of thinking that you’re a *good* person because you’re not as *bad* as someone else. (Listen: Jesus is the standard for righteousness)

It’s important to understand that God doesn’t love us because we’re so good and lovable—God loves us because that’s His nature. In other words, He doesn’t love us because of who we are but because of Who He is (1 John 4:8).

But further understand that we will never walk with God and experience the fullness of God or His power for victory He desires for our lives if we don’t come to terms with the sin in our lives—and that won’t happen if we don’t see ourselves as God see’s us.

Let me stop here and give you some biblical anthropology (the study of man)—and what the Bible (i.e., God) says about fallen mankind.

Romans 7:18a (NKJV)

¹⁸ For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells...

Job 14:4 (NKJV)

⁴ Who can bring a clean *thing* out of an unclean? No one!

Isaiah 64:6 (NKJV)

⁶ But we are all like an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags...[religion]

Job 15:14–16 (NKJV)

¹⁴ “What is man, that he could be pure? And *he who is* born of a woman, that he could be righteous? ¹⁵ If God puts no trust in His saints, And the heavens are not pure in His sight, ¹⁶ How much less man, *who is* abominable and filthy, who drinks iniquity like water!

Job 25:4–6 (NKJV)

⁴ How then can man be righteous before God? Or how can he be pure *who is* born of a woman? ⁵ If even the moon does not shine, And the stars are not pure in His sight, ⁶ How much less man, *who is* a maggot, and a son of man, *who is* a worm?”

At this point many in the Church would cry out—

“That’s that old ‘worm theology’ that we have finally gotten rid of in the Church because it damages a person’s fragile self-esteem, which needs to be built up and affirmed if we’re going to grow into well-adjusted Christian adults.”

The problem with self-esteem is the first four letters—**SELF**!

The whole teaching on self-esteem goes against everything the New Testament tells us to do with self.

- The word “**esteem**” means—*“To regard highly; to value greatly, to have a high opinion of.”*
- Therefore, “**self-esteem**” would then be—*“to regard self highly and to value self greatly, to have a high opinion of yourself.”*
- Self-esteem used to be called PRIDE and stands exactly opposite to what the Bible says we as Christians are to do with self—*“Deny yourself, crucify self, don’t have a high opinion of self...”*

Philippians 2:3 (NKJV)

³ Let *nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

Yet, if the goal of the Christian life is to build up our self-esteem—that of course would involve working on having a greater self-image, a more inflated view of yourself—the goal of which being learning to love yourself more and more.

But self-love rather than being a *virtue* is spoken of in the Bible as the root cause of all of mankind’s problems down through the centuries—not to mention that it is prophesied about in the N.T. as one of the *sinful* qualities that will characterize the last day’s church—

2 Timothy 3:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ² For men will be lovers of themselves...boasters, proud...

Pride and self-love are at the heart of theoretical atheism—listen to the words of Paul the apostle to start the Book of Romans:

Romans 1:19–22 (NKJV)

¹⁹ because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even*

His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,²¹ because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.²² Professing to be wise, they became fools...

“The fool has said in his [or her] heart—no God!”

Nobody goes to Hell by *chance*; they go to Hell by *choice*.

C.S. Lewis in his book, The Great Divorce, pointed out how that Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane prayed, “*Father not My will but Thy will be done.*”

- He said if a person refuses to turn their will over to God now and pray as Jesus prayed, “*Not my will but Thy will be done.*”
- If they instead say to God, “*Not Thy will but My will be done.*”
- Lewis said then someday when they stand before God He will be forced to say to them, “*Not My will but thy will be done.*”

I’ve entitled this message—“**No God or Know God?**”

It’s your choice—make the right one!

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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