

What Do You Believe About God?

Psalm 14:1-7

This morning, I want to begin with a list of names. It is not an exhaustive list by any means, but there is a common link that binds them together. They cross socio-economic lines, come from different periods of history from the present back to the 18th century, and come from different fields like technology, science, politics, philosophy, entertainment, entrepreneurs, athletics, and so on. Most names you will recognize.

Warren Buffet

George Soros

Mark Zuckerberg

Marilyn Monroe

George Clooney

Brad Pitt

Gene Wilder

Richard Dawkins

Stephen Hawking

Charles Darwin

Carl Sagan

John Baskerville

Allan Pinkerton

Kathy Griffin

Bill Maher

Larry King

Thor Heyerdahl

Lance Armstrong

Dan Fouts

Bruce Lee

Bill Gates

Jack Nicholson

Ernest Hemingway

Amber Heard

I could take up the entire time giving a list of names who all fit into the category of people who openly and some adamantly espouse to being an atheist.

“Atheism is more than just the knowledge that gods do not exist, and that religion is either a mistake or a fraud. Atheism is an attitude, a frame of mind that looks at the world objectively, fearlessly, always trying to understand all things as a part of nature.” -

Carl Sagan

“That which can be asserted without evidence, can be dismissed without evidence.”

— Christopher Hitchens

“Is man merely a mistake of God's? Or God merely a mistake of man?” — Friedrich Nietzsche

“Properly read, the Bible is the most potent force for atheism ever conceived.” — Isaac Asimov

“There is something infantile in the presumption that somebody else has a responsibility to give your life meaning and point... The truly adult view, by contrast, is that our life is as meaningful, as full and as wonderful as we choose to make it.”

— Richard Dawkins, The God Delusion

“If God really existed, it would be necessary to abolish Him.” – Mikhail Bakunin

Pew Research released a survey in January looking at religious affiliation in America. The fastest growing demographic are what is called the ‘nones’, defined as people who describe themselves as atheist, agnostic, or nothing in particular. It’s a disturbing trend among those 18-29.

Dr. Ryan Burge, assistant professor of political science at Eastern Illinois University who does research about religious trends in America had this to say about the ‘nones’: “One of the most well-publicized facts about American religion over the past few years is the meteoric rise of the nones. But that upward trend has only really emerged in the last few decades. In 1972 just 5% of adults in the United States said they had no religious affiliation. Twenty years later, that had gone up just two percentage points. By 2021 the share of Americans who were nones was about 30%...Among the youngest Americans, a third of them say they have no religion by the time they hit their 25th birthday.”

Those who believe in God have been called delusional, ignorant, and unthinking. Karl Marx is noted as saying that “religion is the opium of the people” and that “religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature.” Marx is saying that the purpose of religion is to create an illusory fantasy for the poor to help them cope with the reality of their dismal plight. Even though religion is just an illusion, in some way, it helps them find happiness, that the hardships of this life are ok because true happiness will be granted in the next life which is just a fantasy.

Let's turn to **Psalm 14** and see what the Bible has to say about those who claim there is no God. Because those who assert there is no God, better have it right, because eternity is a long time to be wrong.

Let's begin by looking at **verse 1** where we see a view from the heart.

I. A VIEW FROM THE HEART – v. 1

In the first part of **verse 1**, we notice that their belief is wayward.

A. Their Belief Is Wayward – v. 1a (Psalm 10:4)

The word heart refers, in Biblical language, to the center of a person's human spirit. It's the place where we get emotions, thought, motivations and actions. **Proverbs 4:23** refers to it as the wellspring or source of life.

This person has concluded that God does not exist. Now, there are different types of atheists.

There is the **practical atheist**. This view is held by those who think that a person should live their life with disregard towards a god and neither accept nor reject claims about God. In other words, when it comes to day-to-day living, they disregard a belief in God as a matter of practice in their conduct.

Philosopher Zofia Zdybicka gives four forms of practical atheism.

The person is not guided by religious principles.

The person has a lack of interest in matters related to a god or gods.

The person ignores the concept of god.

The person excludes a god or gods from intellectual pursuits and practical action at the individual or social level.

Essentially, they don't care if there is a god, they're going to live as if he doesn't exist at all.

Second is **apatheism**. Like practical atheism, this is an apathetic attitude toward the existence or non-existence of God or gods. It is more of an attitude rather than a belief or claim. They just don't care.

Then there is **pragmatic atheism**. This view suggests that a person should reject a belief in a god or gods because it is unnecessary for a rational or sensible life. A rational person would conclude that acceptance of a belief in God is irrational and

therefore an idea to be rejected. They look at approaching and solving life issues rationally.

Bertrand Russell was once asked what he would say if, when he died, he found himself standing before God. Russell replied, "You didn't give us enough evidence."

"All thinking men are atheists."

— Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*

Now the psalmist tells us the thought of no God begins in the heart. To me that means it isn't a lack of evidence, but rather a lack of belief. **Romans 1:20** is clear when Paul writes: "**For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – His eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.**"

In **II Pet. 3:5**, Peter says they deliberately forget God. It isn't a lack of evidence, it is willful rejection of what is clear because they choose not to see or believe the evidence. Considering the totality of the three types of atheists I just mentioned, they have no fear of God, and they have no need of God.

Billy Graham was once asked why some people refuse to believe in God, in spite of the evidence. Here was his response: "**People who deny that God exists may give several reasons for their unbelief. For example, they may say they reject God because they can't understand why He doesn't do something about all the evil in the world. Or they may say they're turned off by the hypocrisy of Christians they've known.**"

But the real reason most deny God's existence can be summarized in one word: pride. They want to run their own lives, and they don't want anyone—especially God—to interfere with the way they're living. They want to be in control of everything they do, and they know that if they were to believe in God, they'd have to change their lifestyle. Instead of living by their own list of what's right and wrong, they'd have to take seriously God's moral standards."

The term for God in this opening verse is Elohim or the Almighty, Creator God. They don't believe the existence of, not just any god, but THE God who brought everything into existence. They would rather believe that their ideas about how we came into existence is better than what the Bible says.

Some of the videos we have been showing Sunday nights at our Faith Foundations series have helped scientifically and logically to disprove such theories as the big bang. From their own scientific models, they can't answer the question of what came before the big bang. **How did that densely packed particle, smaller than an atom, come into being in the first place? What caused it to explode and have enough force to propel matter into space? How did it contain enough matter to make all the galaxies and stars and planets within those galaxies?**

Stephen Hawking believes that it all came from nothing. Here's what he said in his last book, Brief Answers to Big Questions: **"I think the universe was spontaneously created out of nothing, according to the laws of science. If you accept, as I do, that the laws of nature are fixed, then it doesn't take long to ask: What role is there for God?" So where did the nothing come from?** They refuse to accept a master designer.

The psalmist defines such a person who does not believe in the existence of God, a fool. Now there are three different Hebrew words used in Scripture. The first defines such a person as the dull stupid fool. We might say this person has a limited intelligence.

The second type of fool used in Scripture is the person who is unreasonable and perverted. This person isn't willing to look at facts or rejects facts because of personal bias or an unwillingness to accept what they don't want to believe so they can live as they please.

The third type of fool is the word David uses here. This person is a stubborn fool. He lives without fear of God. In the Hebrew, it's the word nabal. It's the name of one of David's adversaries. David and his men were hungry, on the run from Saul living out in the open country. One of the places was the near where Nabal's herdsmen pastured their sheep. David asked for a few sheep to feed his men. Nabal refused to give a bunch of scavengers any food and told them to leave. David got mad and told his men to saddle up. They were going to teach Nabal a lesson and take his life. But Nabal's wife, Abigail, rode off to intervene and told David that her husband was acting just like his name, he was a fool, stubbornly refusing to help David whose men had protected their flocks without pay.

Tony Evans writes **"Either he disbelieves in the existence of God or is convinced he is not accountable to God for his actions."** This goes back to what we said earlier that it is a matter of pride.

That's what Paul said in **Romans 3:18** **"There is no fear of God in their eyes."**

David says that the person who does not believe God exists is wayward in his thinking. He is a fool. Thinking always leads to actions and in this case bad thinking leads to bad actions. David says that not only is their belief wayward, their behavior is wicked.

B. Their Behavior Is Wicked – v. 1b

Now, let me say something right away here. There are a lot of people who don't believe in God who are very moral. That said, there are people who say they believe in God who are very immoral.

Notice David's description of those who don't believe in God.

They are corrupt.

Their deeds are vile.

No one does good.

Let's be clear that is an apt description of all of us before Christ.

Romans 3:10 **"There is no one righteous, not even one."**

Romans 3:23 **"All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."**

Psalm 51:6 **"Surely I was sinful at birth."**

Isaiah 53:6 **"All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way."**

From God's perspective, stealing a term from Hillary Clinton, we are all a bunch of deplorables.

What is interesting to me in talking with people who don't believe in God is that they say the Bible has some good morals to center one's life around, and yet they toss those morals out because they are too restrictive, or they claim that they are good only in certain situations. For example, they may say you shouldn't lie, but then they lie when it's convenient to get them out of some jam at work. Or they say that stealing is wrong, but if their family is starving will resort to lifting a loaf of bread for the sake of their children.

Even a brief look in history back to the 20th century will

show the wicked and depraved behavior of those who didn't believe in God. Idi Amin murdered some 300,000 citizens in Uganda. During the Khmer Rouge genocide in Cambodia, between 1.5 to 2 million citizens were killed. They estimate under the rule of Joseph Stalin that he murdered between 20-60 million people. And then there are the many who don't believe in God who conclude that a baby in the womb is nothing more than disposable tissue if you don't want it.

Paul says that their wickedness stems from their suppression of the truth about God.

Romans 1:18-33

Gerald Wilson suggests that **“The foolish wicked are led astray by their arrogant assumption that there is no limit to their personal power and control. The corrupt action that follows is not the result of ignorance but of a knowing commitment to a lifestyle based on the false conclusion that God has no effective place in human life...Rejection of God leads to actions founded in self-interest and disregard for moral values.”**

Rather than accept God's absolute standard of right and wrong, they create their own arbitrary or relative standard of what they deem to be right or wrong, one that is ever changing based on cultural norms, popular opinion or what may be advantageous in the moment.

Without God, the truth of **Jeremiah 17:9** is born out: **“The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?”**

That is a view from the heart of a person who says there is no God. His belief is wayward, and his behavior is wicked. Wrong thinking, wrong actions.

In **verses 2-6**, David give us a view from heaven.

II. A VIEW FROM HEAVEN – vv. 2-6

We know from passages like **Psalm 139:23-24** that God is aware of what is in man's heart. Man can give the appearance of being religious by his actions while denying the truth of God's existence in His heart. On the other hand, a person can say they believe in God, but essentially deny Him by their actions. Some theologians would suggest that by their actions they really claim they don't believe in God, because if they did they would obey what His Word teaches. That would be the Pharisees.

In any case, David takes us into God's courtroom. He's peering down from heaven. The word refers to looking through a window. In **verses 2-3** we see that God's examination is thorough.

A. God's Examination Is Thorough – vv. 2-3

In **verse 2** we see God's assessment of the situation.

1. God's assessment of the situation – v. 2

Now David says God is looking down from heaven to see if anyone understands or is searching for Him. In God's omniscience and omnipresence He already knows.

Genesis 11 records the account of mankind gathering together in a valley in defiance of God's mandate to spread out and populate the world. They want to build a tower to heaven. It says that God came down to have a look at what they were up to.

Genesis 18 says He came to have a look at Sodom. We learn from Scripture that God searches our heart. **Romans 8:27** **“And He who searches the hearts knows the mind of the Spirit.”**

Jeremiah 17:10 **“I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.”**

Psalm 139:1 **“O Lord, You have searched me, and known me.”**

We'll talk about those who seek God next week. The fool doesn't want to seek God. I like what Billy Sunday once said, **“Sinners can't find God for the same reason criminals can't find a policeman – they aren't looking!”**

But the wise will seek Him. Keil and Delitzsch note that **“God's all-seeing eyes scrutinize the whole human race.”**

God didn't one day get a call from one of His angels telling Him He better come down and have a look at what man was up to. He could see and know perfectly well from where He was at what was going on. His discerning eyes are looking as He makes an assessment at what He sees. **What did He find in His search? What did His thorough examination discover?** In **verse 3** we notice God's appraisal of the situation.

2. God's appraisal of the situation – v. 3

A judge will make a careful assessment of the facts and make a determination, then give a verdict. God looks and then responds with His judgment.

“All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.”

As we saw earlier, Scripture is very clear on that point. All have sinned. We’re all guilty. God saw humanity turning away. What He saw was that the person who does not believe in God is corrupt in his thinking and corrupt in his actions.

Every week during summer camp, campers headed out into the woods for a cookout carrying a box of stuff for their meal: hot dogs, chips, some kind of dessert, a piece of fruit, and chocolate milk. Staff families also got a box to take home as well. Mom would usually boil our hot dogs and we would sit around the table for supper. I opened my carton of chocolate milk to take a big gulp on a hot summer day only to have it come out in several clumps. I spit it out faster than if I had swallowed a fly. It was spoiled.

That’s the meaning of the word David uses here about the behavior of the person who says there is no God. He is corrupt. His behavior is like spoiled milk.

Walvoord and Zuck note that **“As a practical atheist (living his life as if there were no God) he is separated from the wisdom revealed in God’s Word. As a result, he is corrupt, spoiling whatever he does.”**

God may be asking: **Is there anyone who understands their depravity?**

From His vantage point in heaven, God’s examination is thorough. He who made the heart knows the heart. He made an assessment, then He made an appraisal. But His examination continues in **verses 4-6**, where we notice that it is thoughtful.

B. God’s Evaluation Is Thoughtful – vv. 4-6

In **verse 4**, God is puzzled by the wicked.

1. God is puzzled by the wicked – v. 4

Now I don’t mean that God somehow can’t figure out what’s going on like we’re some mystery He’s trying to sort out. Instead, He’s puzzled why man doesn’t get it. The wicked without God, think they can get away with devouring God’s people like they

eat bread and think they can get away without any consequences.

They do something wrong, they get away with it and think that either God doesn’t exist or He doesn’t care.

Greek philosopher Epicurus, who lived about three centuries before Christ and taught that **“Pleasure is the principle and end to a happy life”** said this about God. **“Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is not omnipotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil? Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?”**

Essentially, he is saying that God is not God at all because He can’t or won’t do anything about evil in the world. People who want to deny God, do so in large part because they can’t reconcile how a good God could allow evil in the world, forgetting that God isn’t the author of evil, that man is, God must not exist or, if He does exist, He is as powerless as a blob of mustard.

Even in its cursed state, the heavens declare the glory of God.

Even in His cursed condition, mankind is still created in the image of God.

Why is it that many are so unwilling to see God in what is around? It boils down to the issue of pride.

Romans 1 says he refuses to glorify God, and instead glorifies himself because he has chosen to suppress the truth and his thinking is futile. Claiming to be wise, he has really become a fool and **“exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.”**

Those who deny the existence of God have become idolaters worshipping themselves and creation rather than the Creator and God is puzzled by what they don’t understand that is so clearly evident. But then such a fool chooses not to see and believe.

Second, God is present with the righteous.

2. God is present with the righteous – v. 5

I mentioned Wednesday that in the past 6 years there has been an 800% increase in attacks on churches in the US. Those who deny the existence of God have become increasingly brazen in their outspokenness against

Christianity largely because they don't want to hear the truth that what they are doing is wrong. So they try to silence believers by intimidation verbally or physically. David says that God is with the righteous and that one-day God will totally overwhelm them. He will bring judgment to bear for their actions against His people. They will be in great dread on the day of judgment.

“They will say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills ‘Cover us!’” (Luke 23:30)

John Phillips states that **“Man is very brazen in his unbelief as he struts across the stage of time. But he will be gripped with stark, naked horror when he stands doomed at the great white throne.”**

God is not only present with the righteous, David reminds us that God is protective of the righteous.

3. God is protective of the righteous – v. 6

God is our refuge, an ever-present help in time of trouble. He is our solid rock, our secure shelter, our protective wing, our shielding fortress.

Tony Evans writes **“Take heart, you who follow the Lord. He keeps track of the injustices, and He will bring about your deliverance at the right time.”**

God's people will one-day be vindicated because of their belief and trust in Him. The fool says there is no God and one day he will stand before Him and tremble. The wise say there is a God and will one day stand before Him in trust. He is protective.

We have seen a view from the heart and what it looks like for the person who says there is no God. Then we took a view from heaven looking at what God sees and the assessment He makes. Let's conclude with a view from the hopeful.

III.A VIEW FROM THE HOPEFUL – v. 7

David has two closing thoughts.

A. He gives a prayer for their deliverance – v. 7a

B. He gives praise for their deliverance – v. 7b

David's prayer is for complete deliverance knowing that such deliverance can only come from Zion, from God in whom His people trust. That day will ultimately come when Messiah returns and rules from Jerusalem during His Millennial reign.

Isaiah 59:15b-20

Notice that it's not a matter of 'if' but of 'when'.

Zephaniah 3:14-16

Romans 11:26-27

Deliverance is not just physical in nature from those who oppress them as the Jews hoped during the time of Christ. Yes, during the Millennial kingdom Jesus will establish His earthly throne and rule the world in righteousness. This is also spiritual deliverance for those who look to Him for salvation.

The atheists claim they have no faith. Yet it takes faith to believe there is no God. God says that faith is required to believe that He exists and rewards people for their faith with a righteousness that is not their own and a promise of eternal life. As I said at the beginning, those who don't believe God exists, better be right. Eternity is a long time to think about your reasons for rejecting His existence, when they will now know that there is a God.

Someone has rightly said that if I die and find out there is no God, I have lost nothing. But if you die and find out there is a God, you have lost everything. Yet many would rather risk it.

Because God delivers His people, saves His people, David concludes by telling us to **“rejoice and be glad.”**

Our names are on one of two lists – those who reject God or those who receive Him. **Which list is your name on?**