

Restoration of the heart

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 09 July 2023

Preacher: Bo Wong

[0 : 00] We're reading from Psalm 14. There is none who does good, not even one.

Have they no knowledge? All the evildoers who eat up my people as they eat bread and do not call upon the Lord? There they are in great terror.

For God is with the generation of the righteous. He would shame the plans of the poor. But the Lord is his refuge. O that salvation for Israel will come out of Zion when the Lord restores the fortunes of his people.

Let Jacob rejoice. Let Israel be glad. Okay, let us pray. Almighty God, as we come before you, we want to see the Lord Jesus Christ.

Help us to have an undivided heart, find our wandering hearts, that we might glorify you in our thoughts, in my saying, hearing your words.

[1 : 38] Thank you, Lord. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. So Psalm 14 is, I suppose, is quite familiar to most of us, even though we might not know that from Psalm 14, but Romans 3 quoted it, and then Don just now mentioned it, about none, and so that's quite familiar.

So today I'm going to approach it from a different angle. Hopefully that would help some of you. In Psalm 14, verse 1, the fool says in his heart, there's no God.

We might think that this statement does not apply to us. We will never say such thing. The problem is that we may not know or may not be conscious what we say in our hearts.

The term heart and mind can mean the same thing. However, by mind, we usually mean thoughts that we can, we know that we are conscious of and heart are the thoughts that we may not be conscious of.

So, for example, we may ask someone, we say, deep in your heart, do you really love me? Or deep in your heart, do you really like this? It's a sort of question that to help people to think deeper what is in their heart.

[3 : 07] And we also know people who can appear quite normal, but they can often do things that are harmful to themselves, like committing suicide, their loved ones, or the people around them.

So, what's happening in their minds when people commit acts of atrocity? And so there's an area of life that is a bit mysterious to us.

So, to think about this, we can get some, you might be able to get some help from Sigmund Freud. As I was preparing for this sermon, Joe just completed a course on psychology online, and he talked about Sigmund Freud, and that reminded me about him because I studied him as well in first year of medicine.

So, Freud was the forerunner of modern psychology. He was born as a Jew in 1856 and lived in Vienna most of his life until the beginning of World War II when he was, in a way, forced to move to London, and he died very shortly after the move at 83 years of age, just before World War II, or at the beginning of World War II.

So, he was the first scientist who started analyzing human minds because before then, humans are considered as sacred and you don't just study humans.

[4 : 43] But after the theory of evolution being accepted, so people started to see humans as one of the animals, and so you can analyze human beings. And he was the first psychologist to push the idea of unconscious minds.

He believed that in each of us there was a part of our minds that we were not aware of. So, Freud's main interest is to explain human behavior, including his own.

So, in Psalm 14, I'm trying to help us to see what is in the minds of people, in the mind of the fools, of God's people.

And so, that's why I've just briefly explained what Freud thinks, and that formed the basis of psychology, even though Freud's idea has been superseded, but he formed the basis of what modern psychology is nowadays.

So, his basic model is that the human mind has got three parts. So, a part that is mostly unconscious mind is called the I-Eat, I-D, or in Latin it's I-D, but English it, I-T.

[6 : 06] It means the, sort of, it implies that the animal part, even though he thinks that human beings are one of the animals, but this is the animal part, the instinct part of the mind, that it comes naturally, as we were born with, and it's pleasure-seeking.

It's a part that gives us, makes us want to do things that's pleasurable, and it's mostly hidden. And the other part is super-ego.

It is the part that is the ideal self, what we want, what we want, we want us to be. what is our ideal, that is, give us honour, reputation, and it's usually nurtured, it's not born with, but we learn, as we grow, we see what the society, what our parents value, and that is what we think about that.

And the third part is equal, it means I, basically. So that is the part that we are, you know, you see me, or I see you, that is the equal part, that we are apparent, that is the, on the surface, that's who we are, and that is the part that will strive for survival, as the main concern.

And it is the rational part, that thinks about the consequence of things, doing or not doing. So, so just think about a movie, inside a movie, the hero, when we, when we watch a movie, we would like to be, the hero.

[7 : 45] That hero is a super ego, of, of our mind, that is what we like, to be. And there is the villain, the bad guy, the bad guy, we like, the bad guy, is the, the one that is just, seeking for pleasure.

And so, and then, there is the supporting actors, or all the rest, the ordinary people, and that is the ego, that is, the real, or the, the me that is, apparent, apparent to, to other people.

So, the Freud, then use this, as a basis, for his psychoanalysis, trying to, understand, why people do, what they, what they do.

Now, Freud is not, a Christian, no, he's an atheist, and so, he, he didn't take anything, about spiritual thing, into account. So, his, this is, his basic model, and therefore, I mean, his, model is not, complete, and also, it's, quite simplistic.

However, even a simple model, helps, for us to, understand, our minds, and we are, not, in terms of, we can modify on it, or, we can think, deeper, based on what, Freud has, given us.

[9 : 12] Okay. So, for this, I'm going to, even, simplify, even more, my, three parts of the, the mind, I'm going to use, a heart, because I'm, talking more about, the part that, we are, less conscious of.

So, they're, also divided into, three parts, and, it's similar to, Freud's, division. So, part one is, the pleasure, that we, are seeking for. So, you can see the, diagram with the, me, inside the middle, I'm seeking for, the pleasure.

Pleasure, it is, drives us to seek, for enjoyment, and to avoid pain. And so, we get addicted to things, because they give us, pleasure. And, the pleasure, we can think about, in two broad types. There's a, sensory pleasure, and aesthetic pleasure. Sensory pleasure, is the pleasure, that we get from our senses. Taste, smell, touch, hearing, and we are born with that, with, even from baby, we know that baby, seeks for such, pleasure.

Aesthetic pleasure, is, more, sort of, refined, you need to develop that, and it's, usually to do with art. So, we learn to appreciate, painting, a poem.

[10 : 40] So, I, I, I, I got friends, who spend, all their, earnings, on music records, and sound system, so they can have a good, sound system at home, they enjoy, that, good quality music.

So, listening to music, give us sensory pleasure. But, appreciating, how the music is, composed, how they put together, that is the aesthetic, pleasure, that I have.

So, that is the pleasure part. And then, honor, the, part of us, is seeking honor, it gives us a sense of self-worth, and it drives us to behave, in such a way, that will gain us respect.

So, what we do for honor, changes, depends on the trend, of the society. Sometimes, we stand for the rights, of the minorities, like, the voice, that is going on, at the moment, people said, because everybody, value that, so, the people, will just stand up for it.

Sometimes, we stand for, environmental, preservation, sometimes, we stand for, animal rights, all depends on, what the world, seems the most. And, the self-preservation part, is part of the mind, that is rational.

[11 : 58] It helps us to do things, that will keep us safe, and alive. So, when we take medicine, we do not do it, for pleasure, or for honor, but for survival.

Pleasure, may drive us, to eat excessively, self-preservation, would stop us, from doing so. Self-preservation, also adjudicate, between pleasure, and honor, to see, which one, it would choose, to do.

So, to give an example, of how our hearts, determine our behavior, let us consider, a boy, who has been told, by his father, to spend an hour, to do his homework. So, the pleasure part, of the boy, wants to play, games.

The honor part, of the boy, wants to obey his father. So, the self-preservation, part of the boy, decides that, it is better, to do homework, for an hour, before playing games.

In doing so, he can avoid, the pain of punishment, and gain the respect, of his father. So, that is a simple, model. Right, so we, go to, Psalm 14, verse 1, the fool says, in his heart, there is no God.

[13 : 08] First of all, we note that, it does not say, a fool, but it says, the fool. What does that, imply? It implies that, it is not because, the foolishness, of a person, that they seem, to say, there is no God.

It is the willful, rejection of God, that makes a person, a fool. So, the fool, is not someone, who is lacking, intelligence. It is someone, who choose, to solely live, for his own pleasure, honor, and survival.

The fool, says in his heart, the fool, may not even, be conscious, of what he says, in his heart. The fool, may appear, to believe in God, but, deep in his heart, he says, that there is no God.

Our behaviors, reveal, what we really say, is deep in our hearts. That is where, Freud's, psychoanalysis, come in. He looked at, people's behavior, and then, from there, he tried to deduce, what is in the mind.

When we believe, that, when believing in God, give us good reputation, among social circles, so the honor part, and self-preservation, part of our heart, will cause us, to say, we believe in God.

[14 : 21] Though the pleasure, part of our heart, really dislike God. So, that is, the hidden part, that we can say, in our hearts, that there is no God, even though, we are, in our, conscious part of the mind, we say that there is God, there is a God.

So, what drives, a fool's behavior, just coming from, back to Psalm 14, one, pleasure, what sort of pleasure, they have, by persecuting, the, God's people, or, doing things, whatever way they like.

So, verse 4, says that, they eat up, God's people, as they eat bread. So, we see that these people, derive pleasure, from abusing others, and they, just keep doing that, as, people can get addicted, to it.

In World War II, when the Japanese, invaded China, suddenly, the soldiers, become like, animals. They were killing, and raping, and torturing people.

Even though, in the culture, the Japanese people, are very polite, and good manner. And they bow, to one another, in their own culture. But, once they, liberate, in the sense that, they are no longer, bound by the, cultural, the honor part of it, in a foreign country, the pleasure part of it, of them, just, play up, and, they just, derive pleasure, by, killing people.

[15 : 51] And, so, they, turn themselves, into monsters. And, that's what, people can do. As we just, do what we, according to our pleasure, eventually, we are turning to monsters, and, become further, and further, from God, and, accumulating God's wrath.

So, the pleasure part, and the honor part, so, in a society, that admires, heroism, and power, so, people derive, their honor, by conquering others.

There are also, societies that admire, heroism, and tolerance, so, people derive, their honor, by standing up, for the minority group. And, so, during the time, of the Old Testament, it's, people, heroism, is by, conquering.

And, that's why, these people, derive, their honor, part of it, by conquering, the weaker, nations. and, the self-preservation, part, of the, the, whose, heart, is, that, they want to, have the most, material, for survival.

Okay. So, you, you, if you conquer, the weaker people, you get more, uh, material, and there's a gain, for your survival. And, also, to have survival, you remove the threat.

[17 : 21] So, the people of God, to the pagans, are a threat to them, because, people of God, do not live, according to, the worldly standard. And, and they don't like that.

They deny that. And, that's why, uh, conquering, the Israelite people, is, uh, uh, satisfied, the, uh, the, the heart's demands, in terms of getting, pleasure, honor, and, uh, self-preservation. The fools do not know God, and do not depend on God. They do not call upon the Lord, for their needs. They rob others, to get what they want. They distance, themselves, from God, and become, more and more foolish.

That is, uh, verse 4. So, another group of people, mentioned in Psalm 14, are called the people of God, the descendants of Jacob, the Israelites, and God has, God has chosen, to make a covenant with them, they have been given God's law.

In this Psalm, God's people are victims, of the godless people. And, we know that in the Old Testament, a thousand, hundred, history of Israel, and more than 90% of the time, they were living in fear, of surrounding nations.

[18:38] They are, most of the time, they are, uh, persecuted by the, the surrounding nations. So, why, were they usually wicked, in the full?

Uh, there are, there are two reasons. There's a superficial, superficial reason, and the deep reason. The superficial, superficial, uh, superficial reason, is that they have been given God's law.

So, paradoxically, they, I mean, given God's law, you should be, uh, a more organized country, uh, nation, more powerful. But, uh, depends how you use God's law, uh, how they live their life.

The, God's law basically, limit, uh, them, in terms of, what they can do. Uh, like, uh, they can't, they cannot cheat, or steal, or kill, to get what they want.

And so, they, when they fight, in a sense, when they fight with the godless people, they are, they are a bit bound, in terms of, uh, the behavior. They, uh, and they are a bit, uh, less vicious, in terms of, because they don't live in that way.

[19:50] Uh, and so, the, the barbarians, have an upper hand, stronger than them, physically. Uh, and, the, just like, uh, being Christians, if you, uh, don't, uh, work on Sundays, or you don't open the shop on Sundays, then, it's hard for you to compete, uh, with people who, who open their shop, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Uh, and, and so on, you can think about the, uh, disadvantage of, uh, uh, in a society, when you try to, uh, follow, God's law. So, that is the superficial reason.

The deep reason is that, their hearts do not love God's law. They, what they want, is God's blessing. They, the pleasure, they derive, is getting blessing from God, not from God, not God himself.

And so, the, the middle of the heart is still me. They're still living for themselves. Uh, so, Psalm 14, verses 2 and 3, says that, there's no one who understands, no one who seeks, after God, no one who does good.

So, this includes God's people as well. There's no one who understands, the things of God. They do not, understand the greater pleasure, the greater honor, and the greater life, that are only found, in the relationship with God.

[21:19] They, do not seek, after God. They only seek, after worldly things, that maximize, their, pleasure, honor, and life. They do what is good, according to their own hearts, not according to God's heart.

All the seeking is for oneself, therefore, no one does good. Doing good, means ultimate good, eternal good. Such good can only be done, from the perspective, uh, of the ultimate, and eternal being.

So, if we do good, because we think that it's good, but in God's eye, it may not be. And, the good that we think is good, usually make us proud. Yeah. So, when we obey God, it is not, only good, because we trust God's wisdom, and plan, but, also ultimately good, for ourselves, even though, obeying God, could be difficult, in the society like this.

So, that is the heart of God's people. Then we look at, the heart of God. In Psalm 14, we can see, at least three aspects, of God's heart. One is, faithfulness.

That is in verse 7, that we read just now. God is faithful to his covenant. He still calls Israelites, his people, despite the breaking of the covenant. So, because of his faithfulness, he will do something, to restore, the heart of his people.

[22:40] And, verse 7 says, salvation will come out, of Zion. Two is holiness. In verse 5, it says that, God is with the generation, generation of the righteous.

God, God, is not with any, other generation. God cannot be with, evil doers. He can only be with, the generation of the righteous. He will establish, the real people of God, the generation of the righteous.

Now, are the people Israelites, the Israel, inherently righteous? No, there is no one, no one does good. But, like Abraham, they were considered righteous, because of God's, grace, just like we are. They were righteous, because of, what God, reckoned, to them. Okay, so there is, they are righteous in that way, because of God's, own, mercy. And so, the third thing is, God's mercy, in verse 6, it says that, God is a refuge for the poor, and the needy.

He does not, turn away anyone, who pleads, mercy. When Jesus said, he had come to, be the salvation of Israel, Israel, the Jews, were expecting him, to terrify their, godless enemies.

[24 : 05] They were, they were waiting, for someone, to restore their fortunes. While they could see, Jesus, helping the, the poor, and the needy, they did not think, Jesus was the one, they were waiting for, as Jesus did not seem, to have restored, their fortunes.

The Jews, did not understand, the things of God, they were, just wanting God, to restore, their worldly fortunes. God wants to restore, far greater things. God wants to restore, the hearts of his people.

The Lord Jesus, told us that, there will be, a final judgment, for everyone. Those who reject God, and those who harm, God's people, will be, will be in great, terror, in that judgment day.

During the Old Testament, time, while God, used the stronger nations, to terrify, and punish, the, the godless people.

It's not the final judgment. There is still, a final judgment to come. And when, and when, and so, on that day, Psalm 14, will be, fully fulfilled.

[25 : 20] But, we can look at the history, all the nations, that, terrified, Israel, were themselves, terrified by, stronger nations, repeatedly.

So, God wants a heart, that understands, takes after him, and does good. Jesus understood, the heart of God, and he understood, the heart of God, that is, in the heart of God, that is not legalistic. It's not that, you have to do this, and you don't do this, but, the heart of God, is, very relational. The law was given, to keep the Israelites, from being fools.

The law reveals, to them, how they can relate, to God. Jesus lived, in perfect obedience, to God's law, not because, of the fear, of punishment, but because, of his love, towards God.

Through Jesus, only fools, would choose, to live by the ways, of the world, and ignore, the ways, of the good God. Jesus delighted, in God. Jesus came, to do the will of God.

[26 : 27] He did, what was, what pleased God, even amid, suffering, and persecution. While the Israelites, suffered the persecution, of God's people, Jesus suffered, the persecution, of religious people.

While, said, Jesus became poor. The religious people, made fun of Jesus. They laughed, at his plan, to save God's people. They said, if he, he could not, even save himself, from, the crucifixion. How could he save, anyone else? Those people, had no knowledge. They did not know, that the Savior, should suffer, before he entered, into his glory.

Those who hear, Jesus' voice, will see the glory, of God, in Jesus. They will know, the truth, about God, and about their own, hearts. They will have, their hearts, restored.

They will understand, the honor, that they get, from their performance, is nothing, compared to the honor, of being called, the people of God, and the children of God. They will understand, that such great honor, cannot be exchanged, with their achievement.

[27 : 37] It is given free, because of Jesus' sacrifice. They will wait, for the greater honor, that is to come. Because, having Christ, in them, they have, the hope of glory. They will begin, to seek, after God, as a joy, of knowing God.

God, the joy, of knowing God, experience, surpasses, all physical, and aesthetic, pleasure.

Because of, the blood of Jesus, they no longer, face the wrath of God.

Instead, they have the pleasure, of being loved by God, and loving God. And they will begin, to live, according to God's view. The decision, they make, no longer, just based on, their own needs, of honor, pleasure, and survival.

Because, they have received, abandoning, everything, that they need, in Christ. They will learn, to live by faith, and not by sight.

About, a hundred years ago, Freud, considered God, as a fantasy. And based on, the infantile, need, for a dominant, father figure, with religion, as a necessity, in the development, of early civilization, to help restrain, our violent impulses.

[28 : 51] And this, could be discarded, in favor of science, and reason. Over the, past hundred years, people have indeed, rejected God, mostly.

Has our world, become a better place, to live? Has there, been more fortune, for most people, of the world? No, we've seen, so many, wars, over the last hundred years, so many people die, signs, and reason, do not give us, wisdom.

In fact, they, they make us, more foolish. In the past, few years, as I work in Newcastle, I, you see that, the number of psychologies, have, at least doubled.

There's always, a new psychology, opening, every, week. week. But at the same time, they're always full. When I refer patients to them, they have to wait for a long time.

Why suddenly, there's so many people, who are sick, counseling, because of depression, anxiety. People, human hearts, are more fragile than ever. We get hurt easily.

[30 : 05] We cannot handle, disappointments, and disapprovals. At the end, our rejection of God, and God's people, will prove, that we are fools. The sad thing is that, we do not even know, we have played a fool.

We keep on, complaining, about the misery, in life. Keep on, blaming others, the government, or other people, for our unhappiness. We will not realize, or admit that, the restness in our hearts, is a consequence, of our rejection of God.

Psalm 34, verses 8 to 10, says, All taste and see, that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man, who takes refuge in him. Oh, fear the Lord, you, his saints, for those who fear the Lord, have no lack.

The young lion, suffer want and hunger, but those who seek, the Lord, lack no good thing. Unlike the fool, those whose heart, have been restored by God, have tasted, the goodness of God.

They will call on the Lord, for their needs. May we, open our hearts to him, today. Let us pray.

Father, we, thank you for your mercy upon us, that you, did not, despise us, you did not, you did not give us up.

[31 : 31] And while we were, yet sinners, Christ died for us, and we thank you for such a love, and care towards us. Father, help us to, be your glory, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.