

Series: Psalms

Title: Sin of Fools, Repentance of Believers

Text: Ps 53: 1-6

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Our Psalm is a familiar Psalm. It is the same as we have already covered in Psalm 14. I want to give the meaning of the Psalm as we read it. But then for my message I want to do something that may surprise some, I want to apply this Psalm to us as believers.

**Subject:** Sin of Fools, Repentance of Believers

**Proposition:** The sin of our sinful flesh is to say, “No, God!” But when God chastens us and grants repentance to a believer he makes us irresistibly say, “Yes, Lord!”

First, let’s look at the meaning of the Psalm as we read it as it applies to reprobate men and women.

**Psalm 53: 1:** « To the chief Musician upon Mahalath, Maschil, *A Psalm of David.* »

Mahalath means sickness. This Psalm is about the worst sickness there is, spiritual sickness and death. Maschil means instruction. This is a very instructive Psalm.

**Psalm 53: 1: The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God.***

All unregenerate men are the fool—the “stupid.” The source of natural man’s stupidity is his heart—our sin-nature, our fleshly nature, our old man. God says, “the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” (Gen 8: 21) He says, “the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead” (Ecc 9:3).

The fool hath said in his heart, “No, God.” The words “there is” have been supplied by the translators. Remove them to get the true meaning. It is not that in his heart the fool denies the existence of God—though some claim to do so. The real problem is that in his heart the fool says no *to* God. He hears God’s word and says, “*No, God! I will not have Christ Jesus reign over me.*” It is not the existence of Jehovah but God’s Authority that the natural heart hates.

Natural man hears God’s word concerning how we are corrupt, depraved sinners in Adam, as well as by our own choice, and he says, “No, God! I am not that bad.” He hears how God saves by grace alone but says in his heart, “No God, I will not be saved by grace apart from my works.” The fool hears that God commands faith in Christ alone but he says in his sinful heart, “No God, I will not give your Son all the glory.” He hears that dead sinners must be born of the Holy Spirit and made willing to come to Christ but the will-worshipper says, “No, God. I am able to make myself born-again and save myself by my own will.”

**Psalm 53: 1:…Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: *there is none that doeth good.***

Corrupt is what all men are by nature. Therefore, from the corrupt heart men do the only thing natural man can do, abominable iniquity. This abominable iniquity includes not only natural man’s lewd profligate sins but also his very best religious deeds—“*there is none that doeth good.*”

Men hear this and say, “No God! Some are good!” It is because men who keep up a good appearance outwardly are thought of as good, while only those who are outwardly wicked are thought of as bad. But God says the inward heart of the very best man is as wicked as the outward wickedness of the most sinful—there is none that doeth good.

**Psalm 53: 2: God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were *any* that did understand, that did seek God. 3: Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; *there is none that doeth good, no, not one.***

The world speaks of election as God looking down from heaven to see who would believe and that is who God chose. But God tells us what he saw when he looked down from heaven—not only did none understand and seek God, we all went away from God.

The reason God had to choose who he would save is because God saw that after the fall this would be true of all sinners. The reason God predestinated some to be born of the Spirit of God is because “*none did understand and seek God*”—worse, “*everyone of them is gone back*” away from God. The reason God predestinated his Son to lay down his life for his elect is because “*they are altogether become filthy.*” Only Christ makes his people righteous and holy so that God can accept us.

**Psalm 53: 4: Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people *as they eat bread: they have not called upon God.***

God asks a rhetorical question. The workers of iniquity have not even the least spiritual knowledge of God. “Neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2:14)

Since natural man hates God, it is as natural for him to hate and persecute God's people as it is for him to eat bread. Though they may be very religious and pray to be seen of men, not once have they called upon God because God is not in their heart

**Psalm 53: 5: There were they in great fear, *where* no fear was: for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth *against* thee: thou hast put *them* to shame, because God hath despised them.**

God is in the generation of the righteous. Generation refers to God's spiritual race—his seed—his children. God promised, "A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation" (Ps 22:30). Concerning God's elect he says, "But ye are a chosen generation." (1 Pet 2:9) It is Christ that makes us the righteous generation.

God is in his people. Therefore, God protects his people, scattering the bones of our enemies because God despises men who hate him. God is in us so we are not fearful of the things that terrify ungodly men—and that itself terrifies ungodly men. They are fearful where no fear is—fearful of things: fearful we will run out of water, fearful of climate change, fearful of guns—they think good and evil is in things.

So when believers are not fearful of the things that unregenerate men are fearful of, it is a sign to the ungodly that God indeed is in the generation of the righteous and that the unregenerate is an enemy to God—"And in nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God" (Php 1:28).

**Psalm 53: 6: Oh that the salvation of Israel *were come out of Zion!* When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.**

Here, we have a new speaker. These are the words of God's believing people. These are those made righteous by Christ. Our desire is for Christ our Salvation to come forth out of Zion. When Christ came forth, by his precious blood justifying us from all our sins, he led captive all his elect who had been taken captive by sin, death and hell. Likewise, in every trial, when Christ comes forth out of Zion and chastens his child, he brings back our captivity from sin. He grants repentance, making us rejoice and be glad.

Now, if you would like to hear more preached on this text I encourage you to listen to the sermon from Psalm 14. But for my message, I want to apply this Psalm to believers.

### **OUR SINFUL HEART SAYS, "NO, GOD!"**

There is in every born-again child of God a sin-nature. It is in that sinful heart that we still say, "No, God." That is right. Even believers play the fool in our old man of flesh. When we were dead in sins the only thing we said was, "No, God." But as regenerated believers, when we make the choice to do contrary to the revealed will of God—the revealed word of God—in our sin-nature we are saying, "No, God"—

*"Corrupt are they."* As believers in whom Christ abides, our sin-nature is still as corrupt as the day we were conceived of Adam's sinful seed. Therefore from that heart, we *"have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good."*

When we heard the gospel for the first time, in our fleshly sinful nature, we cried out, "No, God." We did *abominable iniquity*, trying to justify not obeying God's word which told us to cast all care on Christ. The so-called atheists fall back on the existence of God, "There is no God so why should I believe?" The self-righteous uses the law—"God would not have given us a law we couldn't keep. Why do I need Christ to be my only Righteousness, we have a law?" The will-worshipper uses his will from start to finish—"I have a free will to do all these things, why should I give God all the glory for saving according to his will alone." Some used family, saying, "If I have believed that gospel then I am saying my great grandmother was lost!"

But even now there is in every regenerated saint that same old man who cries out, "No, God!" I need to constantly remind myself of that about you and you constantly need to remind yourself of that about me. Now stay with me because I am going to show you some very good news for God's regenerated children. But let me show you that we are corrupt in our sin nature.

Romans 7: 14: For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

Paul is speaking as a regenerated child of God in whom Christ has the rule in the new man. But he is speaking about his old man—I am carnal, sold under sin.

Romans 7: 15: For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. 16: If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is* good. 17: Now then it is no more I that do it but sin that dwelleth in me

This is very important because this is how God sees his child. It is not the new man born of God that commits the sin we hate. It is my corrupt flesh, saying, "No God, I am not going to obey your word." This is important because the way God sees us is how we need to view one another.

Romans 7: 18: For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing for to will is present with me but *how* to perform that which is good I find not. 19: For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. 20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

When God repeats the same word that means it is very important. Again, the Spirit of God says it is not the new man born of God that sins. But it is the sin that dwells in my natural sinful, fleshly old man of sin.

Romans 7: 21: I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 22: For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 23: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

For some believers, this captivity to sin becomes more easily visible outwardly at times. In other believers this captivity is concealed inwardly where they wrestle with pride, self-righteousness, jealousy, envy, strife and so on. For others, it is both outward and inward. But here is the truth about me and you and every other regenerated child of God.

Romans 7: 24: O wretched man that I am!

It is not that I was a wretched man but that *I am* the chief of sinners! It is also important for us to see that sin still dwells in our flesh so that we do not ever see ourselves as anything other than a wretched sinner in ourselves. Christ is our only Righteousness and our only Holiness.

But here is the good news I promised. As surely as Christ delivered his people on the cross, Christ continually delivers us from this sinful dead body of flesh that we carry around.

Romans 7: 24...who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 25: I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Brethren, I hide my sin. But God knows all the sins of our flesh, even sins we don't recognize in ourselves. Yet, he never casts us out. Instead, he loves us to Christ, "The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer 31: 3). Let us cast off the old man with his deeds and let us put on the new man that we might love one another as Christ loves us.

## **CHRIST CONTINUALLY DELIVERS**

The good news is that God through Jesus Christ our Lord constantly delivers his regenerated saints from our sinful flesh and draws us closer to Christ. God may allow his child to go a long time crying out in our flesh, "No, God!" But thank God, our faithful Father chastens the children whom he loves.

Hebrews 12: 5: And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

God chastens his child and grants us repentance—a radical change of mind and heart regarding our sins, our relationship to Christ and our relationship to our brethren.

Brethren, we should never segregate our lives into spiritual and temporal. Everything that happens to us in our temporal lives is by the direct hand of our sovereign God to teach us spiritual things. Let us recognize our trials and troubles as God's chastening hand. Hear God teaching us to turn from ourselves and our sinful ways, to Christ, to follow Christ, to love him and our brethren as he loves us. This is where our heavenly Father brings his children through the trial.

Is it recognizable when God chastens his child and grants repentance? It is indeed. When God first converted us, we heard the gospel that salvation is of the Lord. From God choosing his people in Christ to Christ making us righteous by laying down his life for his sheep alone to our being sanctified in regeneration by the Holy Spirit to our being kept until the end by God so that we persevere in faith that is in Christ. But our fleshly nature cried out, "No, God"

But let me show you what happened when our Everlasting Father's loving, chastening hand first granted us repentance and faith. This is Paul's account of his conversion from being Saul of Tarsus to a believer in Christ who served his Master.

Acts 9: 1: And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, 2: And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

What was Saul saying? The fool hath said in his fleshly heart, "No God!"

Acts 9: 3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: 4: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 5: And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks. 6: AND HE TREMBLING AND ASTONISHED SAID, LORD, WHAT WILT THOU HAVE ME TO DO?"

When God grants repentance he turns his child from crying out, “No, God” to making us cry out, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

At Pentecost, 3000 men and women were crying out, “No, God!” But when our heavenly Father pricked their hearts and chastened them and granted them repentance, they went from crying, “No God” to crying, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2: 37)

The Philippian jailor was crying, “No, God!” But when God chastened him and granted him repentance, he went from crying “No God” to crying out, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16: 30)

God continues this work in believers all the days that we live on this earth. David was a believer. He saw Bathsheba and, knowing God’s law forbid adultery, in his sinful heart, David said, “No, God.” When David found out Bathsheba was pregnant, knowing God hates murder, David still said, “No, God.” He sent her husband into the forefront of the battle where he was killed. For a year David got away with all this. But at last, God sent his prophet and chastened David and granted him repentance. God turned David from crying out, “No, God” to crying out, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest.” (Ps 51:1-4)

Only God can grant repentance. He does so from the first hour we believe to the last. God continually grants his child repentance in our new man so that God turns us from our sins and rekindles love for Christ and our brethren. God continues this work.

You all have heard me speak of 2003 when the Lord chastened Melinda and I and brought us so low. The Lord has been chastening me and has brought me far lower than he did in 2003. Scripture says, “Faint not when you are rebuked of him.” I have nearly fainted under God’s rebuking hand. He has brought me to the end of myself with no strength in me. Today, as I was at one of these low points, I opened Brother Frank Tate’s bulletin and read this.

#### WHAT DO I DO NOW?

What do I do when I am under severe trial, enduring pain of body and mind, and am full of fear? What do I do when dying seems to be easier than living with the circumstances the Lord has given me? The answer for the believer is simple: **do the same things you do when the Lord blesses you:** worship publicly, pray, and read God’s Word.

What do I do when I don’t understand what God is doing or how He could possibly bring good out of my painful situation? Go to the house of the Lord in the public worship service just like you do when the Lord blesses you. “*When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.*” (Psalm 73:16-17) What do I do when I am so full of fear? Trust the Lord just like you do when the Lord blesses you. “*What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.*” (Psalm 56:3) What do I do when I feel hopeless and helpless? Look to Christ just like you do when the Lord blesses you. “*I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.*” (Psalm 121:1) What do I do when I don’t think I have the strength to endure for one more minute? Trust the Lord to be your strength. “*I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.*” (Ezek. 34:16) No matter what our circumstances may be at the moment, let us say with David, “*I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.*” (Psalm 34:1) *Pastor Frank Tate*

Brethren listen to this scripture from James.

**James 4: 5:** Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? **6: But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. 7: Submit yourselves therefore to God.** Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. **8: Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. 9:** Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: **let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. 10: Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.**

When God grants repentance, he puts down our old man of sin and turns us from crying, “No God,” to “Yes Lord, what would you have me to do?” May God grant us repentance.

**Amen!**