

1. The Folly of “No God” in the Heart (v. 1)

- A. The fool is a *practical atheist*
- “No God for me. No God over me. No God to interrupt my desires.”
 - This is the **fountain of sin**: a heart that refuses God’s rule.
- B. We inherited Adam’s sin nature, but sin begins with how we think about God.
- Romans 1:21—“For though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude.” When God is pushed out of the center: we live as if no one is watching, no one will judge, no one will call us to account. We slide morally.
- C. NT/Christ Connection: Jesus is the **Wisdom of God** in contrast to the fool: “Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:24). To reject God is finally to reject Christ, the One in whom “all the fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Col 2:9). Christ *exposes* our practical atheism: He calls us to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him (Mark 8:34)—you can’t live as if there is “no God” and follow Jesus at the same time.
- D. Life Application: **Ask diagnostic questions**: “Am I living as if there is no God?”
- How do I make decisions—do I actually pray, or do I just act? Do I treat my sinful thoughts, words, or habits as if no one will ever call me to account? Where in my life do I function like God doesn’t matter—money, sexuality, anger, technology, time?
 - If needed, repent of practical atheism, not just defend against theoretical atheism. “Lord, show me where my heart says, ‘No God,’ and teach me to say, ‘My Lord and my God’” (cf. John 20:28).

2. God’s All-Seeing Verdict: All Are Guilty (vv. 2–3)

- A. God’s perspective vs. our excuses
- We minimize and rationalize our sin: “I didn’t mean to...” “It wasn’t that bad...” “You don’t understand...” But **God looks down**—His verdict is not clouded by our self-defense. He sees: Not just *acts* of sin, but *hearts* that have “turned away.” “All alike have become corrupt.”
- B. Universal guilt: no exceptions; Psalm 53 is not about “those bad people out there” only—it is about all of us by nature.
- C. Paul uses this language in Romans 3:10–12 to sum up the human condition.
- D. Romans 3:19–20—“So that every mouth may be shut and the whole world may become subject to God’s judgment. For no one will be justified in his sight by the works of the law...” (CSB)
- E. NT/Christ Connection: In Jesus, the righteousness we do not have becomes possible
- Romans 3:23—“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
 - But Romans 3:21–22—“But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been revealed... The righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.” (CSB)
 - Christ stands as the **only truly righteous human**: He never “turned aside” from the Father’s will (John 8:29). He alone could say, “I always do what pleases him.”
- F. Life Application: **Ask**: “Do I live with humility and honesty before God?”
- Stop comparing yourself to other sinners; compare yourself to God’s standard. Let Psalm 53 and Romans 3 **shut your mouth**—no more excuses, only confession. There are not “good people who need a little help” and “bad people who need a lot of help.” **There is one category: sinners who need a Savior—and one Savior: Jesus.**

3. Sin’s Devouring Power: When People Become Bread (v. 4)

- A. Sin is not just private—it devours others
- The image: eating bread—casual, frequent, thoughtless.
 - Evildoers treat others, even God’s people, as consumable resources.
 - This is the fruit of sin: a dog-eat-dog world where people are used, not loved.
- B. Not calling on God leads to mistreating people
- Vertical rebellion fuels horizontal destruction. When God is ignored, people will be ignored, exploited, and devoured.
- C. NT/Christ Connection: The Shepherd who is devoured for His sheep
- Jesus is the opposite of the devourer: John 10:10–11—“A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life... I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”
 - Sin devours God’s people; Jesus Christ allows Himself to be “devoured” at the cross for God’s people. He absorbs the judgment that devouring sinners deserve. He creates a new people who love and serve one another rather than consume one another.
- D. Life Application: **Ask**: “Do I use people or serve people?”
- In marriage: Do I devour my spouse’s time/energy/patience, or lay myself down?
 - At work: Do I step on others to get ahead?
 - Online: Do I treat people like avatars to be attacked, not souls to be loved?
 - In the Church: We are called to be a counter-culture in Christ. So “*Outdo one another in showing honor*” (Rom 12:10). Refuse the world’s consumer mindset and embrace sacrificial love for both God and other people.

4. The Terror and Shame of Judgment: When God Scatters His Enemies (v.5)

- A. This is both a Historical glimpse, AND an eternal preview
- B. Likely recalls moments when God threw Israel’s enemies into panic (e.g., 1 Kings 18:13–19:36, Hezekiah’s day). But verse 5 also reaches beyond any one event: He says, “Dread like no other.” “Shame and rejection before the holy God.”
- C. The fear of judgment
- Luke 23:30—Jesus quotes OT judgment language: “Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’”
 - Revelation 6:16 echoes the same: people begging for mountains to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.
 - Psalm 53:5 foreshadows, or anticipates, that ultimate and final day of God’s judgment—bringing terror for those who lived as if there was no God.
- D. NT/Christ Connection: Judgment *Borne* and Judgment *Coming*
- At the cross, Jesus stands **in the place of fools**: He is treated as rejected (Mt. 27:46). The shame and dread of judgment fall on Him instead of us.
 - Yet, for those who refuse Him, Christ is the coming Judge: Acts 17:31—God “has set a day when he is going to judge the world in righteousness by the man he has appointed.” The same Jesus who saves is the Jesus before whom every fool will stand in judgment.
- E. Life Application:
- *For the non-believer*: Let the dread of verse 5 awaken you. Better to tremble now and flee to Christ than to tremble then with no refuge. *For the believer*: Judgment no longer holds terror. But it should increase our gratitude—Christ bore this dread for us, and that should fuel our urgency to plead with others to be reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:20).

5. The Faith of the Saints: Waiting for Salvation from Zion (v. 6)

"Oh, that Israel's deliverance would come from Zion! When God restores the fortunes of his people, let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad." (Ps 53:6, CSB)

A. The cry of faith in a world of fools

- Surrounded by practical atheism and devouring sin, the righteous look up:
 - They are not naive about the world's evil.
 - But they are confident in God's salvation.
- They wait for deliverance from Zion—for God Himself to act.

B. NT/Christ connection – Jesus, the Deliverer from Zion

- Romans 11:26—"The Deliverer will come from Zion" (citing Isa 59).
- **Jesus is the long-awaited Savior from Zion:** He restores the fortunes of His people in a greater way than political rescue. Through His cross and resurrection, He brings forgiveness, righteousness, and hope.
- **Romans 3:24–26 sums it up:** We are *"justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."* God presented Christ as an atoning sacrifice, *"to demonstrate his righteousness... so that he would be righteous and declare righteous the one who has faith in Jesus."*

C. Life Application:

- **Hope for the weary believer:** *You live in a world where fools say "no God," where sin seems to win. Verse 6 teaches you to:*
 - Keep looking to Christ.
 - Keep believing that God will restore His people.
 - Let your heart rejoice and be glad even before you see it all.
- **Call to faith for the unbeliever:**
 - Romans 3:27–28—boasting is excluded; salvation is **by faith apart from works of the law**.
 - Psalm 53 doesn't invite you to try harder to be wise. It invites you to **turn from your folly and trust in the Savior from Zion**.

6. Bringing It All Together (Conclusion)

A. Psalm 53 shows us:

- The **fountain** of sin: a heart that says, "No God."
- The **fact** and **fault** of sin: all have turned aside, all are corrupt.
- The **fruit** of sin: we devour others as if they were bread.
- The **fear** and **shame** of sin: dread like no other when God judges.
- The **faith of the saints**: looking for salvation from Zion.

B. Romans 3 explains it and answers it:

- The entire world is guilty (Rom 3:9–20).
- There is no one righteous (Rom 3:10–12, 23).
- But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been revealed in Jesus Christ (Rom 3:21–22).
- We are justified freely by His grace through faith alone (Rom 3:24–28).

C. Invitation:

- If you have been living as if there is no God—*repent of your folly and come to Christ*. If you are tired of being devoured by sin and devouring others—*run to the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for the sheep*.
- If you are a believer discouraged by a foolish world—*lift your eyes to Zion and rejoice; your Deliverer has come, and He will come again*.

The Foolish Sinner: Psalms 53

(Romans 3:9–28; Psalm 14; 2 Cor. 5:21)

WHAT IS TRUE: All humanity is born in sin through Adam, inheriting a nature that instinctively turns from God and lives as *practical atheists* who say in their hearts, "No God," even while knowing that He exists. God sees every heart with perfect clarity and declares the entire world guilty, for there is no one righteous, not even one. Our sin not only corrupts us inwardly but also devours others outwardly, often using people as mere tools rather than loving them as image-bearers. God's judgment on such sin is real, terrifying, and unavoidable, a *"dread like no other"* for all who reject Him. Yet God has not left us without hope—He has sent salvation from Zion in Jesus Christ, the only righteous One, who fulfills the longing of Psalm 53 by bringing the righteousness of God to sinners through His life, death, and resurrection (2 Cor. 5:21).

WHAT TO DO: Confess your sin and personal rebellion honestly before God, repent of living as if there is "no God," and run to Jesus Christ in faith as our only righteousness and hope. We must allow Christ's Spirit, the Holy Spirit, to transform us so that our lives increasingly reflect His character, turning us away from self-centered, devouring patterns of the fool, and shaping us into people who love others as image-bearers rather than using them as resources to consume for self-interest. We should reflect the heart of Christ rather than the "devouring ways" of the fool. We should live with joyful hope, looking up for the salvation God has accomplished in Christ and will complete at His return. And finally, we should move toward others with compassion and urgency, urging them to flee from foolishness and find life in the Savior who came from Zion to rescue guilty sinners like us.

BACKGROUND / CONTEXT: Psalm 53 is a version of Psalm 14, adapted for a fresh circumstance in Israel's life (perhaps the defeat of Sennacherib's army at the hand of the Lord during its siege of Jerusalem in 701 BC), showing that although times change, the human heart does not—sinful folly keeps reappearing in every generation. The psalm draws from Israel's wisdom tradition, where "the fool" is not primarily an intellectual skeptic but a morally rebellious person who lives as if God is irrelevant, embodying *practical atheism* despite knowing enough of God's revelation to be accountable. King David uses prophetic language to describe God's certain future judgment on the wicked. He's not predicting one specific event but announcing a principle: *God will scatter His enemies in shame*. The prophet Jeremiah later uses the same language because his generation experienced that very judgment. In that sense, Jeremiah's day is one real fulfillment of the pattern Psalm 53 promises. **The psalm ends with two guarantees—God will judge, and God will save.** David speaks of these future realities with such certainty that he uses the language of the past. In Hebrew, this is the 'prophetic perfect,' a way of describing the future as if it is already accomplished (compare CSB vs. NASB), because God's promise makes it utterly sure.

NT/CHRIST CONNECTION: Psalm 53 provides the New Testament theological basis for the Apostle Paul's sweeping indictment of humanity in Romans 3, where he quotes its central lines to prove that all people—*Jew and Gentile alike*—are guilty before God and unable to produce righteousness on their own. The psalm ends with a longing for "salvation from Zion," pointing forward to the coming of Christ, the true Deliverer who brings the righteousness that humanity lacks and fulfills the hope that no earthly deliverance ever could.