

PSALM 53

MAN'S GREAT DISEASE

The evil nature of man is here brought before our view a second time, in almost the same inspired words as Psalm 14. This shows us that not all repetitions are the “vain repetitions” that our Savior warns us of in His Sermon on the Mount. Alas! We are so slow to learn, and so we often need to be taught like children – line upon line. After a long life, David found that human beings were no better than they had been in his youth. Holy Writ never repeats itself needlessly, and so there is good cause for the second copy of this Psalm; let us read it with more profound attention than before! If our age has advanced from 14 to 53, we shall find the doctrine of this Psalm even more evident than we may have perceived in the days of our youth.

The main teaching of this composition is intended to convince us of our sins. Through the pen of the Psalmist, the Lord here shows us how bad we are by nature; and David proves this by his own certain knowledge. He speaks terror to persecutors, who are the worst of sinners; and he speaks encouragement to God's persecuted people. And just how does it come about that people are so bad? Because there is no fear of God before their eyes. Their bad practices flow from their bad principles. And even if they profess with their mouths that they know God, yet in their works and their thoughts, they deny Him. See the folly of sin! In the eyes of Jehovah, the person who harbors such corrupt thoughts is a fool – no matter how many persons may voice their opinions in confirmation of their assertion that he is right. And see also the fruit of sin, and the terrible condition that it brings people to, when their hearts are hardened through its deceitfulness. But do not fail to behold a picture in this Psalm of the faith of the saints, and of their hope concerning the cure of this great evil! The Psalmist spoke, in verse 6, of the coming of a great salvation from a great Savior – namely, a salvation from sin. The Lord Jesus saves His Church from her spiritual enemies of sin, the world, death, and the devil. He saves all believers from their own individual sins, so that they may not be led captive by them – and this will be an everlasting joy to them! It was from this glorious work that the Redeemer's name of JESUS came from, for He saves His people from their sins! (Matt. 1:21)

O Lord, we pray that the repeated study of this portion of Scripture, which gives us a deep sense of our guilt and ruin, may help us – under Your grace – to value even more that blessed and only recovery which is found for us in our Lord Jesus! Amen.

Overview of the Psalm, adapted from Charles Spurgeon:

The word Mahalath in the title of this composition appears to mean “disease”; and truly, this Psalm is the Song of Man's Disease – the mortal, hereditary taint of sin. The title also tells us that this is “a Psalm of David.” It is not merely a copy of 14th Psalm, emended and revised by a foreign hand; it is another edition by the same author – emphasized in certain parts, and rewritten for another purpose.

