

# PSALM 53

God speaks once, yea, twice, and it were well if man would even then perceive it; God, in this psalm, speaks twice, for this is the same almost verbatim with the fourteenth psalm. The scope of it is to convince us of our sins, to set us a blushing and trembling because of them; and this is what we are with so much difficulty brought to that there is need of line upon line to this purport. The word, as a convincing word, is compared to a hammer, the strokes whereof must be frequently repeated. God, by the psalmist here,

- I.** Shows us how bad we are (v. 1).
- II.** Proves it upon us by his own certain knowledge (v. 2, 3).
- III.** He speaks terror to persecutors, the worst of sinners (v. 4, 5).
- IV.** He speaks encouragement to God's persecuted people (v. 6). Some little variation there is between Psalm 14 and this, but none considerable, only between v. 5, 6, there, and v. 5 here; some expressions there used are here left out, concerning the shame which the wicked put upon God's people, and instead of that, is here foretold the shame which God would put upon the wicked, which alteration, with some others, he made by divine direction when he delivered it the second time to the chief musician. In singing it we ought to lament the corruption of the human nature, and the wretched degeneracy of the world we live in, yet rejoicing in hope of the great salvation.

## ~~450~~ PSALM 53:1-6

### HUMAN DEPRAVITY

*To the chief musician upon Mahalath, Maschil. A psalm of David.*

This psalm was opened before, and therefore we shall here only observe, in short, some things concerning sin, in order to the increasing of our sorrow for it and hatred of it.

**1.** The fact of sin. Is that proved? Can the charge be made out? Yes, God is a witness to it, an unexceptionable witness: from the place of his holiness he looks on the children of men, and sees how little good there is among them, v. 2. All the sinfulness of their hearts and lives in naked and open before him.

**2.** The fault of sin. Is there any harm in it? Yes, it is iniquity (v. 1, 4); it is an unrighteous thing; it is that which there is no good in (v. 1, 3); it is an evil thing; it is the worst of evils; it is that which makes this world such an evil world as it is; it is going back from God, v. 3. **3.** The fountain of sin. How comes it that men are so bad? Surely it is because *there is no fear of God before their eyes: they say in their hearts, "There is no God at all to call us to an account, none that we need to stand in awe of."* Men's bad practices flow from their bad principles; if they profess to know God, yet in works, because in thoughts, they deny him.

**4.** The folly of sin. He is a fool (in the account of God, whose judgment we are sure is right) that harbours such corrupt thoughts. Atheists, whether in opinion or practice, are the greatest fools in the world. Those that do not seek God do not understand; they are like brute-beasts that have no understanding; for man is distinguished from the brutes, not so much by the powers of reason as by a capacity for religion. *The workers of iniquity, whatever they pretend to, have no knowledge;* those may truly be said to know nothing that do not know God, v. 4.

**5.** The filthiness of sin. Sinners are corrupt (v. 1); their nature is vitiated and spoiled, and the more noble the nature is the more vile it is when it is depraved, as that of the angels. *Corruptio optimi est pessima — The best things, when corrupted, become the worst.* Their iniquity is abominable; it is odious to the holy God, and it renders them so; whereas otherwise he *hates nothing that he has made.* It makes men filthy, altogether filthy. Wilful sinners are offensive in the nostrils of the God of heaven and of the holy angels. What decency soever proud sinners pretend to, it is certain that wickedness is the greatest defilement in the world.

**6.** The fruit of sin. See to what a degree of barbarity it brings men at last; when men's hearts are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin see their cruelty to their brethren, that are bone of their bone — because they will not *run with them to the same excess of riot, they eat them up as they eat bread;* as if they had not only become beasts, but beasts of prey. And see

their contempt of God at the same time. *They have not called upon him, but scorn to be beholden to him.*

**7.** The fear and shame that attend sin (v. 5): *There were those in great fear who had made God their enemy; their own guilty consciences frightened them, and filled them with horror, though otherwise there was no apparent cause of fear. The wicked flees when none pursues.* See the ground of this fear; it is because God has formerly *scattered the bones of those that encamped against his people, not only broken their power and dispersed their forces, but slain them, and reduced their bodies to dry bones, like those scattered at the grave's mouth,* <sup><B17></sup>Psalm 141:7. Such will be the fate of those that lay siege to the *camp of the saints and the beloved city,* <sup><A19></sup>Revelation 20:9. The apprehensions of this cannot but put those into frights that eat up God's people. This enables the virgin, the daughter of Zion, to put them to shame, and expose them, *because God has despised them, to laugh at them, because he that sits in heaven laughs at them.* We need not look upon those enemies with fear whom God looks upon with contempt. If he despises them, we may.

**8.** The faith of the saints, and their hope and power touching the cure of this great evil, v. 6. There will come a Saviour, a great salvation, a salvation from sin. Oh that it might be hastened! for it will bring in glorious and joyful times. There were those in the Old-Testament times that looked and hoped, that prayed and waited, for this redemption.

**(1.)** God will, in due time, save his church from the sinful malice of its enemies, which will bring joy to Jacob and Israel, that have long been in a mournful melancholy state. Such salvations were often wrought, and all typical of the everlasting triumphs of the glorious church.

**(2.)** He will save all believers from their own iniquities, that they may not be led captive by them, which will be everlasting matter of joy to them. From this work the Redeemer had his name — *Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins,* <sup><A12></sup>Matthew 1:21.