

Psalm 53:-

"Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom". Proverbs 9, verse 10.

Verse 1:- At the beginning of the Psalm the author despairs at the state of humanity in its denial of the existence of God. Everything that follows stems from this denial. Among these 'practical atheists' *"there is none that does good"*

Verses 2 – 3:-

"the Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." (1 Samuel chapter 16, verse 7). At present there appears to be a negative attitude in so many areas. Individuals who have been given places of authority and influence so often are found to have abused the trust placed in them and 'feathered their own nest'!

The ancient dictum "Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?" from *Juvenal's Satires* -1st - 2nd century—"Who will guard the guards themselves?"—remains a piercing warning about the dangers of unchecked authority. Originally a wry comment on the corruptibility of those appointed to enforce virtue, it has become a central question in political philosophy and policing: "who ensures that the enforcers of law do what is right?". The problem lies not in just sticking to the letter of the law (although that would be a start!), but in knowing instinctively right from wrong. 'No fear of God' equals no knowledge of basic 'commandments' and no background in how to treat and deal with others.

Verses 4 - 5:-

Have traditionally been applied to the Temple priesthood – see Ezekiel chapter 34. Unfortunately it can apply to ministers of any denomination who fail to teach and preach the Word of God. Maybe they depend on gimmicks and appear to be active but basic faith, preaching and prayer ministry is lacking. These people will ultimately have to answer to God. If they have held any kind of authority then they will come under greater condemnation see Epistle of James chapter 3, verse 1.

Verse 6:-

The Psalm closes again with a prayer for deliverance! In a troubled world, where the news is of '*wars and rumours of wars . . . famines and earthquakes in various places*', the word of command from our Lord Jesus Christ is 'Watch!'. See Matthew chapter 24, verses 7 and 42.

Homework for this week! Read carefully and prayerfully the 1st Epistle of Peter.

1) Lord, her watch Thy Church is keeping:
When shall earth Thy rule obey?
When shall end the night of weeping?
When shall break the promised day?
See the whitening harvest languish,
Waiting still the labourers' toil;
Was it vain, Thy Son's deep anguish?
Shall the strong retain the spoil?

2) Tidings, sent to every creature,
Millions yet have never heard:
Can they hear without a preacher?
Lord almighty, give the word!
Give the word! in every nation
Let the Gospel trumpet sound,
Witnessing a world's salvation,
To the earth's remotest bound.

3) Then the end! Thy Church completed,
All Thy chosen gathered in,
With their King in glory seated,
Satan bound, and banished sing
Gone for ever parting, weeping,
Hunger, sorrow, death, and pain;
Lo! her watch Thy Church is keeping;
Come, Lord Jesus, come to reign!

Henry Downton, 1866