THE POISON AND ITS ANTIDOTE
PSALM 25

MAIN IDEA
No matter how deeply we have been poisoned by sin; God has the antidote.

I. EVERYONE HAS BEEN POISONED (VS 1-7)
\textit{Not only have we been born with genetic poison in our system; we often willfully ingest more poison.}

A. TRUST IS THE ANTIDOTE FOR SHAME (1-3)
B. STAYING ON THE PATH KEEPS US FROM CONTACT WITH MORE POISON (4-5)
C. GOD’S LOVE IS THE ANTIDOTE FOR OUR SIN (6-7)

II. EVERYONE HAS ACCESS TO THE CURE (VS 8-15)
\textit{GOD HAS PROMISED TO ADMINISTER THE CURE TO ANYONE HUMBLE ENOUGH TO RECEIVE IT.}

A. WHY IS HUMILITY NECESSARY (8-10)
B. WHY IS GRACE NECESSARY (11)
C. WHY IS TRUST NECESSARY (12-15)

III. EVERYONE CAN RECEIVE THE SAME UNIVERSAL ANTIDOTE (VS 16-22)
\textit{SATAN POISONS US WITH SIN, DEATH, FEAR, AND DESTRUCTION; GOD COUNTERS WITH LOVE, FORGIVENESS, JOY, PEACE, AND CONTENTMENT.}

A. LONELINESS AND ISOLATION (16)
B. DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY (17)
C. MISERY AND TROUBLE (18-19)
D. SHAME AND HOPELESSNESS (20-21)
E. REDEMPTION AND SALVATION (22)
The Poison and Its Antidote

Psalm 25

The Psalms are extremely earthy. By that I mean they have to do with the nitty-gritty mess of everyday life. They don’t romanticize or sugar-coat the situations we are faced with. The poets describe life as it actually is. I think that as we study through the Bible, it’s important to continually point out false narratives and then replace them with true narratives. We have seen many times so far through our study of the Psalms that suffering is part of the human experience. We have also noted that for some reason, oftentimes evil people prosper while righteous people suffer. We have also said that the causes for suffering are not always clear; sometimes we may never know the cause until we arrive in heaven. Let me go over some of the reasons we suffer. The most common cause of suffering is our own bone-headed choices and decisions. Sometimes we suffer because of our own stupidity. Secondly we suffer because of the sinful thoughts, attitudes, words, and behaviors of others. Thirdly we suffer simply because we are sinful human beings living with other sinful human beings, in a lost and fallen world. In other words, we will have to suffer the effects of the fall until that day Jesus returns and recreates all of nature. Until then, we will all have to face illness, loss, and death.

I don’t often talk about the type of suffering I will be talking about this morning because I think there is a great deal of misunderstanding that surrounds it. Sometimes we suffer directly because of the sin in our life and the ground we have given to Satan. Let me correct the false narratives up front. Not all suffering and illness is caused by sin; but some is. All suffering of this kind is not necessarily healed immediately by confession, repentance, and some preacher or healer laying hands on you and proclaiming you healed. A true narrative would be quickly to do some self-examination when we find ourselves suffering. Even though the suffering may not be a direct cause of sin in our lives; it’s always a good idea to examine ourselves under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. If you’re like me, there is always some sin to confess.

Having said all that, I think this morning’s psalm has to do with suffering that comes as a direct result of our sin and giving Satan a foothold in our lives to work. I don’t want to make this sound so mysterious. We live in the world with demons all around. Neil Anderson demystifies it by equating demons with germs. We don’t let fear of germs paralyze us or prevent us from living life. We merely take the proper precautions to make sure they don’t infect us. His point is that even though there are demons all around looking to infect us; we need to merely take the proper precautions and live our lives.

Charles Kraft equates the demons with rats. He uses the analogy of rats in an alley. If you merely try to get rid of the rats; the battle will be unending. However, if you clean up the garbage out of the alley; the rats will disappear. His point is that even though demons are all around; if we keep the garbage they are attracted to out of our lives; they won’t bother us.

In dealing with today’s passage, I would like to start off with a quote from C. S. Lewis concerning our topic today:

“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest
in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or magician with the same delight.”

What I’m saying is that there will be times in our lives when we will face suffering because we have sinned and then given Satan a foothold into our lives. Here at Devon Church, we have had to help several people overcome this type of suffering and torment. We don’t use any magical formulas. We take seriously the Apostle Paul’s method when he says:

3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 / TNIV

The procedure is relatively simple though it can take a long period of time to be successful. We help one another identify the sin that we have held on to and provided an opening for Satan to set up a stronghold. We confess the sin, repent of the sin, and claim that ground once more for Christ. We rebuke the demons and command them to leave. Staying free from demonic strongholds has to do with developing right thinking and right behavior to go along with the right thinking. Right thinking matched together with right behavior leads to peaceful and joyful feelings.

I have chosen to equate sin and demonic strongholds with poison. Jesus obviously is the antidote. The main idea of this morning’s psalm is this. NO MATTER HOW DEEPLY WE HAVE BEEN POISONED BY SIN; GOD HAS THE ANTIDOTE.

The other day, I happened to be in whole foods shopping for cheese and mushrooms. Another customer approached me and said, “You know, my wife died from eating mushrooms.”

Trying to console him I said, “That’s terrible.”

He said, “Thanks, my second and third wives also died from eating mushrooms.”

“That’s awful. That’s tragic.” At this time, I’m having second thoughts about buying the mushrooms.

He continued, “My last wife died of a broken neck.”

“A broken neck?!” I said.

“Yeah,” continued the guy, “she wouldn’t eat the mushrooms.”

I. EVERYONE HAS BEEN POISONED (VS 1-7)

Satan’s goal is to poison us; Jesus’ goal is to heal us. The simple fact that everyone has been poisoned is illustrated in verses 1-7. NOT ONLY HAVE WE BEEN BORN WITH GENETIC POISON IN OUR SYSTEM; WE OFTEN WILLFULLY INGEST MORE POISON. Before we get into the content of the psalm, let me just quickly go through some of its style. First of all, it is an acrostic poem. That means that each verse starts with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet; starting with aleph in
verse 1 and ending with tau in verse 21. That brings us to verse 22. Many scholars feel that verse 22 was added on at a later date; perhaps when the Hebrews returned from their Babylonian Captivity. They felt this personal poem could apply to the struggles of Israel throughout the ages.

Next, the subtitle says this is a psalm of David. As you read through the psalm you will notice that in verses 1-7, in verse 11, and in verses 16-22, David addresses God directly in the second person. In verses 8-10 and 12-15, David does not talk directly to God. He talks about God using the third person. These are tools we use to break down the passage into parts.

In verses 1-3 David names trust as the antidote for shame. If you quickly look through these 3 verses, you'll see that hope and trust stand out. Although this is translated correctly, we may miss some of the nuances in the Hebrew text. For example, verse 1 names God as YAHWEH. By now you know that is God's personal Name that He gave to the Hebrews. By giving them His personal Name; God indicated that He was present with them and in a special relationship with them. Verse 2 in the Hebrew starts out with the generic word for God Elohim. The TNIV simply combined them together in verse 1.

The second point is a little more important. Verse 1 in the Hebrew says, “To You YAHWEH I lift up my life-force.” We have come across this word several times in the psalm. I'll explain it one more time. The word in Hebrew is nephesh. It is often translated soul but it is much more powerful than that. It means the entire inner life-force; our soul, our mind, our emotions, that force that gives our bodies life. It’s a powerful word. When God breathed into us the breath of life; we became living nephesh. Here is the kind of trust David is talking about. David has placed his entire being into the hands of the One True and Living God; YAHWEH.

Let me put this in Christian language for us. When we come to Jesus in faith; we are putting our entire being into His hands; so that He can save us and redeem us from all our sin. Shame and fear are not for Christians. Jesus has no desire to publicly humiliate us or punish us. We may feel guilt but guilt is meant to alert us that we have done something wrong. Guilt is a gift given to us by the conviction of the Holy Spirit that we need to get something right. We take care of that through confession and repentance. Shame is reserved for those who ultimately reject God. Satan tries to make us feel shame. Since shame is not for believers; it’s a poison that is alien to our system. We need to apply the truth to that and rebuke it. Trusting in the finished work and love of Jesus on our behalf is the remedy for shame. Satan will try to get us to receive and own shame. When the Pharisees were trying to discredit Jesus, they brought out a woman they caught in adultery and tried to shame her publicly. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees by pointing out their hypocrisy and the fact they were indeed working for Satan and not God. Jesus gently and lovingly restored and redeemed the woman. Beware of religious people trying to get you to own shame. Shame is for those reserved for God’s judgment and wrath.

Verses 4-5 remind us of the common sense principle that staying on the path keeps us from contact with more poison. My son and I are pretty much purists when it comes to playing golf. We count every stroke, we putt every putt, and take every penalty. We try to play by the rules. However, there is a place where I personally draw the line. If my son hits a ball into a wooded and weedy area, he will go tramping through the area to find his ball and play it. I will not. I have had poison ivy before and it is not pleasant. If I hit my ball into one of those areas, I’ll let it go, assess myself a penalty stroke, and play on. I’m not about to go tramping through that wooded area to
look for a ball. That’s basically what the songwriter is saying. He says he is committed to staying on the path God has marked off for him. Look the words used in these two verses in regards to the path. He uses way, path, truth, and salvation. His request of God is that God show him, teach him, save him, and guide him. God knows where the spiritual poison ivy is. Let me make this as powerful as the poet did. Verse 4 literally reads, “Your ways, YAHWEH, make known to me. We have also talked a lot about that word to know; yada. It means to be able to distinguish, to perceive, to discriminate, and to be skillful. It also means to have sex. This is an intimate knowledge of God the poet is asking for. If we spend our time getting to know God; we will intuitively be able to detect the poison and know the way around it.

Verses 6-7 remind us that God’s love is the antidote for our sin. In Psalm 51 David stated that we are born into this world already poisoned by sin. One day in a deliverance session, one of the demons told me that he entered the person at birth. I was confused so the next day I called my mentor and talked to him about it. He said that oftentimes what the demons mean by birth is actually conception. The point is that from the time of conception; we are poisoned by sin. We come into this world already poisoned. In theology we call this original sin. This is another false narrative we have to correct. We are not born into this world innocent and good. We are born into this world guilty of sin with a natural bent to do evil.

The key word for the poet in these verses is remember. In looking at him, He wants God to look at him through God’s lenses of great mercy and love. Here is another word that continues to permeate the Psalms; Ḥesed. We have been translating it loving-kindness. God’s great mercy and loving-kindness are part of His nature. They are part of Who He is. If God were simply to look at us through the lens of justice; we would be doomed. Truly shame and humiliation would be what awaited us; but thanks be to God for the gift of His Son Jesus Who died for our sins. If we wanted to define this word Ḥesed, we just need to look at the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. So the poet asks God to remember to look at him through the lens of His great mercy and loving-kindness.

He then asks God not to remember his sin. In these two verses, the poet uses two words for sin. One simply means to miss the mark, the other means rebellion. In other words, there will be many times that we sin unintentionally. We miss the mark. There are other times that we sin knowing that we are sinning. This is the type of sin that most often opens the door for Satan to come in. These are the idols of this world. The most common door we open for the devil to come in, in our society, is sexual immorality. Let me primarily address those in high school, college, and young adults; but it can also apply to those of us who are older and caught in adultery, pornography, or other sexual sins. Just so there is no mistake, let me be a little graphic.

If you are watching on television, a movie, a computer, or any other form a media people engaged in sex or provocatively naked; that is willful sin. Sexual intercourse with anyone you are not married to is sin. If you have any part of your body; your hands, your mouth, or any other part on another person’s private parts, then you are sinning. If anyone has any part of their body on your private parts; you are sinning. If you are married and having sex with anyone else but your spouse you are sinning. All the other above acts with anyone else but your spouse is sin. Are we perfectly clear about sexual sin? It is willful and it opens the door for demons to come in and set up demonic strongholds.
I don’t only want to single out sexual sin. Greed, chasing after power, money and fame are also worshiping idols that open the door for demonic strongholds.

People who have lied, gossiped, participated in destroying churches, have opened the door for demonic strongholds. People who have treated family, friends, or strangers unfairly have opened the door. Whenever we become enamored with the things of this world and start to worship them; we open the door for demons. David owns up to all of it. His personal sin brought about a great deal of suffering to himself, to his family, and to the entire nation of Israel. Keep this in mind. Satan has a few objectives for Christians; He is out to steal, to kill, and to destroy us.

God on the other hand is good, beautiful, fair, joyful, loving, and dependable. Once we find ourselves sinning we must stop, confess, and repent. The idea is that we have to get back on the path again. Sometimes we will be able to get free simply by confessing and repenting. If we have given a lot of ground to Satan, we may have to help getting free. We have people in our church who have a great deal of experience in praying out demonic strongholds. As an aside to this sermon, sometimes Satan can gain a stronghold through no fault of our own. Children who have been sexually, physically, or emotionally abused often end up with demonic strongholds. Women who have been raped are targets for Satan. People with prolonged illness are susceptible. Again, these people usually need help with deliverance prayers. But God is good here as well. He has tons of love and mercy to pour out. It’s just a fact of being born into this world. NOT ONLY HAVE WE BEEN BORN WITH GENETIC POISON IN OUR SYSTEM; WE OFTEN WILLFULLY INGEST MORE POISON.

II. EVERYONE HAS ACCESS TO THE CURE (VS 8-15)

So we are left with the fact that we have all been poisoned and for some crazy reason we continue to poison ourselves. There is no doubt that once we have been poisoned and realize it, we want the antidote. Unlike the world where only the rich and privileged have immediate access to the antidote; verses 8-15 state that everyone has immediate access to the cure. GOD HAS PROMISED TO ADMINISTER THE CURE TO ANYONE HUMBLE ENOUGH TO RECEIVE IT. That sounds strange; doesn’t it? It’s available to anyone humble enough to receive it. Verses 8-10 answer the question, “Why is humility necessary? The poet makes sure we understand that God is both willing and able to cure us.

First of all, David makes sure that we understand the God of the Bible is good, upright, loving, and faithful. God’s primary movement towards us is love. I want to point out this nice little playful thought of the psalmist.

In verse 8 he describes God as upright. The word for upright means straight. The word he uses for sinner means to miss the target. We often shoot and miss but God is a straight shooter. In other words, God doesn’t lie to us or cheat us. He genuinely loves us. God knows the way to the cure. Look at the words David uses; God instructs us, guides us, and teaches us. God desires to lead us like the Good Shepherd described in Psalm 23.

Verse 9 says that God is the Good Shepherd to the humble. Why do we need to be humble? We have to be humble enough to accept the diagnosis. The Prophet Isaiah said this:
We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53:6 / TNIV

First of all we need to be humble enough to confess that we are dumb as sheep. We don’t like to admit that. We’d like to fancy ourselves as smart and wise. The truth is that if we didn’t have a Good shepherd to lead us by still, clean waters; we’d end up drinking from poisoned water and killing ourselves. We are dumb and need a shepherd to lead us.

Secondly, we are evil. People in our culture want to think of ourselves as good and noble people. We are not. We were conceived in sin, we have a natural bent towards evil, we continue to sin, and we are in desperate need of redemption and salvation. Listen to how the Apostle Paul describes you and me:

As it is written: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one; 11 there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. 12 All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.’ 13 ‘Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.’ ‘The poison of vipers is on their lips.’ 14 ‘Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.’ 15 ‘Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 ruin and misery mark their ways, 17 and the way of peace they do not know.’ 18 ‘There is no fear of God before their eyes;’ ... 20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin. ... 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 3:10-23 / TNIV

Are you willing to be described as dumb and evil? If not, there is no way to receive the cure because you are not willing to even acknowledge that you have been poisoned. The antidote is administered like this. We come to God and confess that we are as dumb as sheep and rotten to our core. We then ask Jesus to forgive us of all our sins, invite Him into our hearts, and humbly submit to Him as our Lord and Savior. At that point He takes on the role of Good Shepherd for us. He will lead us beside the still waters and into lush, green, and safe pastures. It takes humility to come to God in faith. That’s why so many people reject God; because we would like to think of ourselves as good, noble, intelligent, and clever.

Verse 11 seems to be the key to this whole psalm. It answers the question, “Why is grace necessary?” We need forgiveness for our sins. The word used for sin here is pretty strong. It means depravity, perversity, and guilt. Our sin is great and there is nothing we can do to make up for it. We can’t be good enough. We can’t keep enough religious rules. We can’t do enough good works.

It is only for the purpose of God’s character and nature that He provides a way for us to be reconciled with Him. Look, no matter how stupid and how evil we are; we are still created out of God’s love, in His image, for the purpose of being in a love relationship with Him. No matter how badly we have messed that up; God is still reaching out to us in grace and love.

Verses 12-15 answer the question, “Why is trust necessary?” Trust in God means that we refuse to depend on any other gods, including ourselves, to save us or deliver us. Even though God is loving; He refuses to share our love with false gods. We talked about some of those earlier. God wants us
to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. There is that concept of our life-force again. God wants us to love Him passionately with our nephesh. Our love for God can spill over onto our descendants. We parents need to take this concept seriously. In the Ten Commandments, through Moses God said:

4 You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea.  
5 You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me.  
6 But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands.

Exodus 20:4-6 / NLT

By loving God faithfully; we can bless our children, our grandchildren, and our great-grandchildren for a thousand generations. There are great rewards for faithfully following God; first and foremost the forgiveness for our sins. GOD HAS PROMISED TO ADMINISTER THE CURE TO ANYONE HUMBLE ENOUGH TO RECEIVE IT.

III. EVERYONE CAN RECEIVE THE SAME UNIVERSE ANTIDOTE (VS 16-22)

In verses 16-22, we are reminded that everyone can receive the same universal antidote. SATAN POISONS US WITH SIN, DEATH, FEAR, AND DESTRUCTION; GOD COUNTERS WITH LOVE, FORGIVENESS, JOY, PEACE, AND CONTENTMENT. In portraying Himself as the Good Shepherd and in contrasting Himself with Satan, Jesus said this:

10 The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

John 10:10 / NLT

Satan tries to demonize us and take advantage of us when we are down and when we are weak. Here are some of the ways he works.

In verse 16 one of his favorite ways to attack us is through loneliness and isolation. When we find ourselves withdrawing from other believers, we need to be careful. Satan wants us to believe that if people really knew who we were they wouldn’t like us. When he gets us alone, he can fill our heads with all sorts of lies. The antidote is the promises of Jesus. First of all, we are never alone. Jesus has promised to never leave us nor forsake us. God is constantly with us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. No matter what we have done; He still loves us and wants to forgive us. We need to stay connected to God and His people. God created the church as a place where we can be safe, receive help, and feel God’s love, grace, and mercy. The body of Christ is where we can be healed. Stay connected.

Verse 17 reminds us that depression and anxiety can be a fertile playground for Satan. When we start to feel sorry for ourselves; get self-absorbed, self-centered, and self-focused; our thinking gets distorted. Again, we need to have good Christian friends help us replace our false narratives with truth. It is only God Who can pluck us out of these depressions. However, when we don’t feel
like praying, we need to stay connected to those who love us and can pray for us. We need to help one another correct our thinking.

Verses 18-19 remind us that when we face misery and trouble, we can become so overwhelmed that we can unintentionally open the door for Satan to torment us. He will try to get us to believe that God doesn't care about us and doesn't love us. He wants us to believe that God has abandoned us. Again, these are lies we need others to help us fight off. The truth is we may have to suffer; but we never need to suffer alone. Sometimes we think we can go it alone because we don't want to bother anyone. The truth is that we are not created like that. God created us in community; we stand together.

Verses 20-21 describe some of Satan’s favorite tools; shame and hopelessness. Remember this shame is not for God’s children. If you are a believer, then shame is not for you. Satan would like you to start dwelling on your present and past sins. He wants you to be shamed and he wants you to think that gaining God’s favor is hopeless. But nothing is further from the truth. When Jesus died on the cross and we humbly submitted to Him as our Lord and Savior; all the sins we have ever committed in the past, all the sins we are presently committing, and all the sins we will ever commit in the future were nailed to the cross with Jesus and we no longer need to be shamed. When the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, we will feel guilty. That guilt is meant to lead us to confession and repentance.

And that brings us to the redemption and salvation described in verse 22. Even though it was probably added on later than the original composition, it stands as an exclamation point at the end of this song. Jesus is the answer for sin. Jesus is the answer to all of our problems. We have been poisoned but it doesn’t have to be fatal. Jesus is the Good Shepherd Who is the antidote. SATAN POISONS US WITH SIN, DEATH, FEAR, AND DESTRUCTION; GOD COUNTERS WITH LOVE, FORGIVENESS, JOY, PEACE, AND CONTENTMENT.

Listen to the remedy for the sin that poisons us put forward by the Apostle John:

8 If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. 9 But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts.

1 John 1:8-10 / NLT

NO MATTER HOW DEEPLY WE HAVE BEEN POISONED BY SIN; GOD HAS THE ANTIDOTE.