

Oct 2nd 2011 :Well Worth Repeating: Romans 3:9-18 (Ps 14 & 53)

“Well Worth Repeating” may seem an unusual title for a sermon, and I guess it is, but it also relates to something that is very unusual in Scripture—Two different Psalms that are just about identical.

I must admit that this was something I only noticed for the first time a couple of weeks ago and it started me thinking about the possible reason God could have, of repeating Himself in such an obvious and exact way. Why would God the HS inspire the person who collated the Psalms to include one psalm early on in the book of Psalms, and then to add another 39 psalms later that, with the exception of a few words and a verse, is the same Psalm?

Now I believe that there is an answer to that question that arises out of the content of those Psalms. An answer that makes good sense, for these Psalms present a warning that every generation of mankind needs to hear and ponder. A warning that is **Well Worth Repeating.**

But before we look at those Psalms we need to lodge in our memories the numerical address that the Bible gives them. Lodge it there so that we won't forget these two Psalms that are just so close to being one, and that contain a message we must never forget. And those numbers are 14 and 53.

Now I don't know how you will remember those two numbers. Perhaps, like me, you will remember that the first one is like a fortnight—for a fortnight has 14 days and the first is Psalm 14. Then the next one comes 39 Psalms later, which is of course the number of books in the Old Testament. And then, as a final check I remember that both add up to 67—the number of man=6 followed by the perfect number 7.

But let's look at these 2 psalms side by side:

Psalm 14

¹ The fool says in his heart,
"There is no God."
They are corrupt, their deeds are vile;
there is no one who does good.

² The LORD looks down from heaven
on the sons of men
to see if there are any who
understand,
any who seek God.

³ All have turned aside,
they have together become corrupt;
there is no one who does good,
not even one.

⁴ Will evildoers never learn—
those who devour my people as men
eat bread
and who do not call on the LORD?

⁵ There they are, overwhelmed with
dread,
for God is present in the company of
the righteous.

⁶ **You** evildoers frustrate the plans of
the poor,
but the LORD is their refuge.

⁷ Oh, that salvation for Israel would
come out of Zion!

Psalm 53

¹ The fool says in his heart,
"There is no God."
They are corrupt, and their ways are
vile;
there is no one who does good.

² God looks down from heaven
on the sons of men
to see if there are any who
understand,
any who seek God.

³ Everyone has turned away,
they have together become corrupt;
there is no one who does good,
not even one.

⁴ Will the evildoers never learn—
those who devour my people as men
eat bread
and who do not call on God?

⁵ There they were, overwhelmed with
dread,
where there was nothing to dread.
God scattered the bones of those who
attacked **you**;
you put them to shame, for God
despised them.

⁶ Oh, that salvation for Israel would
come out of Zion!

Straight away the opening statement hits us. 'The fool says in his heart, "There is no God"'.

Because they feel this way they are in the sight of God without any redeeming features whatsoever. They are corrupt and their deeds are vile. They do not do that which is good in the sight of God for they have rejected His very existence. Because they do not believe in Him they do not realize that they are accountable to Him for their lives and must attain perfection to

be accepted by Him. They see themselves as self sufficient not realizing that one day they will discover that God does exist, and then it will be far too late.

Now we may be able to think of a handful of people who declare themselves as Atheists, and immediately apply these words to them. But the Scripture actually includes more than such when it says, "The fool says in his heart there is no God". Openly a person may seem to accept the existence of God and even claim that they believe in Him. They would never call themselves an Atheist. But deep inside—in their hearts—they don't believe that they have any responsibility to try to please, worship, or obey such a God. They are in no way fearful of God and feel that they can live their lives without reference to Him at all. Their inward response to God puts them in the same melting pot as the one who outwardly claims that God doesn't exist.

So then we ask the Psalmist, about the one who makes such a judgment, and we discover that it is God. Verse 2 tells us that it is the Lord who looks down from heaven—and the words actually say that He bends down to look intently into the hearts of people.

And it is here that we find that the problem is a lot worse than we first thought. For it is not only the fool who says in his heart that there is no God, who is out of line with the Lord. The disease of sin is an epidemic that has affected every human heart. V3 says:

***³ All have turned aside,
they have together become corrupt;
there is no one who does good,
not even one.***

This reminds me of a programme I watched concerning someone's home. They had called in an expert on termite infestation to check their home because they had seen the external signs of white ant damage. The report he brought back showed that the white ants had completely devastated all the timber in the house and the house would have to be totally destroyed and rebuilt.

We look at humanity and we see the outward signs of sin, but the Lord sees the complete devastation that sin has caused. This is what Paul takes from this Psalm and includes in Romans 3 to show that however good or religious we are in comparison to others, we are all 'white-anted' by our sin. When

God is the one looking down on us He sees every hidden part of our lives, and, in comparison to His perfect goodness, no one comes close to making the grade.

But there is hope. Despite what this psalm and psalm 53 says, and what Paul re-iterates there is a way to be righteous in God's sight. For even these 2 psalms refer to the righteous and to God's people. And the Psalm that follows, Psalm 15, talks about the way a person can dwell at peace with God.

And that hope comes because of God's Grace and Mercy. Because of God's love for us that wants no one to perish. For what no person could ever do for themselves God has done for us. He prepared the way in the Old Testament through the sacrifices that pointed to the final sacrifice on the cross of Calvary.

This is the glorious conclusion that Paul comes to in Romans 3. After painting such a gloomy picture of our future as sinners before a holy God he says in 3:21-24(CEV)

²¹Now we see how God does make us acceptable to him. The Law and the Prophets tell how we become acceptable, and it isn't by obeying the Law of Moses. ²²God treats everyone alike. He accepts people only because they have faith in Jesus Christ. ²³All of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. ²⁴But God treats us much better than we deserve, and because of Christ Jesus, he freely accepts us and sets us free from our sins.

Now perhaps you can see why these words found in Psalm 14 and Psalm 53 are Words Well Worth Repeating. They show us how God sees us so that we can turn to Him and find salvation. To do otherwise is to stay in a state of foolishness with no hope whatsoever.

They also remind us to be sure that we have accepted Jesus as the Way, the Truth and the Life and to pray earnestly for those who haven't. These words today may well be the words that you need not only to hear but to act on in your own heart. God has been speaking to you. Has been drawing you to Himself but so far you has yet to accept Him as Saviour and Lord. Today is your opportunity to do so. Just come to the front at the end of the service

when we invite others with prayer needs to come forward, and we will pray with you.

For as 2 Corinthians 6:2 says(CEV)

2 Corinthians 6:2

²In the Scriptures God says,

"When the time came,

I listened to you,

and when you needed help,

I came to save you."

That time has come. This is the day for you to be saved.