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A World of Sinners and the God of Salvation; Psalm 53
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Introduction – As you followed along as I read Psalm 53, if you thought to yourself, “I think I’ve read this somewhere else other than Psalm 53,” you are correct. Psalm 14 and Psalm 53 are almost identical, with only a few differences in a couple of verses.

I take this to mean that the subject matter before us is one in which God takes very serious and for which He knows we take too lightly. To my mind, that is the only rationale I see for why we have two songs that call us to sing almost identical lyrics. Repetition. Biblical repetition serves great purposes. Biblical repetition does not occur to bore us but to awaken us. Biblical repetition does not occur to question our intellectual understanding but rather to challenge our spiritual acuity. Biblical repetition occurs to emphasize and highlight key, central doctrine. It is the way in which God writes in bold font. Biblical repetition occurs to sink doctrinal truth deep down inside so that we don’t forget it and that we operate and live according to it.

The doctrine being emphasized by the repetition of Psalm 14 here in Psalm 53 is the depravity of the human heart in every single human being. That’s the starting point, that’s the foundation for everything the Bible has to say about God, salvation, Christ, grace, forgiveness, atonement, everlasting life – everything. If we don’t rightly understand our sinful condition, we will never rightly grasp all that God is for us in Christ! Simply put, we don’t realize how desperately we need a Savior until we realize how desperately sinful we truly are before God.

Having established that then we understand why you can’t sing this doctrine too often. You can’t overplay this tune.

- I. The Universal Human Condition (vv1-3)
 - a. V1 addresses how far the human heart can sink in its denial of God. The intellectual atheist desires so strongly to be freed from the all-seeing eye of an all-knowing God that he will force himself to believe, against all contrary, rational, logical evidence that no God exists.

- i. That's why the Bible calls him a fool. The ultimate of foolishness is to deny what is impossible to deny. To attribute to nature and chance what can only be explained by reference to a higher power. The push and agenda to do away with God is a foolish attempt to wipe away any accountability to deity or judgment. It is the supreme hope of the depraved heart to exist without having to give account to a Creator. The dead, sinful heart dreams a life and world where there is nothing else to do but eat, drink, be merry, die, and disappear into nothing.
 - ii. The problem, however, is when the sinful heart convinces itself that God does not exist, he then has permission to live as he pleases with no cosmic, afterlife consequences – so that's exactly what he does. – v1b.
 - iii. So v1 is addressing just how far the human heart can fall in its depravity – into an intellectual atheism that really is an atheism of the heart, not so much of the mind.
- b. Vv2-3 widens the scope to show that every human heart denies God to a certain degree. We might not become intellectual atheists, but apart from salvation, we all live as practical atheists. We might not all declare that God does not exist, but we live as if God does not exist.
- c. The human condition is a condition of depravity. We are all fallen. We are all corrupt. We have no spiritual understanding. We do not pursue good – only what we think is good for us. We are not seeking the God of the Bible, we only seek a god after our own likeness.
 - i. When we speak of standing before the Lord at the day of judgment to give account for our rejection of God, the question is often raised, "Well what about the innocent man in Africa or the innocent tribe in the islands?" vv2-3 declare that God has already looked upon every human heart, and there are no innocent men or women to be found anywhere.
- d. We are born separated from God, with no inclination to seek or to know the true God, and given the opportunity, we will even deny that God exists – all of us by our actions, some of us even by argumentation.
- e. If we are left to our own understanding, our own heart, our own devices, we will never draw closer to God, only farther away. That's the universal human condition.

- II. God's Existence Does Not Require Man's Approval (vv4-5)
- a. Just because we may deny God with all our fury and passion, just because we may live out our lives as if He doesn't see every step we make and every breath we take – just because we deny God, doesn't change the reality that He is!
 - b. Vv4-5 speak to the insanity of denying God. How is it that we either completely deny His existence or seek to define Him according to our definition when He is constantly showing and proving Himself to be who He is? Have we no knowledge? Can we not see and understand what is happening right in front of us?
 - i. III. I remember having a conversation with a man one time who claimed to be an atheist. His main defense was that Christianity had a history of being brutal. I spoke with him about sin and that all people, even believers, were sinners. One day I told him that I was praying for him. He responded by getting upset and said, "No don't pray for me. Every time someone prays for me, something happens." I said, "Well that should tell you something."
 - ii. Have we no knowledge?
 - c. One of the great God-deniers of our day was Christopher Hitchens. He spent his life writing and debating and arguing against the existence of God. He claimed to be a full-fledged atheist. So did his brother, Peter, until Peter was converted. Peter wrote a book titled, "The Rage Against God," basically arguing how ironic it is for atheist to spend so much energy to disprove what they claim does not exist. If God didn't really exist, it wouldn't take much to prove it. But it becomes very difficult to kick against the pricks, as Jesus told Saul on the road to Damascus. It is an impossible venture to wipe away from the earth the very One who created it. The heavens declare the glory of God!
 - d. That rage against God often turns to rage against His people, for we are a constant reminder that God does exist and that He still transforms people into the likeness of His Son.
 - e. And one of the greatest demonstrations to God-deniers that God does exist is that He comes to the aid of His people in many and various ways.

- i. The reports on the mission field are astounding. You know the story of Romanian Richard Wurmbrand, founder of Voice of the Martyrs. Persecuted, imprisoned, and tortured for 14 years because of his faith in Christ. Not only could his persecutors not break him, but they couldn't fathom how he could actually love and pray for them as they tortured him. You see, the only answer for that kind of faith is that it is real!
 - f. God-deniers show themselves foolish and without knowledge as we continue to deny the very One we keep bumping into!
- III. God's Salvation is Just as Certain as Man's Sin (v6)
 - a. But here's the more astounding truth. Even though every human heart is God-denying, God not only still shows Himself to exist, He reveals Himself in saving the very ones who deny He even exists!
 - b. The only thing more sure than the human condition of depravity is God's purpose to save! "When God restores"
 - c. That's why we can pray with confidence – "Oh, that salvation will come" because God still saves!
 - d. Don't overlook this truth too quickly – compare vv2-3 with v6!
 - e. If you are saved today, remember, you too were once a God-denier – in your own foolish, dead heart. If not by word, for sure by life. And yet salvation came to you! And you who once lived in denial of God, now rejoice in the same God you once denied!
 - f. If God can do that for you, He can do that for your child, your spouse, your loved one, your friend, your neighbor! Let them kick and deny all they want. Let us pray and believe and share and live the gospel. Let us love those who hate us and eat us up as they eat bread. And let's see God bring salvation! And let's see them rejoice!

Conclusion