

What God Requires Psalms Psalm 50

THE TEXT:

Our text for today is Psalm 50. These are the words of God:

¹The Mighty One, God the Lord,
speaks and summons the earth

from the rising of the sun to its setting.

² Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God shines forth.

³ Our God comes; he does not keep silence;
before him is a devouring fire,
around him a mighty tempest...

SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

Psalm 50 breaks down into several sections:

First, Lord summons the entire earth to hearth what he has to say. (vv. 1-6) This is a message for all people in all times, and it's directed against God's own people. In (vv. 7-15) God defines the kind of worship that is acceptable to him by also defining worship that is unacceptable. The third section is a charge of hypocrisy. (vv. 16-21) Finally, the Lord concludes his judgment with a violent warning (v. 22) followed by a gracious offer. (v. 23)

The Courtroom Assembles (vv. 1-6)

The Lord speaks and summons the earth, everything sunlight touches. God is the glorious one who is coming out of Zion. (v. 1-2) And as he comes, fire and tempest come with him. (v. 3) As he enters the courtroom, he calls the earth below us and the skies above to act as his witnesses when he judges His people. (v. 4) God has come to render judgment specifically to those who are in covenant with him by means of sacrifices. (v. 5) And the heavens will declare that his judgments are righteous. (v. 6)

The Charge of Improper Worship. (vv. 7-15)

Israel is to listen to God because he's about to testify against her. (v. 7) They were giving God all of the outward sacrifices He required (v. 8), so that's not why they are being accused. Besides, it's not the burnt offerings God wants most anyway. (v. 8) God owns it all; every lamb, cow, duck and dingo. (vv. 10-11) If God were hungry, He wouldn't tell us about it. (vv. 12-13) So, what does he want: an offering of thanksgiving. (v. 14) Pay your

vows. And do it all while crying out to him in daily dependence. You'll be delivered and He will be glorified. (v. 15)

The Charge of Hypocrisy (vv. 16-21)

The religious hypocrite declares God's statutes and laws and takes God's covenant on his lips. He talks the talk. (v. 16) He knows the liturgy and motions, but he doesn't care about God's Word. (v. 17) He breaks the second half of the Ten Commandments: he thieves and approves of adultery. (v. 17) he gives his mouth to evil, slanders his brother, and dishonors his mother (vv. 19-20) And, on top of everything else, because judgment hasn't come yet, it won't come at all. (v. 21)

The Warning & the Welcome (vv. 22-23)

Those who forget God need to slow down and think about their actions, because God will tear them to shreds. (v. 22) But those who offer thanksgiving as their sacrifice to God and keeps his commands will see the salvation of the Lord. (v. 23)

1. WE ARE GOD'S COVENANT PEOPLE

One of the common ways we misread the Old Testament is by thinking God's people **then** were covenantal, bound by sacrifices and rituals, **unlike** us. But the church is God's covenant people, united by the New Covenant through Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who fulfilled all obedience, bore our condemnation, and adopted us by grace to be with him forever.

You are as much a covenant people as ancient Israel was. God cares as deeply about how we worship as he did under the Old Covenant. In Psalm 50, God examined the kingdom of Israel's worship, and now he examines our worship in the kingdom of Christ. Never forget you are God's covenant people.

Therefore, Psalm 50 tells us that the great need of Christians is not first to get the government straight, but to get the hearts and mouths of God's people straight. Reformation and righteousness in the culture begins with reformation and righteousness in the church.

2. TRUE WORSHIP JOINS HEART AND ACTIONS

Have you ever had to buy a gift for someone who already has everything? Our worship is a gift to the God who **literally** has everything. God does not need anything from us. He is the self-existent, eternal, unbounded and all-glorious Maker.

The issue in Psalm 50 is not with outward ritual, it's with inner deadness of heart, and our hearts can be just a cold and removed from God in worship as ancient Israel's. Every week, we gather on this hill to observe outward rituals (liturgy). And you can attend every week and look good performing all the rituals with us, and do all of it without thanksgiving in your heart. God says: I want both. True worship joins heart and actions.

The set walls in a fireplace do not prohibit a blazing fire, they contain it. Some want a fire without structure; they want in effect to burn the house down. Others want a fireplace, but no fire; they want to sit in the cold. God wants both, and so should we.

3. TRUE WORSHIP DELIGHTS TO OBEY GOD

As New Covenant Christians we often hear Romans 6:14 terribly mishandled. “I’m not under law, but under grace.” The assumption being that “Since I’m saved by grace, God’s law no longer applies to me.” But we need to make two clarifications:

First, while the ceremonial and judicial laws of the kingdom of Israel expired when that kingdom expired (with the coming of the New Covenant), the moral law of God revealed in the 10 Commandments forever binds all to obedience.

Second, Christians are not under the law as a covenant of works. We are not obeying in order to be made right with God. We are made right through Christ’s obedience and death.

Third, God’s law is good, and we still use it as a rule of life. We are not saved by law keeping. We are saved for law keeping. The law teaches. The law exposes sin. The law shows us how to love one another. The law shows us our need for Christ. Friends the Law of the Lord is good, delighting to the soul. Jesus himself said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

CONCLUSION

Church, we are involved in the work of reformation. We want to honor God with our outward worship but let us never forget God in our hearts. So, remember the Lord. Offer thanksgiving to His name. Obey His commands. You are His covenant people, bought with a price, and you are declaring the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.