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Sermon Notes

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The God of All the Earth Summons His People to Genuine Thankfulness

Psalm 50

Pilgrims December 1620, cold day, landed on Cape Cod after their dangerous passage across the Northern Atlantic in late Fall sank to their knees in humble gratitude to Almighty God

A year later, they did the same thing at harvest time... after the most terrible winter of their lives, when many of them had died, and the living had to care for the dying and bury the dead at night for fear of Indian attack... after surviving and then receiving a bountiful harvest they had plenty of reason to thank God

So we come to Psalm 50... what seems on the surface as a Thanksgiving Psalm is actually far more than that... it is a Psalm of Judgment of God's own people if they will NOT thank Him rightly for His blessings

First of two weeks on this Psalm... next week I will focus on one verse, Psalm 50:15, through the words of one of the greatest sermons I have ever experienced from one of the greatest preachers in history, Charles Spurgeon

This week... we focus on the whole Psalm

I. The God of All the Earth Summons His People for Judgment

A. God's Universal Rule as King and Judge

Psalm 50:1 The Mighty One, God, the LORD, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to the place where it sets.

1. Three titles for God in the first line: El, Elohim, Yahweh

- a. “El” speaks of God as MIGHTY
- b. “Elohim” speaks of God as the object of worship and reverence
- c. “Yahweh” is God’s special covenant name, the self-existent “I am”

2. Stacking titles

As though the King were reciting some of his august titles while summoning his subjects

Monarchs frequently list title to title based on their conquests or hereditary honors... and they use these astoundingly long titles to describe the extent of their dominion

King George VI titles: "King of the United Kingdom and British dominions beyond the seas, Emperor of India, King of Ireland, Head of the Commonwealth..." etc, etc, etc.

Juan Carlos I of Spain has the longest list of titles I've ever read: (45 titles in all)

Juan Carlos I, King of Spain, King of Castile, King of León, King of Aragon, King of the Two Sicilies, King of Jerusalem, King of Navarre, King of Granada, King of Toledo, King of Valencia, ... Sovereign Grand Master of the Celebrated Order of the Golden Fleece

Some of these are shockingly obsolete... like being the "King of Jerusalem" based on the Crusades!!

Here in Psalm 50, our God is laying a singular claim: He is the Lord and Judge of all the Earth

3. Foundational: God is King and Judge of All the Earth

Psalm 50:6 the heavens proclaim his righteousness, for God himself is judge. Selah

- a. In this Psalm, God lays claim to all created beings and objects
- b. It is all His for He made it
- c. And this God and Judge of all the earth is issuing a summons

B. God's Terrifying Summons

Vs. 1 The Mighty One, God, the LORD, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to the place where it sets.

Vs. 4 He summons the heavens above, and the earth, that he may judge his people

- 1. Hebrew: "Summons" ... called to the bar for justice
- 2. When God gives this summons at the end of the world, it will be called "Judgment Day"
- 3. This is therefore a terrifying summons... summoned to stand before the Judge of All the Earth and face His judgment
 - a. Two ways to hear this summons
 - b. One is NOW by faith... it is FAITH that both assures us of the promises of God but also that convicts and reproves us of sin based on the warnings and threatenings of God... so faith-filled people get called to the bar of

God, to Judgment Day in our hearts and minds EVERY DAY OF OUR LIVES... every day that we read Scripture

- c. The second way we will hear this summons will be by ear on the Day itself
 - i) That will require no faith
 - ii) Everyone on earth will hear that summons and they MUST obey it!!

Matthew 25:31-32 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory.³² All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

4. Reminiscent of Mount Sinai

- a. The Law of Moses given in Genesis 20
- b. Genesis 19 spoke of how God terrified the people by many displays of His greatness and power... billowing smoke, earthquake, the Lord descending in fire

Hebrews 12:21 The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear."

Here in Psalm 50, God is surrounding this summons with the same kind of terror:

5. God comes and will not be silent (forever)

Psalm 50:3 Our God comes and will not be silent

- a. Though now it seems God is silent about our lives, our sins, our behaviors, yet He is not silent, nor will He be silent
- b. He IS NOT silent now, for He speaks through the prophets in the Holy Bible...
- c. He WILL NOT BE SILENT forever, for He will speak directly to us concerning our lives and all our ways

Ecclesiastes 11:9 Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment.

No, God will not be silent then, nor is He silent now

But we can only hear Him speak NOW if we believe His word, His prophets, the Holy Scriptures

God comes to speak to us... and He sets the stage with awesome displays of His power; emblems of His majesty; manifestations of His greatness

As He did on Mount Sinai, so He does here again

6. Here: fire and tempest

Vs. 3 a fire devours before him, and around him a tempest rages.

a. Fire is a symbols of God's purity and hatred of evil

Hebrews 12:29 our "God is a consuming fire."

b. Fire is also a terrifying thing to us... the danger of our lives and possessions being lost; how much more our eternal souls in hell:

Revelation 14:10-11 he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night

c. God also comes with a GREAT storm... a tempest... a hurricane of God's winds, a devastation of His power

Illus. I have witnessed many major storms in my life; I was fascinated by typhoon season in Japan, watching winds over a hundred miles per hour bend trees down to the very ground, whipping the sea up into a frothy frenzy, hearing the creak and groan of the very structure of the house in which we were staying

God has put His power on display in the form of mighty storms again and again...

NOTE: the mighty tempest is AROUND HIM... God Himself is perfectly at peace within Himself, but immediately around Him there is a devastating tempest

7. The fear of the Lord is established to keep us from sinning

a. Why does God describe Himself this way?

b. Simple: he described it when He did this kind of display at Sinai

Exodus 20:20 Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning."

C. Judgment Begins with the People of God

1. Shock: though God has the power to summon the whole earth, He focuses first and foremost on His covenant people

Psalm 50:4-5 He summons the heavens above, and the earth, that he may judge his people: ⁵ "Gather to me my consecrated ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice."

Psalm 50:7 "Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against you: I am God, your God.

2. Why? Because of the perfect beauty of Zion... the centerpiece of what God is doing on earth and in history

Psalm 50:2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth.

- a. "Zion" is the dwelling place of God... also represents Israel, God's holy people
 - b. He means for Zion to be pure and holy... there God's glory and radiance most clearly shines forth
 - c. He wants the Bride of Christ to be spotless, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish but holy and blameless
 - d. So, he summons the people of God first to His courtroom for judgment
3. 1 Peter's clear teaching:

1 Peter 4:17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?"

- a. "Judgment begins with the family of God"
- b. This is true in the gospel... we face our Judgment Day early and deal with it at the cross of Christ
- c. But we also face it day after day thereafter... through the trials and temptations and sufferings of our life
4. Purity of God's people is essential to His ongoing salvation plan for the world
5. God also does this because the sin of God's people is worse and more significant than the sin of those who are not God's people
 - a. The more light we have and sin against, the greater is our guilt
 - b. So God must deal vigorously with His own people first

II. God's People Judged for Formalism

Psalm 50:7-13 "Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against you: I am God, your God. ⁸ I do not rebuke you for your sacrifices or

your burnt offerings, which are ever before me. ⁹ I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, ¹⁰ for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. ¹¹ I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine. ¹² If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it. ¹³ Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?

A. God Calls His People to Judgment

1. Note the seriousness of the statement: God testifies against His people
2. He is their God, specifically theirs by covenant
3. These folks are genuine believers who have fallen into the trap of religiosity
4. They have fallen into the sin of formalism

B. What is Formalism?

1. These are Jews who are just going through the motions of their Old Covenant religion... actually the wheels of religion were spinning faster and faster

Vs. 8 I do not rebuke you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings, which are ever before me.

Isaiah 1:11-14 "The multitude of your sacrifices-- what are they to me?" says the LORD. "I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. ¹² When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? ¹³ Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations-- I cannot bear your evil assemblies. ¹⁴ Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them.

2. They are grossly misunderstanding God and what He truly wants
3. They imagine that their salvation depends on outward compliance to patterns of religion
4. They imagine that God will be pleased with them as long as He keeps getting His sacrifices offered, His “pound of flesh”
5. They never stop to consider their ways or understand what the animal sacrifices were for

C. Formalism Based on a Misunderstanding of God

1. At the core, they failed to see the purpose of all their religious deeds

2. Human beings always tend to overestimate the value of their service and underestimate the weightiness of their sin
3. Even worse, they forgot that God owns everything they have, and that the sacrifices they are making are not really sacrifices at all, for it already belongs to God

God is not a debtor

I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens,¹⁰ for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills.¹¹ I know every bird in the mountains, and the creatures of the field are mine.

God is not needy

¹² If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it.

God is not hungry or thirsty

Vs. 13 Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?

D. Formalism Leads to Burden

Malachi 1:11-13 And you say, 'What a burden!' and you sniff at it contemptuously," says the LORD Almighty.

God doesn't NEED our

- Church attendance... prayers... quiet times... evangelism...worship songs... tithes/offerings... family devotions
 - Formalists misunderstand God's position toward the earth and everything in it

Abraham Kuyper: "*There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine!'*"

- God owns all things and needs nothing, as we've said
- This is the truth made clear in the doxology in Romans 11

Romans 11:35-36 "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" ³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

- This is also the truth Paul made clear in Acts 17 to the idolaters in Athens:

Acts 17:24-25 "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands.²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else."

Never imagine for a moment that God needs anyone to serve Him

III. God Calls His People to Repentance and Faith

*Psalm 50:14-15 Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High,
¹⁵ and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me."*

Psalm 50:22-23 "Consider this, you who forget God, or I will tear you to pieces, with none to rescue:²³ He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God."

A. God Calls His People to Genuine Salvation

1. The sham religion of formalism is a counterfeit
2. God wants genuine heart religion... true sacrifices offered by faith

B. The Gross Misunderstanding: God is Needy and We're Helping Him

1. Formalism in religion inevitably leads people to deceive themselves about their relationship with God
2. “Isn’t God fortunate to have me?” we say
3. We become proud of our church attendance, our personal or family devotions, our tithes and offerings, our good deeds or witnessing
4. We fancy ourselves irreplaceable in the Kingdom of God
5. The religionists felt that God somehow NEEDED some of THEIR animals
6. What a gross lie! Every animal they ever offered to God belonged to Him already
7. So also us: every mental ability, every spiritual gift, every dollar, every second of every day is God’s for He made it and gave it... we are merely stewards

C. The Reality: We Are in Trouble and Need Deliverance

Psalm 50:15 call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will glorify me."

1. Apart from Christ, our sins are stacked against us and our righteous deeds are worthless
2. Even in Christ, we face the world, the flesh and the devil without enough power to conquer them
3. We are in trouble and NEED deliverance, and only God can do it

D. Jesus Christ is the True Sacrifice

1. All the animal sacrifices just “prepared the way so that He may show us the salvation of God”
2. The Old Testament could be summed up in Isaac’s question as he ascended Mount Moriah with Abraham, his father
 - a. Abraham had been commanded by God to sacrifice his only son
 - b. Isaac had done many sacrifices with his father before; but this time something was different:

Genesis 22:7 "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

- c. This one question sums up the whole Old Testament in the area of animal sacrifice

Hebrews 10:3-4 those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, ⁴ because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

- d. John the Baptist, who was probably the last Old Covenant prophet, answered the question when He saw Jesus Christ:

John 1:29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Jesus Christ is the only Savior of the world... and even in the Old Testament time, religiosity and formalism and a river of animal blood could never take away the sin and guilt of the people of God

3. David knew the truth about these bulls and goats
 - a. The very next Psalm, Psalm 51, proclaimed it

Psalm 51:16-17 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. ¹⁷ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

- b. Psalm 50 and Psalm 51 teach the same thing about animal sacrifices

- c. In the Old Covenant, they were commanded to be made
- d. But they had no saving power... God was looking for a heart of repentance for sin and faith toward God

- E. Psalm 50:15 and the Ultimate Prayer

Psalm 50:15 call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me

- 1. The most significant thing a man can call out for is for His soul's salvation
- 2. The most significant "Day of trouble" will be Judgment Day

Romans 10:13 "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

2 Corinthians 6:2 "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

- F. God Doesn't Need Our Service, But We Need His!!
- 1. So often we hear language that Christ needs us to do this or that
- 2. We are Christ's hands and feet; if we don't do it, it won't be done
- 3. But the radical truth is that Christ doesn't need us to serve Him... we need Christ to serve us

Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

John 13:6-8 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"⁷ Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."⁸ "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

- 4. So perish the very thought that our religious activities and service are essential to Christ and His kingdom
- 5. Again and again, Paul was overwhelmed with gratitude at the grace of God in giving Him work to do for Him... but he never considered it the grounds of his forgiveness before a holy God

IV. God's People Judged for Hypocrisy

Psalm 50:16-21 But to the wicked, God says: "What right have you to recite my laws or take my covenant on your lips?¹⁷ You hate my instruction and cast my

words behind you. ¹⁸ *When you see a thief, you join with him; you throw in your lot with adulterers.* ¹⁹ *You use your mouth for evil and harness your tongue to deceit.* ²⁰ *You speak continually against your brother and slander your own mother's son.* ²¹ *These things you have done and I kept silent; you thought I was altogether like you. But I will rebuke you and accuse you to your face.*

A. God's Second Accusation: Hypocrisy

1. Far more serious than formalism
2. Those people misunderstood their service to God and the very basis of their relationship with God, but at least they HAD a relationship with God
3. Hypocrites only APPEAR to have a relationship with God... the REALITY is far different

B. Hypocrisy Described

1. Speaking of the things of the covenant... taking God's words on their lips
 - a. This is at "religious times" when it is advantageous for them to do so
 - b. They speak earnestly about God's covenant, God word, God's laws, God's promises
 - c. BUT their hearts are cold and dead to those realities
2. Secretly hating God's instructions and laws AND
3. Casting God's laws behind them in daily life
4. Loving sin and joining with sinners
5. Breaking God's laws

Vs. 18 When you see a thief, you join with him; you throw in your lot with adulterers.

Theft... Adultery... False testimony

Vs. 19-20 You use your mouth for evil and harness your tongue to deceit. ²⁰ *You speak continually against your brother and slander your own mother's son.*

Amazingly: the Psalmist says more about this sin of deceitful speech and slander than he does about theft and murder!

How easily we slander each other!

How easily we speak words that destroy others' reputation... and we can do it so artfully

C. Gospel Hypocrites the Most Miserable People in History

1. The members of the “people of God” here addressed lived in the Old Covenant era and sinned against the Old Covenant with their hypocrisy
2. How much more dreadful is it to sin against the New Covenant... to be a gospel hypocrite

Biblical principle: the more spiritual light you sin against, the greater your sin; these gospel hypocrites have heard the gospel, outwardly conformed, attended church, looked good on the outside... but in their hearts they have cast off Christ and His Kingdom, they despise the Christian life and delight secretly in sin

God is no more impressed with our New Covenant religiosity: church attendance, membership on committees, tithing, evangelism, singing in the choir, praying at the corporate prayer meeting, etc. than He was with the Jews who offered animals without any faith or love for God

3. Our trust in Christ’s finished work on the cross is our only standing before God, based on that, our service to God must be genuine, our thankfulness for His salvation deep

D. The End of the Hypocrite: Full Exposure

Vs. 21 These things you have done and I kept silent; you thought I was altogether like you. But I will rebuke you and accuse you to your face.

1. In the end, God will publicly expose this person
2. He will rebuke and accuse them to their face on Judgment Day

V. God Misunderstood: Both in His Position and His Person

A. God’s Position Misunderstood by Formalists

They thought God NEEDY or a DEBTOR or HUNGRY

B. God’s Person Misunderstood by Hypocrites

Psalm 50:21 These things you have done and I kept silent; you thought I was altogether like you.

1. This is even more devastating
2. An immoral person can mistake God’s silence for His approval; an approval coming from the fact that God loves immorality as much as they do

3. God's silence does NOT mean approval, nor does His silence mean He can be mocked or will not act

Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

4. God's silence means patience, and God's patience means a gracious opportunity to repent

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

5. God has spoken clearly in His word as to how we are to approach Him and how we are to live godly and upright lives in His sight

VI. The Fruit of Salvation: Genuine Thankfulness

Psalm 50:22-23 "Consider this, you who forget God, or I will tear you to pieces, with none to rescue: ²³ He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God."

The Psalmist ends with a warning to the hypocrite who forgets God... He threatens condemnation and eternal judgment

He has offered to deliver us from all our troubles:

Psalm 50:15 call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me."

But here, he threatens a trouble from which no one can deliver

"None to rescue"

Illus. Haiti... boy with a shirt on showing Shadrach. Meshach, Abednego

Told them the story, including Nebuchadnezzar's terrible statement:

Daniel 3:15 you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?"

But I closed with this: There is an eternal fire that God threatens on Judgment Day... the fire of hell; and if Almighty God, the Judge of all the earth throws you into that fire, who shall be able to rescue us from God's hand??

BUT God offers an eternal salvation...

Vs. 23 "the salvation of God"

prepared throughout all the Old Testament by the sacrificial system, demonstrated in the genuinely thankful hearts of all the people of God...

Salvation through Christ's death on the cross; And to eternal thankfulness God calls us... A Salvation in which He gets the glory and we get the joy

Psalm 50:15 call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will glorify me."