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The Judgment of God; Psalm 50
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Introduction – Judgment. Just the mention of the word judgment automatically brings up negative connotations and feelings. Its like the words sick or sin or mayonnaise. Courts are not the only arenas of judgment. People constantly making judgments of one another. But there is a judgment that is always 100% accurate regarding our actions, words, and intentions. There is a judgment that is always true, the judgment of God. He sees all, knows all, and always judges with righteousness.

Two observations before we study the text. First, today's text is not only descriptive of God's judgment in time but it's also prophetic of God's judgment at the end of time as well. There is coming a final judgment of God. A day in which all will be gathered before the Lord and all will be judged. Second, today's judgment text should not be viewed in purely negative connotations. There is a positive objective and purpose. Because Psalm 50 is available to us, there is much that we know. We know judgment is coming. We know who's doing the judging, and we know how God will judge. Therefore, we can prepare. We can correct. We can welcome the Day of Judgment rather than dread it. Today is the day of salvation. Today is the day to mend our ways. Today's dire warning is today's opportunity.

- I. God Himself is Judge (vv1-6)
 - a. First we note the One who judges, The Mighty One, God the Lord. A triplet of God's names, signifying His power, majesty, and presence. He is all-knowing and all-seeing. He discerns the thoughts and intentions of our hearts. He alone is the rightful judge of His creation, and He alone judges rightly.
 - i. He is never silent, for He is always speaking through His creation, through His Word, and through His Son, and yet at times it seems that He is silent. There is coming a day when His silence will not be questioned, for He will speak clearly, decisively, finally, and truthfully.
 - b. This gathering of God's faithful that is accompanied by fire and tempest is spoken about in the NT as well. Matt 24:29-31
 - i. In all of the descriptions of final judgment in the OT and the NT, the Lord addresses His people first.

- c. One thing I miss about our Sunday gatherings is how they are glimpses into this final gathering. We come as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the people of God, to worship God together and to hear from God together. We assemble in the same place, at the same time, for the same purpose. These weekly gatherings are glimpses into the great final gathering of the people of God, in the same place, at the same time, to worship our God and to hear our God. Just as we gather here and He speaks, we will be gathered there on that glorious day and He will speak.

II. A Word from God to His People (vv7-15)

- a. Again, the awesome advantage of hearing God's judgment toward His people now is that we might repent and correct our ways so that we won't hear the same indictment at the Final Judgment.
- b. And what is God's judgment to His people? Empty, religious ceremony. Going through the right motions, even consistently and religiously, and yet going through them void of true, spiritual worship. Remember Jesus' words in John 4 – true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and in truth.
- c. It's so easy to engage in religious activity and not truly worship God. Psalm 50 is addressing OT forms of worship because it was written during OT times. But we have our forms of worship as the NT church as well. We don't offer bulls and goats and doves, but we do gather to sing and pray and give and proclaim the Word and take communion. Our forms can become just empty as these in the OT if all we do when we gather is go through the motions.
- d. God prescribes the forms of worship in the OT and NT. God commanded Israel to offer these sacrifices to atone for their sin as worship. God prescribes our forms as well. Scripture calls us to assemble together, Psalm 34:3, Heb 10:25, to sing His praises corporately, Eph 5:19, Col 3:16, to give generously to the ministry of the gospel, 1 Cor 16:1, 2 Cor 8:1-2, to take communion together, the gospels, 1 Cor 11, and to sit under the proclamation and reading of His Word together, 1 Tim 4, 2 Tim 4. That's why we do the things we do when we gather for worship because this is what God has called us to do.
- e. But therein lies the danger of mistaking the forms for the substance, the external activity as the ends rather than the means.

- f. God's Word to Israel in Psalm 50 may be God's word to us today. Not being able to gather just may be a time for us to correct our worship. He's not after the external activity. The forms are not the worship; the forms are the God-ordained, God-given means for the worship, but the means is not the worship; the means is the expression of the worship.
- g. God doesn't need our singing, our giving, our praying, our eating bread and drinking juice, God doesn't need my preaching, or your teaching. God doesn't need these forms of worship, God has given us these forms of worship because we need them. We need to worship God rightly, that's why we were created!
- h. And so God's word to us today is don't mistake the forms for the substance, don't mistake the means as the end. The point is not that you go through the motions religiously, it's why you go through the motions religiously.
- i. Which brings up another issue that maybe, possibly some of us need to consider today. If God indicts us for going through the motions as if the forms themselves are our salvation, what would God's word be to us if we neglect or dismiss these forms? What if we don't see or even feel the need for the forms God has prescribed for His worship? What if there are things in our lives viewed as more important than God's call for corporate worship? What might God's word be to us?
- j. So what is the litmus test for sincere true worship? How do we know if we are not just going through the motions but are truly worshipping God? Vv14-15 tell us 3 things.
 - i. A spirit of gratitude and thanksgiving permeates true worship. We gather because we are thankful. We sing and pray and give and hunger for the Word because we are thankful for our eternal salvation and our daily provision. We are thankful for grace and mercy. We don't sing because well that's what you do when you come to church. No! The 1905 hymn says it well, "I sing because I'm happy! I sing because I'm free. His eye is on the sparrow and I know He watches me."
 - ii. A Godward view. God is centerstage. We don't come to church because the music's great or the youth program is a blast or the preacher is hip. We come to church to worship God because He is the Most High. We sing to Him, pray to

Him, remember Him, encourage one another in Him, and hear from Him. These things are God-given means to worship and honor Him!

- iii. A humble, dependency. We don't gather to show God or each other how good we are; we gather because we know how needy we are. Nothing demonstrates our awareness of our need of constant grace and mercy like prayer. On that note – how often did we pray this week?
- k. The last phrase of v15 brings this all together. If our view is Godward, we will call upon Him. He will deliver. We will be thankful. And our thanksgiving glorifies Him.

III. A Word from God to False Professors of Faith (vv16-22)

- a. There are those who claim to be believers who are not. Remember Jesus said on that day of judgment they will cry out “Lord, did we not do all these things in your name.” And He will say, “depart from me I never knew you.”
- b. So believers can go through the motions by mistaking the forms for the substance, but unbelievers can go through the motions by trusting in the forms and never embracing the substance. If I were to ask you the question, “are you saved?” and you were to reply, “Yes, I go to church” you have probably embraced the form of worship and without embracing the One who is to be worshipped.
- c. How do you know? How do you know if you're just going through the motions and have never truly been saved? Your life has never changed from embracing sin to embracing the Savior.
- d. Now we're all sinners, that is certainly true. And sometimes tragically and sadly even believers commit the sins listed in vv16-21. The difference though is this, the believer's life as a whole is one that desires to please God and the unbeliever's life as a whole is one that desires to please himself. Vv22-23.

Conclusion – Do you forget Him or do you follow Him? V22 – mark this. Mark this. Mark this. Judgment is coming. God will judge, and His judgment will be final. Today is the day to set our hearts right with God. Today is the day believer to confess our empty worship or neglected worship and truly glorify Him. Today is the day unbeliever to embrace Jesus Christ for forgiveness of your sin and new life in Him. Mark this day and mark this psalm because one

day we won't read about judgment anymore, we won't talk about judgment anymore, we'll face it.