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Morning Service

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Formalism: Will you be indicted?

. Psalm 50 paints us a picture of a courtroom. In it we have a plaintiff, defendants, indictments, and a judge. On trial are the defendants, the professing Covenant saints. God Himself has come to them, charging them with forgetting the purpose of His Law and adopting a system of ritualistic formulas in place of essential devotion.

Upon reading this Psalm one can easily recall the many times our Saviour clashed with the Sanhedrin, charging them with hypocrisy and exposing their true motivations on many occasions. Or, we think of all about all the 'other' churches on Sunday noon, as congregations conduct a perfunctory exodus from sermon, to lunch, and then nap. But rarely do we turn that lens on ourselves. Could I be guilty of formalism?

The words in the Bible are timeless and necessary, Psalm 50 was not written for Israel alone. It did not cease to be valid upon our Lord's ascension. The sin of formalism appears in many, many ways, but it is always consistent in one thing. Its victim is blind to the power of sin and fallen man's nature to hate God and love self righteousness.

Please listen to this message with an open mind, heart, and Bible. Psalm 50 is not a warning, it's a promise. God hates sin in his church more than any other and will come to bring justice.

Notes

Psalm 50 tells of a trial, of God coming in behind devouring fire (judgment), summoning His people, the one's who have entered into Covenant with him, to be put on trail. In the court we have;

- Prosecutor – The Lord
- Defendants – The Visible Church, eg. Professing Christians.
- Charges – Hypocrisy, Formalism, the Futility of Worship Without Faith.
- Witness – The Heaven and Earth
- Evidence – Everything we have ever thought or done.
- Standard of Judgment – The Law of God

Formalism, simply put is worship without faith. It's ritual. Ritual can be idols, icons, memorized statements, even theological works written against other forms of formalism. We as fallen creatures have an instinctual affinity for self righteousness.

Thankfully God loves righteousness in His Church just as much as He hates sin. He will come to us through Providence. He guides us into dependence and obedience to Him, He desires to see us all pant for Him as the deer pants for water in the Psalm.

Application

As you listen to the sermon. Have the following questions in mind.

Does my prayer life line up with scripture or sorcery?

Am I working out the details in my life in accordance with the Word?

How am I growing? What's the evidence?

Scripture References

Psalms 50:1-23 A Psalm of Asaph. The Mighty One, God, the LORD, has spoken, And summoned the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. (2) Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shone forth. (3) May our God come and not keep silence; Fire devours before Him, And it is very tempestuous around Him. (4) He summons the heavens above, And the earth, to judge His people: (5) "Gather My godly ones to Me, Those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." (6) And the heavens declare His righteousness, For God Himself is judge. Selah. (7) "Hear, O My people, and I will speak; O Israel, I will testify against you; I am God, your God. (8) "I do not reprove you for your sacrifices, And your burnt offerings are continually before Me. (9) "I shall take no young bull out of your house Nor male goats out of your folds. (10) "For every beast of the forest is Mine, The cattle on a thousand hills. (11) "I know every bird of the mountains, And everything that moves in the field is Mine. (12) "If I were hungry I would not tell you, For the world is Mine, and all it contains. (13) "Shall I eat the flesh of bulls Or drink the blood of male goats? (14) "Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving And pay your vows to the Most High; (15) Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me." (16) But to the wicked God says, "What right have you to tell of My statutes And to take My covenant in your mouth? (17) "For you hate discipline, And you cast My words behind you. (18) "When you see a thief, you are pleased with him, And you associate with adulterers. (19) "You let your mouth loose in evil And your tongue frames deceit. (20) "You sit and speak against your brother; You slander your own mother's son. (21) "These things you have done and I kept silence; You thought that I was just like you; I will reprove you and state *the case* in order before your eyes. (22) "Now consider this, you who forget God, Or I will tear *you* in pieces, and there will be none to deliver. (23) "He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors Me; And to him who orders *his way aright* I shall show the salvation of God."

Micah 6:6-8 With what shall I come to the LORD *And* bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, With yearling calves? (7) Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, In ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn *for* my rebellious acts, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? (8) He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?

We are glad you have chosen to listen to this sermon and pray that it gives you strength, the want for obedience, and a desire to have God's abundant Grace mortify sin in your life. If you have any questions or comments please email chuck_ezell@yahoo.com.