

Psalm 50:1-23

How are we to worship God aright and in a way acceptable to the Lord?
Is our worship acceptable to God as long as we outwardly go through the motions in a worship service? What about when fail to practice what we preach about what God desires in worship?

God's people in the Old Testament were tempted to forget God's unchanging demands in His worship and Christians today are no less prone to such a danger. Psalm 50 counters and rebukes such folly that thinks that religion is a mere matter of sacrifices and offerings, or that it does not really matter if we do practice what we preach in God's worship. It declares that sincere obedience and whole hearted thanksgiving are the true fulfilling of the Law of God, particularly in His worship.

Summary

Psalm 50 is a judgment psalm that specifies the true nature of the worship that the Lord requires, rebuking both formalism and hypocrisy in the worship of God.

1. Judgment Summons vv. 1-6

Psalm 50 begins by declaring the greatness of God (**Ps. 50:1**). The Psalmist describes God's relationship to the church and the world (**Ps. 50:1**). God will reveal himself to the entire earth, but he will do so by means of his judgment of the church. Whilst the entire earth is summoned, it is gathered to witness the Lord's dealings with his covenant people (**Psalm 50: 4-5**).

Psalm 50 not only tells us that God deals with the world through his church, but also shows us how God relates to the church as its Lord. God has bound his people to Himself by way of a covenant that is sealed in the blood of an atoning sacrifice (**Lev. 26:12**). He therefore calls for his church to be gathered so that he may inquire as to her obedience to her covenantal obligations (**Ps. 50:4-6**).

2. Rebuked Formalism vv. 7-15

Psalm 50 is a rebuke from God through one called to lead Israel in worship (Asaph). The psalmist outlines two complaints that God has against His people, the first of which is empty formalism in worship (**Psalm 50:8-15**).

When Christians ask what they are to give to the God, who owns everything in this created reality (**Psalm 50:10-11**), they are to give themselves from the heart.

When this spiritual offering is withheld, the Lord is uninterested in receiving mere outward sacrifices in worship: "I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your folds" (**Ps. 50:9**).

The answer to empty formalism is worship that is filled with genuine thanksgiving and sincere obedience, and trusting prayer (**Ps. 50:14-15**).

We truly worship God only when we offer him genuine praise, thanksgiving and sincere whole-hearted love in response to his grace.

3. Condemned Hypocrisy vv. 16-22

Next the psalmist turns to problem of hypocrisy in worship.

God's righteous indignation is particularly expressed against hypocrites in his church (**Psalm 50:16**). He condemns those who flagrantly and openly make a mockery of God's moral commands (**Psalm 50:18-20**). The psalmist outlines, in particular, the flagrant breaking of the seventh, eighth, and ninth commandments.

The Lord condemns in the strongest terms those who seek to speak his praise whilst reveling in sin (**Ps. 50:22**).

The best test for hypocrisy is found in **Ps. 50:17** "For you hate discipline, and you cast my words behind you."

Each of us should therefore observe how we respond to the Bible's commands and how we react when the Scriptures show us to be in error or in sin.

4. True, God-honoring Worship vs. 23

Against the backdrop of solemn judgment, Psalm 50 is yet a summons from God to draw near in worship.

The psalm concludes: "The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me; to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!" (**Ps. 50:23**).

God is truly glorified by the sincere offerings of thanksgivings from grateful hearts, and the Lord promises His salvation to those who order their way rightly.

Jesus, Himself, dealt with questions about worship, and his classic statement to the Samaritan woman agrees with and amplifies the message of Psalm 50.

God is seeking worshipers, through Jesus Christ, who come in spirit and in truth. When we do, he will be our chief delight.