

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

What Angers God

Psalm 50

Keywords: Justice, Judgment, Ritualism, Rebellion, False Worship, Anger.

PowerPoint Presentation included: none

SermonAudio Blurb In a courtroom setting God calls all of heaven and earth to act as witnesses as He brings charges against His covenant people, Israel. And in doing so we are given a solid glimpse into how those who claim to love God slip into grave sin and, if not stopped, into apostasy.

I. Introduction.

- A. Read Psalm 50.
- B. Setting:
 1. Essentially you have a courtroom scene the supreme judge, the creator of all things, is leveling charges against the people of Israel.
 2. God as judge is a common theme in the bible, culminating in the final judgment with Jesus Christ, Himself shall judge the living and the dead.
- C. So we have God, seated in the heavenly courtroom, surrounded, as Revelation describes it, by lightening and peals of thunder. Before the throne is like a sea of glass and gathered in the courtroom is the heavenly host of angels.
 1. But here in our Psalm the setting is “out of Zion” (2) speaking of the earthly place where He chose to reside. In the temple of the holy city Jerusalem, on the holy mountain and within the holy of holies.
 2. And so YHWH speaks in vs 1. YHWH, God, the Mighty One calls out to all the earth to come and function as witnesses to His judgments and His evidences. To the earthly host He adds the heavens themselves in vs 4.
 - a. But to whom is He judging?
 - b. Vs 5 gives us the answer. It is Israel.
 3. And in vs 6 we see God described in terms of righteousness. That the fulness of the heavens cannot help but declare that YHWH alone is truly righteous.

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- D. So, with the situation established we ought to now ask, “Why has YHWH called heaven and earth to assemble before Him as He renders a judgment?” And the rest of this Psalm lays it out for us.
 - 1. We have the Lord showing the people of Israel, the people whom He made covenants with through Abraham and through Moses, enacted through the shedding of blood, how they are in grave danger of apostasy. His anger is raised against them through two primary problems.
 - 2. These attitudes are the attitude of ritualism and the attitude of rebellion.
- E. Now it is worth our time to first consider the writer of this Psalm as I believe it bears heavily upon the psalm itself.
 - 1. Asaph was one of the chief musicians appointed by King David to oversee the music aspect of Israel’s worship. He, along with the other official singers, sang at the dedication of the temple built by Solomon (2 Chronicles 5:12).
 - 2. Beyond this, not much more is described for us. He wrote several of the psalms and, with the exception of this one, they were all grouped together, starting with 73 through 83.

II. The Attitude of Ritualism (7-15).

- A. Note first in vs 7 that God affirms that He has the right to bring these charges to bear.
 - 1. These are “His people” and He is to them, “your God.”
 - 2. He has this right to demand from them and to expect from them a heart that is broken, contrite and committed to Him. He has the right to call them to the right attitude of fearing Him.
 - 3. And so because these are “His people” by right of covenant He now begins to testify against them.
 - a. Note in vs 8 that God approaches His charge of ritualism in an indirect fashion.
 - b. But in vss 9-13 we begin to see the issue. They are acting like pagans, who believe that their offerings to the gods are needed by those gods.
 - c. But this is the nature of ritualism isn’t it?

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- B. And then our Lord gives the antidote to this ritualism in vss 14-15.
1. First, develop a spirit of thankfulness to YHWH for His many blessings and grace (15).
 - a. The Psalmist says it this way in 69:30, “I will praise the name of God with song and magnify Him with thanksgiving.”
 - b. In a similar way we read in Psalm 95:2, “Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.” And why should we do this? Hear now vs 3, “For YHWH is a great God and a great King above all gods.”
 - c. And the Apostle Paul builds off of this when addressing fear and anxiety when he commands us, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6).
 - d. Think about the nature of the Old Testament sacrifices and this spirit of thankfulness will make sense.
 2. Second, recognize that only God can deliver us from our hour of trouble and our sin (15).
 - a. Here is something so basic that it ends up being forgotten somehow. The very fact a Jew could go and offer anything to God was because God had rescued him out of sin and death.
 - b. And the same is for you and I. To any of you who are on the cusp of ritualism, I can only implore you to go back to the gospel of Jesus Christ and remember.
- C. But ritualism brings about a second, more deadly consequence. If left unchecked, it leads to God’s second charge, that of rebellion.

III. The Attitude of Rebellion (16-21).

- A. Now Asaph begins to grow in intensity as he describes the charge of rebellion by YHWH, the God of Israel. First comes the challenge (16):
1. “Who are you to tell Me anything?” That is the essence of His statement.
 2. Note that God is describing these people as they actually are, not as they are presenting themselves to be. They are the “wicked.”

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3. But note that they also claim to be part of the covenant people of Israel. By faith? Because they love and follow God? No, but because they uttered some words of assent to the covenant between Israel and God.
- B. Second, we see the details of their crimes in vss 17-20.
1. They hate discipline, meaning they hate instruction for the purpose of then applying it in their lives (17).
 - a. This is the same charge that James gave in his letter. They are hearers of the Word but not doers. They look intently at the Law of God and then turn away and forget it.
 - b. For Israel, this ignoring of God's Word is what leads to all other sins.
 2. In Vs 18 we see the love of overt sin and sinners such as thieves and adulterers.
 - a. Why? Because these are the sort of sins that flow from forgetting God.
 - b. They rob God of His glory and therefore their hearts go out to those who rob others of their possessions.
 - c. Note the charge though. They are apparently not involved themselves in the acts of theft and adultery.
 3. They are lovers of lies and foolish talk (19-20).
 - a. Truth is not their guide; nor does it constrain or inform them in their lives.
 - b. And whenever truth is lost, lies take over. The lips of man do not stop moving; but, as Christ Himself said, they merely speak forth what is in the heart.
 4. And in all of these acts and attitudes is nothing less than a rejection of the very commandments they claim to love and be under.
 - a. The command to not commit adultery means nothing to them.
 - b. The command to steal means nothing to them.
 - c. The command to not bear false witness is nothing to them.

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- d. And why? Because they have forgotten the character of YHWH who brought their forefathers up out of slavery and into freedom.

IV. Conclusion (21-23).

- A. In the final three verses we have Asaph coming back to these two activities of so-called worshipers and giving God's final warning to each group.
- B. In vs 21 we see that they lost sight of God. Because nothing has happened up to that point, they assume He does not care.
- C. So with regard to rebellion God tells them in vs 22 to remember that if He alone is God then there shall be no one to deliver them when He comes for them.
- D. And with regard to ritualism He calls them to come back to Him in thanksgiving and show Him and Him alone the honor due His Name. And He will show them salvation.
- E. And here I speak to you before me.
 1. Search your heart and ask that God might show your soul's state today. Do not delay but hear the Word of God and fear Him who alone is worthy of fear.
 2. Go back beloved and think on Christ. See the mercies shown you in the gospel. Grasp the vastness of that mercy that put your sin upon the shoulders of the Sinless One who bore them as far as the East is from the West.
 3. Confess freely that which you have done for God is ever the faithful One to forgive you and cleanse you.
 4. Give thanks for His sustaining grace that enabled each of you to come today and hear the Word preached and to sing with the brethren and worship in truth.

Benediction

Now the God of peace, Who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to Whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.