

Sermon 63: God's Grace, Justice, and the Cultural Christian: Psalm 50:1-23

Text: Psalm 50:1-23 "The mighty God, even the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah. Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High: And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.."

Summary: God's grace should be magnified in our minds as we soberly consider the severity of His justice against sin.

Proposition: He offers salvation to all who repent and believe.

Interrogative: Why should this text sober us?

Part 1: Background:

- **The desperate human condition:**

- **Jeremiah 17:9** "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"
- **Romans 1:21-23** "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their

imaginings, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man..."

- We naturally have a diminished view of God's holiness:
- We naturally have a deficient view of God's greatness:
- We naturally have a selective view of God's justice:
- **The danger of being religious but unregenerate: Matthew 23:25-28** "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also...ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity..."

Part 2: Details:

- **Universal Courtroom: 50:1-6**
 - **The Judge: 50:1** "The mighty God, even the LORD, hath spoken..."
 - **His audience: 50:1** "Called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof..."
 - **His witnesses: 50:4** "He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people..."
 - **His intent:** "The heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself..."
 - **His allusion: Exodus 19:16-22** "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God...And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly..."
- **Acceptable Worship: 50:7-15**
 - **His audience: 50:7** "Hear, O my people...I am God, even thy God..."
 - **His contention: 50:7** "I will testify against thee..."
 - **Negatively:**
 - **Their problem was not in practice: 50:8** "I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices..."
 - **God did not need their sacrifices:**

- **50:10** "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills..."
 - **50:12** 'If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof...'
- **Positively:** They had a motive problem:
 - He wanted their minds.
 - He wanted their heart.
- **Foundationally:** Motives matter
 - **"Offer thanksgiving:"** Thanksgiving comes from a heart that recognizes it has received grace.
 - **"Pay vows:"** People follow through with commitments when their word is given genuinely.
 - **"Call upon me:"** People cry out to someone who is stronger when they are in desperation.
- **Duplicitous Worship: 50:16-21**
 - **His audience: 50:16** "But unto the wicked..."
 - **His contention: 50:16** "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or...shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?"
 - **These people were not Gentiles ignorant of God's ways.**
 - **They were members of God's covenant people, going through the motions of true religion but unregenerate.**
 - **This is a great danger in every generation:**
 - **In the Old Testament:** Circumcised and following the Law.
 - **In the time of Christ:** following as a disciple but unregenerate.
 - **In the New Testament:** A member of the church but not regenerate.
 - **The evidence of their true condition:**
 - **Pride: 50:17** "thou hatest instruction...castest my words behind..."
 - **Theft: 50:18** "When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst..."
 - **Adultery: 50:18** "hast been partaker with adulterers"
 - **Slander: 50:20** "Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother"
 - **Presumption: 50:21** "I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself..."
 - **A New Testament parallel context: Romans 2:1-4**
 "Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that

judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

- **His point: 1 Peter 4:17** "The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"
 - Knowledge of truth or paying lip-service to it is not enough.
 - Our actions expose the true intentions of our hearts.
 - If the righteous are rebuked for their mixed motives, how much more will the wicked who have access to the same information be condemned for rejecting the truth.
- **Somber Warning: 50:22**
 - **You have forgotten God:** "Consider this, ye that forget God..."
 - **You are in grave danger:** "Lest I tear you in pieces..."
 - **No one can deliver you from this danger:** "And there be none to deliver..."
- **Gracious Invitation: 50:23**
 - **We can repent:** "Now consider..."
 - **We can turn to Him and offer praise:** "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me..."
 - **We can correct the way we approach Him:** "To him that ordereth his conversation aright..."
 - **We can be saved from this terrible judgment:** "Will I shew the salvation of God..."
- **His point:** Even though you are in great danger, you can still turn to God while there is time.

Part 3: Highlights:

- **Fact 1: The reality of God's sovereignty and justice: Revelation 20:11** "I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them..."
 - He rules over everything and everyone.
 - All will one day answer to Him.
- **Fact 2: The contrast of true and false worship: John 4:22-24** "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship...But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the

Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth..."

- True worship starts with God's grace, our position in Him, and is entirely motivated by a selfless love for Him.
- False worship starts and ends with self.
- False worship is shaped by our minds, not His revelation.
- **Fact 3: The terror of pure justice: 2 Corinthians 5:11** "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men..."
 - No one can stand before God in his own righteousness.
 - Our only hope comes from Him.
- **Fact 4: The comfort of God's grace: Romans 5:20** "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound..."
 - **As sobering as God's justice even sweeter is His grace.**
 - **Ephesians 2:4-9** "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast..."
 - **Isaiah 53:12** "He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many..."
 - **Hebrews 9:22-28** "Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself...So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many..."

Part 4: Application:

- **To the Unregenerate Cultural Christian:**
 - It is possible to sit in the church and play the part of the true Christian but be unregenerate.
 - God's justice should sober everyone.
 - If it were not for the cross, there would be no hope.
 - No matter what we have done, there is still hope in Him.
- **To the inconsistent Christian:**
 - Our practice should reflect a healthy view of God.
 - We should live like the people we are, and our lives should reflect the doctrines we affirm.

- We should be thankful people, because we are the recipients of His grace.
- We should follow through with our commitments, because our word matters as a new creature in Christ.
- We should live with a humble dependence upon Him, not just for salvation, but also for our daily strength, growth, and protection.