

"GOD'S COURTROOM"

Psalm 50

Famous - Judge oak -

Boy 16  
Parent  
car  
wreck - (85)

INTRODUCTION:

The whole Psalm is a great dramatic poem, a courtroom scene with Israel being brought before the bar of Almighty God. And being condemned for moral failure.

Now the drama that takes place here has its occurrence and re-occurrence many times in history.

The idea which the people had was that they were (doing God a favor) by worshipping him. How many people today would have their hypocrisy exposed by saying we are making a few gestures, we are helping to carry on this cathedral of worship.

This is something that sounds like Micah 6:6-8. Yes, if you have listened to some of the (folk songs) today in America, you know that they frequently center around a courtroom scene. There are trials, judges, rigged juries, and judgement that otherwise seems to be improper.

But Psalm 50, if you will notice, is inscribed God's courtroom.

Let me say a word first about the author of this Psalm. Asaph was the sweet singer who put these Psalms to music and sang in David's court. And this Psalm from his pen is like any courtroom that you might be summons too today.

This man was perhaps like Bach of modern Germany. They say that at the family reunion of Bach's, there were present 120 musicians. And there were some reknown names that came from that family. In like manner, Asaph founded a family which the book of Ezra informs us, gave 128 singers to the nation. But after a few generations, no one of that name was found in history.

But here was an outstanding chief of musicians, who were sent over to service in song in the house of the Lord. He was entrusted with the ministry of music - both vocal and instrumental. And in a religious service, this was an important task. He had to set voices and an orchestra, and religious poetry - which is among some of the greatest in inspiration of that generation.

He was both really a singer and a poet, and he would say, he was somewhat of a prophet. I think there are something like (12 poems) that bear his name.

He had such a brilliant gift of poetry and music, that some later generations placed him on par with David. His skill as a poet was recognized and it is to be remembered that he lived in one of the greatest periods of Hebrew history. When the flowers and the fruits of culture were glorious. It was the golden age. And he had an opportunity to manifest his talents. And to combine his rare distinction as a priest, a prophet, and a poet. He no doubt belonged to the (priestly) family of Levites. And had the job in the religious services of the Tabernacle and the temple. It was family tradition and it carried him back with the ritual and the ceremonies. He was well acquainted with this because he conducted the music at the elaborate religious services of David's day. And, he knew that ceremony played a big part in the worship of God.

Yet, the 50th Psalm, coming from his pen - had one of the most sweeping denunciations of the whole reign of ritual. There are few pages in the Bible that play up and exalt the requirements of God.

The Psalm opens with a (summons) to worship in the house of prayer. Where God reveals himself and all of his loveliness - the mighty God. Even the Lord has spoken and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof. So the presence of God was associated with the (tabernacle) in the sense that here was a possibility. That the hour here is, that God is in Spirit and he is to be worshipped. And a company of people worshipping God present a marvelous spectacle. How wonderful it is, to see a congregation of people worshipping God. Raising their prayers before one that they had never seen nor felt. And yet they offer their praise and their prayers before a being who is eternal, immortal, and invisible. This is wonderful. Because man does not see God, nor does he hear his voice, nor the touch of his hand. Or can we trace his footprints on the ground. But man always has in his heart, oh, that I knew where I might find him. That I might come even before him. This was the deep thing of service that the author had in mind as he wrote about God's courtroom here.

Let us consider this Psalm then = first, scene of judgement. V. 1-6.  
Second, summons to answer charges. V. 7-20. Third, sentence recorded. V. 21-23.

#### I. SCENE OF JUDGEMENT - V.1-6.

V. (1) Is a (mighty call). It is a (summons) to the whole earth. Here is a judge that is coming. The mighty God.

*judge - Passenger*  
Passenger - "I wish you would overrule" - The motion?"

Have you ever gone to a courtroom or have you ever been summons to come to court. This is something like the Psalmist had in mind as he looked upon the scene that was awesome and impressive. The judge is coming into the courtroom and the people are going to be summons to the bar.

God, himself, is judge.

Look at the judge first. This is a courtroom in which God sits to judge the people. V. 1 - He describes himself in (three ways) The mighty one, God, the Lord. Now, the name ~~El~~<sup>EL</sup> and the name Elohim and the name Jehovah were in the Hebrew three names. These three names are impressive. As we talk about the mighty characteristics of God.

He is first, EL. The mighty one, the all powerful one. The one of authority and strength. Elohim, the one of majesty. Of greatness. The supreme one. The soverign one over all.

Jehovah, he is the God of mercy. The one who graciously enters into the understand-<sup>ING</sup> of his (people's needs).

Now this is the scene we have - God the judge. He is introducing himself. As being the God of might, majesty, and mercy. And he is soverign. He is one of grace and love.

V. 2 - He comes out of Zion, in perfect beauty. The judge does not come out of Sinai. Sinai, was of course, where the law was given. It was acquainted with thunderous judgement. The voice of the trumpet which gets louder and louder until the people could not stand it. They cried out to Moses - you speak to us, but let not God speak to us. Less we die.

But this is not Sinai - this is Zion in Jerusalem. And it stands for the mercy of God, the redemptive love of God. God is judging - but he is judging in mercy. It is well to remember this as we go into this Psalm, of judgement, as we look at the scene it will be more realistic. It refers to Jerusalem. Now some people have taken this as meaning the (second coming), and describe as Christ the Lord Jesus returning to earth in power and glory. Matt. 25. He sits upon the throne and gathers the nations before him to judge them. Now it is true, Jesus is coming to the earth. And when he came the first time, he came in weakness, humility, and born in a stable in the hills of Bethlehem. There was no real power exhibited there. But when he comes again, he will come in great glory to judge the earth. And they are summons before him.

Now the Psalm is in my judgement, a very beautiful description of an Old Testament event which is recorded in the New Testament.

But it would be a mistake for us to limit this Psalm to that event. Which often happens when we take a passage of Scripture. It may apply to many different occasions. He not only looks forward to the time when Christ will return to judge his people, it also describes a judgement that is going on right now.

This is indicated in V. 1. He summons the earth from the rising of the sun to the setting. The sun rises every morning and it sets every evening. This indicates something goes on daily. God is daily judging his people. He is sitting among them as a judge.

V. 3 - the Hebrew says our God comes. Not is coming in the future - but he keeps coming. He is (always coming.) And we are (always living) in the presence of God. Our God comes - he does not keep silent.

He talks about the people who are going to be judged. There are two symbols that mark the characteristic of judgement, of God. First, there is [fire.] And then there is wind, as recorded in V. 3. Our God shall not keep silent. A fire shall devour before him. And then there will be a [tempest.] These two things - now in the New Testament these symbols are used to describe God as a consuming fire. The Spirit of God is described in Acts as a mighty rushing wind. The wind blows where it desires said Jesus to Nicodemus. You hear the sound but you cannot tell where it is coming from. And where it is going. So is everyone born of the Spirit.

Here is a great suggestion - the symbol of fire purifies. It destroys all the waste and trash. A fire burns out those things that need not to be in the soul.

Now the wind is one of the mighty forces of nature. I once was in a revival meeting in N. C. And a man showed me a piece of 2x4 that had gone through a pine tree - about a foot long and was extended on the other side.

From this log which he had cut. That happened during a tornado. Now, if you had taken that 2x4 and tried to drive it through that tree, it would have not happened. You would have been too weak. And you know the wind can take even a piece of straw and drive it through a board or a pole during a mighty wind. Now this is something that happened on the day of Pentecost. The mighty rushing wind came. And the Disciples were empowered to do things that they were unable to do before. They went out and upset the world of their day. They astonished men with the evidence that they had this power.

Now the Psalmist tells us here - that God judges and he will do two things. He will burn up the trash in your life, and then he will empower you to live for him. Now if you catch this - this Psalm will be marvelous for you.

V. <sup>v. 5</sup>4 - He tells us who these (people) are that he is going to judge. His people. He says gather the saints together unto me. Those that have made a covenant with me. He calls heaven and earth. He is going to judge his people. Now we are his people, are we not. Israel, they were the ones that made a covenant with God by sacrifice. And of course, he is going to refer to the animal sacrifices. They were to reflect the relationship that God had with his people. The covenant of blood, and all of the Old Testament sacrifices were pictures of Christ. Who was to be offered.

In Christ, we are his people. We have made a covenant with God. By a sacrifice. Now this arrangement has been made possible because of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. So the Psalmist describes what is going on right now. He is God among his people. And what he is saying to us - God is coming. He loves and

sees things. And that is why this section ends with the little word selah.  
It means stop, look, and listen. And then it means think. Just think of that.  
The judge is in our midst. And God is judging our people. The awesome scene  
of judgement with the judge, the mighty God, and the principles upon which  
judgement will be administered out of Zion. With certainty of that judgement  
that God will come. The person to be judged is going to judge his people. And  
the witness to that judgement - he shall call the heavens from above. And to  
the earth that they may judge his people. He is going to be called upon to  
be present, to witness the solemn transaction of judgement. Such appeals to  
the heaven and earth to witness in Scripture. It indicates that it is a solemn  
attraction that they are called upon by Heaven. The angels will witness this  
judgement.

## II. SUMMONS TO ANSWER CHARGES

As the judge comes to the courtroom - there are going to be two charges that  
they will deal with. First, the (form vs. spirit). And second, (deceit vs. sincerity).

First, (form vs. spirit) - V. 7-15.

This passage says in V. (7), here are my people. I will speak. I will testify  
against thee. The Lord God will listen to what the judge has to say. He is going  
to talk about the (worthlessness) of mere form.

V. (8) - I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices nor thy burnt offerings  
to have them continually before me. The judge says first there are some certain  
things that you are doing that are just right.



Israel brought every day the sacrifices which they are prescribed. Now I do not reprove you for that, God says. There are certain things which you are doing just right. But what was wrong, they thought the act of sacrificing was all that God wanted. And for that same reason, they thought that he needed the flesh of bulls and the blood of goats. And they had a very low concept of God. V. 9 - I will take no more bullocks out of thy house, nor goats out of thy folds. I reject these sacrifices.

How absurd can he get. Do you really think I am that kind of God. Do you think I need flesh and blood.

Now this is an appraisal of the ritual and the ceremonial observance. No fault can be found with them on this score except it had become mechanical of their services. And Asaph quotes the Lord, I will not reprove thee, these burnt offerings that are brought before me. However, he goes back to the book of Samuel, behold, to obey is better than sacrifice. Now, it is a picture of Hosea, I desired mercy and not sacrifice God said.

The great symbols of Israel - the ark of the covenant. It was a sacred thing. And that little box with measured approximately 4 ft. long and 2 1/2 feet wide, and 2 1/2 feet high. On the lid of it - the figures of the Cherubim and was wrought in gold and it contained a copy of the law of Moses, a golden pot of manna, the rod of Aaron. And we appreciate that they held this as a symbol. And that it had power in their midst. But the use of a symbol should never be substituted but a stimulous to worldly living.

We remember the Scottish hero, the black douglas in a noteable battle - took a silver (locket) containing the heart of Robert Bruce. And around his neck, and harrelled it into the midst of the enemy. He did not thereby do anything to decide the issue of the conflict. But the act inspired him to shout "on heart of Bruce, Bruce as thou doest want. Douglas will follow thee or die." It was a valueable symbol. Now the observance of ceremony is fine. But it is no excuse for neglect of practical service of God. And that is what your Bible orders. That is the service of God.

If a (child) finds itself in want of anything, and asks its father for it. Does it call that doing his father a service. If it begs for a toy or a piece of cake - does it call that service, or serving his father. Now that with God is prayer and he likes to hear it. He likes for you to ask him for cake. But he doesn't call that serving him.

So when a (child) loves his father very much, or very happy - it may sing little songs about him. But it doesn't call that serving his father. Neither is singing songs about God, serving God.

Divine service will be performed. And it is a willing act of life.

V. 10 - God speaks about his (ownership). He owns the forest, the hills, and the mountains and air. The world is mine. V. 10-12. All of this, belongs to me. I own all the beasts of the forest. The elk, the moose - all the birds in the air. The wonderful wild fowl - they are all mine. And I can do with them as I will. If I hunger, if that were my motive in asking you to bring sacrifices

then I could heap up a mountain of flesh.

Do you see the parallel today - many people will go to church once in awhile and think that God wants them to sing a hymn, spend an hour in prayer and go through a certain form. How absurd. It is all perfectly right - there is nothing wrong with it. But that is not what God is after. It is not what God desires.

A preacher once asked a man about his minister. He said - tell me what is wrong with the evangelical church today. I've been trying to get the answer to the questions for quite a while. And he put it in a brief form. He said I have been thinking too. And I said finally - there are two things that are wrong with the evangelical church. There is a lot of things that are right. Our doctrine is right. Our emphasis upon the authority of the Scripture is right. Our concern about getting away from the authority of the Bible is right. There is nothing wrong with that.

But the average church is dead. And many Christians do not demonstrate any real life. Their words are wonderful - but their lives leave much to be desired. Like Avrial Harriman. Ambassador to France. Somebody said - how is your French. He said, oh, my French is excellent. All but the verbs.

That sounds something like the politician who was talking about the two Germans who went to a meeting. It was long and tiresome. (Let's go) - said one. No, said the other, lets wait for the verb.

Well, that gives you a good idea of the French sentence structure.

It is pretty long and you have to wait for that verb to come up.

Now our religion is excellent which we have. All except the verbs.  
Holy, sacred, divine - noble, and all the rest.

There are the wonderful nouns that match the adjectives. But no great verbs. Yet there are some great verbs in the Christian religion. Come, follow, go, do, be, work. And millions of people are waiting for the verb to go with the noun brother. The deed, to make it more than words.

Think about some of these verbs - loving, forgiving, healing, restoring. That is where we are weak, is it not. And that is what God is finding fault with. He said your sacrifices are fine. But where are your hearts.

A second thing he said is wrong with the evangelical church is its remoteness. It is far removed from life as it is. It tends to withdraw from the real issues of life. It will not involve itself where people are bleeding, struggling, and facing terrible problems. We tend to excuse that by saying, well - getting in and helping outwardly doesn't solve anything ultimately. But it is wrong for us not to be involved. This turns off many people today. They do not want to touch anything like the Levite in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. He pulled his robes about him and crossed over to the other side. Leaving the wounded man without help. You observe the form - but there is something missing. And God's says it is form vs. spirit. Here is a charge against him.

What does God want - what does the judge want you to do about this charge. V. 14-15 - God says offer thanks. Pay your vows. Call upon me. Well, he does not want more of our form - all that is fine. Each one of us - he wants us to offer him the sacrifice of thanksgiving. And that is something that costs us.

Have you ever asked yourself why do the Scriptures stress thanksgiving so much. Both in the Old Testament and New - above everything else, God wants thankfulness. In the New Testament, Paul says give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Well it is because thanksgiving only comes as a result of having received something.

You only say "thank you" when somebody has given you something that you did not have yourself. It all comes from someone else. Therefore thanksgiving is a proper expression of Christianity. Because to be a Christian, is to be constantly receiving something from God.

If you have not received anything from God - then you have nothing to thank him for. When you go to church in a critical, complaining, griping and grumbling mood, no matter how many hymns you sing or how many prayers you recite - you are really not worshipping God. You have not received. Now you cannot fake thanksgiving.

I know there are certain people - and they are awfully (hard to live) with. But think that Christianity consists of pretending to be thankful. They think they can screw up a smile on their face, and pretend that they don't have any troubles. But that is a most painful kind of Christianity. Now God doesn't want a man to go around shouting Hallelujah - I got cancer. Oh no, that is not what

God wants. God wants you to be thankful for what he can do with every situation.

Now the first thing that he wants in worship is a thankful heart. And the second thing, he wants is an obedient will. Pay your vows. Notice the kind of obedience that it is. It is not something that is forced upon you. You have chosen for yourself.

A vow is something that you decide to give. Or to make because of the truth that you have seen. You say, I never saw it like that before. I really ought to do something about it. God I am going to do such and such. That is a vow. And God said, I am not asking you to do things which you have learned are not yet important. If you have vowed something - then do it.

<sup>1 v. 15</sup> Now the third thing that God wants out of you in V. 15 - God wants a prayerful spirit. Follow me in the day of trouble. And I will deliver you and you shall glorify me. He wants to be recognized where the force of power is. Power comes from him.

The open lines of Psalm 27 - The Lord is my light, and my salvation.

Now that is the spirit in which David met Goliath. There was Goliath 9 feet tall. Clothed with his armour. A great beam frightening the armies of Israel. But little David says, who is this - I am a circumcized giant. Who dares to defy the armies of the living God. Who does he think he is.

He is nothing. The Lord is the strength of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid. Psalm 27:1.

Now that is great. How different David is from us. He is in the midst of his people pointing these truths out.

The next thing is (deceit vs. sincerity.) V. 16-20. We are summoned to answer the charge of form vs. spirit. And now deceit vs. sincerity. This is another class. But to the wicked, God says, what right have you to recite my statutes.

I suppose in every congregation and in every church - there are those that are superficial, who need to be rebuked and challenged to be real. There are those who are not sincere. But there is deceit. What we call hypocrites. We use all the right words in their Christian form. They are very ungodly. And there is wickedness in their hearts. It is forgetting that God lives and exists. It is to rule him out of his life. The ungodly and so wicked.

The judge sees these. And he identifies these.

In V. 17 - Thou hatest instruction. They hate discipline. They want only their own way. They reject the truth. They do not hear the truth or want the truth. They do not recognize anything as truth. They believe that everything - whatever they like is right. They want basically their own way.

\* In V. 18 - They admire evil. When thou sawest a (thief), he says here. You are a friend of his. You join them. You keep company with adulterers. The thing is, you admire evil and you enjoy evil friendship. This is the charge that Paul put in Romans 1. They admired evil but they approved those that practiced evil. And this is what God describes here in this Psalm. He says, he thinks he is better. You admire a man who can cheat someone and get away with it. You want to be with him and to imitate him. You see someone who lives an open sexual, immoral life - and you say, why, he is free. And you seek him out. You think he is better off than you are. Living under certain restraints. You admire this person who seems to be free. Who gets a kick out of life by kicking over the traces.

And third, V. 19 - Thou givest thou (tongue) to frame deceit. You have an ungoverned tongue. It is just whatever he feels like saying. Lies, he slices away and jabs at their reputation. You did this even, the judge says, to your brother, sister, or to everyone in your family. God will reveal that you are wicked. And that you do not own God in your life. You are essentially ungodly.

Today, we have not only Christians - but also, what we call (Christianeers). Those that subscribe to the (outward) form of Christianity. They are in every congregation. We have this type. Some times it is hard to tell them apart. But God knows and God is judging. He is in the midst. (If you are not for real) - you may believe you even have God fooled. But you listen to what the judge says.



Now we have been at the scene of judgement and we have had the charges spread out. And now the great judge of the universe is going to lay out the sentence.

First, the awful fallacy V. 21. Thou thought that thou was altogether as thyself. Now there are certain features in which we like God. And men are able to hide their sins from each other. And men are apt to lose all concern of the insignificant when they are occupied with wickedness. And they act as though this truly is the way that God sees wickedness. Now God is saying here, Mark this - and you do this and expect me to say nothing.

The question that God puts in V. 21 - do you really think that I am like you. God says now I do not always act immediately. I may be silent. But surely you have heard people say - why doesn't God cause my hand to shrivel when I took something that didn't belong to me yesterday.

Why didn't he cut off my tongue when I said that sharp and cutful word to my friend.

Why didn't he blind my eye when I let them dwell on something that I shouldn't have.

Why didn't God remove my mind when I let it play upon lust.

You see, if God is going to judge. He must judge all. God counsels us.

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Why didn't he cut my friend.

Why didn't he blind have.

Why didn't God remember

You see, if God is going

W. F. Powell, who for many years was pastor of First Church, Nashville, Tenn. once told this story at the Southern Baptist Convention.

He said two robins built a nest in his backyard hedge. He and Mrs. Powell watched the two birds work long and diligently in building the nest. Soon eggs appeared and before long there were five little robins in the nest. The parent birds lovingly cared for the little ones. The Powells put food in easy reach of the birds. They spent much time in the late afternoon fascinatingly watching the happy birds. One afternoon a snake slinked through the fence from a nearby wood, and the Powells heard the frightened and anguished cry of the birds. By the time they got outside the snake had already devoured the five little robins. Powell killed the snake. Sorrowfully Powell told the parent birds, "I'm so sorry for you, but you built your nest too low!"

Obviously, as children grow to ma-

turity they must chart their own destiny. However, it is vitally important to provide them a home that will give them a Christian environment during their formative years. What are the characteristics of such a home?

1. It is a home where father and mother are both devoted Christians.
2. It is a home where Bible reading and prayer is a daily experience.
3. It is a home where the local church is honored and the pastor respected.
4. It is a home where discipline is lovingly administered.
5. It is a home where there is an atmosphere of love.

**BUILD YOUR NEST HIGH!**

God counsels us.

And God says he lets this go on - why. Because he wants to reach us. I don't want you to be this way, God says. I want to change you.

I want to call you back. But do not misread my indifference. You thought I was like you. That I didn't give any thought to these things. But friend there is coming a time, I must lay this charge clearly before you. You can't go on this way.

Now in V. 23, God says, I am offering you redemption and salvation. Remember, if you refuse it, there will come a time that I must become your enemy. If I, God, who wants to be your friend is made your enemy by the way you act towards me - then who will be your friend in that day.

Now God has a (thousand ways) of leveling accounts. Of settling up issues. And who can defend against him - who can take on God. Who can overcome his purposes. We must get that into our minds. God is not fooled. He sees us exactly as we are.

The one who brings thanksgiving as his sacrifice - honestly.

To him who orders his way a right, God says I will show him that man's salvation. V. 23. Such a man is not always able to follow through as he desires. God knows that.

But one who wants to order his way a right, God says I will show you salvation. And that is a great word. It is a word that gathers up all that

God wants to do for us. In us, through us, and by us.

And God offers to produce men who are not for sale. Who are honest, who are sound and true to the core. God offers to produce men who will stand for that which is right even while the world reels about them.

And men who will stand for God and say - they are on his side. And they will not be ashamed to say, I won't do this. I can't afford it. He wants men and women, boys and girls who have found strength in the only place where everyone can find it - in salvation.