

Psalm 50:1-23
When Your Loyalty to God is On Trial

Introduction: This psalm is from the perspective of a prophet describing God's courtroom. We will notice many first-person references (me, my, I, etc.) to God speaking.

Superscription: *A Psalm [mizmor] of Asaph.*

- This is the first of 12 psalms attributed to him (50, 73-83).

1) God arrives to speak and to judge His people—50:1-6

a) Does God possess the necessary credentials to accomplish this task?—50:1-4

i) Authoritative to summon witnesses: ¹ *The Mighty One [El], God [Elohim] the LORD [Yahweh], speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.*

(1) Cf. Josh. 22:22, the only other time all three names occur like this.

ii) Glorious: ² *Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth.*

iii) All-powerful: ³ *Our God comes; he does not keep silence; before him is a devouring fire, around him a mighty tempest.*

iv) Judge: ⁴ *He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that he may judge his people:*

b) The defendants' (Israel) covenant relationship with the Judge—50:5-6

i) ⁵ *“Gather to me my faithful ones [hesed],*

(1) *who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!”*

ii) ⁶ *The heavens declare his righteousness [tsedeq],*

(1) *Why? for God himself is judge!*

(a) *With perfect knowledge, perfect impartiality, and perfect wisdom.*

iii) *Selah*

2) The danger of ritualism: God speaks directly to the righteous people within Israel—50:7-15

a) Righteous Israel is judged by their God—50:7

i) ⁷ *“Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, I will testify against you^{pl}. I am God, your^{pl} God.*

b) God does not need the gifts of righteous Israel—50:8-13

i) ⁸ *Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you; your burnt offerings are continually before me. ⁹ I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your folds.*

ii) Why? Because God is self-sufficient—50:10-13

(1) ¹⁰ *For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills.*

(2) ¹¹ *I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves (insects?) in the field is mine.*

(3) ¹² *“If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine.*

- (4) Rhetorical question: ¹³ *Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?*
- (a) The false gods of the Ancient Near East depended on the people's sacrifices for their food. The True God cannot be manipulated like that.
- c) God commands righteous Israel to give with the right motives—50:14-15
- i) Three commands
- (1) Two voluntary offerings in which they shared by eating from the offering. Cf. Lev. 7:12; 22:29
- (a) Be genuinely grateful: ¹⁴ *Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,*
- (b) Be people of integrity: *and perform your vows to the Most High,*
- (2) Be people of prayer: ¹⁵ *and call upon me in the day of trouble;*
- ii) Two promises
- (1) He loves to ask on behalf of His children: *I will deliver you,*
- (2) He loves to be glorified by His children: *and you shall glorify me."*
- 3) **The danger of rebellion: God speaks directly to wicked individual Israelites—50:16-23** *But to the wicked (singular) God says:*
- a) God's rhetorical questions—50:16
- i) *"What right have you to recite my statutes or take my covenant on your lips?*
- ii) It is easy to simply say the right words, isn't it?
- b) The evidence against the foolish individual supports God's charges—50:17-20
- i) They reject the good: ¹⁷ *For you hate discipline,*
- ii) They reject God's Word: *and you cast my words behind you.*
- iii) They embrace the evil:
- (1) Wrong values with violation of the 8th commandment: ¹⁸ *If you see a thief, you are pleased with him,*
- (2) Wrong association with violation of the 7th commandment: *and you keep company with adulterers.*
- iv) They utilize corrupt speech: (violation of the 9th commandment)
- (1) ¹⁹ *"You give your mouth free rein for evil, and your tongue frames deceit.*
- (2) ²⁰ *You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son.*
- c) God's rebuke—50:21
- i) Wrong behavior: ²¹ *These things you have done, and I have been silent;*
- (1) God delayed His judgment of them, but His patience will eventually run out.
- ii) Wrong thinking: *you thought that I was one like yourself.*
- (1) He wrongly assumes God's silence equals God's inability or unwillingness to judge.
- (2) They had confused God's patience with God's permission. (Allen Ross)
- iii) Appropriate conviction: *But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you.*

- d) God's righteous conclusion—50:22-23
 - i) Warnings (switches to plural): ²² *“Mark this, then, you who forget God, lest I tear you apart, and there be none to deliver!*
 - (1) Those who neglect a relationship with God find themselves with no God to rescue them during adversity. (FSB)
 - (2) These are those who attempt to live as though God doesn't matter.
 - ii) Promises (switches to singular):
 - (1) God's glory: ²³ *The one who offers thanksgiving [Qal act. ptc.] as his sacrifice glorifies me;*
 - (2) God's provision: *to one who orders [Qal act. ptc.] his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!”*

4) Things to remember:

- a) While judgment is guaranteed to occur, the opportunity for salvation is still available. But this opportunity does not last forever.
- b) It is a constant challenge to go through the motions of worship without heartfelt praise and obedience.