

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Psalms: Living By Faith In God
L. God's Solution To Harmful Religious Manipulators
(Psalm 50:1-23)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

A lot of people today practice harmful religious manipulation on others:

(1) Many members of Congress do this: (a) "U. S. Rep. Jared Huffman, D-Calif." said "many colleagues in Congress find religion to be politically useful, 'particularly across the aisle, how so many of them exploit and weaponize religion but seem to be totally divorced from any authentic connection to the religion they're weaponizing.'" (Peter Smith, "Survey: Religiously, Congress doesn't reflect America," Republican-American, January 6, 2023, p. 3B) (b) However, Democrats in Congress practice it, too: Phil Zuckerman, professor of sociology and secular studies at Pitzer College in California, said, "'The fact that the (Democratic) leadership doesn't reflect an open, secular identity is paradoxical,' for 'Democrats know that non-religious voters align with them on the issues, but party leaders also don't want to alienate other, more religious parts of the party's base, particularly Black Protestants. Party leaders' thus "'speak to the politics of secular people but don't want to take on the identity,'" Ibid.

(2) Many leftists practice it: The Black Lives Matter movement was begun allegedly to promote the belief that African American lives are valuable, what certainly aligns with Scripture, but Mike Gonzales' piece, "New Congress should investigate BLM riots," Ibid., January 3, 2023, p. 6A, asserted, "The founders of the BLM movement are committed Marxists who, for years, created a vast revolutionary infrastructure in which to meet and strategize. They received . . . direction, strategic support, and . . . encouragement from . . . Venezuela . . . but also China . . . All of this happened years before 2020 – and . . . the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the death of Trayvon Martin . . . that gave revolutionaries the opportunity to create the BLM movement in the first place." Consequently, "America enters 2023 as a radically different society because of the 2020 violence linked to Black Lives Matter," Ibid.

(3) Many religious leaders practice it: The Christian Church's Council of Carthage in A. D. 397 formed a list of books as its Biblical canon of authoritative books, what included the 66 books of the Protestant Bible plus "several books" in "the Apocrypha." (gotquestions.com, "What happened at the Council of Carthage?") Yet, "both before and after the Council of Carthage, most Christian and Jewish scholars held the Apocrypha to be non-canonical," Ibid. When later "confronted by the [Protestant] Reformers," the Roman Catholic Church "lacked arguments to justify her unscriptural deviations," so "(s)he declared that the Apocryphal books supported" the doctrines of prayers for the dead, the expiatory sacrifice (later the mass), almsgiving with expiatory value, leading to deliverance from death, the invocation and intercession of the saints, the worship of angels, purgatory, and the redemption of souls after death. (Rene Pache, The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture, 1971, p. 173) Thus, the Roman Catholic Church at its 1546 Council of Trent included several Apocryphal books in the canon, anathematizing all who disagreed with this move, what condemned even their own "Saint" Jerome who had translated the Catholic Church's Latin Vulgate! (Ibid.)

(4) Some people even try to manipulate God lawlessly: Jorge Fitz-Gibbon's piece, "Prayers of migrants go unanswered," New York Post, January 9, 2023, p. 4, reported, "Desperate migrants prayed . . . as cops rounded them up in El Paso, Texas," with one man being heard to pray "loudly in Spanish in an NBC News report," saying, "'Cover us, father, in the name of Jesus . . . They are looking for a better future. They're respecting the law, sir.'" In contrast, on the next page (Ibid., p. 5) was a copy of a letter from Texas Governor Greg Abbott to the president, stating: "Dear President Biden: Your visit to our southern border with Mexico today is \$20 billion too little and two years too late . . . On behalf of all Americans, I implore you: Secure our border by enforcing Congress's immigration laws."

Need: So, we ask, "What is God's answer to harmful religious manipulators?!"

- I. In Psalm 50:1-6, the Lord summoned a court case, calling the heavens and the earth as witnesses and His covenant people Israel as the defendants, Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament, p. 831.
- II. God's first indictment was against Israel's godless efforts religiously to manipulate Him, Psalm 50:7-15:
 - A. Ancient Near Eastern pagans believed that the gods "thrived on food sacrifices," so that if they provided the gods with enough sacrifices, they would be moved to grant the worshippers their requests, Ibid.
 - B. Israel's people applied this belief to God, thinking they could manipulate Him to bless them by sacrifices.
 - C. God reacted to these worship efforts, saying that He did not rebuke Israel for her sacrifices, Psalm 50:7-8.
 - D. However, He claimed that had no need for such sacrifices since He as the Creator could take any animals He wanted anywhere in the world to satisfy His hunger without relying on His people's sacrifices, Psalm 50:9-13.

E. God thus implied that His people were insubordinately trying to manipulate Him for their own interests, that they should instead rely on Him, offer thank offerings, fulfill their vows and call on Him for help, v. 14-15.

III. God also indicted Israel for hypocritically trying to manipulate disobedience to His Word, Psa. 50:16-23:

- A. On the one hand, God's people honored their commitment to His Word with their lips, Psalm 50:16.
- B. However, this was done hypocritically, for they rebelled against His Word to commit many sins, believing that God's great patience in not immediately punishing them meant that He condoned their sins, Psalm 50:17-21.
- C. Rather, God called His people to consider their accountability to Him lest He severely punish them, to realize that they needed to submit to His sovereignty by offering thank offerings and living righteously in obedience to His Word that they might enjoy God's deliverance from His punishment for sin, Psalm 50:22-23.

Lesson: *God's people practiced harmfully religious manipulation in insubordinately trying to lure God to do what they wanted and hypocritically to manipulate rebellion against His Word. Israel was to repent of these sins lest she face God's severe punishment, a repentance that included submitting to God's headship, heeding His Word and calling on Him for deliverance from her trials.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) If we have tried to manipulate God to give us the blessings we seek from Him or if we have hypocritically disobeyed His Word, (a) may we confess it as sin and turn from such sin to avoid His severe punishment and (b) humbly obey His Word and rely on Him for relief from our trials. (3) If we have been harmfully manipulated in a religious context, (a) may we call on God for His help and (b) heed the guidance of His Word in avoiding needless continued exposure to such harmful manipulators.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message and provide additional guidance . . .)

Scripture provides us insight on handling the issues of concern mentioned in our introduction (as follows):

(1) On the exploitation and weaponizing of religious beliefs by members of Congress, like the Bereans in Acts 17:11, we should search the Scriptures daily to see whether the statements members of Congress make are true, making Scripture and not members of Congress our ultimate source of the truth on religious matters.

(2) On how the Black Lives Matter movement's leaders used the Biblically true idea that the lives of African Americans are as valuable as the lives of others to foster a Marxist revolution, (a) 2 Timothy 3:13 warned that evil people and seducers would go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived, and Paul told Timothy to keep preaching God's Word in view of the coming apostacy in 2 Timothy 4:1-5. We must keep preaching God's Word!

(3) On the Catholic Church's addition of some Apocryphal books to the canon to support some of its beliefs, those beliefs are **countered** by the **initial 66-book canon**: (a) On Prayers for the Dead [taught by 2 Maccabees 12:44-45; Ibid., Pache], after death is the judgment when the unsaved will be judged by their works in this life according to Hebrews 9:27 and Revelation 20:11-12, so prayers for the dead are ineffective. (b) On the Expiatory Sacrifice (later, the Mass) [taught by 2 Maccabees 12:39-45; Ibid.], Hebrews 9:28 and 10:14 with Ephesians 2:8-9 teach that Christ by His **one** death on the cross positionally forever perfects those who trust in Him. (c) On Almsgiving with Expiatory value and leading to deliverance from death [taught by Tobit 4:10; 12:9; Ibid.], Ephesians 2:8-9 claims that justification is by faith, not works, and Hebrews 9:27 asserts that all men are appointed once to die, and after that the judgment, so alms cannot deliver from physical or eternal death. (d) On the Invocation and Intercession of the Saints [taught by 2 Maccabees 15:14 and Baruch 3:4; Ibid.], 1 Timothy 2:5 claims Jesus is mankind's sole Mediator with God. (e) On the Worship of Angels [taught by Tobit 12:12; Ibid.], Colossians 2:18 opposes it. (f) On Purgatory and the Redemption of Souls after death [taught by 2 Maccabees 12:42, 45; Ibid.], Hebrews 9:27 with 2 Thessalonians 1:9 teach that the unsaved at death face eternal torment, and 2 Corinthians 5:8 teaches that believers at death enter heaven. (g) Also, 1 Maccabees at 4:46, 9:27, and 14:41 in the Apocrypha admits that it is not God inspired! (**The Apocrypha**, Cambridge University Press, p. 119, 127, 137) (h) When Jesus said that Israel's martyred prophets in Luke 11:50-51 began with Abel (Genesis 4:1-8) and ended with Zechariah (2 Chronicles 24:20-22) in the last book in the Hebrew Bible, He named Zechariah and not a Maccabean as the last prophet, so he denied the canonicity of the Apocrypha.

(4) On the immigrant who was praying at the southern border, urging God to protect the immigrants as alleged law abiding people who were illegally trying to enter the U. S., (a) 1 John 3:22 with 5:14-15 teach that God hears our prayers **if** we **obey** Him and pray according to **His will**, and (b) 1 Peter 2:13 calls us to obey the government's laws. Immigrants to our country, like its citizens, must heed our nation's laws if they want God to answer their prayers!

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. May we not seek to manipulate God or others but live by faith in submission to Him for blessing.