

Psalm 95 — The Joy of Worshiping God Together & The Warning Against Hardening Your Heart!

****READ THE TEXT****

INTRO-

Introductory Illustration

- Recently I came across an online database that showed that there are over 3700 churches in the greater STL area. *Wow! That's a lot!*
- It's common for many today to view the Gathering of the Local Church is a peripheral, optional (perhaps helpful) opportunity.
- And the reality is: in many places of so-called worship:
 - The focus is on **RELEVANT** message; *not* on the ravishing Majesty of our God!
 - the focus is on **LAUGHING**; and *not* on the LORD
 - the focus is on **ENTERTAINMENT**; and *not* on the ATONEMENT
 - the focus is on **GETTING PEOPLE IN**; and *not* EXALTING GOD – HIGH & LIFTED UP.
 - the focus is on **RISING HIGH** in SELF-CONFIDENCE & SELF ESTEEM; and *not* BOWING LOW prostrate in HUMBLE submission!
 - the focus is on the visible **BUILDING**, the place, the props, the preacher's appearance, the stage; *not* the UNSEEN HEART OF WORSHIP & DETERMINATION TO OBEDIENCE!
- SOME VIEW the corporate worship of MEETING WITH GOD
 - as optional; not essential
 - as an 'add-on'; but not the FOUNDATION
 - as a Sunday-possibility, but not a Spiritual Priority!
 - As an appointment on the calendar; not an obsession with the Redeemer!
- **Someone once said that many people are: "CHURCH DATER"**
 - 1)** a church-dater is **ME-CENTERED** (what I get out of it; the main driving question is: What can this church DO/GIVE to me?)
 - 2)** a church dater is **INDEPENDENT** — 'not involved; E.g. "I don't need other people in my life"; I'm busy and OK with that'.
 - 3)** a church dater is **CRITICAL** — attends but complains; a fault-finder and he takes note of & shares about the church's imperfections.
- **WHY** gather? **Why** assemble? **Why** sing? **Why** preach? **Why** hear from God? **Why** gather to meet God and meet w/ his people?
 - ❖> GOD IS WORTHY OF THE HIGHEST PRAISE! WE MUST BOW LOW!
 - ❖> GOD IS SPEAKING THRU HIS WRITTEN WORD! WE MUST OBEY HIM!
- So again, to ask & answer this question: Why gather for worship? **6 brief phrases:**
 1. To **praise** (God)
 2. To **remember** (Truth)

3. To **edify** (Saints)
4. To **unify** (Fellowship)
5. To **protect** (from Error)
6. To **focus /re-focus** (upon Christ, Gospel, Heaven, things that really/eternally matter)

- In this wonderful Psalm, We learn that ASSEMBLING TOGETHER — must be REGULAR, must be JOYOUS, must be MAN-DEBASING, GOD-EXALTING, must be URGENT, must be ANTICIPATORY & it must be EVANGELISTIC!! **Yes, CHRIST is the object, the goal, the sum, the focus, the satisfaction of our worship! It's about HIM.**
 - and here's Gods' Word CALLING us/ INVITING us/ SUMMONING us/ BECKONING us/ WOOING us to come, meet God!! Together as a congregation!

Background to Psalm 95

- **Psalm 95** is found in the heart of one of the main thematic sections of the psalter — psalms 93-100 are the KINGSHIP psalms// they present and acclaim and adore the Sovereignty of Jehovah! [*The Lord reigns, He's the King, Bow & Submit to Him!*]
- David wrote [Heb 4.7] Psalm 95 has a word for the ASSEMBLY and a tone of URGENCY!
 - It's a psalm about the UNRIVALED MAGNIFICENCE of God and the CLOSE NEARNESS of God!
 - it's a psalm of INVITATION to submit to the KING and a CAUTION against not submitting to this King!
 - It's a CALL TO WORSHIP and a CAUTION against DISOBEDIENCE!

THESIS — This is a remarkable hymn that teaches us about *praising God together* & it provides a warning to those who will not bow to Christ. **2 headings & 2 commands for us!**

1. **Come!** Let us be **worshipping our God!** (vv1-7a)
2. **Caution!** Let us be **warned by God!** (vv7b-11)

I. COME! LET US BE WORSHIPING OUR GOD! (1-7a)

- Imagine if not only God calls us to worship Him, but we called & begged one another to *consistently, regularly, genuinely, affectionately, and intentionally worship God together!*
- Think of a team that is calling players to keep running hard, to complete the drills, the run till the end: saying: ***"Come on! Keep going! Come on! Let's do this together!"*** That's the spirit of these verses.

A. V.1-2 - the invitation to come! (1-2, 6)

1. Amazing verses: here we have "LOUD-MOUTHED CRIES" -- lion-like roars to praise God. The English is too tame and quiet & too soft for the Hebrew. The psalm opens with a LOUD CRASH OF WORDS: He calls upon the worshipers to SHOUT and SING loudly & joyfully & enthusiastically to God! **>>like the sports team when they win the tournament - it's not quiet, it's loud & enthusiastic & full of happiness! So here, it is *LOUD*.**
2. vv.1-2 — the whole community is summoned (called, exhorted, commanded) to COME together for the purpose of celebration!

- a) **WORSHIP IS CELEBRATION!** >> To come together to worship Christ is a celebratory act of praise, of honor, of ascribing glory to the ONLY God, our Savior, our Deliverer!!! Every Sunday, we celebrate Christ's death, burial & resurrection for His glory & for our salvation!
3. Note all the verbs: vv.1-6 - note all the "LET US" — '*commands to one another*': COME< LET US DO THIS... **For instance:** let us sing for joy, let us shout joyfully, let us come before him, let us shout joyfully, let us worship, let us bow down, let us kneel!
- a)>> It's a CALL to ALL to COME and PRAISE! **Dear Church: Let Us Assemble!**
4. V.1&2 -sing... 'psalms' >> music! when we come to worship God >> worship is NOT to be a mindless activity.
- we would sing mindfully (thoughtfully/with focus!)
 - we should rejoice enthusiastically
 - we should gather corporately
 - we should worship Doxologically
- B. V.6 - BOW LOW (3 verbs):** each concerned with GETTING LOW — bowing down — before God. **The word for 'worship' means to prostrate oneself (like 2 Sam 14.33 - when Absalom came before King David, it says that he (1) prostrated himself (2) on his face (3) to the ground (4) in the presence of the king)**
1. v.6 — **Like a King** in the ANE world. One would prostrate himself face to the ground, then kneel. It was an act of complete homage and submission and it left worshipers respectfully attentive for new duty in the service of the Sovereign. You're BOWED LOW; you're KNEELING; you're ATTENTIVE; you're ready to receive new messages on HOW TO SERVE Your king! **O does this describe YOU & ME?**
- C. V.3-5 - the reasons! (3-5, 7)**
1. Why should we ALL come & gather & praise God? vv.3-5 - why do we worship and come before our GOD? >> B/C he is the great KING (v.3)
- not because we feel/don't feel like it
 - not because times are good/bad/hard/easy
 - not because there's political/economic upheaval and troubles
 - not because there's friends that gather together
 - not because it's the popular or unpopular thing to do
2. We come b/c of *WHO HE IS* - BECAUSE GOD IS THE KING (and he's worthy, deserving of it!)
3. Because of who HE IS & what He has DONE & how he's in CONTROL.
- D. Let me remind you - re-introduce you to this Great King** -who is GOD in this psalm? LORD, Rock of our salvation, Great God, Great King, Above all gods, Creator, Sustainer, our Maker, Shepherd, he's one who Offers Rest - full, satisfying, eternal rest!
1. V.4-5 merism/totality - The psalmist wants to *WOW you.
- a) See God's POWER and His CARE
 - b) See God's TRANSCENDENCE and his TENDERNESS
 - c) v.4 - in God's HAND are the depths of the earth
 - d) v.5 - his hands formed the dry land [emphatic: *As for God, He Himself made it*]
(1)Fact: 70% of Earth's surface is ocean; less than 5% of our planet's oceans have been explored. To date there are almost 250,000 marine species in the

oceans. **Consider:** Mt Everest is 29,000 ft high; Mountain ranges are about 1,000 miles long. & the largest Mountain Range is *IN* the Atlantic Ocean (underwater) - **God made it & owns it. O Come Worship. Be in awe!**

e) v.7a - we are the sheep of his hand [NIV: sheep under his care]. **Is he YOUR shepherd? What a picture!** The Lord is our shepherd (Ps 23) whose different than the false shepherds who don't feed, care for, protect, save his people (Ezek 34), & our Shepherd shepherds his flock in the strength of the Lord & is our Peace (Micah 5.2-5); Our Shepherd has come & has laid down his life for his sheep (John 10.11) & he will shepherd us TILL glory & IN glory forevermore in security (Rev 7.16-17)! **Is he YOUR shepherd? Are you the sheep under his care?** [*anyone who enters thru him will be saved & will go in & out & find pasture, **John 10.9**] - abundant life (John 10.10) - **is this true of you?**

❖ **O Friend:** God summons us! We summon one another! **Come & worship!**

II. **CAUTION! LET US BE WARNED BY GOD! (7b-11)**

- These verses are like God open air preaching with thunderous, loud, fervent, compassionate urgency! **Yes**, with evangelistic zeal, the psalmist presses the appeal: TODAY!
- God is clearly speaking through His Word. The only question is: ARE YOU LISTENING?

A. **V.7 - "TODAY"**

1. This is the monument of grace! This is the billboard of mercy! This is the sermon from GOD to ALL people today >> today, today, today, listen, act, hear, obey, bow to me!

a) learn from the **past** failures & don't let it lead you into present failures!

b) learn from **past** rebellion so you live in present humility & WORSHIP!

B. **v.8- Don't harden your hearts as at Meribah & Massah**

1. These are historical locations where Israel rebelled against the Lord. (Exodus 17:1-7).

a) What's the issue? They rebelled, complained, didn't trust, had an 'unbelieving heart' (**Heb 3.12-15!!**).

C. **V.9-10 - Israel of old tested/tried God; God loathed them.**

1. **To test/try God** is to *see* what God does and *ignore* it; to hear God's truth & disbelieve it; to see God's ways & remain indifferent, apathetic, unchanged, stubborn. >> **God loathes REBELS.** [*for God to loathe is a word that speaks of utter disgust, a gross taste in one's mouth, a fuming, righteous anger.*]

a) Don't test God! You test/try God if you question or doubt God's presence and power to guide, provide, and deliver HIS people. Don't test, don't doubt, don't question, don't second-guess, don't be stubborn toward God. **O may God help us!**

2. For ***40*** years -- wow, O the prideful presumption of man; to offend the Maker for 40 years! O how patient and long-suffering God is. O how willing for sinners to repent! O to give them 40 years to turn, repent, return, trust Him! **O he's patient with YOU!**

3. **O friends: hear God's warning from his own divine lips:**

❖ **What does GOD do with those who hear Him, but harden their hearts?**

- ✓ GOD IS SO PATIENT (40 years)
- ✓ GOD IS SO ANGRY (I loathed that generation)
- ✓ GOD LOOKS AT THE HEART (err/go astray in the heart)
- ✓ GOD SWEARS W/ DIVINE UNCHANGEABLENESS (i swore in my anger)
- ✓ GOD CASTS SINNERS AWAY (they will never enter to my rest)

4. v.10 - the people ERR, WANDER/STAGGER in their heart. **What an irony >> the people were WANDERING in the wilderness because of their inner wandering of heart.**

YOU WANDER FROM GOD

> AND YOU'LL WANDER THRU LIFE

> till you're finally settled >>> in Hell.

D. V.11 - they will not enter my “REST”

1. I swore in my “anger” -- God makes an oath in his **anger**: Divine anger/wrath is not blind, senseless rage. God's anger refers to His resolve to execute justice without compromise

a) Note: to all who do NOT come to worship (v.1, 2, 6), **THEN** you will not “come” into God's rest (v.11b) >> **clear wordplay!** O let us awaken & take heart!

2. **REST -- a huge theological galaxy where themes meet together. It's like a city-center where many roads lead into it. God says: Never enter my rest: [Heb 3-4!]**

(1) they would not enter the Promised Land (=rest, book of Joshua/Canaan)

(2) they would not enjoy the fullness of God's favor and blessing (=God's Promises)

(3) they would not enjoy the rest in the King-Messiah (=salvation by faith alone w/o works)

(4) they would not enjoy the everlasting rest from pain, sin, death, and trouble (=glorification/heaven)

3. The REST has the root and center and climax in GOD HIMSELF -- a full-blown, awesome REST rooted in, centered upon GOD HIMSELF both physically and spiritually, eternally for God's people.

a) Rejoice! This rest is found in the finished work of REDEMPTION of the Messiah. >> come to me and I will give you “REST” (Matt 11.28-29). **Are you in it??**

4. Hear what the Living & Glorious & Global God says to YOU: “don't come short of entering this rest” (Heb 4.1); “don't drift away” or “neglect so great a salvation” (Heb 2.1-3); “NOW is the acceptable time; NOW is the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6.2); ‘we BEG you to be reconciled to God’ (2 Cor 5.20). **So:** Heb 4.11 - Therefore: ‘let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall... for the Word of God is living and active... O Hold Fast to Christ (Heb 4.11-13, 14!). **IS THIS YOU?** O **today is your day!**

WHY give heed to God's call to Come, Worship, Bow, Submit, Believe & Obey Him??? Why do it *TODAY*??

1. B/c the Bible Commands It
2. B/c God is Patient & Calling
3. B/c Christ is Willing & Able

4. B/c the Spirit Can Give You Life
5. B/c Life is Short & Death is Near
6. B/c to Reject Is to Incur God's Anger
7. B/c Eternal life is abundant security

CONCL-

Concluding Illustration

- Ps 95 is like an Ultimatum — **WORSHIP GOD OR PERISH!**
 - Jesus said it: Repent (turn from resting in self) or you'll perish!
 - Christ Calls the Weary — Come to Him, Rest in Him — rest your weary soul in His Mighty Strength! >> Come & worship this God! >> His Rest is an Abundant, Satisfying, Sweet & a Protective Rest! **Come! Let's Worship This God!**