

Psalm 95
The Greatness and Goodness of God

Introduction: This psalm, from book 4 (90-106), seems to have been composed for the Feast of Tabernacles which commemorates the wilderness wanderings. Some Jews will still recite this psalm on Friday evening at the beginning of Sabbath. It has been widely used by various denominations throughout the centuries as a call to worship. It is referred to in Hebrews 3:7-4:13

Superscription: None. Most likely by David (Heb. 4:7, based on LXX)

1) The psalmist commands people to joyfully praise Yahweh's greatness—95:1-5

a) What are they to do?—95:1-2

i) ¹ *Come, let us sing for joy to Yahweh,*

(1) *let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation!*

(2) This is understood as a reference to Deuteronomy 32:4, 15, 18, 30, 31 from the end of the wilderness wanderings.

ii) ² *Let us meet His face with thanksgiving;*

(1) *let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.*

iii) Let us be unashamed for being rescued by Him.

b) Why are they to praise Yahweh—95:3-5

i) Yahweh's incomparable greatness is declared—95:3

(1) His transcendence—³ *For (because) Yahweh is a great God,*

(2) His supremacy—*and a great King above all gods.*

ii) Yahweh's incomparable greatness is demonstrated in creation—95:4-5 (authority over inanimate creation)

• Creation motivates the voice of praise.

(1) His comprehensive authority and ownership—⁴ *In His hand are the (lowest) **depths** of the earth; and the mountain **peaks** (heights) are His.*

(2) His comprehensive power and wisdom—⁵ *The **sea** is His, for He made it, and His hands formed the **dry land**.*

(3) Both vertically (depths and heights) and horizontally (sea and land). The false gods have limited authority over limited locations.

iii) His creation is both hand-made and hand-held.

2) The psalmist commands people to humbly worship Yahweh for His goodness and grace—95:6-7a

a) What are they to do?—95:6

i) ⁶ *Come, let us worship and let us bow down,*

ii) *let us kneel before Yahweh our Maker*

(1) He is their Maker by election, by redemption, by revelation, etc.

(Motyer)

- iii) The importance of recognizing our smallness before Him. Without this reverence our shouting and singing simply become a shrill noise.
- b) Why are they to worship Yahweh?—95:7a (authority over human life)
 - Redemption motivates the bowed knee of worship.
 - i) His sovereignty—⁷ *For (because) He is our God,*
 - (1) By His choice, not ours.
 - ii) His care and authority—*and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.*
 - iii) There is an appropriate sense of familiarity noted here. Worship of Yahweh is not for strangers, but for His own people.

3) The psalmist calls people to obey Yahweh—95:7b-11

- Submission to God is shown in our obedience to Him. This is one of our primary acts of worship.
- a) An urgent call to pay attention—95:7b *“Today, if only you^{pl} would listen to His voice,* (attributed directly to the Holy Spirit in Heb. 3:7)
 - i) The “then...” clause is left unspoken.
 - ii) God is calling for a bending of our will in conformity to His will.
- b) Specific instructions—95:8-11
 - i) Reference to Exodus 17 and Number 20—95:8-9
 - (1) *Do not harden your^{pl} hearts as at Meribah* (“strife, controversy”) *as on the day at Massah* (“testing, trial”) *in the wilderness,*
 - (2) *When your^{pl} fathers tested Me; they tried Me even though they had seen My work* (of providing food and water for them).
 - (a) An emphasis on their cynical refusal to trust Him. They were willing to withhold trust until He provided fresh proof for them, instead of trusting on the basis of what He had already done. (Motyer)
 - (b) While they tested Yahweh, He was testing them. (Deut. 8:2)
 - ii) Reference to wilderness wanderings—95:10-11
 - (1) Persistent spiritual wandering—*For forty years I was disgusted with that generation; I said, ‘They are a people who are wanderers of heart, and they do not know My ways.’*
 - (a) God’s ways are the paths from which the people wander astray. Their wandering in the wilderness was evidence of their wandering in the heart.
 - (2) *Therefore, I swore an oath in My anger, ‘They will not enter My rest* (the Promised Land).”
 - (a) The rest is not merely physical rest (peace and tranquility), but rather the rest of a right relationship with the Lord, and in the ultimate sense signifies the rest of the messianic kingdom when King Messiah rules on earth. (Moody Bible Commentary)

4) Things we need to remember:

- a) Be careful: As mighty as He is, and as faithful as He is to Israel, He is not to be trifled with. (Sailhamer)
- b) Be faithful: Right living flows from right worship.
- c) Be grateful: Like a shepherd, God sovereignly works out His purposes through those whom He made in His own image.