

Not long ago I read an obituary of a guy who died. In the obituary it said that he did not participate in normal corporate church worship, but he went off and worshipped God in nature. He worshipped God his own way. That is impossible.

In order to worship God, God must classify it as acceptable worship and some guy out in nature who forsakes himself from assembling together with other believers cannot possibly worship God.

Psalm 95 is a Psalm that challenges God's people not to harden their hearts in their worship of God. God wants His people worshipping Him in His acceptable way. As this Psalm clearly reveals to any who study it—God deserves worship; God demands worship and God detests those who refuse to worship.

Now we may observe from the superscription that the writer of this Psalm is not named here. However, we actually do know who the writer is. **This Psalm is partially quoted in Hebrews 4:7 and it is stated in that verse that this was a Psalm that was written by David.**

It is interesting that this Psalm is quoted in Hebrews, which would certainly lend itself to a New Testament Grace Age application. The primary point of the Psalm is this:

GOD DESERVES, DESIRES AND DEMANDS THAT HIS PEOPLE WORSHIP HIM; AND GOD'S PEOPLE NEVER WANT TO HARDEN THEIR HEARTS AGAINST THIS OR THERE WILL BE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES.

One initial observation we would make here and that is, it is obviously possible for people to harden their hearts and stop worshipping God. **Not worshipping God properly is a heart problem.** If a person sits home and does not go to corporate worship, it is a heart issue.

Now the worship that God is discussing in this Psalm is a worship in which God's people go to a specific place of worship and worship Him. **This is not speaking of personal worship or private worship; it is speaking of public worship. In this dispensation, God wants His people going to church to worship Him.**

There are three main worship themes brought out in this Psalm:

WORSHIP THEME #1 – The admonition to worship. **95:1-2, 6**

As we look at these verses, there are six “let us” worship challenges:

Worship Challenge #1 - Let us worship by singing for joy to the LORD. **95:1a**

In order to worship God properly, there must be God-glorifying songs to sing. People who go to corporate worship should go with an expectation that we are going to joyfully lift up our voices to God and sing some wonderful hymns.

Worship Challenge #2 - Let us worship by shouting for joy for our salvation. **95:1b**

Many of the God-glorifying songs that we should joyfully and loudly sing are songs that have to do with the theme of God saving us. God is the God of our salvation. We do not ever want to sing songs about how great we are, we want to sing songs that exalt how great God is.

Now the concept about God being “the rock of our salvation” is a concept about our salvation being secure and solid. Arminian hymns have no place in a true worship of God.

Worship Challenge #3 - Let us worship before the LORD with thanksgiving. **95:2a**

God wants us coming to worship in a thankful way, not a miserable way. The more our hearts are right with God, we will come to church thanking God, not complaining to God.

Now the statement “come before His presence” has to do with specifically coming to a place of corporate worship. When God’s people go to corporate worship, they should view it as going into the presence of God and they should do that with an attitude of thanksgiving.

Have you ever put yourself out for someone and not even gotten a thank you for it? You know how that hurts. Well it hurts God. We should come into His presence with thanksgiving.

Worship Challenge #4 - Let us worship by shouting joyfully with Psalms. **95:2b**

There is a very delicate balance between enthusiasm and reverence. But there is no question that singing should be enthusiastic. Now the enthusiasm comes in part from what we are singing about and what is stated here in the Psalms. Those Psalms declare all kinds of wonderful things about God; in fact, we will see some of those things in just a moment.

Worship Challenge #5 - Let us worship by bowing down before God. **95:6a**

There should be a bowing down before God, not a jumping up and down before God. There should be a great reverent spirit of both reverence and awe when we gather to worship God. At corporate worship there is to be prayer and reverence.

Worship Challenge #6 - Let us worship by kneeling down before God. **95:6b**

It has been well said that the one who kneels often before God is able to stand strong before anyone and anything. Now prayer is heard whether or not we are on our knees; but for one whose heart is right with God, there are times when one will kneel before God in quiet, reverent prayer. When is the last time that you personally got down on your knees to privately spend time with God? Daniel did it. Jesus did it. Any with a heart right with God will kneel before God.

These attitudes in worship are a far cry from bringing coffee and pop and popcorn and bands into a sanctuary. What is described here is reverent worship and those who refuse have a serious heart problem.

WORSHIP THEME #2 – The reasons for worship. **95:3-7**

There is a dangerous movement that is dominating many churches today and the movement is this—we need to make church a place that meets the needs of people. We need to make our church a user-friendly place. The true point of a place of worship is completely overlooked. **A true place of worship is not about meeting my needs; it is about worshipping God and learning what pleases Him, because if we worship God and please Him, the needs things take care of themselves.**

Now one might ask why we should worship God. Why bother going to worship? David lists eight reasons:

Reason #1 - Because God is a great God. **95:3a**

God is to be worshipped for His greatness. The Hebrew word “great” (gidol) means majestic greatness and the ultimate level. There is nothing greater than God.

Reason #2 - Because God is a great King. **95:3b**

The God of the Bible is the great God high above anything. He is the ruling King over all things and all people. People invented all kinds of false deities; God says I am King over everything.

Reason #3 - Because God has designed and controls the depths of the earth. **95:4a**

The lowest portions of the earth belong to God. The abode of the dead existed in the depths of the earth and God controls all of that.

Reason #4 - Because God designed and controls the peaks of the mountains. **95:4b**

The peaks of the mountains are places most cannot even get to. There are summits no man can scale. Notice the grandeur of creation is cause for worshipping God. When you see the majesty of God in creation, you should bow your knee before Him. These things cause man to worship God (Rom. 1:19-20).

Reason #5 - Because God made the sea. **95:5a**

The oceans are God’s oceans. He made them. He controls them. They are majestic.

Reason #6 - Because God made the dry earth. **95:5b**

Mr. Spurgeon said when you walk on dry land consider it to be walking on the floor of God's created temple. He made the world.

Reason #7 - Because God made us. **95:6b**

God is our Maker, too. The same God who made the earth and the mountains and the seas made us. We have been fearfully and wonderfully made by the same God who made all other things. He deserves worship.

Reason #8 - Because God is our God. **95:7**

Charles Spurgeon said of this final reason, here is the "master reason for worship." The great Sovereign God who created everything entered into a personal relationship with us. We have become His sheep. The God of the middle of the earth; the God of the peaks of the mountains; the God of the sea is our personal God and by His hand He has made us His sheep and He sees to it that He cares for us in His pasture. We are God's sheep. We are led by Him, we are tended by Him, we are fed by Him, and we are folded by Him. We are protected by Him and we are provided for by Him. He is our personal Shepherd and we are His sheep. There is cause for worship.

If this does not cause you to want to pay homage to God and worship Him, we do not know what will.

WORSHIP THEME #3 – The warnings against improper worship. **95:7b-11**

There are three main warnings here that are very sober when it comes to worshipping God:

Warning #1 - The time to respond to God's Word on this is today. **95:7b**

When we go to worship to hear the Word of God, we are actually hearing the voice of God and the time to respond to that voice is immediately when we hear it. It has been observed that when we hear the Word of God, "we cannot repent too soon, because we do not know how soon will be too late."

When people are brought under conviction by the Word of God, the time to respond is today. Not tomorrow or the next day, but today.

Warning #2 - The warning to not harden one's heart. **95:8-9**

The Psalmist reminds Israel of a time when she hardened her heart against God after He had done so much for her. The episode is recorded in Exodus 17:1-7. The people quarreled with Moses and started verbally saying crazy things about Moses and God.

Instead of worshipping God and thanking God, they angered God. God gets really angry with people who have seen Him work and then harden their hearts against Him. Israel brought 40 years of grief to God and has been paying for it ever since.

Someone said Israel brought 40 years of grief to God and many in the church have brought over 2000 years of grief to God because they harden their hearts against Him.

Warning #3 - The consequences of one who does harden his heart. **95:10-11**

There are five consequences given to one who will harden his heart:

(Consequence #1) - One who hardens his heart will be loathed by God. **95:10a**

Most people don't get this point but when people go to corporate worship, God can love them or loathe them and the determining factor is their attitude toward Him.

(Consequence #2) - One who hardens his heart will have a heart problem. **95:10c**

Just because people go to church does not mean they have hearts right with God.

(Consequence #3) - One who hardens his heart will not know God's ways. **95:10d**

Many will wander through life not truly knowing God's Word or His ways.

(Consequence #4) - One who hardens his heart will anger God. **95:11a**

When God gets angry at His own people, it is a scary thing.

(Consequence #5) - One who hardens his heart will not enter God's rest. **95:11b**

I understand this to mean that one whose heart is not right with God will never know the peace and tranquility God can supernaturally give to the heart.

This Psalm teaches us our corporate worship is important, but it is also important that we go to corporate worship with hearts right with God.