

When God Speaks: Listen!

Psalm 95

Introduction: 1) The God of the Bible is a talking God. As Francis Schaeffer reminds us, “He is there and He is not silent.”

2) In Psalm 95, a psalm both of worship (vs. 1-7a) and warning (7b-11), we are summoned, “Today, if you hear His voice” (7b).

3) This psalm is a reflection on God’s mighty acts of creation and salvation, especially His deliverance of the Hebrew children out of Egypt and His guidance and protection in the wilderness. Yet in spite of God’s mighty acts of salvation, they rebelled, hardened their heart, and missed out on God’s best, His rest. The author of Hebrews will see a parallel situation in his day as those who have professed Christ are thinking about going astray and returning to their old way of life in legalistic Judaism (Hebrews 3-4).

I. Listen to God because He is your Savior

95:1-5

Apparently a priest or Levite, Israel’s pastor/teacher, has called the people to assemble at the temple for worship. It is a joyous time as they gather to celebrate the one identified as “the great God, the great King” (v.3). The mystic Thomas Merton said, “the great thing, and the only thing, is to adore and praise God.”

1) Sing to this Savior

95:1

- The psalm begins with a call to worship. Four times we see the phrase “let us” in vs. 1-2. Hebrew parallelism is also beautifully employed.

Come: 1) let us sing to the Lord (Yahweh).

2) let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our Salvation (cf. 18:2, 31, 46, 19:14; 28:1).

2) Come to this Savior

95:2

- Vs. 1 leads to vs. 2. Singing to Him, we come to Him, before Him. Added to joy is thanksgiving.
- Let us: 1) come before His presence (lit. “His face”) with thanksgiving.

2) shout joyfully to Him with psalms. (*ESV*, “let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise”).

- Here are words of praise and adoration worthy of a King! Putting them to song: 1) stirs the heart, 2) quickens the mind, 3) fills the soul and 4) brings health to the body.

3) Honor this Savior

95:3-5

- These 3 verses are a short hymn to our God, and they explain why He is worthy of our praise and worship, our adoration and attention. The little word “for” (*Hebrew* “kiy”) turns the key and opens the lock. John Piper says, “Watch the fiery logic of heaven here.”

- Having extolled and emphasized God's character and supremacy, vs. 4-5 focus our attention on His acts of creation and sovereignty. The anthropomorphic use of the word "hands" conveys the idea of God's tender care in shaping and molding this world exactly as He desired it to be.
- Here is a poetic summary of Genesis 1. Go low or go high, it is all His. Cross the waters or walk the earth, it is all His. Ours is a hand-shaped, hand-held world brought into existence by the Lord who is the rock of our salvation! Oh when He speaks, we should listen.

II. Listen to God because He is your Maker

95:6-7

- The great God and great King is the Creator of the Universe. The great God and great King is also the Maker of you and me. Building on the cosmic nature of God as Creator, we now see that this great God who is above us and over us, is the same God who gets up close and personal with His people. Never was this made more clear than when "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

1) We should worship our Maker

95:6

- We have been challenged to come to the Lord and sing, shout joyfully, and give thanks to the great God and King. Now we are invited to come and worship, bow down, and kneel before the one who is our Lord and Maker.
- The word "come" is an imperative.
- The word "worship" (*Hebrew* shāchāh) means to prostrate or bow down in homage, usually before a superior. It occurs more than 170 times in the Old Testament.
- The phrase "bow down" (*Hebrew* kāra') is often used in conjunction with the word translated "worship." It means to bow, bow down, to bend the knee. It occurs in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) about 35 times.
- "Kneel" completes the picture of going as low as possible in honoring the Lord. He is great and we are not. He is our Creator and we are His creatures.
- Yahweh is our "Maker" (*Hebrew* asah). The word occurs more than 2600 times in the Old Testament as a verbal form. Here it is as a participle. The one who, with His hands (vs. 4-5), shaped and fashion all of creation also shaped and formed you. You are no accident. You are divinely made; created and recreated in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:10).

2) We can trust our Maker

95:7

- The word "for" shows up once again making a logical and theological connection between v. 6 and v. 7.

- But He is also our shepherd for “we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.” The same great God and great King who used His mighty hands to create all things is the same great King and shepherd who holds us in His hands. What protection. What a privilege.
- Once again the theme of the Lord our Shepherd appears. Finding its great expression in Psalm 23, it reaches its apex in the Good Shepherd Jesus in John 10, and its climax in our shepherd in heaven in Revelation 7! The redemptive story line looks something like this: Psalm 23 → Ezekiel 34 → Micah 5:2-4 → John 10 → Revelation 7:16-17. The great King is a shepherd King who watches over, guides and guards the flock under His care.

III. Listen to God because He is your Leader

95:7-11

- There is an abrupt change of pace and direction at the end of v. 7. Some Old Testament scholars believe the unexpected turn is so great as to indicate that a separate psalm somehow was joined to vs. 1-7a at this point. However, the theme of God’s salvation is found in both sections. Further, God’s great works of creation and salvation highlighted in vs. 1-7 are the basis for the warning of vs. 7-11.
- There is something of an inspired commentary on Psalm 95:7-11 in Hebrews 3:7-4:13.
 - Psalm 95 is cited 4 times
 - Psalm 95:7-11 → Hebrews 3:7-11
 - Psalm 95:7-8 → Hebrews 3:15
 - Psalm 95:11 → Hebrews 4:3
 - Psalm 95:7-8 → Hebrews 4:7

1) He is a God who speaks to us

95:7-8

“Today if you will hear His voice”

- Today conveys a sense of urgency. Today. Right now. This very minute.
- If you hear His voice tells us 1) He is talking and 2) we must listen.
- Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion (*NIV*, as you did at Meribah).

The problem with our hearing the Lord is not with our ears, it is with our heart!

Ear trouble is a heart problem.

- “As in the day of trial in the wilderness” is best translated “as in the day of Massah in the wilderness.” These are historical locations where Israel rebelled against the Lord. (Exodus 17:1-7; Numbers 20: 1-3).

2) He is a God who works for us

95:9-10

- The 40 years is emphatic in v. 10.

- He was consistent in His care as a shepherd (v.7) and they were consistent in their rebellion, apostasy and unbelief.
- This grieved, disgusted, angered the Lord. He loathed them and responded with an irrefutable indictment: “It is a people who 1) go astray in their hearts, and 2) they do not know My ways.”

3) **He is a God who disciplines us**

95:11

- The last verse is simple, clear and direct. The Lord speaks and there is no ambiguity in His words, no hesitation in His voice.
- Unbelief and rebellion forfeits and loses out on God’s best. The wilderness generation died in the desert. They missed the promised land.
- Hebrews 4:7 picks up this warning and applies it to each and every generation who is blessed to hear the Lord speak. You see a new, permanent and better rest is now made available in Messiah, in King Jesus. This shepherd will restore and give rest to your soul if you will only hear His voice. Today is the day to listen.

Conclusion: “Today, if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts...” The Lord is speaking. Are you listening? Will you obey?