

# Called and Warned to Worship

By Don Green

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**Bible Verse:** Psalm 95  
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**Truth Community Church**  
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45255

**Website:** [truthcommunitychurch.org](http://truthcommunitychurch.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm](http://www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm)

Tonight we have the opportunity to turn to Psalm 95 and I invite you to turn there with me. There's just so much to be thankful for here at Truth Community and my heart is filled to overflowing with gratitude to the Lord as I stand once again in this pulpit.

Psalm 95, I'm going to read the text and then we'll unpack it. Beginning in verse 1,

1 O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD, Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. 2 Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. 3 For the LORD is a great God And a great King above all gods, 4 In whose hand are the depths of the earth, The peaks of the mountains are His also. 5 The sea is His, for it was He who made it, And His hands formed the dry land. 6 Come, let us worship and bow down, Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. 7 For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you would hear His voice, 8 Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, As in the day of Massah in the wilderness, 9 "When your fathers tested Me, They tried Me, though they had seen My work. 10 For forty years I loathed that generation, And said they are a people who err in their heart, And they do not know My ways. 11 Therefore I swore in My anger, Truly they shall not enter into My rest."

Now from the very start just to give you a sense of anticipation about where we're going, there's something important to realize about this Psalm. As this Psalm looks back and looks back to the experience of Israel in the wilderness in its concluding verses, when we interpret Scripture by Scripture, we also see that this Psalm is looking forward to the importance and the urgency of responding to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It looks back and then in the fullness of revelation and the progress of revelation, we see very clearly that the writer of this Psalm under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit had something even higher and greater than their experience in the wilderness that was on his mind and we'll see that as we go along. Psalm 95 deals with the urgency of worship. It is a call to worship and it is also a warning about the significance of worship. In Psalm 95, we are called to worship and we are also warned to worship. There is a positive aspect to it and there is a negative aspect to it. The first one calls us with joy and we have that sense of anticipation, the warning that accompanies that is one that sobers us and cautions us not

to take it all lightly. The call to worship is to be heeded by the people of God and it is to be heeded by the people of the earth because there are consequences to the failure to heed, as we will see.

James Montgomery Boice said this about Psalm 95, and I quote, he says, "Psalm 95 tells us how to worship, indeed it does more, it is a call to worship. It explains how and why we should worship and it warns of what can happen if we do not worship but harden our hearts instead." This is a Psalm, beloved, that immediately, as it were, takes a surgeon's scalpel and opens up your heart and says what will you do with what is being said here tonight. This is not the mere impartation of information that we are going under, and it never is when we open God's word, it's never the mere impartation of information. The opening of God's word is a call to faith and obedience. It is an invitation to joy. It is a warning about the consequences of failing to heed that call. So every time we open up the word of God, we are engaging in the highest form of worship that we could ever possibly do because we are coming to God's word which she has revealed, we are coming to our Creator and Redeemer, and we are seeing how he would speak to us by his word and what we find in Psalm 95 is that there is an expectation and an accountability of a faithful righteous response to what God's word says. So the call to worship is a serious call even while it is a joyful call as we will now see.

So we're going to split this in two, this Psalm. We'll look first of all at the call to worship, and then we will look at the voice of warning. The call to worship and the voice of warning that comes out in Psalm 95. It was some three or four years ago that our friend, Dieter Borkman, stood in this pulpit and preached Psalm 95 when he was in town from Germany. I did not have the benefit of reviewing his notes in my preparation, but I do recall that.

So here we go, joy is the predominant theme in this call to worship the Lord in the first two verses. Joy is the predominant theme in this call to worship. Look at it with me. You see the word "joy" or its cognates listed three times as the psalmist says,

1 O come, let us sing for joy to the LORD, Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. 2 Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.

And so you see this prevailing sentiment, this prevailing mood of joy right from the very beginning and Psalm 95 expects – watch this, you ask the question how are we to worship, Psalm 95 expects worship from the people of God to be exercised with joyful singing and with a sense of celebration. When a King would enter into a room, there would be a shout of acclamation, "The King is here!" And there would be a groundswell of joy and enthusiasm at the presence of the sovereign monarch amongst his people, and that is the sense of joy, "Hallelujah, the Lord is here! Hallelujah, the Lord reigns! Shout to him with joy that is consistent with your love and your faith in him!" So Psalm 95 calls us not to a morbid sense of sobriety and just a monotone response, Psalm 95 is calling us to an enthusiastic response to who God is, to who our Christ is, to love him enough to

worship him with a sense of joy that is utterly independent of the circumstances in which we find ourselves as he comes into our presence.

And let me say something about that here as we look at this, "sing for joy, shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation, come before His presence with thanksgiving, shout joyfully to Him with psalms." Beloved, and this is something that we need to contemplate in our Western culture, you know, and it's just good for us to think about, in our singing as we gather together corporately, in our singing during our time of fellowship and worship together on an ongoing basis, beloved, I just want to say to you and I don't have any one in mind as a target of this, but just for us to recognize that when we are singing hymns, when we are singing in worship, there should be an engagement of your heart, there should be an engagement of your mind and an elevating of your voice that is worthy of the King in whose presence you are. Apathetic mumbling during the times of singing in corporate worship is not true worship at all. This is not to be a matter of apathy and just kind of mumbling the words as you're looking down and hoping that no one is listening too closely and your heart and mind aren't really engaged. No, we are to leave behind our circumstances, we are to leave behind our preoccupation with self and recognize the presence of God in our midst and respond to him with the joy that he deserves; to respond to him with a sense of honor that says, "I am glad to be in Your presence, O God, and I will lift my voice gladly to You in song." And that is to be the corporate attitude and the corporate response of worship, and it's not always that way. I understand in our American church culture, it's not always like that and where you really see the contrast is if you ever have the opportunity to travel internationally and you're in the place of worship with other Christians, I can tell you multiple times I have been stunned and even convicted by the joyful exuberance of the singing with those brothers and sisters in Christ in foreign lands all of whom have less than we have here. It was convicting to me to see their immediate exuberance in their singing not in a wild charismatic way but just genuine joy in their worship. Well, you and I and as a church corporately, we should just be mindful of the fact that whatever we've been accustomed to in perhaps our past cultures in other churches that we've been to, for us to grow more into this, for us to be a congregation that when the music starts to play and the song leader lifts his hand and ducks us into the song, that we step up, we step up spiritually and we honor God with the sense in which we sing and we lift our voice even if you're like me and you don't have a very good voice and no one's going to be asking you to sing a solo, that's okay, it's not about that but it's about the attitude of heart that projects out joy with the manner in which you sing. This is what Scripture calls us to do, sing joyfully, come to his presence with thanksgiving, and that is how we are to worship him.

Verse 1 says, "Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation." Beloved, when we think about a rock, we shouldn't think about a movable pebble, it's not a picture of something that you could easily throw across the lot if you wanted to, this is a picture of God being immovable granite. He is solid. He is dependable. He is immovable. He is unchangeable. He is immutable. This is our God and this is why we sing to him. Every time that we come together in worship, we are coming to the same God that we were worshipping last week. He hasn't changed. Our circumstances have, our inner life, our outer life may have changed, but God has not changed and so this response of joyful faithful worship and

celebration of his presence is always appropriate and always what we should aspire after when we come to be with him. This is who our God is and he is worthy of this and he is worthy of no less. When we gather corporately, beloved, when we gather corporately we should all be coming with a sense, forgive the crass way that I'm going to express this, but we need to come with our game face on. What I mean by that is that we're ready, we're coming with a sense of anticipation and we're going to engage and we're going to honor God with this. God is going to be the object of our worship and our great concern is going to be that God is pleased with how we worship rather than what we ourselves get out of it. That's a secondary benefit but it is secondary to the fact that we come with the attitude and with the sense and the response that Scripture calls us to, and worship is not about you being pleased with what you see and experience in the time together, the primary goal of worship is to ascribe to God the honor that is due to his great and holy name. That's why we worship. It's not for what we can get out of it primarily. We get things out of it but that is secondary, that is not the goal.

Now with all of that said, you could say, well, you know, someone could say, "Well, why? Why do we respond to God this way?" Well, verse 3 anticipates and answers that question. Look at verse 3 with me. Why should we be so joyful in his presence? Why should we be grateful and thankful? Verse 3,

3 For the LORD [Yahweh] For Yahweh is a great God And [He is] a great King above all gods,

That "For" there at the beginning of verse 3, it's an explanatory "For." It explains why the call to worship in the first two verses is appropriate and why it is that you should respond in this way. Why do we worship God joyfully and enthusiastically and with all of our heart? Why do we do that? The verse tells us, it's because God is great. He is a God of surpassing authority and majesty. He is a great King and because of that, his very essence, his very name, his very character, who he has displayed himself to be in the past, how he has dealt with his people, who he has always been and how he will deal with us in the future is great. It's weighty. It's magnificent. It's awesome. It's glorious. And because of that, because God is like that, then our worship should be from the depths of our hearts giving him all that we have from our innermost man in response to who he is.

Now I rather suspect and this is true of me too, I rather suspect that if we thought about this seriously and worked it out we would say, "Do you know what? I don't always, I don't always worship that way." Sometimes my prayers in private are listless and emotionless and dry and dry as a cracker. Sometimes we come together here and we're not always engaged and we're thinking of other things and we're not really all necessarily interested in it but we're just here out of habit. Well, beloved, what Psalm 95 is telling us is, it's calling us out of that, it's calling us to a greater sense of spiritual response and spiritual responsibility that says, "No, no, God is great and His very essence calls for us to put forth our best effort into the worship that we bring to Him." That's why a church with a high view of God starts to attain to a high view of its music. That's why music is done with excellence in a church that has a high view of God and a high view of Scripture, it's because God is great and therefore we seek to honor him with a level of

musical excellence that corresponds to the greatness of his being, and we put our effort into it and we give him our best because he is great, he is majestic, and that is the right thing to do. He is our God. He's our great King.

It says, look at it there in verse 3, he is "a great King above all gods," well, understand that the point of that is not that there actually are other gods, Yahweh is the one and only God, rather what he's saying is that he exalts God over any other gods that might be in the imagination of those who come into contact with this Psalm. "Put your false gods away because the God that I proclaim to you is the true God. He is great and exalted and you should respond to Him in this kind of true worship.

Then he goes on and he expands, he tells us something of why God is great in verse 4. How great is this God? How great is this King? Remember we're in a section of Psalms celebrating God as King, Psalms 93 through Psalm 100. How great is this King? How great is this God? Well, look at verse 4.

4 In whose hand are the depths of the earth, The peaks of the mountains  
are His also. 5 The sea is His, for it was He who made it, And His hands  
formed the dry land.

Whatever you see in the world around you, whatever you see in the natural world around you, God is the God of it. God created it. He made it. He formed it with his hands; by the motions of his own infinite mind, forming what it should be, creating it with his power and then sustaining it with his power and that is what we see the result of. That's how great God is, that the mountains belong to him; that the oceans are his; that their movements of the seas are in his hands; the stability of the mountains are a result of his sustaining presence. That's how great he is. This God is the universal Creator who rules over everything and so the greatness of God informs our worship and calls forth a response that comes from the best that our heart has to offer him. And we realize, don't we, we realize that our best worship, in a sense, is not worthy of him; that our tongues can't declare the fullness of his greatness, our tongues can't declare the strength of his might in a manner of which he's actually worthy because he's infinitely beyond us, but we can come in sincerity, we can come confessing sin, we can come with a sense of humility recognizing that he is great, we are humbled for him, we're grateful for the works of his hands, and therefore we honor him with our thanks.

So this is one great call to worship that we see here in Psalm 95 and look at verse 3 with me again. There's something really important that we need to draw out of the text here when it says, "the LORD is a great God, a great King above all gods," Psalm 95 is calling you to respond to God in the way that it's describing, the true faith that worships God in the manner to which Psalm 95 calls us, the response of faith is a faith that does this, it honors God in a positive sense, and then in a negative sense it denies all other deities. It denies everything else that makes any claim of supreme being or a supreme claim on our affections, and when you fill this out with New Testament revelation as well, true faith, beloved, must not simply say, "I believe in the God of the Bible," it needs to go beyond that, true faith needs to go further and say, "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ who is the

perfect revelation of the Father, through whom alone a man can find reconciliation with God through faith in His righteousness and in His shed blood." It does that in a positive sense, but true faith and the faith that Psalm 95 calls you to goes even further and after making those affirmations, it makes corresponding denials. It says, "There are no other gods. The God that I worship is the only God and there is no other." It looks to Christ and says Christ is the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through him, and therefore goes further and says there is no other way of salvation. If a person does not put their faith in Christ, they will be eternally lost. That's the kind of faith and the kind of worship that is called for by Psalm 95. It exalts God as the true God and then it makes a corresponding denial that if you don't worship the God of the Bible and if you don't come to him through Jesus Christ, you're not worshipping any god at all. You are lost in your sin and you are in danger of eternal perdition. There is no other way. Jesus is not one way among many, he is the only way. He is a great God above all others and so there is this affirmation and there is this corresponding denial that is at the heart of true faith and what Psalm 95 does, as you work through it all, true faith then gives loyalty – watch this – gives loyalty to this great God of a surpassing uncontested loyalty of the heart, true faith gives loyalty to this God that is not given to anyone or anything else.

So it is a lofty call to worship and the psalmist comes back, having expanded on the greatness of God, expanding on the way he has revealed himself in creation, look at it here in verse 6. We come with joy, we come with exclusivity, and in verse 6 we see even more that informs our worship when the psalmist says,

6 Come, let us worship and bow down, Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. 7 For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand.

To bow down, to kneel, to worship in this manner, beloved, is to express to this God submission and reverence. It is to come before this God and say, "I recognize Your greatness and I humbly bow before You. I lower myself in the presence of You, O my King. I come before You, as it were, and I kiss Your feet. I bow down before You. I reverence You. I give You my devotion. I humble myself before You." So there is this sense in which true worship, the true worship that we come and express every week in one sense or another, is also coming with a sense that says, "Father, Thy will be done. As in heaven, so also upon earth. I bow before You. I submit to Your providence in my life. I submit to Your authority. I submit to Your word. I kneel down before it in expression of lowering myself in the presence of One who is greater than I am." And this is an intrinsic part of worship. So there is joy, there is joyful singing, there is a recognition of God, there is a faith that is exclusive to him, there is this sense of submission and reverence to him that all go into a true act of worship.

So beloved, what I want you to see and what I hope animates your heart, stirs your heart with a sense of, I don't know if excitement is the right word, but stirs your affections, let's put it that way, that stirs your affection with this recognition: the reverence and the worship of which Scripture calls us, particularly here in Psalm 95 – oh, watch this – it is not a cold external formality. It is not something where if someone comes in and goes

through the motions and stands up and sits down and kneels when the appropriate time to kneel comes and their mind is not engaged, that's not worship at all. It's called worship in some circles, but it's not biblical worship. This reverence, this worship in Psalm 95 is no formality, it is from the depths of reverence and fear and love and respect and honor from the depth of your being, recognizing with your heart, soul, strength and mind, this is the true God, he is wonderful, and everything that is in me I offer to him in response to who he is.

So we need to ask ourselves is that the spirit in which we worship? Are those the attitudes that are running through our minds? Are those the affections in our heart? Because anything less is not what our Lord deserves. And while we may wrestle with our flesh to express this from time to time, we recognize that this is the aspiration of our heart that we aim after. I want to worship him like this, don't you? I want to honor him with my reverence, with my fear, with my love, to proclaim him as the only God and to worship him in that way; to love Christ with an exclusive devotion that says, "Apart from You, I would be eternally lost so, of course, You're my Lord. Of course, You're my highest love."

Psalm 95 points us in all of those directions and looking at verse 7 again, we said we worship God because he's great, verse 7 calls us to recognize that we worship him because he's also good. He's good. He's our God. We are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. He cares for us. He provides for us. He guides us. So we worship him not only according to his intrinsic greatness, oh yes, we do that and that informs our worship completely, we worship him for he is a great God but we also worship him for he is so good to us, he is so kind to us. He is like a shepherd who cares and provides for his own sheep and makes sure that they are safely in the fold, he makes sure that they get the food and the water and the provision that they need, that's what a literal shepherd does, and Scripture says God deals with us like that. Psalm 23, he prepares a table for us in the presence of our enemies, "I fear no evil for You are with me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. O God, You are so good, and even in this barren place I see that You are with me. I'm grateful, God. I worship You in response to Your goodness."

Along those lines, we would do well to turn together to John 10. We, 2,000 years after the coming of Christ, have even fuller revelation with which and upon which to base our worship, and this goodness, this goodness of our Christ to inform our response to him, our honor and our love that we offer to him day by day in our private lives and corporately as we gather together, John 10:11. Remember that in Psalm 95 it said we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand, well, what's this shepherd like? How has Christ exercised his role as a shepherd toward us? Verse 11 of John 10,

11 I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. 12 He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13 He flees because he is a hired hand and is not concerned about the sheep.

Christ contrasts himself with that and says in verse 14,

14 I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me,  
15 even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down  
My life for the sheep.

Let your eyes rest on that passage for just a moment. Christ is telling us that he is the good shepherd and as a good shepherd, therefore, he has concern for us. The Christ whom we worship, the Christ who saved us is one who cares for us, is concerned for our well-being to the extent that he even laid down his own life in a sacrificial act bearing the punishment our sins deserved, taking them in his body to make certain that our souls would be safe and secure in him. That's how good he is. At the cost of great personal sacrifice, he laid down his life for us. That's how good he is. You can talk about whatever good you want to talk about, it doesn't get any better than that. The shepherd leads, the shepherd provides, the shepherd guides. Christ is all of those things to his people. He's loved us, he's given his life for us, now he keeps us safe from sin, from Satan, from judgment. There is a coming day of judgment that will be with fire and destruction upon all of the world and Christ is so good to you as a believer in him that he will make certain that you are carried through that safely; that the flame will not hurt you; that he will carry you safe through to the other side to heaven; that he will make certain and he will bear you through your final day when your earthly life comes to an end and death comes knocking on your door, you have the certainty that Christ will keep you then, he will be the shepherd that leads you through that, that provides for you through that, that guides you through. You say, "But I don't know what that's going to be like and that's dark and that's kind of scary." You don't have to know what it's like, Christ has you in his hands and he will carry you through so that the greatest earthly threat of death to your life is of no threat because Christ will carry you through. The thought of the Great White Throne judgment discussed in Revelation 20 is no threat to you in Christ because he is a good shepherd who has cared for you and provided for you absolutely, completely in a way that you can by no means be lost.

So beloved, we think about the greatness of God revealed in creation, we think about the goodness of God revealed in Christ and his saving work in our lives, I ask you, I ask you how could we do anything but worship and worship him with our best, and worship him with joy and worship him with thanksgiving? And when these things crystallize and come into focus in your thinking, worship is no longer a drudgery, worship is a delight, worship is a privilege, worship is an opportunity to give voice to the affection that you have in your heart for such a great and good God as that.

So Psalm 95 calls us to worship. Now that brings us to the second part of our Psalm, the voice of warning. The voice of warning. There are consequences to these things having been said. There are consequences to Psalm 95, there are consequences to the Gospel, there are consequences to being under their sound of the word of God in this forum here this evening. The psalmist now interjects a warning to his readers, to us, to pay heed to this call to worship; that this is a call to be obeyed, not to be trifled with. And he goes on, look at verse 7, he says, "Today," indicating urgency, "Today, if you would hear His



voice," if you are under the sound of this word and these words have reached your ears, there's something that you need to do. Verse 8,

8 Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, As in the day of Massah in the wilderness,

He says, "If you hear these things, don't harden your heart. Don't resist. Don't stiffen your neck. Don't be stubborn about it. Don't disobey." The call comes as a command, comes as an invitation but it comes as a command, "Do this in response to who God is." And the word "today" indicates that there is an immediate urgency to obey. Beloved, you should not resist God's call to come to him like this at all. You should not resist. You should immediately rise and follow. As the hymn writer said, "I rose, went forth and followed Him." Different context, same idea. Psalm 95 says, "Come, let us worship and bow down," and your only response is to say, "Yes, I will. Let's go." There is to be no hesitation, no resistance, no delay.

The psalmist here when he refers to Meribah and to Massah, he's referring back to Israel's attitude during the 40 years of wilderness wanderings and I want to show you this from Exodus 17. Turn back to Exodus with me as, again, we let Scripture interpret Scripture for us because that might seem a little bit obscure if you weren't familiar with your Old Testament. "What do you mean, don't be like those people at Meribah or at Massah?" Well, you see what he's referring to in Exodus 17, beginning in verse 1. By this point, the people of Israel had been delivered through the Red Sea from slavery in Egypt and they were headed to the Promised Land, and in chapter 17:1 of the book of Exodus it says,

1 Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of Sin, according to the command of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink.

So they were facing some adversity. They were thirsty, they were frustrated probably. Verse 2,

2 Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water that we may drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" 3 But the people thirsted there for water; and they grumbled against Moses and said, "Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"

They had just been delivered by a great and miraculous sign by God at the Red Sea and they're complaining that they don't have water as though God had brought them out so that they would die in the wilderness. And Moses, verse 4,

4 ... cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me." 5 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and

take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us, or not?"

In response to the great acts of deliverance that God had given to them, they did not respond with worship, they did not respond with trust, instead they questioned him, they questioned the goodness of the Lord and rather than trusting the Lord and being content in him, they tested him with complaints and with dissatisfaction. They grumbled as if God would have brought them out to kill them. They complained and wondered why they hadn't just stayed in Egypt and that was their response to the care and the deliverance of God, that was their response to the presence of God, was to doubt his care and to complain against him, and that historical incident Psalm 95 uses to illustrate his warning.

Go back to Psalm 95 with me now. He says, "Whatever you do in response to this call to worship, don't harden your hearts like the people of Israel did in the wilderness. Don't complain against Me. Don't test Me with your grumbling." To harden your heart was a way of expressing a refusal to obey. "I hear Your call, but I'm not going to do it. I refuse. I will not bow down. I will not worship. I will not sing with joy." And what this is showing us is there is no worship, beloved, without obedience. There must be obedience for worship to be genuine. A heart hardened in sin, a heart that refuses to repent of known sin in your life is a heart that cannot worship and elsewhere again as we let Scripture interpret Scripture, we find this to be the case.

Look at the Gospel of Matthew with me in chapter 15. Matthew 15:8, we see what a warning Scripture gives us and how difficult it is to let this penetrate our tendency toward hypocrisy; to go through the motions without sincerity and sincerity being marked and qualified by obedience to the revealed will of God. Matthew 15:8, Jesus speaks to the Pharisees and scribes and says,

8 This people [quoting from the Old Testament] This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. 9 ... teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.

"They honor Me with their lips but their heart is far from Me." It is not enough to go through the flapping of your lips if your heart is not engaged, if your heart is not manifesting a life of worship.

1 John 2:4 says,

4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;

One more in the Gospel of John 14:23, Jesus Christ himself said this. John 14:23,

23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. 24 He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me."

Jesus says that love is expressed in obedience to him. "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."

So we find that Scripture says that worship is also expressed in obedience and that apart from obedience worship is not genuine, and so we have found a lot to inform our worship here this evening, the sincerity of it, the joy of it, the grounds of it, the greatness and the goodness of God, the way that we worship is expressed with exuberance, it is expressed with obedience, and at this point in the Psalm in Psalm 95:9, the direct voice of God now interjects. The direct voice of God is interjecting at verse 9. This warning has been given, "Do not harden your hearts." Verse 9,

9 "When your fathers tested Me, They tried Me, though they had seen My work. 10 For forty years I loathed that generation, And said they are a people who err in their heart, And they do not know My ways. 11 Therefore I swore in My anger, Truly they shall not enter into My rest."

The direct voice of God is saying at this point, "There is a historical precedent for what's been said in this Psalm. The historical precedent is that when the people of Israel came out of Egypt, they rebelled against Me. They had seen My work, they knew the truth of the matter, but they rebelled even though they had more than sufficient revelation to know better, and as a result of that, they all died in the wilderness save Joshua and Caleb." They died in the wilderness. God judged them for their rebellion and their unbelief. The point here in Psalm 95 is this, beloved, the point in Psalm 95 is this: there are dire consequences for those who refuse to heed the call to worship this living God. Judgment comes for disobedience to this call. Judgment comes for not responding to God with the worship that he deserves. Judgment comes for persisting in sin in light of this call.

So while we who love the Lord hear this call to worship and it is a call that elevates our spirits, that brings us to a transcendent sense of honoring the God who made us and saved us, and this call has that effect on us, it has a different effect and a different consequence on those who disobey it. The whole point of the Psalm, in one sense, is, "Don't be like that because that don't come out well for you. The outcome is bad if you won't come and bow down and worship." And as I said at the beginning, this Psalm not only in the fullness of revelation was not only looking back to Israel failing to heed the call to worship in the wilderness, looking forward this Psalm is applied to those today in the New Testament era who hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ and refuse to believe.

Look at the book of Hebrews 3. Hebrews 3:7, the writer of Hebrews quotes this very Psalm with a warning to those readers of his after the coming of Christ. He says in Hebrews 3:7,

7 Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you hear His voice, 8 do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, 9 where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw My works for 40 years. 10 Therefore I was angry with this generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart, and they did not know My ways'; 11 as I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'"

Here in the context of explaining the greatness of Christ, the superiority of Christ in every respect to the Old Testament, the writer of Hebrews quotes Psalm 95 and says, "In light of the superiority of Christ, all the more it is crucial for you to come to Him in repentance and faith or the judgment of God will be upon you." That's why he quotes Psalm 95.

But he wasn't done. He goes on and he quotes Psalm 95 a second time. Look at verse 12, he says, "Take care, brethren," addressing the congregation reading it, giving them a sense of inclusion and yet warning,

12 Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," [we remember that word from Psalm 95] so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,

Verse 15, here it is, he's quoting Psalm 95 a second time,

15 while it is said, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me."

Have you heard of Christ? You've heard of him tonight. Have you heard of him throughout the course of life? The question is have you come to him by true genuine repentant faith, setting aside hypocrisy and obeying the call to worship, obeying the call of the Gospel that calls you to Christ, have you obeyed or have you hardened your heart inside no matter what's going on outside in your life? He quotes it twice, it must have been important to him.

But then you keep reading and you realize he quotes Psalm 95 a third time. A third time. Hebrews 4:1,

1 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

"You identify externally but internally in your heart you haven't really come to Christ," and so he warns them. He says,

2 ... we have had good news preached to us just as they also [they had had good news in the Old Testament and we've had it now]; but the word they heard did not profit them because it was not united by faith and those who heard. 3 For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, [here's Psalm 95 again a third time] "As I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest," although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4 For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh day: "God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; 5 and again in this passage [a fourth time], "They shall not enter My rest." 6 Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, 7 He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before [a fifth time he quotes Psalm 95], "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts."

How crucial is Psalm 95 in our understanding of the seriousness of the Gospel? Five times the writer of Hebrews quotes it in these two chapters to emphasize the importance of receiving Christ, to entering into the rest that is found in Christ alone, and not to neglect the call and warned every one of us not once, not twice, not thrice, not four times, five times in just this passage, that the call of the Gospel and the presentation of Christ to your heart is one of utmost urgency that you must respond to today lest you enter into the fearful judgment that fell upon the people of Israel. God intends for his calls to worship, the call to Christ to be heeded, to be obeyed, and he warns us that there are consequences if we refuse.

So there's joy for those who believe, there's warning and the very real threat of judgment for those who refuse, and for those who refuse, they will miss salvation completely.

Verse 11 of Hebrews 4,

11 Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience.

And if you'll look over at Hebrews 10 as we close, Hebrews 10:26, it says,

26 For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

If you continue to sin and rebel after hearing the Gospel, you are turning away from the only hope for your eternal soul, and if you do that, verse 27, there is

27 a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.

Then he goes on and he shows by comparison how much greater the obligation and the consequences are today in the New Testament than they even were in the Old.

Verse 28,

28 Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

If you hear about Christ and you reject him, how do you think you can ever escape the most severe judgment of God? You are doing something far worse, my friend, in rejecting Christ than Israel did when they grumbled against him in the wilderness and they all died. Scripture warns us it comes out worse for those who hear about Christ and refuse to believe.

Verse 30, he said,

30 ... "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay. The Lord will judge His people."  
31 It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Beloved, Jesus Christ died for sinners just like you. He offers the free forgiveness of your sins if you'll come to him in humble repentant faith, and you're called and invited to do that and I urge you to do so today if you have not, to come worship him because he's great, because he's good, because he's the only Savior. But understand, my friends, and I say it with tears in my heart though not on my cheeks, that the consequences of refusing are great. Be warned. Heed this call to worship today while there's time. Be warned that there are consequences if you harden your heart and refuse to obey with a response of faith. For those of us who know him,

*How great is our gratitude, O God, as we close in prayer, how great is our thanksgiving to You that by a work of Your Spirit, by a loving gift from Your gracious hand You placed Your hand upon us, as it were, and drew us to Christ, drew us out of our slavery, not to sadistic rulers in a foreign land but out of a sadistic ruler, Satan, who was over our souls. You drew us out of his slavery, slavery to our sin and brought us to Christ and, Lord, we gladly offer You our deepest and highest and broadest worship that we can possibly muster here this evening. You are great. You are good. You are wonderful and what a treasure You have given us in Your word, the word written, and the Word Incarnate. So we bow down and we gladly give You our worship here today, Lord, as Your people. We pray for the souls of those who are teetering on the fence, who are hesitating. Father, may You reach and draw them as well and may they harden their heart no more, may they stiffen their neck no more, may today be the day of salvation for them. Father, we are called to worship and we gladly do. We proclaim the warning that You call us to heed as well. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

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