

Psalm 95

Psalms 95 through 100 are *calls to praise to God*. All of the psalms are songs of worship for God's goodness. God is not an ego-maniac, who needs to hear us talk about him. It is therapeutic and evangelical to rehearse and publicly state the facts of what God has done. *The fact that I don't feel like it; is a testimony to where I am spiritually at the moment.* We might learn here that we only thought that we understood real praise. What we call praise might be shallow and self oriented. Let's broaden our view of total praise.

How do I get there; when I do not feel like praising God? The bible describes sin like leprosy; because we just lose our feelings. Somehow we have to get away from our selfish indifference to a place of zeal for God. Psalms 95-100 are here *to teach us how to make our heart right for praise.* Isn't praise just a feeling; like laughter or happiness? How can I be taught something that comes naturally?

Praise is not meant to be just a reaction to improved conditions in my life. **It is far more than a reflexive emotion. Higher praise is actually something that needs to be taught.** That may seem like a foreign concept. We are normally *not in the mood to shout to God* for his goodness. We are more settled, or melancholy or just focused on our own activities. We already know what it is to praise God *as we feel like it*; but we might have to learn to purposefully praise God.

It is surprising that praise needs to also be associated with tragedy and loss. It doesn't seem sincere to try to get happy over what I hate. Think about the passion of Jesus Christ; and the horrific things that we did to him on that day. My sins brought death to this innocent man. His blood is on our hands. We do not deserve his goodness towards us. We may not have even really acknowledged him before our friends. We need to somehow become broken, from our indifferent or hardened state.

As I fall on my knees to surrender my foolish heart; I receive his forgiveness. In brokenness, I will arrive at a place of intellectual honesty about who I am, and what I've done. The Holy Spirit confirms us; and checks our spirit with a moment of healing and release. We have to embrace the ugliness in us as truth, to be healed and get a release. In other words; happiness is not found by only pursuing happy thoughts. It is found in embracing the ugly truth.

If we begin to speak favorably about God publicly we will experience something new inside of ourselves.

We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come. Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. (Hebrews 10:13-16)

Praise reminds us about the vast number of great things God has done for us...so that we do not immediately dismiss the long string of answered prayers...and just focus on *the next need*.

Seeing things out of our control creates stress. How can God teach us to change the way we process what we see? We naturally become angry or depressed when we are presented with something that is contrary to our hopes. Can we praise God when things are going poorly for us? It is counter-intuitive to praise God as we face disappointment; but **praise acts as a stopper to our string of losses!**

Praise is not just emotional. Praise includes inventory management. God may have answered 27,358 prayers for me, but I am only focused on what is happening on Tuesday morning. I write daily prayer requests and thanksgivings for answered prayers. Sometimes these lists can be long, and seem impossible. Sometimes I lose these pieces of paper. I will find it again a few weeks later. It is amazing seeing that those 20 things were all answered! And yet; I may never think of them again. Praise humbles us; by forcing the past back into the future. Praise is one of the only ways to *stop us from being self-consumed*.

Praise is also about God's priorities versus my priorities. These psalms instruct us to publish God's goodness and praise. We are to tell others about how great God is. Catholics are taught that it is a virtue to keep your conversation to God to yourself. Not so. Expose your history with God. Tie yourself irreversibly to God publicly. We are to share what we have witnessed first hand. Many psalms are designed for temple worship. It is a time to share with others. These psalms can be seen as a newspaper article of

something you witnessed; that others need to hear about. “Hey everybody: Guess what God just did!”

All said, we need to praise God in bad times and good times. It is not a mere heart response to an improved situation. We need to learn the ins and outs of praising God during bad times.

Read Psalm 95:1-5: There are endless reasons to worship. An obvious place to start is with creation. The psalmist is literally saying that God has his hand on the earth’s core, and on the mountain tops, and the sea and the land. This all goes back to Genesis chapter one. Hebrews 11 re-tells us about creation in a different way.

Now faith is the Jsubstance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible. (Hebrews 11:1-3)

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day. (Genesis 1:1-5)

We all know that God made the heavens and earth from nothing in 6 days. We know that it is God’s Word (Jesus) who made all things.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. (John 1:1-3)

A word is an invisible form of energy and vibration that comes from a source. All substance and matter is actually made from things that are invisible. All living and nonliving things are made of matter. Matter is made of molecules. Molecules are made of atoms. When I was in school I learned that atoms are made of protons, neutrons and electrons. Today we have learned even more about atoms.

Although protons were originally considered elementary particles, in the modern [Standard Model of particle physics](#), protons are now known to be composite particles, containing three [valence quarks](#), and together with [neutrons](#) are now classified as [hadrons](#). Protons are composed of two [up quarks](#) of charge $+\frac{2}{3} e$ and one [down quark](#) of charge $-\frac{1}{3} e$. The [rest masses](#) of quarks contribute only about 1% of a proton's mass.^[6] The remainder of a proton's mass is due to [quantum chromodynamics binding energy](#), which includes the [kinetic energy](#) of the quarks and the energy of the [gluon](#) fields that bind the quarks together.

Electrons belong to the first [generation](#) of the [lepton](#) particle family, and are generally thought to be [elementary particles](#) because they have no known components or substructure. The electron has a [mass](#) that is approximately [1/1836](#) that of the [proton](#).

An atom can be compared to comparatively having a peanut-sized nucleus (made of protons and neutrons), with infinitesimally small electrons orbiting around it at the comparable distance of a major league baseball stadium's outer fence perimeter. In other words, an atom is 99.99999% empty space. We are made of atoms. We are therefore 99.9999...% empty space! If you took the space out of our atoms, and put all living humans in a pile, the size of the pile would fit into a sugar cube!!!

The bible says that *we are like a fog*, or a mist that evaporates in the morning. According to the Bureau of Standards in Washington, a dense fog covering seven city blocks to a depth of 100 feet is only composed of less than one glass of water.

Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. (James 4:14).

Knowing this gives us perspective on how our lives are truly in God's control, and we are very complicated; but not much more than a mist.

Read Psalm 95:6-7: Sheep learn to trust their shepherds; but we are less likely to settle down and trust our good shepherd. This behavior of willful ignorance makes us more like animals.

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the Lord has spoken: “I have nourished and brought up children, And they have rebelled against Me; The ox knows its owner And the donkey its master's crib; But Israel does not know, My people do not consider.” (Isaiah 1:1-3)

How do we get to the place of the trust level of this psalmist? How can we approach God with a restful soul? Worshiping God is what we were made for. Unfortunately, we become so distracted and calloused from this world, that we lose interest in his holiness. We begin to treat God like a mere resource to escape harm or achieve life's challenges. I have a friend who has attended church much of his life. He did not like some churches because it was just *Jesus, this* and *Jesus that* and *Jesus, Jesus, Jesus*. His flesh was dictating his interests, though deep down he knew the truth.

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing (1 Corinthians 1:18)

Since that time, my friend has had some significant health and career issues. Now he is immobile and isolated. He now has time and interest to read his bible. Sometimes our other interests have to be removed for us to regain interest in God. The parable of the sower includes some seed of the gospel that was choked out by competitions interests:

And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. (Matthew 13:7)

We tend to overlook how vulnerable and dependent to God that we really are. It is staggering when you really stop and take a good look. God has created us. We are virtually nothing (dirt, water and air); and yet incredibly complex. It is really not about us in any way. We are to God's glory to even exist. God has created a whole universe in the same pattern of the atom. God is the unseen force that holds atoms and planets together. The same complexity can be seen at the cellular and organ level. Our bodies are self-healing incredible machines. How could we not feel loved and vulnerable to his goodness with all of this knowledge?

Sheep are supposed to trust their shepherd. They cannot make it alone. Like sheep, we are to follow his voice.

Read Psalm 95:8-11: It is one thing to be ignorant of God; but a completely different matter to refuse to believe what is in front of our faces. We do not need more information about God. We do not need more information about ourselves. The problem is a combination of our self-will coupled with our imagination.

Learning how to worship is not any easier if we see miracles. The Hebrews spent 40 years in the wilderness. There were daily miracles of manna, a pillar of fire by night and a

pillar of cloud by day, etc... How could a nation live in a place which has no food or water, with livestock? They got used to it. They took it for granted. They even told Moses to deal with God and keep them out of it. They all died in unbelief. Approximately 2.6 million people saw big daily miracles; with only a few in relationship with God. The human race is pathetic and depraved. It is a miracle that anybody gets saved. Jesus spoke about the extreme accountability to those who have witnessed God's work first hand, and then to reject him.

“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades. He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me.” (Luke 10:13-16)

What exactly happened in the 40 year wilderness; as God had daily miracles that were obvious to the whole world? We have the amazing capacity to ignore the truth in front of our face if our desire is for something else. When our desire exceeds our commitment to God we are a lost cause.

“This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.’ “This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us, whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt, saying to Aaron, ‘Make us gods to go before us; as for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the Prophets: ‘Did you offer Me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? You also took up the tabernacle of Moloch, And the star of your god Remphan, Images which you made to worship; And I will carry you away beyond Babylon.’ (Acts 7:37-43)

