

The greatest and highest privilege any person can ever be given is the privilege of worshiping the true God. There is no greater glory, no greater enjoyment, and no great purpose in life than worshiping God.

At the same time, there is no greater sin against God, and no greater disgrace of human life than not worshiping the true God. Nothing makes God more angry, and nothing makes man a greater fool than when a person does not glorify God and does not give Him thanks; when he worships and serves created things rather than the Creator who is to be praised forever. (see Romans 1:21-25).

Worshiping the true God means worshiping the God revealed in the Bible. He is the God who made and rules the universe. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because worship is so important to Him, and because the sin of not worshiping Him is so heinous, He sent His Son, Jesus, to earth as a human being to die on the cross and rise again on the third day. Jesus did this in order to pay for the sin of not worshiping God, and to create in sinners a new heart that turns away from idols to worship the true God. Through Jesus Christ sinners are brought back to the true God and to true worship!

In Psalm 95 the God of heaven and earth is calling His saved people to come and worship Him – by making music to Him, by humbling ourselves before Him, and by hearing His Word with an open heart.

1. Worship and the Command of God

The true God doesn't just allow His people to come into His presence to worship Him; He commands it. This is His will and purpose for our lives. He says it repeatedly: **Oh come, let us sing to the LORD...Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving...O come, let us worship and bow down...**(Psalm 95:1,2,6). People say, "We can worship God anytime and anywhere we want." And it's true that in a certain sense all of life is to be offered to God in worship. But in the Bible God calls us to "Come" to worship. He commands us to put away whatever we're busy with, leave our homes and schools and workplaces, and gather together with His people to offer public worship to God in assembly. That is why the Psalm keeps saying, "**Come let us sing...let us shout...let us come...let us shout...let us worship...let us kneel...For He is our God and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep[flock – a collective term] of His hand."**

This call to worship God by coming into His presence is found in many other places. Let me list a few:

- **Give to the LORD the glory due His name; bring an offering, and come into His courts.** (Psalm 96:8)
- **Exalt the LORD our God and worship at His holy hill; for the LORD our God is holy.**(Psalm 99:9)
- **Come before His presence...Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise.** (Psalm 100)
- **I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the LORD."** (Psalm 122)

In the Old Covenant God's people met every Sabbath in the synagogue of their local town or village, and at least 3 times a year, went to Jerusalem to worship God at the temple. This was done according to God's command (see Leviticus 23; also Luke 4:16). He wants His people to join together and come into His presence.

The Call to "Come" and worship God in public assembly has not been done away with in the New Covenant.

- The believers met together often in the name of Jesus Christ and **devoted themselves to the apostles' doctrine, the fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers.** (Acts 2:42)
- It was their normal practice to meet together on the first day of the week to break bread and to hear the Word. (see Acts 20:7)
- In I Corinthians 5:4, when Paul is giving instructions on church discipline, he wrote: **In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ...** He was reminding them that when believers gather together for worship in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, there His power is present among them in a unique way!
- **[Do] not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhort one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching.** (Hebrews 10:25)

But there is a major difference between the Call to worship in the Old Covenant and that of the New Covenant. In the Old Covenant, God's people were being called to gather at a stone-and-wood temple on earth where God placed his glorious presence, and there they met God. But in the New Covenant when we gather together in the Name of Jesus Christ God is calling us to come up to heaven! For Jesus is the true temple where we meet God, and since Jesus has gone up into heaven, that's where Christian believers go every time they gather to worship. They are obeying God's command to come up to heaven!

- When John the apostle saw a door opened up into heaven, Jesus said to Him, "**Come up here.**" And John, representing all the church on earth [the '7' churches], went up to heaven not with his body but in the spirit, and there he met the 24 elders representing the church of the Old and new Covenant worshiping the Triune God. (Revelation 4:1)
- **You have not come the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire....but you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to a countless company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made**

perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. (Hebrews 12:18, 22-24)

This is a glory and majesty that is far greater than our minds can understand! Every time we gather the Spirit of God transports us by faith into heaven. Every Lord's Day the Triune God is calling us to come to heaven to worship Him! We are right now in heaven!

But the only way to obey this call is through Jesus Christ, by faith. If we are not united to Jesus by faith, our sins are too great and God will never accept us in His presence. He is holy! He accepts no sin, not even one. But when we trust in Jesus our sins are washed away completely, and Jesus says to us, "Come up here!" God summons us, receives us, and even delights to have us in His presence. This is far too amazing to understand: that God calls us, welcomes us, and wants us in His presence. He loves His people. He loves the gathering of His people. He loves the sound of our prayers and praises. He loves to speak to us His children!

In Psalm 149 we hear the call to worship again: **Sing to the LORD a new song, and His praise in the assembly of saints. Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the children of Zion be joyful in their King**...and then he adds the reason for gathering: **For the LORD takes pleasure in His people.** This is too much grace for us to grasp – that God saves and forgives sinners in Jesus and loves to meet with us in His house in heaven! – but it is true. When we gather to worship God, God delights in us infinitely more than we can ever delight in Him!

2. Worship and the Praise of God

The second main teaching of Psalm 95 concerns how His people are to worship the true God. We will focus here on the main parts of true worship. Please notice that God does not leave it up to human imagination to decide how we should worship God. He does not say, "Just as long as you come, I will leave it up to you how you want to use your time when you assemble for worship." Rather, He says: **Let us have grace that we may worship God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.** (Hebrews 12:28-29) He cares very much about how we worship Him, what we do when we gather in His awesome presence.

First, He wants us to sing praises to Him for His glorious greatness as our Creator, Provider, and Saviour.

- **Oh come, let us sing to the LORD!** [the word sing means *to cry out as one who is overcome with joy*]
- **Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.** [*to split the ears, either with an alarm or with joy*]
- **Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving.** [*our songs must be filled with thanksgiving*]
- **Let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.** [Let psalms have the priority: *psalms, hymns and spiritual songs*, Ephesians 5]

Music has an important place in our meeting with God. The Bible says that the LORD rejoices over His children with singing (Zephaniah 3:17), and He wants us to imitate Him by rejoicing over Him with singing! Speaking our praise is good, but there is a special power and glory in human singing that makes it an important instrument of praise to our God!

Second, He wants us to confess His Name and His Works when we worship.

God does not want us to be the focus of worship, nor does He want worship to be the focus of worship (He doesn't want us to be in love with the feeling of worship, but in love with God!), but He calls us to see and acknowledge that He is at the Centre of our lives and at the centre of the universe. We do not make God the centre of worship; He is at the centre of the universe and of true worship, and He calls us to see and confess that.

- **Let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our Salvation.**(1)

He calls us confess that He is the LORD, which is His memorial name forever, the I AM WHO I AM, the Almighty God who makes His covenant with us and keeps His covenant. He is forever faithful to His promises and never breaks them. (see Exodus 3)

As the Rock of our salvation He is the firm and sure ground of our salvation. if you build your life on another god, your life is built on sand; it is wobbly and insecure. But if you trust in God and walk in His ways, your life is resting on a foundation that will never shake.

- **For the LORD is the great God, and the great King above all gods. In His hand are the earth's deep places of the earth; the heights of the hills are also His. The sea is His for he made it; and His hands formed the dry land.** (3-5)

He calls us to know and confess Him as the great Creator and Ruler of the world. From the deepest hole to the highest mountain, the LORD is in charge. Over both sea and land, He rules. **He does whatever He pleases in heaven and on earth** (Psalm 135:5-6). This is what makes Him 'the great God,' completely different than all other gods. He is the Almighty King. **Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.** (Psalm 96:4-5) Confessing the sovereign rule of God is a very important part of true worship.

- **Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker, for He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.** (6-7)

Here the LORD gives us yet another reason to praise Him: He is our Maker in the sense of the Saviour who called us out of the world, out of sin, out of idol-worship, and made/formed us into His covenant people. He sent Jesus to rescue us from our sins, to build us into a Church and make us His temple. He is the Shepherd who bought His scattered sheep with His blood to gather us into a flock.

Third, He wants us to come with humility as we enter His presence and worship Him.

While we confess His Almighty power and greatness, we also acknowledge our lowness, smallness, and weakness compared to Him. It is so easy for us to come into worship thinking we're such great people because we're worshipping, while others are not; and we can preach and we can sing. This tempts us to exalt ourselves. But self-exaltation is contrary to everything true worship is about!

- **Oh come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. (6)**

Three different words are used here, but they all have very similar meaning: to fall on the ground in front of God our Maker, to sink down to our knees in adoration. One can use a kneeling bench to do that, but even more important is with what kind of attitude we come before the LORD. It is the attitude of faith: He made me, I did not make myself. He saved me, I did not save myself. He built me into His people and flock, I did not put myself into His Church. I am what I am only because of God's grace, power, and work. I am a sinner rescued and redeemed by God through His Son Jesus Christ.

Psalm 100:3 also tells us how to come into God's presence: **Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.**

Hebrews 10:19 says that **we have boldness to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus**. This means that as we enter His holy presence we confess that we are sinners and it is only by the blood of the Son of God offered up in His hellish death on the cross that I am given access into His presence!

So confessing His greatness and confessing our weakness and sinfulness can and must go together in the true worship of God! Shouting God's praises and confessing our sins can and must go together in the true worship of God! We do this when we confess: **Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth** (Psalm 124:8) and then go on to sing joyfully God's praises.

Fourth, God wants us to come into His presence with an ear for hearing His Word.

- **Today, if you will hear His voice: Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, when your fathers tested Me; they tried Me, though they saw My work.** (95:7b-9)

True worship is a covenant dialogue between God and His people. He listens to us while we sing and pray; and He calls us to listen to Him while he speaks His life-giving word to us, the Word which makes us, forms us, leads us, guides us, and trains us.

II Timothy 3:15-4:4 **All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. I charge you... preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.**

Listening to what God our Saviour has to say to His people, what the Shepherd has to say to His sheep is one of the most important parts of the worship of God. Some think that they are worshipping God only when they are singing. They will even call the singing time in worship "Praise and Worship" – but there is no worship like that of children who open their ears and hearts ready and eager to hear what our God has to say to us – **Today!** In other words, everytime we enter His presence.

Do not close your ears to his Word, for then the punishment of God will come upon you like it came upon our spiritual ancestors in the wilderness. They were not allowed to enter the Promised Land. If we do not come with open ears ready to hear and do His Word, the curses of the covenant will come upon us and we will not be granted entrance into the Promised Land of heaven and the new creation.

But hear His Word in faith, with submission, and all the blessings of the covenant will come upon you! Today, it is the Lord Jesus Christ speaking to us from heaven who addresses us when we worship. Of Him God said: This is my beloved Son. Hear Him! The greatest worship anyone could ever bring to God is to listen to His beloved Son. He promises eternal Rest to everyone who gathers in Jesus' Name and listens to Jesus' voice. That is true worship. If you go through all the acts of worship in good order, but do not hear His Word with an obedient heart and mind, your worship is vain and false! But God does not want us to enter into the curse of our forefathers in the wilderness: **Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts!**

Conclusion

God has made an appointment with you to meet Him in worship! How blessed we are to have an audience with the holy King of heaven and earth in His home in heaven! The next time your family and friends say to you, "**Let us go to the house of the Lord,**" make sure you join the psalmist who said: **I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord!"** (Psalm 122)