

# Make a Joyful Noise

Ps 95:1-7

SS Lesson for 12/14/2014

**Devotional Scripture:** 1 Kings 8:54-62

## OUTLINE

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*Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary*

*Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator*

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*From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary*

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*God the Rock like no other (2 Sam 22:32)*

*God the Rock of Israel (2 Sam 23:3)*

*God the Rock that is a fortress and deliverer (Ps 18:2)*

*God the Rock on which the Church is built (Matt 16:18)*

*God the spiritual Rock (1 Cor 10:4)*

*God the Rock that is higher than all (Ps 61:2)*

*God the eternal Rock (Isa 26:4)*

*God the cornerstone Rock (Isa 28:16)*

#### GOD IS OUR KING (PS 95:3)

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## **CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS**

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# Introduction

## Overview and Approach to Lesson

The lesson admonishes us to **Make a Joyful Noise** in worshipping God. The **study's aim** is to get a clear picture of the greatness of the Lord and His exalted position, then make appropriate responses to God. The **study's application** is to express praise to the awesome God and Savior through singing, especially during this Christmas season. (*Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary*).

### Key Verse: Ps 95:1

*Oh come, let us sing to the Lord! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.*

### Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

This “enthronement psalm” calls for the people to acknowledge that the Lord is a great King above the gods. (Other enthronement psalms are 47; 93; 96-99.) But having exhorted the congregation to worship their Creator, the psalmist warned them against unbelief as in the days of the wilderness wanderings when God’s rest was not experienced.

This first section of the psalm is a typical praise song. The psalmist called the congregation to sing praises to the Lord. He is designated here as the Rock of our salvation, a figure of God’s provision of security by delivering His people. Apparently the congregation had experienced some such deliverance, for which they were to give thanksgiving. God is worthy of the joyful praise mentioned in verses 1-2 because of His majesty. He is the great King (cf. 98:6; 99:4) over all gods. Mentioning these gods (idols) does not acknowledge their reality. It is a statement of God’s sovereignty and superiority over every force, real and imagined. Everything in Creation—including things the pagans venerated as gods—the Lord made, and therefore He has power over it all. In Ps 95:6-7a, which conclude the praise section of the psalm, the psalmist exhorted the congregation to worship... the Lord... for He is their God, and they are His sheep (cf. 74:1; 79:13; 100:3). The title of Maker may refer to His formation of the nation (cf. Deut. 32:6). The flock suggests again that the Lord, the Shepherd of His people Israel, leads and provides for them.

In this didactic section (Ps 95:7b-11) the psalmist warned the nation not to repeat the folly of unbelief that cost their ancestors the promised rest in the land. This warning was prompted by the mention of the Lord’s care for His people (v. 7a); in the history of the nation too often that care was reciprocated by disobedience. The incident referred to here is the people’s murmuring at Rephidim (Exodus 17; Num. 20:1-13). The names given to the place reflect the incident. Meribah (cf. Pss. 81:7; 106:32) means “strife” and Massah means “testing,” for the people strove with the Lord and tested Him. So God swore that they could not enter the land, but must perish in the wilderness. The younger generation would enter the Promised Land. In exhorting his audience the psalmist began with the word Today, a rhetorical device to stress the immediacy of the opportunity. They must not resist God’s voice calling them to trust and obey. In the Bible the word hearts often means people’s wills. To harden one’s heart meant to refuse to obey. If this psalm’s hearers also disobeyed through unbelief, God would keep them from attaining rest in the land. This passage is quoted in Hebrews 3:7-11 as a warning for Christians who through unbelief (Heb. 3:12) were in danger of not receiving the promised rest (cf. comments on Heb. 3:7-12). In its fullest sense, that rest signifies the Lord’s coming kingdom on earth, when believers will experience spiritual and temporal rest in the Lord. Believers, of course, enter that rest positionally when they cease from their works and trust Him. The warning in Psalm 95 anticipates this because it is part of a song that celebrates the Lord’s kingship (Ps 95:3), a kingship that can only be served by true worshipers.

### Commentary from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

When we get to heaven and join people of "every kindred, and tongue, and people, .and nation" (Rev. 5:9), what do you suppose the music will sound like? This same verse says they sang a new song, but it does not say what the song sounded like. Whatever the music will sound like, it will be good because it is heavenly! God enjoys music. He is pleased when we praise Him in song. And as the golden text implies, we should encourage others to join us to worship in song together, rejoicing through music that we are saved and on solid spiritual ground, held firm for

eternity by the Rock of our salvation. My family has lived in several countries overseas, and one of the things I enjoy most while traveling is hearing the music of different cultures, especially when they are praising God. It is joyous to hear an offering of praise and heartfelt emotions to the One who alone is worthy of it. Music affects our bodies, our minds, and our emotions. Studies show that slower music can slow the heartbeat and breathing rate and lower blood pressure, while faster music does the opposite. Some people unconsciously drive faster to faster music and slower to relaxing music. Music is powerful. Good, joyful music can lift a heavy heart and renew faith. It is no wonder that God tells us to praise Him in song. Not only does He enjoy it, but we gain from it as well. A study back in 1968 showed that music even affects plants. Plants grew well with nearly every style of music except rock. The ones tested with rock music withered and died. Interestingly, music can be a reflection of your mood or a change agent to your mood—either a thermometer or a thermostat. If you are choosing the music, you are choosing the goal, whether you consciously make the decision or not. You can choose to play music that supports the way you are already feeling, or you can choose music that encourages the way you want to feel. Say you have had a difficult day and are struggling with frustration and anger. You could turn on some melancholy music that would provide a support for the pity party you would like to have. You could play some harsh music to match anger. Or you could play music of praise, the opposite of how you are feeling, and instead encourage your spirit to worship and praise the Lord! Songs of praise—joyful noises—will improve your outlook, especially if you begin to sing along. Therefore, "come, let us sing!" The next time you are feeling down, conquer your feelings with praise, even if your voice sounds less like a joyful noise and more like just a noise! God does not mind, and if you are singing to Him, that is all that matters. Whether it is an African beat or an Asian melody, whether an upbeat hymn like "Ode to Joy" or a softer chorus like "God Is So Good," singing to God about His goodness reminds us of that goodness. It is a way to fill our hearts with the truth that sets us free. It lifts our spirits and fills us with joy. The Bible says that one day even the mountains and hills will break forth into song and the trees will clap their hands (Isa. 55:12). Do not wait until they do it. Start singing now!

## ***Lesson Introduction and Background***

### **From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

He was a new preacher in town, and he was going door-to-door in the community for several purposes: to introduce himself to the residents, to invite them to come to the church where he preached, and to do what he could to lead people to salvation in Christ. He had recently earned a doctorate, so his introductory remarks included that bit of information. His get-acquainted comments were usually like this: "Hello, I'm Dr. Jones. I'm the new preacher at Main Street Church, and I would like to invite you to come and worship with us." The new preacher was unable to finish his introduction at one particular home when the man who opened the door interrupted as soon as he heard the word doctor. The man's reply (modified) was "No one here is sick!" as he slammed the door. The invitation was rudely spurned, even before it could be fully expressed. What if that man later called on that minister, whom he had treated so discourteously, to pray on his behalf? Would the minister say, "Sorry! You did not come when I invited you, so I am rejecting your counter-invitation. You had no time for God or me earlier. Why should I give you my time now?" Certainly, no caring Christian would respond in such a way! Even so, Jesus spoke of a time to come when a spurned invitation would remain just that (see Matthew 22:2-14; Luke 14:16-24). The great invitation of the Old Testament is a designation often given to Isaiah 55:1-3, which bids a person to "come... buy... without money and without cost.... listen, that you may live." Jesus offered one of the great invitations of the New Testament when he said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). The verb come appears three times in the verses of today's lesson. The verbs in the Hebrew are different each time, and there are different purposes in the invitations, as we shall see. We do well to keep in mind, however, that the invitation inherent in the word come is, as TV commercials say, "a limited-time offer."

Most editions of the Bible group the 150 chapters of the book of Psalms into five subdivisions: 1–41, 42–72, 73–89, 90–106, and 107–150. These subdivisions are usually designated as books themselves. It is often noted that this five-book arrangement is a reminder of the first five books of the Bible by Moses—the Pentateuch. Each of the first four books in Psalms concludes with a brief doxology, and the fifth book utilizes all of Psalm 150 as a doxology that is a fitting close for the Psalter as a whole. The superscriptions featured at the beginning of many psalms provide the names of authors, historical occasions that prompted the psalm in view, and/or musical instructions. Psalm 54 offers an example of a superscription that has all three components. At the other end of the spectrum are the 34 so-called orphan psalms, which have no superscription. Psalm 95, from which today's text is drawn, is one of these. Some suggest that the orphan status of Psalm 95 makes it especially suited to the Messianic era, and this thought may be reinforced by the fact

that this psalm is quoted in Hebrews 3:7-11, 15; 4:3, 5, 7 (which attributes this psalm to David). Psalm 95 is recognized as having two major parts, and the text for our lesson is the first part. This part is not quoted in the New Testament.

## Major Theme Analysis

*(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)*

### **God is Our Rock (Ps 95:1-2)**

1 Oh come, let us sing 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.

#### **God the perfect and faithful Rock (Deut 32:4)**

4 He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.

#### **God the Rock like no other (2 Sam 22:32)**

32 For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God?

#### **God the Rock of Israel (2 Sam 23:3)**

3 The God of Israel spoke, the Rock of Israel said to me: "When one rules over men in righteousness, when he rules in the fear of God,

#### **God the Rock that is a fortress and deliverer (Ps 18:2)**

2 The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

#### **God the Rock on which the Church is built (Matt 16:18)**

18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

#### **God the spiritual Rock (1 Cor 10:4)**

4 and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.

#### **God the Rock that is higher than all (Ps 61:2)**

2 From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

#### **God the eternal Rock (Isa 26:4)**

4 Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal.

#### **God the cornerstone Rock (Isa 28:16)**

16 So this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed.

### **God is Our King (Ps 95:3)**

3 For the Lord is the great God, And the great King above all gods.

**God is the eternal King (Jer 10:10)**

10 But the Lord is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath.

**God is King because His dominion endures forever (Dan 4:3)**

3 How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation.

**God is King of kings (1 Tim 6:15)**

15 which God will bring about in his own time — God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

**God is King of heaven (Dan 4:37)**

37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

**God the King that should be praised (Ps 145:1)**

145 I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever.

**God the King over all the earth (Ps 47:2)**

2 How awesome is the Lord Most High, the great King over all the earth!

***God is Our Sovereign (Ps 95:4-5)***

4 In His hand are the deep places of the earth; The heights of the hills are His also.

5 The sea is His, for He made it; And His hands formed the dry land.

**God is sovereign because He is God of Heaven and earth (Deut 4:39)**

39 Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other.

**God is sovereign because all the earth and all it contains is His (Ps 24:1)**

24 The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;

**God is sovereign because He has control over life and death (Matt 10:28)**

28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

**God is sovereign because He is God of gods and Lord of lords (Deut 10:17)**

17 For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes.

**God is sovereign because He is over all and in all (Eph 4:5-6)**

5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

### **God is sovereign because He is King of kings (1 Tim 6:15)**

15 which God will bring about in his own time — God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

### **God is Our Creator (Ps 95:6)**

6 Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.

#### **Creator of things both visible and invisible (Col 1:16)**

16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

#### **Creator through His Word (John 1:1-3)**

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

#### **Creator who built everything (Heb 3:3-4)**

3 Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. 4 For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.

#### **Creator of all things (Isa 45:5-7)**

5 I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, 6 so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides me. I am the Lord, and there is no other. 7 I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things.

#### **Creator of man (Rom 9:20-21)**

20 But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'" 21 Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?

#### **Creator that should be praised (Ps 148:1-5)**

148 Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise him in the heights above. 2 Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts. 3 Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars. 4 Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies. 5 Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created.

#### **Creator that shouldn't be questioned (Isa 45:11-12)**

11 "This is what the Lord says — the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker: Concerning things to come, do you question me about my children, or give me orders about the work of my hands? 12 It is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts.

#### **Creator that nothing is too hard for (Jer 32:17)**

17 "Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.

### **God is Our God (Ps 95:7)**

7 For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture, And the sheep of His hand. Today, if you will hear His voice:

**Our God of peace (1 Cor 14:33)**

33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints,

**Our God of hope (Rom 15:13)**

13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Our God of comfort (2 Cor 1:3-4)**

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

**Our God of Heaven and earth (Deut 4:39)**

39 Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other.

**Our God of love (2 Cor 13:11)**

11 Finally, brothers, good-bye. Aim for perfection, listen to my appeal, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

**Our God of all grace (1 Peter 5:10)**

10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

**Our God of mercy (2 Cor 1:3)**

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort,

**Our God of both Jews and Gentiles (Rom 3:29-30)**

29 Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, 30 since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.

## Conclusion and Other Thoughts

### *Commentary Thoughts from Steven Cole*

**1. The invitation: Worship God with rejoicing, reality, reverence, and relationship (95:1-7a).**

Soft hearts are worshipping hearts. Soft hearts submit to God's rightful lordship over all. Soft hearts submit to God's discipline. They trust Him for His care as the Good Shepherd.

A. Worship God with rejoicing (95:1-2).

Note the exuberance of verses 1 & 2: "O come, let us sing for joy to the Lord, let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms." Does that describe your heart as you come daily into God's presence and as you gather with the saints on the Lord's Day?

There is no room in those verses for apathetically mumbling through a few songs while your mind is elsewhere! As Kidner says (p. 344), "The full-throated cries urged in the verbs of verses 1 and 2 suggest an acclamation fit for a

king who is the savior of his people.” Note that in the context of shouting joyfully to God, the psalmist calls Him, “the rock of our salvation.” In this psalm, which refers to Israel in the wilderness, the rock that literally saved the nation was the rock that Moses struck, which then flowed with water (Exod. 17:1-7). Paul tells us that that rock was Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). If Christ is the rock of your salvation, who has given you living water for your soul, shouldn’t you come before Him with great joy and thanksgiving?

#### B. Worship God in the reality of His presence and His person (95:2-5).

(1). *Worship God in the reality of His presence (95:2).*

“Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving” (95:2a). God is present everywhere, of course, but He is especially present when His people gather to worship Him. After the incident with the golden calf, Moses told the Lord (Exod. 33:15), “If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here.” He knew how vital it was to have God’s real presence with him because the task of leading two million people through a barren wilderness was humanly impossible. Although we are fewer in number, we would still be attempting the impossible and wasting our time if we meet each week and God were not present with us.

(2). *Worship God in the reality of His person (95:3-5).*

Verse 3 begins with the word “for,” giving the reason why we should worship God so exuberantly. He mentions three things: The Lord is a great God; He is a great King above all gods; and, He is the great Creator.

- He is a great God.

As Psalm 113:3-5 exclaims, “From the rising of the sun to its setting the name of the Lord is to be praised. The Lord is high above all nations; His glory is above the heavens. Who is like the Lord our God, who is enthroned on high?” Or, Psalm 145:3, “Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable.”

- He is a great King above all gods.

The psalmist is not suggesting that any of the gods of the nations are real. They are only manmade idols, who have no life in them. Or, if it refers to the demons behind the idols, the Lord is still a great King above all the host of heaven. He rules the entire universe (Ps. 103:19).

- He is the great Creator.

“In whose hand are the depths of the earth, the peaks of the mountains are His also. The sea is His, for it was He who made it, and His hands formed the dry land” (95:4-5). You can dig down to the earth’s molten core, and it’s all in God’s hand. The oil is His. Mount Everest belongs to Him. He made the sea and every creature in it. He formed the dry land. The point is, unlike the idols of the pagans, who were localized gods—the god of the mountains, the god of the sea—the Lord made it all and owns it all. And even more, He also made us: He is our Maker (95:6). Thus we should worship Him in the reality of His presence and His person.

#### C. Worship God with reverence.

“Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker” (95:6). The verb translated “worship” means to prostrate yourself. Thus all three verbs in verse six are “concerned with getting low before God” (Kidner, p. 345). So while our worship should be exuberant and joyful, it must also be reverent. We are worshipping our Maker!

#### D. Worship God in relationship.

“For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand” (95:7). Kidner again puts it aptly (p. 345), “The familiar metaphors of verse 7 express His commitment, which is constant (our God), and His care, which is all-sufficing (his pasture) and personal (his hand). He is no hireling.” Jesus is the Good Shepherd, who knows His sheep and His sheep know Him (John 10:14). We worship Him in close relationship to Him, as His people. So the appealing invitation is, “Come, worship our God with rejoicing, in the reality of His presence and person, with reverence, and in relationship to Him as our Good Shepherd. But, what if we don’t worship Him? Do we shrug our shoulders and go, “Whatever! No big deal”? No, the Lord gives us an ultimatum:

### **2. The ultimatum: Harden your heart against the Lord and perish (95:7b-11).**

The command is given in 7b-8a: “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.” The rest of the psalm is an illustration of Israel in the wilderness as a people who hardened their hearts against God. When they sided with the ten spies who thought that the giants in the land of Canaan were too hard to conquer and they wanted to return to Egypt, they said (Num. 14:2), “would that we had died in this wilderness!” Because they disbelieved God’s promise to give them the land, He determined that according to their word, they all would perish in the wilderness. Of those who were twenty years old and upward, who had seen God’s miraculous deliverance from Egypt, only Joshua and Caleb would enter the land (Num. 14:28-32). Both in Psalm 95 and in Hebrews 3, where it is cited, the warning is directed to those who were associated with God’s people, but their hearts were not right before Him. Those in Israel had seen God do stupendous miracles in the plagues against Egypt, while protecting them. They watched God part the Red Sea and take them across on dry land. They watched Him bring the sea back on the Egyptian army. Then they went three days into the wilderness and found no water. After witnessing all of those miracles, you would think that they would have said, “God, You didn’t bring us this far to have us die of thirst. You can provide water for us and our children. Please bring us to some water.” But instead, they grumbled. God directed Moses to throw a tree into some bitter water and it became sweet (Exod. 15:22-26). But then they went further into the wilderness and grumbled because they didn’t have the meat and bread that they had enjoyed in Egypt. In response, God sent them manna each day (Exod. 16:1-21). But in spite of all these evidences of God’s power and His care for them, the next time they ran out of water, they grumbled again. It was there that God told Moses to strike the rock and water gushed forth. But it became known as Massah (“test”) and Meribah (“quarrel”), because they tested the Lord and quarreled with Him there (Exod. 17:1-7). Later, God supplied them with quail (Num. 11:31-32). But they were perpetual grumblers. The text describes them (Num. 11:1), “Now the people became like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of the Lord.” Although they had been miraculously delivered from Egypt and miraculously sustained in the wilderness, they still grumbled against God because of the hardships that they had to endure. And so God was not pleased with them and laid them low in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:5). The Hebrews in the New Testament were in danger of doing the same thing. They had come out of Judaism, professing faith in Christ. But now they were suffering persecution and other hardships. Some had defected from the faith back to Judaism. They were like the seed on the stony ground. At first, it sprung up and seemed to be doing well. But when the sun of adversity beat down on it, it withered, because it had no root (Mark 4:16-17). The point is, it is possible to be associated with the people of God and yet to harden your heart against God when trials come. He’s meeting your needs, but He’s not doing it in the way that you want Him to do it. You want a trial-free life. You don’t like His discipline, which is for your ultimate good. So you complain against Him or, even worse, turn back to the world. Be careful! Great privileges do not guarantee responsive hearts. So the ultimatum or warning against hardening your heart is written to professing believers who are prone to grumble when trials hit. The danger is that if you keep grumbling against God and don’t worship Him with a thankful heart, it may reveal that you’re not a genuine believer. You may be in danger of incurring His anger and not entering into the eternal rest of His salvation.

**Note five things about this ultimatum:**

1. The ultimatum is time-sensitive: “Today” (95:7b)!

Today emphasizes the urgency of the appeal. You may not have tomorrow. As Thomas Fuller put it, “You cannot repent too soon, because you do not know how soon it may be too late.” Or, Francis Quarles said, “He that hath promised pardon on our repentance hath not promised to preserve our lives till we repent” (both cited by C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David* [Eerdmans], 4:328). Don’t think that you’ve got years to wait. Today is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2)!

2. The ultimatum requires sensitive ears: “If you would hear His voice” (95:7b).

God has spoken to us through His Son (Heb. 1:2) and that message is recorded in His written Word. The author of Hebrews introduces the quote from Psalm 95 by saying, “just as the Holy Spirit says” (Heb. 3:7). In other words, God inspired the psalmist. The Holy Spirit used human authors (David may have written Psalm 95, or “in David” [Heb. 4:7] may mean, “in the Psalms”). But God used those authors to record His message in such a way “that what they said God said” (Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* [Eerdmans], 1:154). But, as Jesus often said to the crowds who heard Him, “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear” (Mark 4:23). He warned of those who “while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand” (Matt. 13:13). Thus He said (Luke 8:18), “Take care how you listen.” When we read God’s Word, we must ask Him for understanding. We must think about how to apply it to our lives. Otherwise, we will not be doers of the word, but hearers who delude themselves (James 1:22).

3. The ultimatum is heart-related: “Do not harden your hearts” (95:8a).

Also (95:10), “they are a people who err in their heart.” Israel’s wilderness wanderings were due to their heart wanderings. In the Bible, the heart refers to our total inner being—the mind, the emotions, and the will. Proverbs 4:23 warns, “Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.” Do you guard your heart? Jesus taught (Mark 7:21-22), “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness.” He leveled against the Pharisees God’s complaint through Isaiah (Mark 7:6-7), “This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.” Outwardly, they spoke nicely about God, but He saw their hearts, which were far from Him. Outwardly, they worshiped God, but in vain, because they were following manmade rules rather than submitting to His Word. So, again, in the words of Hebrews 3:12, “Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.”

4. The ultimatum is historically illustrated: Do not be like Israel in the wilderness (95:8-10).

Do you read the Old Testament? I’m amazed at how many Christians do not read the Old Testament! Paul tells us that these things happened as examples for our instruction, so that we would not fall into the same sins (1 Cor. 10:5, 11). The Lord says that Israel in the wilderness tested Him (95:9) and that they did not know His ways (95:10). God’s ways are His method of accomplishing His purpose in our lives. His ways include His loving discipline, so that we might share His holiness (Heb. 12:5-11). God could have sent a plague to wipe out the Canaanites. Israel then could have moved into the land with no battles (and, no need to trust in God!). Instead, He led them through the wilderness (I call it, “the scenic route to the Promised Land”) because He knew that they were not ready to go into the land (Exod. 13:17). But in spite of the hardships of the wilderness, He always cared for them. He protected them with the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. He gave them food and water in the barren desert. But they grumbled and tested Him. We test God when we do not submit to His ways with us, but rather complain and accuse Him of not caring. Rather than rejoicing in His salvation, we wish that we were back in the world, where we didn’t have all the trials that we now face. Submitting to God’s ways does not mean that it is wrong to pray for deliverance or to seek legitimate means to relieve the trial, such as medical help. But it does mean that if God prolongs the trial, we don’t grumble and shake our fist at Him or turn back to the world. Rather, we see how much He has cared for us in the past and in the present and we worship Him for His ways, even if they are difficult.

5. The ultimatum is dreadfully enforced and eternally final: “I swore in My anger, ‘Truly they shall not enter into My rest’” (95:11).

God’s anger by itself sounds pretty frightening! I don’t want Him to be angry with me. But to have Him swear in His anger sounds utterly dreadful! It means that the curse He is about to pronounce is irrevocable. Israel crossed the line of no return when they grumbled at the report of the spies. At that point, God swore in His anger, “Truly, they shall not enter into My rest.” It meant that they would never enter the Promised Land. But as the author of Hebrews applies it to us, not entering God’s rest means that we will not be saved. We remain under His wrath (see Heb. 3:10, 11, 17, 18; 4:3). Because of unbelief, expressed through grumbling about our trials, we do not experience the “rest” that comes through trusting Christ for eternal life. Although we may be associated with God’s people (as the grumblers were a part of Israel), we remain under God’s judgment because of evil, unbelieving, hardened hearts that come short of God’s true rest, which is eternal life. (See my sermon, “Cultural Religion Versus Saving Faith,” on Heb. 4:1-11, 2/29/2004, on FCF web site.)

*(Adapted from URL: <https://bible.org/seriespage/psalm-95-worship%E2%80%94or-else>)*

### **Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

Several years ago, an article in a certain journal described worship as “shouting praises to God, banging on drums and cymbals, jamming on electric guitars, dancing, waving, laughing,” and other emotional actions. A preacher who read

the article commented that that description sounded more like what Elijah witnessed at the contest on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:26-29). Worship is not easy to define to everyone's satisfaction, as the "worship wars" in some churches attest! Since a form of the word worship is used approximately 80 times in the New Testament, then surely the New Testament has explicit words of instruction about worship for the assembled church, doesn't it? The answer may surprise you: the New Testament never explicitly describes the church as coming together to worship or says that an assembly of Christians is a "worship service." (The closest situations are in Acts 13:1, 3 and 1 Corinthians 11:17-21; 14:23-25.). Today's lesson should lead us to conclude that worship is at least reverence, including acts that demonstrate reverence, directed toward God. What is of the utmost importance is the heart of the individual. Is he or she in submission to God when singing or praying? This focus on the individual does not establish an exemption from being in a weekly assembly. The one who deliberately forsakes the assembly when he or she could attend does not have a truly submissive heart (compare Hebrews 10:25). May we worship together to declare the worth of God! He is a God indeed above all gods because he is the maker of all.

### ***Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator***

1. While true worship of the Lord takes place inwardly, we should praise God outwardly as well (Ps. 95:1)
2. We always have a reason to be thankful to God, for everything we have was given by Him (vs. 2)
3. God deserves our worship because He is the only true God. All other gods are false (vs. 3)
4. We should praise God because everything is His (vss. 4-5)
5. Maintaining a position of submission can aid in our worship of God (vs. 6)
6. God is our Shepherd who protects us, and His care includes everything we truly need (vs. 7)