

# (How to Understand the KJV Bible) 30 Psalm 95

by Keith Simons

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of joyful worship and obedience to God, warning against hardening one's heart against God's message.*

**Duration:** 26:54

**Scripture:** Psalm 95:1

**Topics:** "KJV Bible", "Obedience to God", "Worship"

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## Description

Keith Simons emphasizes the multifaceted nature of worship in his sermon on Psalm 95, highlighting the importance of joy, thanksgiving, and obedience to God. He explains that God is the 'rock of our salvation,' deserving of joyful praise and reverence, and encourages congregants to approach God with gratitude and humility. Simons warns against hardening one's heart when hearing God's voice, drawing parallels to the Israelites' disobedience in the wilderness. He stresses the need for a responsive heart that listens and obeys God's commands, as failure to do so can lead to spiritual consequences. Ultimately, he reminds listeners of God's greatness and care as the shepherd of His people.

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## Transcript

Welcome. I wonder what you consider to be the most important aspects of your worship to God. Is it that, humbly, you should bow down and respect God because he is truly great? Or is it that you should be joyful in his presence and happy and pleased because of the good things he's done for you? Or is it that you should, that you should trust and obey him and that you should obey his directions and live in the way that pleases him? The psalm we're looking at today is Psalm 95 and it considers all these things to be important.

So my name is Keith Symons. I'm a Bible teacher from England and it's my pleasure to welcome you to this series of talks on how to understand the King James Bible using the psalms. We look at the psalms verse by verse and word by word.

So Psalm 95 has no ancient title to it. So we begin with the first verse which says, O come, let us sing unto the Lord, let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Yes, the Bible encourages God's people to be joyful, to be joyful in his presence, to sing to him.

Singing is an expression of joy because we don't just sing plain words as we would if we were chanting, but we use all the music to make a beautiful sound because of the joy that we have in God. And that verse

gives us specific reasons to be joyful because God is the rock of our salvation. A rock, of course, is a strong and secure place.

It's something that you can rely on, that you can depend upon. When Jesus spoke about building a house that stood firm, he described it as a house built upon a rock. And the rock in this verse, let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation, is a title for God himself.

But God is called not just the rock here, but the rock of our salvation. Salvation means rescue and safety. God is the rock who brings us rescue from our enemies, from the sin and the wrong things in our lives, from the devil and from hell.

And he brings us to a place of safety. We have safety in him. And so for those reasons, it's a good thing to be joyful before God.

It's a good thing to sing to God. And the author of this psalm encourages those around him. Oh, come, let us sing.

He's not singing by himself. He's encouraging everyone around him to join him because they too know him as a rock of our salvation. And so they all should sing together and be joyful before God.

And there's a feeling of a procession here. There's a feeling of people going into the temple, God's house, to worship God because the psalmist has said, come. And he continues that thought in verse two.

Let us come before his presence. Let's go before the place where God is and let's go there with thanksgiving. In other words, we should give thanks.

We should give thanks to God. We should give thanks to God for his goodness, for the kind things that he's done for us, for the way he's rescued us and looked after us and provided for us. And so we go, we go to God's house to worship him, to praise him and to praise him joyfully because we should make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.

The word here for psalms means songs that you sing and you play on an instrument because it's not just enough for the author of this psalm to sing to God, he also wants to play his instrument and to play beautiful music to make even more beautiful and joyful the sound that he's making before God. God deserves this. God deserves all the praise and all the honour that we can give to him.

The great God, the loving God, the kind God, the good God, the only God. Verse three, for the Lord is a great God. Now that might not sound in your world to be a great statement, the Lord is a great God, because maybe you know Lord as a title for God and it seems to you that verse to say because God is God.

Well of course God is God. Well the clue to the meaning is given in the way Lord is printed in the King James Bible and you'll see that it's printed in block capital letters and that signifies the holy name of God, the name of God which the Jewish people don't even pronounce out of respect for God. It's referring to God himself, the only God, not the false gods.

All the nations around Israel at that time worshipped different gods, they all had their own names and they were all false gods. But the Lord was the title and is the title and is the name of the only true God and be sure he is great. He's much greater than the false gods who other people worship.

He's much greater than important people and powerful people, however powerful they may be. God is a great king above all gods. It's not saying here that the false gods of the nations really had any power or that the spirits that caused people to worship those false gods really had any power but it's saying that God is greater than anyone, anyone in heaven or on earth or in the spirit world or in the natural world.

The word for gods can mean the false gods, the idols that were worshipped in those foreign nations but the same word is used of powerful rulers and powerful judges in the bible and so God is a great king above all kings of the earth, above all judges of the earth, above all powerful people. God's greatness, he rules heaven and earth, he made heaven and earth. Verse four, in his hand, the hand of God, are the deep places of the earth.

The strength of the hills is his also. Running on the border of Israel is the deepest valley in the world, the Jordan river as it runs past Jericho into the Dead Sea. That's the deepest place on land in the entire world and yet God is in control of that place.

He's in control of deeper places of sea too as we'll find in verse five but let's pause to think of the hills which seem so powerful, so impressive, so bold. You know it's great effort for us to climb to the top of a hill but the strength of the hills is God's also and those powerful rocks that are underneath the ground on the hills, well God owns them. God owns the hills, God owns the valleys, the whole world is his.

In fact even verse five, the sea is his. God claims the sea as his own, this place which to man looks so unstable with its waves and its creatures and huge creatures and fearsome creatures, yet God owns it. God is the master of it.

God is a king and ruler over the sea and it has been so since the beginning because God made the sea and whatever there is on the dry land, well God owns that too because God's hands formed it. It's like a potter shapes the clay into shape. The mountains are there because that's how God shaped the earth and the valleys.

God formed it with his hands by which we don't mean physical hands, we're describing it in terms, in human terms. God is a spirit it says in the New Testament and so you know we can't think of him in physical ways but we have to describe him like that so that we can understand. We can understand the care that God took to form the earth in the shape, the precise shape that he wanted it to be.

That is our God, our great God, our powerful God, our loving God who cares about every detail, who formed every part of the world around us. So we as God's people should come to him and the author of the psalm returns to the thought he had at the beginning. He says, oh come let us worship and bow down.

Yes we've sung a joyful song to praise God but now we come before him in worship. We bow our bodies low down to the ground or we kneel before the Lord our maker. God who made heaven and earth but also God who made Israel to be his people who chose his own special people, who appointed them, who took them when they weren't a nation and made them into a nation and gave them their own land.

Verse seven, for he is our God. He is the God of Israel. He is the God we worship.

He is the God we belong to. No other God, no false God, can claim us for himself because God, the true God, is our God and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. Okay well if I were wording that I might have said we are the people of his hand and the sheep of his pasture but the author of the psalm puts it the other way around and he says we're the people of his pasture.

The people who he feeds, pasture is a place where you feed sheep. It's a place where the food grows but the grass for the sheep to eat but it's also the place to which the shepherd must guide his sheep because pastures dry up or the grass becomes too bare and so the work of an ancient shepherd was constantly to lead his sheep from place to place and God is the God, says the author of the psalm, who leads us. He leads us from one place to another and wherever he leads us we have all that we need because he provides for us.

I shall not want, psalm 23. God is guiding us and looking after us and providing for us day by day. Give us this day our daily bread, says the Lord's Prayer and we are the sheep of his hand.

We're like a flock of sheep that the Lord is guiding from day to day and his hand here emphasises how much he's looking after his people, how much he's caring for them. He personally takes responsibility for them like a shepherd takes responsibility for his sheep. And at that thought the psalm seems to pause for a moment because it's now going to move to another part and one with an important warning to us.

So the second part of psalm 95 verse 7 begins, today if ye will hear his voice and there's a comma at the end of it and the sentence continues in verse 8, harden not your heart. Now it's very tempting for me when I read the Bible just to read that continuously, today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart. As if the emphasis is all on that warning, harden not your heart.

But the verse ends at that point in the middle of the sentence and perhaps for a deliberate reason because there are two separate thoughts here. It would be better read, today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart. With that pause after voice and the reason that's better is that in the Hebrew the word hear doesn't just mean listen to God's voice, it doesn't just mean listen to it and ignore it like people who harden their hearts.

It means listen and obey God's voice, listen and pay attention to God's voice. God has a message to you so you must listen to it and that message is coming to you today. It's something not to be neglected or put off for another day because God is calling to you and God has a message to you and God is asking you to trust and obey him and so you should hear, you should listen, you should pay attention, you should obey the voice of God.

But when you hear his voice, verse 8, when God speaks to you, when God's message, God's word comes to you, then you must harden not your heart. Okay, hard heart. It's a picture of, imagine someone had a heart of stone.

Well because it's stone it wouldn't be flesh, it wouldn't move, it would be dead, it would be unresponsive, it would do nothing. No, the heart has to be soft and flexible and move and that's how God has created the human heart to be. Now the heart in the Bible is often not referring to the physical heart, the heart that ticks in the body.

It's a word picture, it's a word picture for attitudes. It's saying don't have attitudes which are stubborn and hard and unwilling to change. You've heard the voice of God, you've heard God's message to you, so you should respond to it, you should respond like someone who is living, you should do what God wants, you should obey him gladly and wholeheartedly and joyfully too, verse 1. But then it refers back to a time when people did harden their hearts, they refused to listen to God as in the provocation and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness.

The wilderness is the desert, the provocation means when you provoked, when you stirred up God, that was a terrible thing to do and the day of temptation, usually when we talk about temptation, we're talking about when something tempts a person, it attracts a person to do wrong things. But no, here we're talking about how you or rather the people in the desert tempted God, they tested God, they tried to force God to do what they wanted. Now this thing, the provocation and the temptation, these in the Hebrew language are masa and meribah and I tell you that because those words appear in Exodus chapter 17 and verse 7 and he, Moses, called the name of the place masa and meribah because of the chiding of the children of Israel and because they tempted the Lord saying, is the Lord among us or not? So what happened there? That's what's referred to in this verse.

So the people had no water, they asked Moses to give them water to drink and they complained about against Moses and in effect they were complaining against God. They said, wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? So they were complaining against God, they were trying to force God to do what they wanted and to provide them with that water and they weren't humbly waiting for God to act, they weren't praying to him and putting their trust in him, they were complaining against God, they were provoking God, they were tempting or testing God to act among them. So God told Moses to take his staff and to strike the rock and out of the rock came water so that the people could drink.

So God provided for the people but he provided for them at a time when they were rebelling against him, he provided for them when they tempted him, they tested him, he provided for them but they provoked his anger against them. So it was there in the desert and you can read the full account in Exodus chapter 17 verse 9 of Psalm 95 now, when your fathers tempted me, proved me and saw my work. So these people who hardened their hearts against God, who provoked God and tempted God were your fathers, the previous people in Israel, the people of a former generation, not really the fathers of the people who the author of the psalm is speaking to but to people way back in their families, centuries before, they were the ones who did this wrong thing, they tested God, they proved God, they showed him to be truthful, to care about them, to work for them, they saw that God was working amongst them but they were in rebellion against him and it's so important when we receive God's message, when we hear his word, when the Bible is spoken to us and explained to us, that we respond, that we not just listen but pay attention and obey God and we serve him joyfully and gladly with our whole hearts because it's a terrible thing if God works amongst us and we don't listen to him.

God works among us and we don't care what his message is, what his word is. God works among us, it's a terrible thing if we obey him but with resentful hearts and with those attitudes, verse 10, 40 years long says God, was I grieved with this generation. The generation is the people who lived at that time, God was grieved, he was upset with them, he was upset for 40 years, for 40 years they remained in the desert, in the wilderness, for 40 years they went through the desert, they could not enter the land that God had promised to them, the good land and God said, first 10 seconds off the verse, it is a people that doer in their heart and they have not known my ways.

Terrible thing that God had to say about them, that they were erring in their heart, that they were wandering from God, that they were not following him, that they were not joyfully obeying him but they were resentfully opposing him. These were people who God said they'd not known his ways and for that reason we speak about the promised land but here is a very different promise about the land that God had to make about the people who were alive then. Verse 11, unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.

To swear means to promise. God promised in his wrath, in his anger that they should not enter into God's rest, the place of rest and content and salvation, peace that he had for them. Initially that means the promised land, the land called Canaan and later called Israel which God gave to their children because all of that generation died in the desert during those 40 years.

Every adult who left Egypt died in the desert except for two, Joshua and Caleb who were loyal to God. The rest of them, they suffered God's anger against them. God gave the promised land to their children but they did not enter into it.

Yet that rest of course was not complete when Israel entered the promised land. That rest, that complete place of peace and security in God is for a future time and it's something that God brings about through his Messiah. So in a moment I'm going to read you the whole of Psalm 95.

If you'd like to know more about the meaning of Psalm 95 when we're finished today you might like to turn to the book of Hebrews chapter 3 and verse 7 and if you read Hebrews 3 and verse 7 and chapter 4 you'll read the author of the book of Hebrews, his comments on the psalm we've just looked at. I'm going to read you the psalm first but before I do my email address 333kjbv at gmail.com that's 333kjbv at gmail.com and now here's the whole psalm. Oh come let us worship and bow down 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.

Today if you will hear his voice harden not your heart as in the provocation and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness when your fathers tempted me proved me and saw my work. 40 years long was I grieved with this generation and said it is a people that do err in their heart and they have not known my ways unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.

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