

Psalms 95:1(NLT) ¹Come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. ²Let us come to him with thanksgiving. Let us sing Psalms of praise to him. ³For the LORD is a great God, a great King above all gods. ⁴He holds in his hands the depths of the earth and the mightiest mountains. ⁵The sea belongs to him, for he made it. His hands formed the dry land, too. ⁶Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the LORD our maker, ⁷for he is our God. We are the people he watches over, the flock under his care. If only you would listen to his voice today! ⁸The LORD says, "Don't harden your hearts as Israel did at Meribah, as they did at Massah in the wilderness. ⁹For there your ancestors tested and tried my patience, even though they saw everything I did. ¹⁰For forty years I was angry with them, and I said, 'They are a people whose hearts turn away from me. They refuse to do what I tell them.' ¹¹So in my anger I took an oath: 'They will never enter my place of rest.'"

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.

Amen. ¹Come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. ²Let us come to him with thanksgiving. Let us sing Psalms of praise to him.

I grew up in home where Christian music and hymns were a huge part of our family. The Christian contemporary Music was just beginning in the late 60's during the hippie movement and the Jesus movement. Many of the psalms were being put to music in what was called the Praise Albums or Praise songs. Groups like Love Song and Christian singers like Andre Crouch were writing and singing songs that went nationwide and yes world-wide. It was common to begin prayer meetings with these new Christian contemporary songs, putting to music the Scriptures. "Bless the Lord O My Soul and all that is within me bless his holy name." The younger generation in those days such as myself cut their teeth on this music. My parents enjoyed this music immensely. This new music began to be sung in churches and for the most part was readily accepted. This was long before the worship wars. The new music was rather invigorating. On the other hand, the new music did not take the place of traditional hymns. It was a both/and. The older generation cut their Christian teeth on the traditional hymns and became flexible enough to accept Christian Contemporary songs and choruses in church. Either that or they kept their complaints to themselves. Songs like "Pass it On," "They will know they are Christians by our love", "My Tribute", "Alleluia", and more found their way into our lives.

That particular music was used by God to bring people into the Christian faith and feed the souls of Christians. For whatever reason, the younger people could relate well to the music. Larry Norman defending Christian rock music said, "Why should the devil have all the good music?" The 70's was a time of great revival across our land and the new music played an important role. There was also an explosion of different Bible translations.

This is what I am trying to say. Our very souls yearn to worship God. There is a part of our souls that wants to sing out loudly unto the Lord our God our Maker. Music that sings of God and who God is lifts our spirits and our worship goes all the way into the very throne room of God. I encourage you to discover your own favorite Christian music and/or hymns. Not only will those songs minister to you now, but they will for rest of your life. During 21 years of Alzheimer's, until the near end Mother could sing all hymns and songs in a worship service. She did not know us, but she knew the songs that she had sung for her entire life. Your soul will still communicate with God through music even after you have lost your mind. You will be giving yourself a gift then by memorizing and learning Christian music today that stays in your heart and touches the heart of God.

This week it hit me like never before what singing loudly unto God does for us. God does not need to hear our praises; God has no needs. It is best for us to place our mind on God, sing songs unto God, for our souls crave God. It takes a lot of faith in Jesus these days just to keep our heads above water. Singing praises unto God impacts our emotions as well as our intellect. The Holy Spirit takes the Christian truth of those songs and builds you up inwardly, strengthening the inner man, the inner woman, strengthening you on the inside. The Holy Spirit applies to you what you are singing and in song we tend to be more open to the Holy Spirit's application. Sometimes when hard times hit, we have temporary amnesia with our knowledge of God. We become practical atheists. We may even think God has turned against us. As a believer God can never turn against you and there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.

My father's favorite hymn was How Great Thou Art. He was always, always touched by God in a special way when he sang that hymn. My mother's favorite hymn was "Blessed Assurance." It always shocks me when I plan a family funeral how the kids do not know their parents' favorite hymn. Parents let your kids know your favorite hymn or Christian song. For the rest of their lives they will enjoy it and be ministered to by the songs and/or hymns. Your favorite hymn or church song will remind them not only important things about you but more importantly about God.

There is a hymn that goes like this, Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side; Some great cause, God's new Messiah, offering each the bloom or blight. In 1963 my mother sang that hymn in church. The Holy Spirit gave to her the inner prompting. I have to make a choice for Jesus or the evil side and thank God she chose Jesus. Christian music sung unto the Lord can be life changing. Please stop mumbling the music and sing, shout unto the Lord the praises God so deserves and is worthy of hearing.

This week is Thanksgiving. The Bible says, "Let us come to him with thanksgiving." Thankfulness improves your mood and shifts your perspective by allowing you to see the good in situations. In fact, science agrees and proves that grateful people are less depressed and anxious. Learning to thank God in all situations is a direct sign of Christian maturity. Being a grumbler in all situations, or as I say, an old poop, is a sign that you either do not know the Lord Jesus or if you do you have never grown past the 1st grade spiritually. The Holy Spirit inside of us nudges us, prompts us to offer to God words of thanks and praise throughout the day. It helps to keep our spirits lifted out of the pit of discouragement.

Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. I absolutely love it when you shout out an Amen or an Alleluia joyfully. Worship that is dead, dull, and boring is a sin.

³For the LORD is a great God, a great King above all gods. ⁴He holds in his hands the depths of the earth and the mightiest mountains. ⁵The sea belongs to him, for he made it. His hands formed the dry land, too. ⁶Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the LORD our maker, ⁷for he is our God. We are the people he watches over, the flock under his care.

Before COVID-19 hit, I have heard almost every excuse in the world why people don't come to church. One I have so often heard is this. "Pastor, I am too depressed to come to church." I want to say rather loudly, "That's exactly why you should be here." God cares about your emotions and in worship you can be uplifted by God Himself. Having a grateful heart to God has a way of getting us out of ourselves and rising above our circumstances because we are worshipping a God who is so great. There is no one greater. Keeping our minds only on ourselves and our own needs is a sure way to keep sinking. Reading only the bad news of the day and neglecting the Good News (the Bible) is another way of living full time in a pit. May the Lord God grant us all grateful hearts that uplifts our souls to a higher plain.

In these verses we are given reasons to worship God. God is the creator of heaven and earth. "God, thank you for the entire creation and your power that created it all." "God you are greater than the entire creation itself." "God you are more beautiful and majestic than the entire universe." We worship God because God claims us as his own people. He is our shepherd, the guardian of our souls. Thank God that we belong to Him. Thank God that you are God's own prized possession (James 1:18).

Sometimes words are not enough to give to God his proper praise. Kneeling or bowing down to God can and is a form of worship. Humbling ourselves before God is always the right thing to do. When you do not know what to say to God, reading the Psalms gives to you the language of praise. Immerse yourself in the Psalms and God's Word will give you the words to speak to God, the language of prayer and praise.

“If only you would listen to his voice today! ⁸The LORD says, “Don’t harden your hearts as Israel did at Meribah, as they did at Massah in the wilderness. ⁹For there your ancestors tested and tried my patience, even though they saw everything I did. ¹⁰For forty years I was angry with them, and I said, ‘They are a people whose hearts turn away from me. They refuse to do what I tell them.’ ¹¹So in my anger I took an oath: ‘They will never enter my place of rest.’”

I believe the greatest tangible gift God has given to us, something that we can hold in our hands, is the Bible, the very Word of God. When I was growing up I had a relative that was a chain smoker. Of course, back in those days the majority of the people smoked. I remember reading the side of my great grandmother’s cigarette pack. It contained The Federal Cigarette Labeling and Advertising Act of 1965 (Public Law 89–92) requiring that the warning “**Caution:** Cigarette Smoking May Be Hazardous to Your Health” be placed on every pack. At eight years of age that truly frightened me. “Grandma, did you know this?” She just looked at me and smiled.

I am here to warn all of us that ignoring the Scriptures and having a noncompliant, rebellious attitude toward the word of God is hazardous to your very soul. For 40 years in the wilderness the older generation grumbled, complained, and hardened their own hearts toward God who had done everything for them. The miracle of the Red Sea only satisfied the people for a short time. Here God saved their lives from the Egyptian Army. A miracle like that and you would think they would live the rest of their lives in Praise of God. Miracles do not strengthen faith. God’s Word is the strengthener of faith. They refused to listen to God. God kept them out in the desert to teach them obedience and all they did was disobey, refusing to listen to God. I say this with great sadness. Those 40 and over when they left Egypt, the majority of them died in unbelief and missed out on the great salvation of God, the rest that only God can provide. God provided for them in every way. Their shoes did not even wear out. In spite of blessing after blessing their very hearts rebelled against God and they refused to listen and obey. They

refused to trust and obey. God was patient and gave them time to repent but a large number of them refused to do so. They would not bow down to God and God alone.

Dr. Boice writes, "If you want to worship God, make sure you do not harden your heart against God's Word, or quarrel with God or put God to the test, as the ancients did." "True worship is: 1) Hearing the Word of God, 2) Obeying the Word of God, and 3) praising God for it" (James Montgomery Boice, Psalms Vol 2, pg. 779).

God always knows what is best for us and God always knows exactly what we need to hear from God. A consistent intake of the Scriptures feeds your soul. Please pray for soft hearts toward God and God's Word. Please do not ignore what God says but put it into practice. I know of no other way today to keep our heads above water than to be immersed in the Scriptures. God is our rescuer, our deliverer, our Savior. It is hazardous not to listen to God. May the Holy Spirit take what we read and personally apply it to our lives directly. Amen and Amen.