**Our God and Our Gratitude**

*Psalm 95*

**Introduction**

1. Gratitude is at the heart of our relationship with God. It separates the sincere from the insincere.
2. **Psalm 95** is about the praise and gratitude due to God, but it is a Psalm of great contrast.
	1. **(vv. 1-7)** – Joy, thanksgiving, praise – God’s goodness.
	2. **(vv. 8-11)** – Warning, admonition, sorrow – God’s severity.
3. Because of the great contrast, some have suggested two separate fragments were placed together. Careful thought shows the deep connection between the two halves of the Psalm, comprising a logical progression in thought.
4. That gratitude for God is an integral part of faithfulness is an understatement.
5. A Call to Praise and Gratitude **(vv. 1-2)**
6. A Command
	1. **John 4:23 –** God desires to be worshiped, a large part of such worship being thanksgiving.
	2. **1 Thessalonians 5:18** – in everything give thanks.
	3. **Colossians 3:17** – give thanks as we do all in the Lord’s name.
	4. **Colossians 2:6-7** – abounding in the faith with thanksgiving.
	5. **Colossians 4:2** – prayer, thanksgiving.
		1. “Thankful. This is the crown of all prayer.” (Lightfoot, Joseph Barber, 1828-1889. Colossians and Philemon / by J.B. Lightfoot.)
	6. **Ephesians 5:3-4** – not…but giving thanks.
	7. **1 Timothy 4:4-5** – food to be received with thanksgiving.
		1. **Romans 14:6** – eats to Lord for he gives thanks.
	8. **Hebrews 12:28** – ***“have grace” – “let us show gratitude” (NASB)***
7. A Willing Reciprocation
	1. Though gratitude is expected and commanded, true gratitude is a willing and natural outgrowth of meditation on God.
	2. **Psalm 95:1-2** – Excitement, joy, adoration.
		1. **LORD** – *yhwh* – Jehovah, personal name of God related to His covenant people.
			1. **Exodus 3:13-15** – more so an explanation of the name of God (in contrast to Egyptian gods) – “I AM” – “yhwh – self-Existent or Eternal” (STRONG)
			2. ***“This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.”*** – Manifestation of Himself in the name, and the remembrance of His people – brought consolation in their time of affliction, remembering Him as the eternal One who made covenant with their fathers – He will deliver and bless them – He is faithful.
			3. “It ultimately meant to them what the name Jesus has come to mean to Christians, a ‘shorthand’ for all God’s dealings of grace.” (Cole, R. Alan, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries)
		2. **Rock of our Salvation** – firm and sure – HE IS OUR CONFIDENCE IN SALVATION.
		3. **(v. 2)** – invitation into His presence elicits thanksgiving.
			1. Always before God in a true sense.
			2. However, special significance to the ability to approach Him in this intimate way (**cf. Ephesians 2:17** – near, far, as Jews and Gentiles contrasted – now, all brought near in Christ; **Hebrews 10:22**)
8. A Reason for Praise and Gratitude **(vv. 3-7)**
9. Sovereign Creator of the Universe **(vv. 3-6)**
	1. **(v. 3)** – God and King of gods.
		1. ***“Lord”*** – *yhwh* – personal name of God as before.
			1. **He is the only true God** – *elôhîym* – used in reference to false gods as well.
			2. Natural world deified, and called King – obeisance and fealty rendered through arbitrary standards of human invention – **cf. Romans 1:22-23**
		2. **1 Timothy 6:15** – He is the only ***“Potentate”*** (sovereign ruler).
		3. **Deuteronomy 6:4-5, 13-15** – His singularity demands singularity in devotion – no piety and submission is due any other.
	2. **(vv. 4-5)** – Creator God – sovereign control.
		1. **Deep places/heights** – idea includes them, and everything in between.
		2. **Sea/Dry land** – one seemingly uncontrollable, and the other a manifestation of the control of the former (**cf. Proverbs 8:29; Job 38:8-11**)
		3. **The goal of creation is to draw attention to the creator:**
			1. **Psalm 19:1-2; Romans 1:20** – reveals God, His glory, power, nature, and demands devotion, worship, etc.
			2. **Acts 14:14-17** (Paul/Barnabas in Lystra after miracle – crowd calls them gods, and intent to offer sacrifices) – creation, and blessings in it act as God’s witness of Himself, and attention due Him, not the creation itself. **(James 1:17** – all good comes from Him, and we are to serve Him.)
			3. **Psalm 50:12-15** – Creation does not exist to sustain God – He needed nothing – it exists to benefit man in his call to serve God, and impresses Him with reliance on God.
	3. **(v. 6)** – He made all things, and that includes us. We are created with purpose – to glorify Him.
		1. **Ecclesiastes 12:13-14** – the whole of man.
		2. **1 Corinthians 8:5-6** – we are FOR HIM, and it is through Christ that we accomplish such a purpose.
		3. ***“our Maker…He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture…[etc.]”*** – of all creation, and even mankind, there are specific people who belong to Him – those have all the more reason to praise and thank Him.
10. Shepherd of His People **(vv. 6-7a)**
	1. “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.” (Kidner, Derek, PSALMS 73–150, An Introduction and Commentary, Tyndale OT Commentaries)
	2. God personally identifies with us (as Christians), and cares for us:
		1. Physically – **Matthew 7:7-11**
		2. Spiritually – **John 10:27-30** (people of His pasture, sheep of His hand)
		3. His creative power displayed stands as a metaphor for His ability to provide for and protect His people **(vv. 4-5):**
			1. **(v. 4)** – deep places/heights – **1 Kings 20:23, 28-29** – there is no place too high, and none too low for the Lord to provide and protect.
			2. **(v. 5)** – sea – represents chaos/trouble **(cf. Psalm 124:1-5; 65:7)** – Jesus calmed the sea – **Mark 4:37-41** – He is in control, and will give us peace and rest.
	3. God is to be praised and thanked by all – HOW MUCH MORE SO HIS OWN PEOPLE!
11. A Warning Against Irreverence and Ingratitude **(vv. 7b-11)**
12. The Text **(vv. 7b-11)**
	1. NOTE: Used in **Hebrews 3-4** to warn Christians about departing from God in unbelief like Israel, and missing out on the Promised land (heaven, not just Canaan – “Today” – as long as it is called, a rest remains).
	2. **General representation of the wilderness generation** – **(v. 10)** – for 40 years – the overall disposition and behavior of that generation – what marked their entire existence after the Exodus from Egypt.
	3. **(vv. 8-9)** – early testing of God stands for the continued behavior throughout their time in the wilderness.
		1. **Rebellion** – merîyḇâ
		2. **Trial** – masâ
		3. **Though they saw My work** – Exodus (plagues, victory at Red Sea), Bitter waters made sweet (**Exodus 15:22-27**), Quails and Manna provided (**Exodus 16**)
		4. **Exodus 17:1-7** – weren’t thankful, and confident in the Lord’s provision, but questioned whether He was among them.
	4. **(v. 10)** – continual thing – they were defined by it – lack of trust, lack of gratitude, lack of obedience.
	5. **(v. 11)** – consequence – not brought into the promised land – **cf. Numbers 14:22-23**
13. The Problem
	1. Why does the great contrast of Psalm 95 fit together?
		1. ***(v. 7b) – “Today, if you will hear His voice: ‘Do not…”***
		2. Today – in David’s time, well after the wilderness generation.
		3. **They were not mindful of God, and certainly showed no gratitude or reverence – THIS CONTRIBUTED TO THEIR HARDNESS AND DISOBEDIENCE, AND RESULTED IN THEIR FALL.**
	2. Praise and gratitude are not only due God, but are indispensable for our own faithfulness to Him – **Deuteronomy 8:11-20** – to forget God in ingratitude is to render gratitude and fidelity to another who doesn’t deserve it, and thus fall from God’s favor.
	3. What lack of thankfulness and praise leads to – **Romans 1:21-24, 26, 28** – They were not thankful, turned to serve the creation, and God gave them over.

**Conclusion**

1. God is worthy of praise and gratitude simply because of who He is.
2. Even more so is God worthy of praise and gratitude because of who He is to us, and all that He has done on our behalf.
3. We cannot meditate on the greatness of God, and the immensity of His blessings enough.
4. The meditation of a tender heart will translate into praise, gratitude, and devotion to God’s will.
5. The forgetfulness of an indifferent heart will translate into irreverence, ingratitude, and unfaithfulness.
6. ***“Oh come, let us sing to the Lord!...Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving…Today, if you will hear His voice: ‘Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion…”***