

Thanksgiving

Psalm 95

- ☐ Thanksgiving is a common theme in the Psalms.¹ Psalm 95 is called a hymn of praise (of the LORD's kingship), but thanksgiving is included. Read Psalm 95:1-7b.²

Call to Worship

- ☐ Verses 1-2 present a call to worship: "Come, let us..."
- "sing for joy to the LORD"
 - "shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation"
 - "come before him with thanksgiving"
 - "extol³ him with music and song"



Basis for Praise & Thanksgiving

- ☐ Verses 3-5 present basis for praise and thanksgiving.
1. Why should we give praise and thanksgiving to the LORD?⁴
 2. As Creator and sovereign⁵ Ruler over his creation, God should be thanked for every good thing. However, some people may also blame him for allowing bad things to happen. Should we still be thankful when things are bad? If so, why?⁶

📖 "It was good for me to be afflicted
so that I might learn your decrees." (*Psalms 119:71, NIV*)

📖 "Blessed is the one you discipline, LORD,
the one you teach from your law." (*Psalms 94:12, NIV*)

📖 "Rejoice always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will
for you in Christ Jesus" (*1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, NIV*).

¹ Thanksgiving is expressed at least 54 times in the Psalms. Some psalms are considered to be 'thanksgiving psalms' but thanksgiving and praise are closely related.

² This lesson does not include verses 7c-11, which provide an important warning (applied in Hebrews 3:7-4:13).

³ 'extol' - praise highly

⁴ The LORD is 'the great God' and 'great King' (v. 3). He is the Creator (v. 5); and Sovereign Ruler over his creation (v. 4). In contrast to the limited [and false] 'gods,' the LORD rules from 'the depths of the earth' to 'the mountain peaks;' and from 'the sea' to 'the dry land' - that is, He rules over everything. This immense and varied world is not only hand-shaped but hand-held by the LORD (Derek Kidner, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, Psalms 73-150* [Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973], 344).

⁵ 'sovereign' - highest in power or rank; supreme; not controlled by others

⁶ Consider Hebrews 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 1:8-9; Romans 5:3-5; 8:18, 28, 35-39. Bad circumstances can cause us to realize the truly important things in life. In such times, we are more likely to understand our need for God and seek Him, and we are more likely to appreciate God's provision for our basic needs, relationships with others, and our relationship with God. For more information on suffering, see 'Evil and Suffering' on the ICF website.

Call to Worship

- ❑ Verse 6 renews the call to worship: “Come, let us...”⁷
 - “worship and bow down...and kneel before the LORD, our Maker!” (ESV)



Basis for Praise & Thanksgiving

- ❑ Verses 6-7 present basis for praise and thanksgiving.
 3. Why should “the people of God’s pasture” *especially* give praise and thanksgiving to God?⁸
 4. How can we have a more thankful heart, consistently, in good times and bad times?

Having a Thankful Heart

- Acknowledge (admit to be, and recognize) God as the Creator, Sustainer, and Source of every good thing (*Psalm 95:3-5; James 1:17*).
- Acknowledge your constant need for God’s provision.
- Receive God’s greatest gift – his “indescribable gift”⁹ – through faith in Jesus Christ. Then you will become one of God’s sheep under the care of the Good Shepherd (*John 10:7-11*).
- Identify the various gifts you have received from God. Learn to see and appreciate God’s good gifts (including the “small things”) in everyday life. Count your blessings.
- Think more about the Giver than the gifts.
- Regularly express your thankfulness to the Giver, with words and action. Make it a lifestyle.
- Spend time in Christian fellowship and worship. “Let *us* come before him with thanksgiving” (*Psalm 95:2a*). We can encourage one another in thankfulness.
- Seek to be God-centered rather than self-centered or world-centered. This will make us more sensitive to God’s values, purposes, provision and activity in everyday life; and shift the basis of our joy and thankfulness from earthly circumstances to our relationship with God.
- In bad circumstances, realize that God is good, sovereign, and trustworthy. God uses bad circumstances for good purposes (*e.g., Romans 5:3-4; Hebrews 12:7-11; 1 Peter 1:6-7*).
- Remember that the greatest blessings cannot be taken away from believers. Nothing can take away our relationship with God and our certain hope of heaven (*Romans 8:28-39*).

📖 “Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind” (*Psalm 107:15, NIV*)

⁷ ‘worship (*shāḥā* - bow down, prostrate oneself)...bow down (*kāra*)...kneel (*bārak*)’ - each of these three verbs means getting low before God. In any case, bowing our hearts is more important than bowing our bodies.

⁸ The LORD not only made the physical earth, he made *us*, and he made us (as believers) *his people* (his children, his ‘sheep’). He is more than Creator and Ruler over the earth, he is ‘*our* Maker,’ ‘*our* God,’ (vv. 6-7) and ‘the Rock of our Salvation’ (v. 1). He is ‘the LORD’ who has graciously entered into a covenantal relationship with his people. He is the God who loved us so much that he gave his one and only Son, who died for our sins (see *John 3:16; Romans 5:8*). If we have received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, he is our Shepherd, and we are ‘the people of his pasture’ and ‘the flock under his care.’ When we think about what God has done for us, how can we not be thankful?

⁹ The ‘indescribable gift’ is the grace of God given in Jesus Christ (*2 Corinthians 9:15*). Through faith in Him, we can enter into a personal relationship with God, and enjoy the abundant and eternal blessings of salvation.