

The Creator  
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## Psalm 95

Opening: Ever leave the lid off your Play-Doh ®? We all did it? What happened? How much fun was it to play with after the air got to it?

Why are we talking about dried up Play-Doh? It's an illustration, a metaphor for what can happen to the heart. **How would you describe someone with a "hardened heart?" Do you remember any stories from scripture that talk about hardened hearts?**

Big idea: God is so awesome, and so sovereign, we should worship Him with passion, thanksgiving, and joy! Failure to do that results in a hard heart and restlessness instead of peace.

Let's begin with the first seven and a half verses of Psalm 95:  
Psalm 95 (ESV)

### **Let Us Sing Songs of Praise**

**95** Oh come, let us sing to the Lord;

let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

<sup>2</sup> Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;

let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

<sup>3</sup> For the Lord is a great God,  
and a great King above all gods.

<sup>4</sup> In his hand are the depths of the earth;  
the heights of the mountains are his also.

<sup>5</sup> The sea is his, for he made it,  
and his hands formed the dry land.

<sup>6</sup> Oh come, let us worship and bow down;  
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

<sup>7</sup> For he is our God,  
and we are the people of his pasture,  
and the sheep of his hand.

- At first blush these verses simply seem to be a joyful song of praise.

- They are that, but as we'll see in the last four verses, they are really a solution to a very human problem: the problem of a hard heart.
- If you jump all the way to verse eleven, you read God Himself saying (about the children of Israel,) *"Therefore I swore in my wrath, "They shall not enter my rest."* Not a sentence I would want God to say about me!
- Verse one invites us to *"Come and sing to the Lord."* *"Make a joyful noise!"*
- Verse two says, *"Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!"*
- **If God is everywhere all the time (omnipresent) how do we "come into His presence?" How was this different in the psalmist's day compared to our day today? How is "stop and smell the roses" a good illustration?**

John Piper writes:

*God is...omnipresent...like his sustaining all things at all times, holding every electron and every sub-nuclear particle in its place. But he makes his influence more manifestly felt and experienced in particular ways and particular times, and this is what we are referring to when we say with the psalmist, "For me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord my refuge, that I may tell of all your works" (Psalm 73:28). Psalm 145:18: "The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth." That doesn't mean that God traveled some distance. It means he is near in the sense that he exerts his influence for our good in special ways and causes us to experience the sweetness of his reality in special ways.<sup>1</sup>*

- **What kind worship does verses one and two describe?** Is this a funeral or a celebration? Ever been to a worship service and weren't sure?
- Matthew Henry in his 18<sup>th</sup> century style wrote: *"...praise God; for it is a duty which ought to be performed with the most lively affections, and which we have great need to be excited to, being very often backward to it and cold in it."*<sup>2</sup>
- Translation: We have so many reasons to praise God, how can we be anything but EXCITED and JOYFUL! Yet, often we're drab and dull.

- What reasons do we have for joyful praise? The psalmist cites several.
- Verse two: We're singing about the "rock of our salvation."  
**What does that description of our God mean to you?**
- Verse three: Our God is greater! Do we worship like we believe that?
- Verses four and five: **What extreme examples does the psalmist use to illustrate God's greatness? Does that remind you of other verses?**
- I noticed a pattern in this psalm of ACTION to take and the REASON to take it. Verses 1&2 tell us what to do (joyful worship); verses 3-5 tell us why to do that (our God is the greatest!)
- Verse six is back to action of a different sort, "bow" and "kneel."  
**Why is the "posture" of our hearts important?**
- Verse seven is beautiful in the way it describes our relationship with a loving, caring Heavenly Father. *"He is our God, and we are His sheep,"* in his pasture (provision) and in his hand (guidance and protection.)
- We could stop in the middle of verse seven after the word "hand" and go home with a smile on our face and a song in our hearts! But the psalmist isn't done. Let's read further.

Today, if you hear his voice,  
<sup>8</sup> do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,  
as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,  
<sup>9</sup> when your fathers put me to the test  
and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.  
<sup>10</sup> For forty years I loathed that generation  
and said, "They are a people who go astray in their heart,  
and they have not known my ways."  
<sup>11</sup> Therefore I swore in my wrath,  
"They shall not enter my rest."

- **When a sentence starts with "today," what does that communicate?**
- This is an urgent command: *"If you hear His voice, don't harden your heart."* Parents, ever say something like that to your kids?  
**What do you think the psalmist means? How would you say it to your kids?**

- Verse eleven: **What do you think God meant by entering into His rest? Eternal rest? Temporal rest here on earth now?**

Hebrews 4:1 (ESV) says, *Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.*

Quoting John Piper again:

*“The Christian life is a life of day by day, hour by hour trust in the promises of God to help us and guide us and take care of us and forgive us and bring us into a future of holiness and joy that will satisfy our hearts infinitely more than if we forsake him and put our trust in ourselves or in the promises of this world. And that day by day, hour by hour trust in God's promises is not automatic. It is the result of daily diligence and it's the result of proper fear.”<sup>3</sup> [of not being in God's rest]*

- When I think of a hardened heart I tend to think of someone who totally denies the things of God; even the existence of God. **Is that who the psalmist is referencing? How can one of God's “sheep” harden our heart toward His voice?**
- The psalmist refers to a story about the children of Israel from Exodus 17 (also Numbers 20:13.) No water; grumbling Israelites; why did we leave Egypt?; frustrated Moses; intervention from God; then, Exodus 17:7 (ESV) *“<sup>7</sup> And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord by saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”* [Those words are significant!]
- We might say, *“I don't have a hard heart like Pharaoh, or like someone who doesn't believe in God. I'm a follower of Christ!”* But have I ever tested the Lord by saying, *“Is the Lord among us or not?”* Is God in control or not? Am I doubting (even slightly) whether my Heavenly Father, who I proclaim is the creator of everything and everyone, will come through?
- You don't have to be an atheist or an apostate to have a hardened heart.

Mark 6:51–52 (ESV) [After the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus walked on water.]

<sup>51</sup> And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, <sup>52</sup> for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened. [Jesus own disciples could have hardening of the heart!]

- Ps. 95:9 says the Israelites put God to the test, they said, “*We want PROOF that you love us and PROOF that you’ll do what you promised.*”
- Verse ten: God said, for forty years He “loathed” them. He just let them wander. “No promised land for you bunch of hard heads with hard hearts!”
- By the way, these verses aren’t saying your heart gets hard and you lose your salvation.

Warren Wiersbe writes:

*Canaan is not a picture of heaven, but of the believer’s present spiritual inheritance in Christ. Believers who doubt God’s Word and rebel against Him do not miss heaven, but they do miss out on the blessings of their inheritance today, and they must suffer the chastening of God.*<sup>4</sup>

- A heart hard isn’t only someone who doubts there is a God. It can also be a follower of Christ who acts like it by doubting that God will do what He promised.

Proverbs 28:14 (ESV) tells us

14 Blessed is the one who fears the LORD always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.

- We can be on our way to heaven but living without blessing in this life because we are testing God by doubting He’ll do what He promised.
- We can be eternally secure but perpetually miserable because of our distance from God’s presence, God’s peace, and God’s word.
- The writer of Hebrews quoted Psalm 95 in chapter four of that letter. Look at the role of God’s word in entering into God’s rest.

Hebrews 4:11–12 (ESV)

11 Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. 12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Hebrews 4:14 (ESV)

14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

Hebrews 4:16 (ESV)

16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- When our hearts are exposed to the “air” of the world and sin, they will begin to harden just like that Play-Doh. They need to be returned to the “air tight” environment of God’s word and God’s worship to keep them soft.
- That only comes by drawing near to the throne of grace.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- We’ll end where we began: Ever leave the lid off your Play-Doh®?
- That question is sort of like, *“Who licked the red off YOUR candy cane?”*
- If we are followers of Christ, and we sense that our heart had grown hard to the things of God we should look in the mirror and ask ourselves, *“Who left the lid off YOUR Play-Doh? Have you let your heart get hard? No wonder you can’t seem to find any peace, any rest in God.”*
- Unlike dried up Play-Doh, a heart that belongs to Jesus can be restored.
- Just turn to the first seven verses of Psalm 95 for instructions on how to soften up that hardened heart.
- Those verses will remind us that sincere, passionate, and joyful worship are the “lid” that keeps our hearts from turning hard from exposure to sin.
- How vibrant is your worship? How close are you to God’s presence? How air-tight is the lid on your heart?

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-does-it-mean-to-live-in-god-s-presence>

<sup>2</sup> Henry, M. (1994). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume* (p. 881). Peabody: Hendrickson.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/be-diligent-to-enter-gods-rest>

<sup>4</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 289). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.