**Alan Telford – Summer in the Psalms**

**Psalm 95 - Will you hear His voice?**

The second half of Psalm 95 contains a warning and encouragement for all Christians to *hear His voice* and not *harden our hearts* as the Israelites did. God had rescued the entire race of Israelites from Egypt, parted the Red Sea for them, provided a cloud by night and fire by day, water from the rock and manna from heaven, defeated two kings Og and Bashan, and finally brought them up to the brink of the promised land. God spoke to them saying *I have given you this land. Go up at once and possess it*. But the Israelites rebelled against His commands: *We are not able to conquer this land. There are giants there who will kill us. We wish we had died in Egypt or the wilderness, in fact, let’s choose a leader and go back to slavery in Egypt (Numbers 13:31-14:4)*

Because of their rebellion, an entire generation died. They spent the next 40 years wandering in the desert until everyone aged 20 years and over except for Caleb and Joshua had passed away. They never entered the promised land nor fulfilled their God-given potential.

Psalm 95 is quoted several times in the New Testament book of Hebrews. This letter was written to Jews who had accepted Jesus as Saviour, been born again, had stopped following the Law of Moses. But now they were being persecuted, thrown in prison and their goods confiscated. To avoid this persecution these Hebrew Christians were severely tempted to abandon Christ and return to Judaism (Hebrews 10:31-39).

Psalms 95 and Hebrews 3-4 is an encouragement for both them and us to *hear His voice* today and *enter His rest*.

*Hebrews 3:13-14 Exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.*

*Heb 4:9, 11 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. Let us, therefore,* ***be diligent to enter that rest****, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.*

**The Two Levels of Rest**

The Israelites experienced not one but two levels of rest. First when they escaped from slavery to Egypt, and secondly when they finally entered the Promised land (forty years later).

As Christians, we also experience two levels. We enter the first level of rest when we are born again and set free from slavery to sin. But the second level of rest is only gained as we grow up in our salvation and learn how to live by the power of Christ within us - the spirit-led life.

Jesus describes the two different levels of rest in the following passage:

*Matthew 11:28-30 (NKJV)*

*[28] “Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will* ***give you rest****. [29] “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will* ***find rest for your souls****. [30] “For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

Matt 11:28 promises that when we simply *come* to Jesus He will set us free from bondage to sin and *give us rest*. We can do nothing to earn salvation and forgiveness from sins. It is purely by grace through faith and not by our own works (Eph 2:8-9). This is when we receive rest into our spirit.

Matt 11:29 then tells us to **take His yoke and learn from Him …** so we can **find rest for our soul**. This is growing up in our salvation and learning to live by the power of the born-again spirit (Christ in us). It is a spirit-led life. And it is not automatic. We must *take His yoke*, and *learn from Him*. This is the process of transferring the rest from your born-again spirit into your soul.

**Yoke-Less?**

Matt 11:28 - we take off the yoke of sin by being born again.

Matt 11:29 - we are invited to put on Jesus’ yoke by learning from Him (hearing + obeying)

But can’t we just be *yoke-less, free, independent?*

God created us to be yoked to someone, and we will never remain yoke-less. If we don’t choose Jesus then we will choose something else.

**The yoke of religion** (Gal 5:1-4) - Don’t accept the yoke of religion, dead-powerless Christianity, or false religions, or even a cult.

**The yoke of the flesh** (Gal 5:13) - Don’t use your spiritual freedom as an excuse to give in to your flesh, and the lust for sex, fame and fortune. Remember Jesus’ warning about those who use their *Christian works* as an excuse to keep *practising sin* (Matt 7:21-23)

**The yoke of Jesus** (Matt 11:29-30; Gal 5:14-16)

There are three main ways of taking Jesus’ yoke: Praise and worship, Reading God’s word, Prayer (especially in tongues).

**Praise and Worship - Psalm 95:1-7**

Praise (v1-5) is something you do to wake up your body and soul and remind them of the power and goodness of God. You acknowledge the power of the God that created everything including you.

You (the born-again spirit) are the worship-leader of your own soul (Psalm 42:5; 103:1-2; 131:2). It is your responsibility to make your soul enter God’s presence with thanksgiving and shouts of joy.

Imagine that your spirit is the parent, and your soul is a two-year-old child. Don’t give your soul the option by asking if it wants to praise God. Treat it as a toddler and make it praise and worship God.

Worship (v6-7) is when your soul (mind, will, emotions) bows before God in adoration. Your spirit is always ready to worship, but your soul will resist whenever it doesn’t sense God’s presence (which is always there even when you can’t see it or feel it).

**Hearing and Obeying God’s Word - Hebrews 4:12**

We enter Jesus’ rest by **hearing and obeying Jesus’ voice, today!** The primary way of hearing Jesus’ voice is to spend as much time as possible reading God’s word, especially the New Testament. It is literally alive, and sharp enough to divide your soul (unrenewed mind, will and emotions) from your spirit (born-again righteous child of God). It will discern any areas in your heart which are hardened and going astray.

Once you have read and understood the word of God then remember to *be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves (James 1:22).* Become a wise builder by doing the sayings of Jesus (Matt 7:24-27)

**Praying in Tongues - Jude 19-20; Isaiah 28:11-12**

How do you move from *reading* God’s word to *hearing* His voice? Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to be our teacher (John 14:16-17, 25-26; 16:13) and lead us into all truth.

How do we allow the Holy Spirit to teach us? By praying in tongues. Every body-builder knows that to strengthen any muscle you must isolate it and find an exercise targeted directly at that muscle. Praying in tongues is the only activity a born-again Christian can do which is guaranteed to build-up and strengthen their spirit, and not just their soul.

When you pray in tongues you are entering Jesus’ rest because you are no longer struggling to find the right words to say, or which problems in your life to be solved, or how to save your parents/children/colleagues, or how to provide for your needs.

By praying in tongues you are transferring the burden of choosing what to pray for onto the Holy Spirit, and trusting that He is choosing the perfect words that will allow you to enter and possess your promised land.

How much? As much as possible and keep doing it until Jesus returns.

Ranui, will you make your soul worship Jesus today? Will you fill your mind with God’s word and practice doing it? Will you pray in tongues and give your spirit the privilege of hearing Jesus? Will you take His yoke, and learn from Him?

If you do these things then you will progressively find more and more rest for your soul.