

Psalm 115 • We will bless the Lord forevermore

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Psalm 115. This is the third Psalm in the Hallel Psalm collection. We're not going to get through all of them tonight. This was originally given to direct the worship of the temple. We think that this was possibly used for the dedication of the second temple, which would have been during the time of Ezra.

But either way, this song draws a contrast between the God of heaven, and the gods of the pagans. Because here's the deal. When Israel came back from their exile, there were 70 years in exile in the Persian kingdom, because of their own idolatry and disobedience.

And by the way, do you know that cured Israel of their idolatry? We don't see idolatry in the midst of Israel after that time. God cured them, 70 years in Persia cured them. And now that didn't mean that they were perfect. By the time Jesus came on the scene, there were other issues. There was rampant legalism. But idolatry was gone.

But when the Jews got back to the land, they noticed that the people that were still living in the land, that were occupying the land... And they, some of them were Jews, maybe, but most of them probably weren't. Because the way they would conquer nations back then is, they would take over. And they would bring people from other countries to live in your country. They'd move you to a different country and they'd move other people into your country.

And they did that because the people... If you were new in a land, if you were a stranger in a foreign land, you were less likely to rebel against the conquering king. And they knew that to be true.

And when the Jews were finally released from their exile in the Persian kingdom, they came back to Israel. And they found that the people living in the land were still living in the midst of idolatry. And as they began to speak of the worship of the One True God, the Invisible God, these people began to mock them.

And this Psalm really grew out of that experience. Because they were being mocked. And they were crying out to God because of it. But God was silent. Has God ever been silent in your life? Well, if He's ever done that in your life, then you know that can present a huge temptation for us to become hopeless and discouraged.

And this Psalm was written to urge God's people to keep their focus on the Lord and to trust Him for His deliverance in the midst of all of these idolaters and so forth.

It begins by saying,

"1 Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and faithfulness!" (ESV)

And I almost have to wonder if they're saying, "It's not anything that we did, that we are now free from the idolatry we now see that's going on among these peoples in the land. The glory is not to us, it's to You. You sent us into the Persian kingdom. There we were for 70 years and You cured us. Not to us, but to your name, we give the glory. "

And then they asked the questions,

"2 Why should the nation say, "Where is their God?"

I'll tell you where our God is, they say.

Verse three,

"3 Our God is in the heavens; (and) he does all that he pleases.

And that's really all you need to know about our God. He's in the heavens and He does all that He pleases. Our God is a sovereign God, and this is another way of saying, there is no one above Him.

Now, what about their gods? What do they have to say about the gods of the people?

It says,

"4 Their idols (gods) are silver and gold, (They are) the work of human hands."

Can you imagine making your own god? Oh, we do it all the time. We do it all the time. Hey, don't think idolatry is gone. You might not have a little statue in your house that you bow down to. That doesn't mean you're not an idolater. Idol worship is alive and well.

You can make an idol out of anything. You make it out of money. You can make it out of sex. You can make it out of drugs. You can make it out of anything. You can take good things and turn them into an idol. But he says it's *"the work of human hands."*

Look at it. He goes on to say, in verse 5,

"They have mouths, but they don't speak; eyes, but do not see.

6 They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. (You can get the picture here, can't you - useless.)

7 They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat."

He doesn't even say they can't talk here. He says, they can't even make a noise. If you're sitting in front of your idol and saying, just grunt or something and tell me that you hear me. Can't do it. Can't do it.

But verse 8 is one of the most sobering verses of the entire psalm. Because it says,

"Those who make them become like them; (In fact, he says,) so do all who trust in them."

And that's the word. That's the word that we're getting here, that you and I need to see. Those who make their own gods, make their gods in their own image. Do you know that we're made in the image of God? But there are some people who make their God in their image. It's in their image.

In other words, it's what I want it to be. I want I'm going to make my God who and what I want him to be. And I want him to be someone who constantly blesses me, gives me lots of money, gives me lots of physical enjoyment. I never get sick. I never have to deal with difficulty. That's the God I want and I'm going to make him in my own image.

That doesn't work. And so what's the exhortation to the people of God? Verses 9 through 11. Listen to this threefold exhortation.

"9 O Israel, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield.

10 O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD! (And its talking to the priests now, specifically, the high priests.) He is their help and their shield."

And then if there's anybody else, who isn't involved in either... an Israelite.

It says,

"11 You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield."

He says in verse 12,

"The LORD has remembered us; he will bless us;"

Now remember, this is being spoken during a time when the Lord is silent. So can you hear? I want you to hear the faith here.

He says, *"The LORD has remembered us; he will bless us;"*

"he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron;

13 he will bless those who fear the LORD, both the small and the great."

Do you believe that? Do you believe that?

"14 May the LORD give you increase, you and your children!

15 May you be blessed by the LORD, who made heaven and earth!

16 The heavens are the LORD's heavens, but the earth he has given to the children of man."

You and I know that. Isn't it funny that science, in all of its wisdom, doesn't know this? Science doesn't know this. Well, they choose not to know it. What do you say? Pastor Paul, what are you talking about? What don't they know?

They don't know that the earth was given for man. They don't know it. They deny it.

We look at the earth and we go, wow, it's perfect! I mean, the oxygen level, it's just what we need. There's water on earth. We need water to live. It's perfect! Thank you. We look at the world. We look at the way it's created. We look at the distance from the sun. It's just right.

Although I think... Sue I just got back last night from Minnesota. I think Minnesota is farther from the sun than anything. It was cold while we were there. It got down to zero. And there was a biting wind. I mean, they were, it was cold. And we saw snow coming down sideways, which is always fun. You go outside and it hits you in the side of the face as it's... That was a kick.

Oh, I saw... But I saw a real Minnesotan. I went to the store for my mother and I went to go pick up some things. And I was just freezing. And I'm getting ready to get out of my car to go into the store. I pulled into the parking lot and I'm thinking to myself... Yeah, you got to psych yourself out, to walk between the car and the door. You got to just, okay, here we go. We're going to do this. Here we go. Any minute now I'm going to just open this door and I'm going to go. And I'm thinking about how I'm going to make a mad dash...

And the guy pulls right in, in front, in my view; and he gets out of his car and he's got shorts and flip flops and a short sleeve T-shirt. Remind me of you, Larry. He's one of yours. He's probably related to you somehow in a distant sort of a way. Larry wears shorts most of the time of the year. And I watched this guy get out of his car and I thought, good for you, buddy. He's one of these guys who probably live forever. And then I ran to the store for all I was worth.

Anyway, how did I get onto that? The earth is really cool, that's what I was saying, wasn't I? Except in Minnesota, yes. He made heaven and earth, yeah.

Verse 17,

"The dead do not praise the LORD, nor do any who go down into silence."

Now, I want to pause here just a moment, as we finish up this Psalm. Because we see verses like this one in the Old Testament and these sorts of verses, and you'll see them in the book of Ecclesiastes too. They reveal a limited revelation of life after death. And you read this in the Old Testament, where it talks about people dying and they can't praise God from the grave, and so forth.

But with the revelation that you and I have from the New Testament, and the teachings of Jesus, we know that this is not the end. When someone dies they simply are present with the Lord. If they're believers, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. (2 Corinthians 5:8)

And we know that worship and praise just really get started at that point. It's not over. It's just starting. If you can talk about... If you can use the word starting in relation to eternity, which you really can't. Because things don't start in eternity, nor do they finish. Because start and finish are time words. And in eternity, there's no time. Anyway, it's a side point.

But anyway, you can see that in verses like this, there's an old Testament perspective. And thank God we know better from the new Testament.

And this Psalm ends in verse 18 by saying,

"But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the LORD!"

And we will finish out the rest of the Hallel Psalms, next week. And then we'll pause, as I said, for Thanksgiving week. Not have a service. And then after that, we'll come back and we'll start tackling Psalm 119. And who knows how long that will take? We'll just have to see.

Anyway, let's pray,

Father, thank You so much for giving us time tonight to just dig into the Word and to look at the Psalms. As always, Lord, the Psalms are just such a blessing. They teach us so much about putting our faith in You, even in the midst of challenge and difficulty. We see how the people of God have rallied themselves, Lord, during hard times. Rallied one another to say, we will trust. We will praise. God will bless.

Lord, help us to keep going back over these Psalms to remind ourselves of how faithful You are, how You will never forget Your covenant, Your loving kindness, Your tender mercies. Thank You for that, Lord.

We continue to look to You to be our deliverer. Even when all earthly means of deliverance are gone, we will trust in You. We will trust in You. We choose tonight to put our trust in You. Thank You Father. In Jesus precious name we pray, amen.