

Psalm 115:1-18 Trust in The LORD Falls Church AM 9/10/2023

We are studying the Hallelujah Psalms – Psalms 113-118. This is the third in that group, where the Psalms begin or end with Hallelujah.

In Psalm 115, the theme of false gods compared to the True and Living God suggests that it was written at a time when God's people were exposed to a great defeat and difficulty, and also the mocking taunts of unbelievers. Perhaps in the Babylonian exile, or in the Egyptian slavery.

The LORD God calls us to see the emptiness of false gods, to place our trust in Him, to receive His blessings, and to praise Him!

1. Reasons to trust the LORD and not false gods! (v.1-8)

There is a crisis, a situation of great defeat for God's people. Verse 1 sets the tone of the Psalm by asking for God to rescue them for the glory of His name, and for the sake of His steadfast love and faithfulness. Verse 1 is a plea from hurting people to God to go ahead and take action to save them! Not for their sake, but for God's sake. And for the sake of God's steadfast love and God's faithfulness, to demonstrate to the world God's character through His actions on behalf of His own people.

However, right away in verse 2, the concern is that if God delays in rescuing them, then the heathen nations would call into question God's love and loyalty to His people. The sad circumstances seem to be used by other nations to substantiate their questioning. In verse 2, the nations are questioning even God's whereabouts, hinting that His very existence was doubtful. Surely, if God existed, He would help His people, when they are in a needy time such as this one! Where is God? Are you sure He is coming? Are you sure He is there? And again, where is God? The Psalmist promptly replies as narrator in verse 3 in order to restore God's honor and to prove God's power to do whatever pleases Him!

Verse 4 remind us of the child's storybook called The Emperor's New Clothes. Everyone goes along with the official royal statement that the Emperor has a new set of clothes, except a child who admits what no one else wanted to say. Actually, the Emperor has no clothes! Here in verse 4, all the other nations have all gone along with the story that idols are real gods, but it was only a child of God who admitted what no nations wanted to say. Actually, the idols are fake gods!

Israel's eyes had been opened to the futility of man-made gods, whether the gods were Egyptian, Philistine, Assyrian, or Babylonian. All of those gods and all of the threats of those nations now appeared ridiculous in their total uselessness. The following list is humorous in its litany of facts, starting in verse 4 that all of the false gods were made by human hands. The laughable consequence is idols of lifelessness – verse 5, having mouths that do not speak, eyes that do not see, verse 6, ears that do not hear, noses that do not smell, verse 7, hands that do not feel, feet that do not walk, and throats incapable of making even such a sound as clearing

one's throat. The point is driven home by verse 8 in two parts. First, that the people who make such idols to worship become like the idols in exactly the ways listed. They become spiritually lifeless. Their mouths no longer speak truth, their eyes no longer see reality. In the spiritual realm, rather than being useful persons and full of life, the idol-makers become as dead as their dead idols. The second part of verse 8 brings up the issue of trust, a main theme in this Psalm. The spiritually dead worshippers have made the spiritually fatal error of putting their trust in such dead idols. Those who trust in these idols are also spiritually dead.

2. The call to trust in The LORD. (v.9-11)

Verses 4-8 set up well for the call to trust God in verse 9, "*O Israel, trust in the LORD!*" calls on the people of God to forsake any remaining hankering after these false gods, and to instead commit themselves wholly to the Lord.

Since reasons had been given for not trusting in false gods, now reasons are given to trust in the true God. Reasons #1 and #2, "*He is their help and their shield.*" Has Babylon or Egypt or Assyria ever turned to their false gods and received help? Have they ever been shielded? But how often has Israel been helped and shielded by the True and living God?

In verse 10, now the call is to the religious leaders, the priests, O house of Aaron, now you hear in verse 10, what the whole of Israel already heard in verse 9.

In verse 11, there is a call to any foreigner who respects and fears the LORD God of Israel, to go ahead and wholly trust the LORD as their God, too. The foreigners receive the exact same invitation – Trust in the LORD, He is the help and shield of any who trust Him!

It is time to commit! There is solid reasoning here. You need to jump on this offer. Let's review the offer to suffering people....

Verse 1, The LORD has glory, and steadfast love and faithfulness to us.

Verse 2, why should we let the nations say that we have no God, when actually we do have this glorious God?

Verse 3, our God exists, and is alive and well, He is in the heavens, and He has the ability to do anything and everything that pleases Him.

Verses 4-8, trusting in any other god is silly and foolish and leads to death.

Verses 9-11, God is our help and shield, and God Himself is pleading with us and commanding us to trust in The LORD. What is the hold up for you?

3. The LORD blesses those who trust/fear Him, and we praise Him. (v.12-18)

Starting in verse 12 to the end of the Psalm, there is encouragement for those of us who have decided to place our trust in The LORD. If we have decided to heed the call to trust in the LORD our God, then we can be counted as God's people. When we read the word "us," we are now included, by faith. "*The LORD has remembered us; He will bless us...*" We are reminded of God's help in the past for believers like us, and so we can be welcomed and officially reassured of

God's help for us starting right now and continuing into the future. This confidence in our good decision to entrust this God with our care will grow as the Psalm continues and comforts us for six more verses.

Who does the LORD help and protect? Verse 12 answers US. Those who trust in Him. He will remember us. He will bless us. Who else? The house of Israel, and the house of Aaron. Who else? Verse 13 answered those people in the faith community, those people who trust God, those people who fear The LORD. Who else? *Both the small and the great.* Not just the big-name believers, and the people with a lot of responsibility and visibility. Not just the great ones. No. Also the small ones. Also the little people. Also the people with a tiny bit of responsibility and no visibility. Whoever you are, and wherever you are, and as unknown as you are – when you entrust yourself and your life and your needs and your safety to this God, He has news for you: He will remember you and bless you!

Verse 14 shows the community starting to act like a community already. The Psalmist is renewed in a spirit of prayer for others. The author says to everyone who has joined in trusting the LORD, “*May the LORD give you increase, you and your children!*” This is a prayer that the LORD will grant all believers increase of blessings and help and safety provided by our loving and faithful God.

Verse 15 bases the praying of believers for one another with a reminder of the ability of the LORD God. Is The LORD capable of shielding you, blessing you, granting the requested increase to you and to your children? Yes. In the sharpest contrast possible to the false idols of verses 4-8, and in answer to the taunting nations of verse 2, the LORD God is the one so capable of blessing you, that He is the one who made the heavens above, and He made the earth our home.

Verse 16, the LORD our God is not only concerned about His home in the heavens, but our home on earth, too. God has given the earth to the children of man. The God of heaven has committed Himself to blessing us and helping us, and shielding us. Why would the God of heaven do this? Verse 17 shows the answer – so that we would praise Him.

Verses 17-18, “*The dead do not praise The LORD, nor do any who go down into silence. But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the LORD!*” The conclusion of the Psalm reveals a lot. It shows that as God looks down from heaven, God sees two different kinds of people. The dead and we the living. Those who trust dead idols, and those who trust The LORD God of love. Those who become like dead idols, and those who bless the LORD. Those who mock God and question His existence, and those who fear Him. Those who are silent, and those who praise God. Those who make idols, and those who serve the LORD God in this life. Those who will be dead forever, and those who will be alive from this time forth and forevermore. Those who go down into silence, forgotten, and those whom the LORD remembers and blesses, helps, and shields.

The invitation is repeated. We were invited in verses 9-11 to trust in the LORD, and now we are invited in verse 18 to bless the LORD and to Praise the LORD!

Why has the God of heaven blessed us? So that we could live to praise Him now and live on to praise Him in the future.

The dead do not praise the LORD, nor do any who go down into silence. During the ancient times, very little was revealed from God for what happened after people died. Death was seen as a place of darkness and a place of silence. Christ came and conquered death for us by taking our sins upon Himself on the cruel cross. He entering the realm of the dead, and then exiting the realm of the dead in His resurrection. Christ returned to the realm of the living on earth. Then, Jesus ascended from earth back to heaven. All the time from then until now, Jesus has been preparing a place for believers to be with Him. John 14:3, “...if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also.”

Through trusting in The LORD Jesus Christ, we have the glorious certainty of being transported to another sphere in which we will not be dead, and not be silent, but rather we would live forever, praising God. Revelation 4:8, “*the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”* Revelation 7:15, “*Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will shelter them with His presence.*”

We who trust The LORD, who respect and fear The LORD will be blessed forever, and we will in return, bless God forever, and praise The LORD forever.

Conclusion:

1. Trust in The LORD. It is the title of the sermon, because it is the main thrust of Psalm 115. The LORD God is so glorious that there never was more than one good image of The LORD on earth, and that image was found in the person of His own dear Son, Jesus Christ. And the glorious and perfect Jesus is the very One who was sacrificed in order for us to be saved and join with the LORD in His heaven. Listen to the central verses, 9-11, and listen for this 3 times. “*O Israel, trust in the LORD! He is their help and shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD! He is their help and shield. You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD! He is their help and shield.*”

If God tells us something once, we should listen very carefully.

If God says something twice, we should pay strict attention.

If God repeats it three times, we should drop everything else we are doing, give our full attention to it, to study, ponder, memorize, mediate on, and joyfully obey what God has said.

Trusting in idols is disappointing, because the idols are nothing, and they can do nothing for us. Trusting in The LORD is never disappointing, because The LORD our God lifts us up when we are hurting. The LORD our God helps us in our weakness. The LORD our God shields us from those who want to hurt us.

We trust in the LORD for our salvation. We do not expect God to recognize and reward our own efforts, motivations, intentions, accomplishments, contributions, or merit. None of that will result in our entering heaven. The only thing that results in our entering heaven is trusting in the LORD Jesus Christ alone, and His grace alone through faith alone. Christ died and rose again in order to provide us with the blessing of His forgiveness and perpetual blessings. This is true for all believers, whether you are educated or not, whether you are poor or not. This is true for all God-fearers, whether you are respected in your own eyes or not, whether you are respected in the eyes of others or not. This is true for those who are overlooked, mistreated, neglected, abused, or persecuted. Verse 13 said God will bless those who fear The LORD, both small and the great.

We trust in the LORD as our death approaches. If you are trusting the LORD, then you know that the One who has been faithful to you to bless you throughout your life, will not abandon you as you age, and will not abandon you in your final days and final hour. The LORD God will draw closer to you. Trust Him to do so.

2. Give God praise constantly.

The opening verse of Psalm 115 has the atmosphere of requesting a great rescue. If you look at them again, they also have the atmosphere of praising God after a great rescue.

In the year 1415, the English army was battling the French army. The English army was small, and they tried to withdraw, but were blocked. They had to take a stand and fight. Imagine the scene and attitude of the victorious British Army, having just won a surprising and inspiring victory. This victory was one of England's most celebrated victories and was one of the most important English triumphs in the Hundred Years' War. Perhaps the most notable example of a last stand of a heavily outnumbered force resulting in an outright victory. It forms the background of a Shakespeare play written 184 years later, called Henry V. This victory continues to be celebrated by Brits, and has perpetually fascinated scholars and the general public into the modern day. But all this is not why I am telling you. Imagine the scene and attitude of the victorious British Army, having just won a

surprising and inspiring victory. Right after the win at Agincourt, the King of England immediately gathered the whole army of England for a victory ceremony right on the battlefield. As part of that ceremony, the army was hushed to listen to the singing of Psalms 114 and 115 together. What the army did not know is that when they got to verse 1 of Psalm 115, the whole army of England was ordered to kneel in the thick mud and to sing along, joining in giving one voice to these words, “*not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to Your name give glory.*”

We have been given victory over sin, death, and the devil, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord. We keep on remembering these victories and praising God for them!

The dead cannot sing His praises. The wicked will not sing His praises. The careless do not sing His praises. But we will shout Hallelujah and sing Praise the LORD *from this time forth and forevermore.*