

Psalm 115
Praising God

Introduction: This psalm is found in book 5 of the psalms (107-150). This psalm was sung during Passover, particularly after the meal and the fourth cup of wine. It was also sung at Pentecost, Tabernacles, the New Moon, and Hanukah.

Superscription: none

1) The desire for God to be glorified in light of His sovereignty—115:1-3

a) A request—115:1

i) The what?—

(1) Stated negatively; we are unworthy—¹ *Not to us, O Yahweh, not to us,*

(2) Stated positively; You are worthy—*but to Your name give glory*
[kabod],

(3) In other words, “Act on our behalf to magnify Your reputation!”

(Anderson) Be consistent with Isa. 48:11.

ii) The why?

(1) *because of Your loyal love [chesed],*

(2) *because of Your truth [emeth].*

b) An answered question—115:2-3

i) The question—² *Why should the nations say, “Where, now, is their God?”*

(1) The present adversity casts a doubt on the power of Israel’s God.

(VanGemeren)

(2) To the Gentiles, the absence of an image/idol suggested the absence of a god.

ii) The confident answer—115:3

(1) A position of transcendent authority—³ *But our God is in the heavens;*

(2) A demonstration of sovereign freedom—*He does [asah] whatever He pleases.*

(a) His ability to act and to fulfill His plans distinguishes Him from pagan gods. (Anderson)

(3) God is completely self-determined, and His actions are voluntarily, not necessarily, done. (McCune)

(4) Whatever He wants to do, He does, and what He wants depends on Himself alone. ... Nobody and nothing other than God caused Him to put into His plan what He has put there. (Feinberg)

2) The dangers of trusting in false gods—115:4-8

a) The impotent, man-made idols—115:4-7 ⁴ *Their idols are silver and gold, the work [ma’aseh] of human hands.*

i) No revelation—⁵ *They have mouths, but they cannot speak;*

ii) No moral observation—*they have eyes, but they cannot see.*

iii) No hearing of prayer—⁶ *They have ears, but they cannot hear;*

- iv) No discernment—*they have noses, but they cannot smell.*
- v) No activity—⁷ *They have hands, but they cannot feel;*
- vi) No movement—*they have feet, but they cannot walk;*
- vii) No thought—*they cannot mutter (muse) with their throats.*
- b) Their worshippers—115:8 ⁸ *Those who make [asah] them are like them, as are all who are trusting [batach] in them.*
 - i) The idol has the dreadful capacity to transform its worshippers into its own image. (Motyer)

3) The psalmist calls people to trust in Yahweh instead—115:9-13

- a) Three groups who are called to trust God—115:9-11
 - i) The people—⁹ *O Israel, trust [batach] in Yahweh; He is their help and their shield.*
 - ii) The priesthood—¹⁰ *O house of Aaron, trust [batach] in Yahweh; He is their help and their shield.*
 - iii) Genuine believers, including Gentiles—¹¹ *You^{pl} who are fearing Yahweh, trust [batach] in Yahweh; He is their help and their shield.*
 - iv) Note: the word “help” is used of the woman’s relationship to her husband in Gen. 2:18-20. A woman reflects God’s image as she helps her husband.
 - v) This is the antithesis of the foolish faith in lifeless idols because it a faith in the living God who acts. (Ross)
- b) The same three groups are reminded of God’s resolve to bless them—115:12-13
 - i) ¹² **Yahweh** (emphatic) *has remembered [zakar] us;*
 - ii) *He will bless [barak] us;*
 - (1) *He will bless [barak] the house of Israel*
 - (2) *He will bless [barak] the house of Aaron*
 - (3) ¹³ *He will bless [barak] those who are fearing Yahweh, the small along with the great.*
 - iii) This is in accordance with His promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:2).

4) The psalmist prays for his readers—115:14-18

- a) The prayer requests—115:14-15
 - i) ¹⁴ *May Yahweh give you^{pl} increase [yoseph], you^{pl} and your^{pl} children.*
 - ii) ¹⁵ *May you^{pl} be blessed [barak] by Yahweh, the Maker [asah] of heaven and earth.*
- b) The confidence behind the prayer requests—115:16-18
 - i) The contrast of responsibility—115:16
 - (1) His ownership—¹⁶ *The heavens are the heavens of Yahweh,*
 - (2) His generosity—*but the earth He has given to the sons of man.* (cf. Gen. 1:28)
 - ii) The contrast of praise—115:17-18
 - (1) ¹⁷ *The dead do not praise Yah [hallelu-jah], nor do any who go down into silence.*

(2) ¹⁸ *But we will bless [barak] Yah from this time and for evermore.*

(3) *Praise Yah! [hallelu-jah]*

5) Things for us to remember:

- a) The righteous do not worship images; we ARE the image of God and worship Him.
- b) People do not want a God who makes demands of them; they want a god who serves them.
- c) If people cannot solve their own problems, then nothing that they can make will be able to do so, for what they make will be inferior to them. To find deliverance from the problems of life, people need a God who is greater than they, a God who created them. (Ross)