

PSALM 115  
Not unto Us, O Lord

REFOCUS 2021 – PSALM 115  
Worship and Prayer

For this year the refocus vision is on worship deepening our sense of God's Presence and Power.

Psalm 115 is a kickoff for this in the series on Revelation will carry it through many months.

This psalm, like many others, speaks to the issue of our SPIRITUAL ROOTS, BRANCHES, AND FRUIT.

**PSALM 115**

1 Not to us, O LORD, not to us, But to Your name give glory  
Because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth.

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

3 But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.

4 Their idols are silver and gold, The work of man's hands.

5 They have mouths, but they cannot speak; They have eyes, but they cannot see;

6 They have ears, but they cannot hear; They have noses, but they cannot smell;

7 They have hands, but they cannot feel; They have feet, but they cannot walk;

They cannot make a sound with their throat.

8 Those who make them will become like them, Everyone who trusts in them.

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

10 O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield.

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

12 The LORD has been mindful of 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, The small together with the great.

14 May the LORD give you increase, You and your children.

15 May you be blessed of the LORD, Maker of heaven and earth.

16 The heavens are the heavens of the LORD, But the earth He has given to the sons of men.

17 The dead do not praise the LORD, Nor *do* any who go down into silence;

18 But as for us, we will bless the LORD From this time forth and forever.

Praise the LORD!

v. 1-3 16-17 ROOTED in the glory of God.

v. 9-12 BRANCHES- corporate worship and reminders

v. 13-18 FRUIT – fear of the Lord; a life of praise

**PSALM 115:1-3 16-17 Roots**

v. 1 Don't we all waver like this in some way?

The audience of Psalm 115 seems to be feeling that God has forgotten them. Their enemies seize the chance to mock their God.

Notice what concerns the Psalmist in this time of distress – the honor and glory of God.  
IS THIS HOW WE PRAY? Is it OUR FOCUS?  
This Psalm helps us re-center our spiritual GPS.

This prayer is good during distress or if you will be in the future (and you will be.)  
It's how we reboot our spiritual hearts when we get the idolatry virus.

This is where the daily struggle is – keeping our eyes and hearts on God. This is at the heart of the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment – No other gods before me and the GREAT COMMANDMENT – “love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.”

These commandments are FIRST AND GREAT because they are FOUNDATIONAL. The Biblical life of faith is built on those commandments.  
“Love your neighbor as yourself” is built on “Love God first”.

1 Jn 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

Matt 6:33 Seek ye first the kingdom of God.”

That's the goal; the ideal. If we're honest, we know we aren't ideal all the time. **When we crash and fail, then we can do one of two things:**

- 1- **Redouble our efforts to polish our resume before God;** try harder to do better to work our way back into God's favor. HOW DOES THAT WORK FOR US? It is spiritually exhausting and relationally destructive. The accuser tells us that it's never enough, so try harder. Or he lies and says, 'It's all good. God really expects too much. Relax and take it easy.' It is relationally destructive because the only way that we'll feel good about our resume is by comparing ourselves to others- quietly or out loud. We become resentful or filled with pride.
- 2- The other and better option is to **hide ourselves in the righteousness of Christ. That is the movement of faith.**

When we see our own fickleness, we must and CAN run to Christ to repent and experience forgiveness, which is ours because of God's lovingkindness ('hesed').

The throne of grace is always available. **We should never go to God based on our own good works; we should never stay away from him because of our own bad works.** (Jessica Thompson The Sinner/Saint Devotional p.18)

The GOOD NEWS of scripture is that through faith alone in Christ alone we are covered with the righteous of Christ.

It is His grace and forgiveness that is part of His Glory and is why we should revere Him.

**Ps 130**

**3 If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?**

**4 But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.**

1 Not to us, O LORD, not to us, But to Your name give glory  
Because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth

This verse expresses the core of biblical faith – Glory to God alone.

Glory is a term that means “weightiness, worth, value, significance, splendor and honor.”

“God’s glory can be defined as the otherworldly divine transcendence that dwarfs our position as creatures before the Creator. It speaks to the weight and worth of God. It encompasses the full panorama of the supremacy and unity of his divine attributes... This directs us to a world that is radically God-centered... Scott Christensen

<https://www.crossway.org/articles/j-i-packer-on-the-hub-of-christian-life/>

*There can be no genuine or transformative holiness in life until a person has for his primary and ultimate aim the glory of God alone.*

That rubs us the wrong way. We want glory for ourselves, which is why Phil 2 says, <sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit= “vain glory”. The flesh / old nature is characterized by ‘glory hunger.’

At the root of the fall was the desire to be like God, and that desire lives on in all of us today in various ways. Some ways are secret and don’t get much notice. Others are out there and are clearly seen, if we have the eyes to see.

EX: the current “identity” hot button in our culture is one example. It is often called “identity politics”, but it is rooted in theology. Politics is downstream from culture, and culture is downstream from THEOLOGY.

Without even knowing it, I think the “identity” issue is an expression that says, “I want to be the sovereign one and identify myself how I want, and I demand that all others go along with me.”

Intentionally or unintentionally, it is a mindset that says, “Not to you, O LORD, but to me and my name give glory.”

That self-centered view is the essence of the spirit of the age and of the strategy of the ungodly beasts of Revelation 13

This shows a lack of awareness of our own status as creatures – we are made and defined by God’s will and His design. WE ARE NOT SOVEREIGN to define ourselves. While this is not the only example of our desire to be God, it is the current one that has the combined lobbying power of media, government, academia, and entertainment behind it.

The anti-dote to the sovereign self, here in Psalm 115 and in Revelation, is to get a proper view of God on the throne. THIS IS HOW WE STAY ROOTED in God.

v. 2-3

2 Why should the nations say, “Where, now, is their God?”

3 But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.

Do we know with our hearts and heads that all glory goes to God, that He is in the heavens, and He does what He pleases? Do we acknowledge that we wouldn’t want it any other way?

This issue of verse 3 isn’t one of “Reformed vs non-Reformed or Calvinist or Baptist or Methodist, etc”

This is an issue of THEIST vs non-theist / atheist.

If God is not sovereign over all things and free to do as He pleases, then he is not God.

**v. 4-8 Such ‘gods’ are like the weak helpless idols of v. 4-8**

The sad truth is that we become like what we worship. All the idols of man lead to a form of spiritual slavery.

Something Wicked This Way Comes – secret wishes are granted by the mysterious Mr. Dark, and the people lose their souls in obtaining what they desired.  
*We don't have idols, Idols have us; yet they really have no power to deliver what they promise.*

EX: current pagan idolatry – Mohler briefing <https://albertmohler.com/2021/08/06/briefing-8-6-21>  
Paganism is a direct refutation of Christianity. And by that, I mean, it's a refutation of Christianity as an overarching worldview, particularly in the distinction between the Creator and the creation. That is the most fundamental of all the distinctions that come in the flow of biblical history and in the biblical revelation.

Paganism, in its modern do-it-yourself version is a form of trying to recreate some kind of earth worship. It's also very much associated with pantheism. That's the view that the earth is god or divine in some sense, or panentheism, which rejects the separation between God and creation. ... We should note that this kind of paganism, it's making its way into some mainline Protestant circles. The Massachusetts Review, based in Cambridge, ran a story about the ordination of some cherry trees....

The report in The Massachusetts Review included these words spoken at the ordination ceremony. "We are here today to ordain these seven venerable Kwanzan cherry trees that the city currently plans to cut down, ...and in addition to these seven, the three younger trees on the end of the block have said that they would like to be ordained, too. The ordination ceremony will ordain these seven Japanese cherry trees as Soto Zen priests. "

[Ordination of the Cherry Trees | Mass Review](#)

This has resonance with what we'll see in Revelation ch 13, one day.

Theology has consequences; bad theology leads to idolatry and spiritual slavery.

In the midst of darkness, the scripture is a light to our path.

Rick Gamache says this about the Psalms...

In the midst of the forest of real life, which sometimes grows thick and dark and frightening as we hike along, and we find ourselves stumbling along, hoping for a beam of light to break through the trees so we can find the path again, these songs cut a path that takes us to God and reveals him once again to us and teaches us how to respond to him and how to worship him even where it *seems* he does not dwell."

#### **v. 9-12 BRANCHES- corporate worship and reminders**

The Psalmist is NOT ALONE IN THIS. His spiritual branches extend to the community of faith – the House of Israel, the house of Aaron. They signify the entire community.

Trust in the LORD – Yahweh ; He is their help (ezer). SIDE NOTE: THE same word used in Gen 2:18 when God made woman, Eve, as an "ezer" for Adam. Another sermon, but wives, you are given a role designation that in a specific way parallels that of God himself. You are in good company. This is no small place of honor and distinction. END OF SIDE ROAD

12 The LORD has been mindful of us; He will bless *us*"; *This is one of the truths that we are to use in corporate encouragement.*

A key part of 'one anothering' is to build each other up in the faith with the promises and character of God.

#### **v. 11, 13-18 FRUIT – fear of the Lord; a life of praise**

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

There is a reciprocal relationship between being rooted in God and bearing fruit, such as the fear of the Lord. **Being God centered leads to a proper fear or reverence for God, and reverence for God leads to being God-centered.** It's a chicken and the egg situation.

WHEN YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE TRUSTING God...?

"If you ask, 'Why is this or that happening?' no light may come, for 'the secret things belong to the Lord our God' (Deu. 29:29); but if you ask, 'How am I to serve and glorify God here and now, where I am?' there will always be an answer." J.I. Packer

"Trust in the Lord."

The Psalmist prayer and expectation was that "blessing" would come from the God of Heaven and earth.

One sign would be "increase" from God. It was His pattern to bless Israel so that the nations might see and turn to Him. **PSALM 67**

**God be gracious to us and bless us,  
And cause His face to shine upon us— Selah  
That Your way may be known on the earth,  
Your salvation among all nations.**

While we do experience blessings and increase in VARIOUS ways and days in our lives, Jesus gives a fuller paradigm of "blessedness" in Matt 5

**"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.  
5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.  
6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.  
7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.  
8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.  
9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.  
10 "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
11 "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.  
12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way, they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

In Christ, we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. The blessings we have in Christ transcend the material blessings that OT SAINTS would have expected.

We are to sink our ROOTS in God and the heavenly blessings of Christ and his kingdom, ALL FOR HIS GLORY, not ours.

Meditate on the grace of God and the promises and blessings of the gospel. Meditate on the glory of God to be revealed when Christ returns.  
Make the glory of God your balm and anchor in times of trial and when you are reviled for the name of Christ.

Our REFOCUS for 2021 is on the Glory of God and the reality of His presence and power.

**Here is a glorious irony:**

When we take our eyes off our pain and focus them on God's enormous and splendid being, the magnitude of our pain shrinks exponentially.  
God is astronomically greater than even the most horrific evils that inflict injury on our souls...  
When we see that God's glory *is* the center and we are able to immerse ourselves in that center, no matter what we may encounter in this ever-dark world, we will find a deep well of joy and tranquility that transcends the adversity and sustains us in the midst of it."  
Scott Christensen

Not to Us O Lord, but to Your name give the glory

Let's make that our prayer!! AMEN.