

# PSALM 115

## INTRODUCTION TO PSALM 115

This psalm is by the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, joined to the former, and makes one psalm with it: and Kimchi says, that in some books the psalm does not begin here; but in the best and correct copies of the Hebrew, and in the Targum, it stands a distinct psalm; and the different subject matter or argument shows it to be so. It is ascribed to various persons; by some to Moses and the Israelites, when pursued by Pharaoh: by others to the three companions of Daniel, cast into the fiery furnace: by others to Mordecai and Esther, when Haman distressed the Jews: by others to the heroes at the times of Antiochus and the Maccabees; so Theodoret: by some to Jehoshaphat, when a numerous army came against him; and by others to David, which is more probable; though on what occasion is not easy to say: some have thought it was written by him, when insulted by the Jebusites, (~~1016~~ 2 Samuel 5:6). The occasion of it seems to be some distress the church of God was in from the Heathens; and the design of it is to encourage trust and confidence in the Lord; and to excite the saints to give him the glory of all their mercies, and to expose the vanity of idols.

**Ver. 1.** *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory,* etc.] There is no glory due to men; no, not to the best of men, not to be given them on any account whatever; neither on account of things natural, civil, and temporal, nor on account of things spiritual and eternal; but all to be given to the Lord: for, as for their beings and the preservation of them, with all the mercies of life, food, raiment, etc. they are not of themselves, but of the Lord; and so are the salvation of their souls, their election and redemption, their regeneration, conversion, and sanctification, their justification and pardon; whatsoever good thing is in them, or done by them: nor have they anything for the sake of righteousness done by them; nor do they desire to take the glory of past favours to themselves; nor request deliverance from present evils for their own merits, which they disclaim; nor for their own sakes, or that they may be great and glorious;

but for the Lord's sake, for his name's sake, that he may be glorified; which is the principal sense of the passage. So the Targum,

“not for our sakes. O Lord, not for our merit, but to thy name give glory.”

Good men desire to glorify God themselves, by ascribing to him the perfections of his nature, and celebrating them; by giving thanks to him for mercies, spiritual and temporal; by exercising faith upon him, as a promising God; and by living to his glory: and they are very desirous that all others would give him the glory due unto his name; and that he would glorify himself, and get himself a glorious and an everlasting name. And indeed the words are addressed to him, and not to others; and particularly that he would glorify, or take the glory of the following perfections:

*for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake*; so very manifest in the salvation of his people, and in all their deliverances, and therefore ought to have the glory of them. His “mercy”, or his “grace”<sup>f1600</sup>, as it may be rendered, is displayed in the salvation of his people by Christ, in their regeneration, justification, pardon, and eternal life: and so is his truth, or faithfulness in all his promises; and particularly in the mission of his Son as a Saviour, so long promised and expected; and who is “truth” himself, the truth of all promises and prophecies; and by whom the truth of the Gospel came, the Word, which God has magnified above every name.

**Ver. 2.** *Wherefore should the Heathen say*, etc.] The nations about Israel, the nations of the world; the Gentiles in any age; the Papists in ours, sometimes called the Heathen, (<sup><9016></sup>Psalm 10:16 <sup><6112></sup>Revelation 11:2,18). The church expostulates with the Lord why those should be suffered to say, in a reproachful, insulting, manner, and by way of triumph,

*where is now their God?* that they have boasted of would help them; in whom they have put their trust and confidence; why does not he help them, as he has promised, and they expect? Thus the church suggests, that if the Lord did not appear for them, his own glory lay at stake. Such language is generally used by their enemies, when the people of God were in any distress; (see <sup><9210></sup>Psalm 42:10 79:10 <sup><2127></sup>Joel 2:17 <sup><3109></sup>Micah 7:9,10).

**Ver. 3.** *But our God is in the heavens*, etc.] His habitation is in the heavens, as the Targum; the Septuagint and Arabic versions add, “and in earth”: he is in both, and fills both with his presence; and cannot be contained in either. He is the Maker and Possessor of heaven and earth; the

one is his throne, and the other is his footstool: he dwells in the highest heaven, and overlooks all persons and things on earth, and overrules all; he is higher than the highest, and his kingdom ruleth over all.

*He hath done whatsoever he pleased*; in creation, in providence, and in grace: he hath made what creatures he pleased, and for his pleasure; and he does according to his will, and after the counsel of it, in heaven and in earth; and is gracious to whom he will be gracious; saves and calls men, not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and will; whose counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure; he is the most high God, and a sovereign Being; all that he wills are possible to him, and easily done by him, and which Heathens themselves own <sup>f1601</sup>.

**Ver. 4.** *Their idols are silver and gold*, etc.] The idols of the Gentiles; so the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions. The gods they serve and worship are not in the heavens; but the matter of which they are made is dug out of the earth: and this is the greatest excellency and value that there is in them; and such as are made of these are of the greatest worth, and yet only for the matter of them, otherwise useless and inanimate statues; such are the idols of the Papists, (~~400~~ Revelation 9:20).

*The work of men's hands*; the matter of them is gold and silver, which they owe to the earth as their original; the form of them they owe to men, and therefore can not be God, (~~2006~~ Hosea 8:6). If it is idolatry to worship what God has made, the sun, moon, and stars, it must be gross idolatry, and great stupidity, to worship what man has made: if it is sinful to worship the creature besides the Creator, or more than him, it must be still more so to worship the creature of a creature.

**Ver. 5.** *They have mouths, but they speak not*, etc.] These idols are carved with mouths, but they make no use of them; if any cry to them for they cannot answer them, nor save them from their troubles. Baal's priests cried to their idol, but was no voice heard, nor answer returned; they are rightly called dumb idols, (~~2018~~ Habakkuk 2:18 ~~2347~~ Isaiah 46:7 ~~2405~~ Jeremiah 10:5) (~~1185~~ 1 Kings 18:26,29), but our God in the heavens, when his people cry to him, he answers them, and sends them relief; and tells them his grace is sufficient for them, and so they find it to be.

*Eyes have they, but they see not*; they are made with eyes in their heads, but cannot see with them; they cannot see their worshippers, nor what they

bring to them; neither their persons nor their wants, (<sup><2163></sup>Daniel 5:23), but our God and Father in heaven, he sees in secret the persons and hearts of his people; their desires are before him, and their groanings are not hid from him; his eyes are on the righteous, and are never withdrawn from them.

**Ver. 6.** *They have ears, but they hear not*, etc.] The makers of them have taken care to place a pair of ears to their heads, but could not convey the faculty of hearing to them; so that though their priests may cry from morning to noon, as Baal's worshippers did, saying, O Baal, hear us; and even tonight, and one day and night after another, nothing is heard, (<sup><1183></sup>1 Kings 18:26,27). Indeed the image of Jupiter at Crete was made without ears; because it was thought unbecoming that he, who was prince and lord of all, should give ear to any <sup>f1602</sup>: but the God of heaven and earth is a God hearing prayer; his ear is not heavy, that it cannot hear; his ears are always open to the cries of his people.

*Noses have they, but they smell not*; the incense that is set before them, nor the sacrifices offered to them, (<sup><4948></sup>Deuteronomy 4:28), but our God smelled a sweet savour in legal sacrifices, offered up in the faith of the Messiah; and especially he smells a sweet savour in the sacrifice of his Son, and in the prayers of his saints, which are sweet odours; and particularly as they come to him perfumed with the incense of Christ's mediation, (<sup><0082></sup>Genesis 8:21 <sup><4972></sup>Ephesians 5:2 <sup><6118></sup>Revelation 5:8 8:3,4).

**Ver. 7.** *They have hands, but they handle not*, etc.] So as to feel any thing that is put into their hands; they cannot make use of their hands to stretch them out, and receive anything from their worshippers; nor can they give anything to them: but our God receives and accepts the sacrifices of his people, their prayers and their praises; and opens his hand, and liberally supplies their wants, both in providence and grace.

*Feet have they, but they walk not*; cannot stir from the place where they are, to the assistance of those that call unto them, (<sup><2407></sup>Isaiah 46:7) but our God walks upon the wings of the wind, and is a present help in times of trouble; a God at hand and afar off, and makes haste to the relief of his people in distress.

*Neither speak they through their throat*; or make a mournful voice as a dove, as the word is used in (<sup><2384></sup>Isaiah 38:14) or chirp as a bird, or chatter as a crane; or warble out any note through the throat, as birds do; and

much less form any articulate sound, or utter any proper word, that may be understood.

**Ver. 8.** *They that make them are like unto them*, etc.] As stupid as the matter of which they are made; as sottish and as senseless as the idols themselves, (see <sup>234D</sup>Isaiah 44:9-20). Aben Ezra and Kimchi interpret it as a petition, “let them that make them be like unto them”; and so the Targum, the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions: they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, let them be given up to a reprobate mind, to a mind void of all sense and judgment; and which indeed is their case, ( <sup>40L8</sup>Romans 1:28).

*So is everyone that trusteth in them*; more especially they that worship them: for an artificer may make them for gain, and have no faith in them; but a worshipper places confidence in them. Or this clause may be explanative of the former, and be rendered, even “every one”, etc. for “to make” sometimes signifies to serve and worship, ( <sup>423S</sup>Exodus 32:35).

**Ver. 9.** *O Israel, trust thou in the Lord*, etc.] Or, “the house of Israel hath trusted in the Lord”: so the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions: the Targum is,

“Israel trusteth in the Word of the Lord;”

in distinction from the Heathens, that trust in their idols. But it is better rendered as an imperative, trust thou; it being an exhortation to Israel to trust in the Lord, in opposition to idols; and may be understood of Israel, literally taken, who were God’s chosen covenant people, to whom he had made a revelation of himself, and of his will; and therefore should trust in him, and in no other; and of spiritual Israel, or all the elect of God, and redeemed of the Lamb; every Israelite indeed; every wrestling Jacob, and prevailing Israel; every praying soul; every sensible sinner, Jew or Gentile. It becomes them to trust in the Lord, not in the creature; not in their own strength, wisdom, riches, righteousness, or fleshly privileges; but in the Lord, as the God of nature, providence, and grace; as a promising and covenant keeping God, who is to be trusted with all, and for every thing temporal and spiritual, and at all times.

*He is their help and their shield*; the help and shield of every true Israelite; of everyone that trusts in the Lord; or,

“your help and your shield, O ye Israelites;”

so Ben Balaam in Aben Ezra reads the words: which are a reason or argument encouraging trust in the Lord, since he is the help of his people; they are helpless in themselves, and vain is the help of man, for there is none in him; there is no help but in the Lord, and he is a present, seasonable, and sufficient help: Jehovah the Father has promised them help, and he is both able and faithful to make it good; he has laid help upon his Son for them; and has set up a throne of grace, where they may come for grace to help them in time of need: Christ has helped them out of the miserable estate they were fallen into by sin; he helps them on in their way to heaven, by his power and grace, and at last brings them thither: the Spirit of God helps them to the things of Christ; to many exceeding great and precious promises; and out of many difficulties, snares, and temptations; and he helps them in prayer under all their infirmities, and makes intercession for them, according to the will of God; and therefore they should trust in the Lord, Father, Son, and Spirit: and who is also “their shield”, to protect and defend them from all dangers, evils, and enemies; what a shield is to the body, to secure it from hurt, that to the people of God are the love and favour of God, his power and might, his truth and faithfulness; as likewise Christ, his blood, righteousness, and salvation; and the Spirit, and his grace; (see <sup><1652></sup>Psalm 5:12 18:35 91:4) (<sup><1616></sup>Ephesians 6:16 <sup><2599></sup>Isaiah 59:19).

**Ver. 10.** *O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord,* etc.] The family of the tribe of Levi, that was separated from the rest, to minister in the priest’s office, to offer gifts and sacrifices for the people, and to bless them; and therefore ought to trust in the Lord, and set a good example to others: as ministers of the word should, who are intrusted with much by the Lord, and should trust in him for much; for every supply of gifts and grace; and the rather, as they are to be examples of faith to the people: and as all the saints under the Gospel dispensation are priests unto God, they should put their trust and confidence in the Lord; since their sacrifices cannot be acceptable and wellpleasing to God, without faith in him.

*He is their help and their shield;* the Lord is the help and shield of everyone of Aaron’s family; of the priests under the law, and of ministers under the Gospel; and of all those who are kings and priests unto God; and therefore they should trust in him. This is repeated for the certainty of it, and for the particular application of it to Aaron’s house.

**Ver. 11.** *Ye that fear the Lord, trust in the Lord*, etc.] Which is said not to distinguish true saints from hypocrites, in Israel or in Aaron's house; rather to describe such who belonged to neither: but, as Aben Ezra interprets it, who feared the Lord, of every people and nation; or proselytes, as Jarchi explains it: the distinction between the people of the Jews, and the proselytes among them, under the character of those that feared the Lord, may be observed in (<sup><4133></sup>Acts 13:26). It takes in all true worshippers of the Lord; and who are exhorted to trust in him, for faith and fear are consistent; and where there is the one, there is the other; where there is the true fear of God, not a slavish nor an hypocritical fear, but a holy reverence and a godly fear, there will be faith and confidence in him. Job was a man that feared the Lord, and yet trusted in him; these characters meet in the same persons, (see <sup><4519></sup>Psalm 31:19).

*He is their help and their shield*; the help and shield of all those that fear the Lord, their protector and defender, and therefore should trust in him. The word "ezer", translated help, in this and the two preceding verses, is applied to God, and often in this book of Psalms, as a title and epithet belonging to him; and it may be observed that "Aesar", in the Etruscan language, signifies God<sup>f1603</sup>.

**Ver. 12.** *The Lord hath been mindful of us*, etc.] The Targum is,  
 "the Word of the Lord hath remembered us for good."

And is another reason why his people should trust in him: he has been mindful of his covenant with them and promises to them, and has kept them; he remembered them in their low estate, and sent redemption to them; goodness and mercy have followed them all their days. Past experiences of divine favour should encourage trust in the Lord, as well as promises of future blessings, as follow:

*he will bless us*; with all kind of blessings, temporal and spiritual; with blessings indeed, solid and substantial: it is certain and may be depended upon; he has promised it, and swore to it, that in blessing he will bless. Kimchi interprets it as a wish, "let him bless": the Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and all the Oriental versions, render it in the past tense, "he hath blessed"; but the Targum as we: and as it follows,

*he will bless the house of Israel*; with whom he has made his new covenant; the household of faith, the family named of Christ, the whole Israel of God.

*He will bless the house of Aaron*; his priests, his ministers, all that offer up spiritual sacrifices to him; he will bless them with an increase of gifts and grace, and with his presence and Spirit, and therefore they should trust in him.

**Ver. 13.** *He will bless them that fear the Lord*, etc.] They shall want no good thing now, and have much goodness laid up for them to be enjoyed hereafter; the sun of righteousness rises upon them, and a book of remembrance is written on their account; the Lord delights in them, his eye is upon them; and they are blessed with more grace now, and will be blessed with glory hereafter.

*Both small and great*; young and old, rich and poor, high and low, lesser or greater believers; be they children, young men, or fathers; (see ~~Gal~~ Revelation 11:18).

**Ver. 14.** *The Lord shall increase you more and more*, etc.] The Word of the Lord, as the Targum, shall do it; in a temporal sense, with a numerous posterity, with riches, wealth, and honour; and in a spiritual sense, with an addition of spiritual blessings; with renewed instances of divine layout: with an increase of the gifts and graces of the Spirit of God, as faith, hope, love, joy, patience, humility, and other graces; and with more knowledge of God and Christ, and of divine and spiritual things.

*You and your children*; not only they that feared the Lord of the present generation, but those that should succeed them, and be as they were, a seed to serve the Lord, and who should be accounted to him for a generation.

**Ver. 15.** *You are blessed of the Lord*, etc.] The Arabic version reads it, “we are blessed”; with temporal and with spiritual blessings; being the beloved of the Lord, chosen of him; whose sins are pardoned, whose persons are justified by the righteousness of Christ; who are put among the children of God, and are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; regenerated by his Spirit, favoured with communion with God, and wrought up to some degree of conformity to Christ, and shall ever be with him.

*Which made heaven and earth*; and so able to bless with all kind of blessings, both heavenly and earthly; and from whom all help and assistance may be hoped for, and who may be trusted and confided in: and this, it may be, is observed to distinguish him from the idols of the Gentiles,

who made not the heavens and the earth; and who are not able to bless, nor give the least relief to any of their votaries.

**Ver. 16.** *The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's*, etc.] Not only the visible heavens, the airy and starry regions, which are within our sight; but the heaven of heavens, the third heaven, into which the Apostle Paul was caught, and heard and saw things not to be uttered; and which is, as the Targum expresses it,

“for the majesty of the glory of the Lord:”

he is the maker, owner, proprietor, and possessor of them all: but the third heaven is more especially the seat of his majesty; where he has prepared the throne of his glory, where he keeps court; where his ministers, his angels, wait upon him, observe his orders, and execute his will; and which he has prepared for his saints to dwell with him in to all eternity.

*But the earth hath he given to the children of men*; to Adam and his posterity, to dwell in it, to till it, and enjoy the fruits of it; yet so as not to leave it entirely to the care of men, and have no concern in it, and the affairs of it, as some licentious persons would from hence conclude; as if God had took the heavens to himself, and only minded the persons and things in that, and never concerned himself about the earth, and persons and things there; having disposed of it to the children of men, and left it to their conduct: for though he has given it to them for their use, yet he has still a claim upon it, and can and does dispose of it, and order all things in it, according to his pleasure; and men, from the highest to the lowest, are accountable to him, being but stewards, and at most but deputies and viceroys, under him: besides the words may be rendered, “and the earth which he hath given to the children of men”<sup>f1604</sup>; that is his also, as well as the heavens. This the Lord gives to the children of men as their portion; and sad is the case of such, when this is their all; but to his own children he gives heaven, the kingdom of heaven, eternal glory and happiness. Maimonides<sup>f1605</sup> gives the sense of the whole passage thus;

“God only perfectly knows the truth, nature, substance, form, motion, and causes of the heavens: and to man he has given, that he may understand what are under the heavens; because they are the world, and as it were his house, in which he dwells, and of which he is a part.”

**Ver. 17.** *The dead praise not the Lord*, etc.] Not the dead in sin; such as the makers of idols, and those that trust in them, who are like unto them; men must be made spiritually alive, ere they can show forth the praises of God: nor the dead corporeally. The souls of departed saints can and do praise the Lord: these die not with their bodies, nor sleep in the grave; they go immediately to God and Christ, and are employed in the service of God continually; particularly in praising him, as do the angels with whom they join; they sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, of providence and grace; especially the song of redeeming love, with which they always praise the Lord: but they cannot praise him with their bodily organs until the resurrection, which by death are rendered useless; they can praise him no more among men on earth, as they have before done; there is no work of this kind in the grave.

*Neither any that go down in silence*; the grave, so called, because everything is mute and silent there <sup>f1606</sup>; the instruments of speech are no more used on any account; no noise and clamour there from wicked men; there the wicked cease from troubling; and no songs of praise from good men, all still and quiet there. So the Targum,

“not any that go down to the house of the grave of the earth;”

or the earthly grave. And therefore save us, O Lord, suffer not the enemy to destroy us; for, should he, we shall no more be capable of praising thee, as we have done and desire to do; for no such service is to be done in the grave, (see <sup><904></sup>Psalm 6:4,5 30:9 88:10-12).

**Ver. 18.** *But we will bless the Lord from this time forth and for evermore*, etc.] The Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Ethiopic, and Arabic versions, render it, “we who are alive”; both in a corporeal and in a spiritual sense who, as long as we live, and while we have a being, will bless the Lord; being made spiritually alive, quickened by the Spirit and grace of God, and so capable of ascribing blessing, praise, and glory to him, for all the great and good things he has done; and especially when in lively frames, or in the lively exercise of grace: and that from this time; under a sense of present favours, and outward mercies being renewed every day; yea, throughout the whole of life, and so to all eternity in the world above; (see <sup><2339></sup>Isaiah 38:19).

Praise the Lord; let others do the same as we; let us join together in this work, now and hereafter.