

# Trust In The Lord's Blessings

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<i>Text</i>	Psalm 115
<i>Reading</i>	Isaiah 44:6-23; Ephesians 1:1-14
<i>Theme</i>	In a time of difficulty the psalmist urged Israel to trust in the Lord for his blessing, and so praise him.
<i>Purpose</i>	To encourage you to trust in the Lord in trouble confident of his blessing, and so praise him.

Each Sunday we come together as a church to worship God. These services, morning and afternoon, are *worship* services. We come together to praise God for who he is and to thank him for all his blessings.

We do this in our prayers, our psalms and hymns, in our offering of money, and in our attention to God's word.

We do this regardless of our circumstances – we do it when our lives are difficult because we trust that God will bless us and we want to praise him; we do this when life is delightful because we want to thank him for his goodness to us.

This psalm calls us to trust in God for his blessings and to praise him.

We will consider this under four headings:

1. Help from the Lord
2. Trust in the Lord
3. Blessing from the Lord
4. Praise to the Lord

## **1. Help From The Lord – verses 1-8**

We don't know when this psalm was written, but it arose out of a time of trouble when the people of Israel cried to God for help. Some think it may have been written after the return from the exile in Babylon when the people of Israel were small in number and were oppressed by their enemies.

If so that would be similar to our situation today. Christians are a small minority and in our Western world Christians are often despised and mocked.

The nations around Israel scoffed at them saying, "*Where is their God?*" If your God is so good and so great, why are you in this sad and sorry state? Why is your situation so difficult and desperate?!

The enemies of Israel ridiculed them like this when Israel was defeated in war, when she went through a drought or a famine or a plague of locusts; "*Where now is your powerful God?!*"

It is with this background in mind that the psalm begins with a confident plea for God's help – this is how we should read verse 1; "*Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name be the glory.*"

In their situation of trouble they were sure that God would help them and that his name would be glorified.

They were sure of this because of God's covenant love and his promise of faithfulness to his people.

This psalm was sung by the Jews at the Passover as they looked back to their deliverance out of Egypt; they remembered that God had displayed his power and glory then, and were confident he would do this again.

They expressed this confidence in verse 3, "*Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.*" Heaven is God's realm; he is enthroned on high and he is sovereign and almighty. The phrase, "He does whatever pleases him" is put generally and covers the past and the present; he will carry out his plans and fulfil his purposes. The people of Israel were confident that this all powerful God would help them in their troubles.

They contrasted the power and might of God with the futility and foolishness of idols (verses 4-8); "*But their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. They have mouths, but cannot speak.*" This means that they cannot communicate with those who worship them and they cannot "explain the past nor prophesy the future" (Spurgeon).

They have ears, but cannot hear the prayers and requests of the people.

They have feet but they cannot walk and so have to be carried about and they cannot come to the aid of anyone!

This reminds us of the prophet Elijah taunting the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, suggesting that they shout louder because their god might be asleep or away on a journey!

The prophet Isaiah gave an extended critique of the foolishness of idols (Isaiah 44:6-23).

Billions of people in our world today are worshipping lifeless idols which cannot help them in their troubles and trials and certainly cannot save them. By contrast this psalm expresses our confidence in God's help.

It was probably a responsive liturgical psalm where there was an exchange between the people and the priests. These first 8 verses were spoken by the people and then verses 9-11 by the leader of the levitical choir.

## 2. He urged Israel to **Trust in the Lord**

This is stated three times and is addressed to the "house of Israel... the house of Aaron.... and you who fear him...." This triple repetition was common in calls of worship to God's people.

This repetition covers the people of Israel in general and in particular: the believers in Israel, the priests, and individuals who feared the Lord.

Today we would say it covers the church as a body, and the Christians in it, who love and revere the Lord.

All of us are urged to trust in *the Lord* rather than in idols. The previous section ended in verse 8b by saying that those who make idols will be like them, that is, they will be as lifeless and senseless as those blocks of stone and wood.

You are not likely to put your trust in a physical idol such as a Buddha or a statue of the Virgin Mary, but you may be inclined to trust your health, or strength, or your retirement account, or your abilities, or your intellect, or your hard work. But any of these things can be taken away from us at a moment's notice; all of them are unreliable and faulty and feeble.

Rather you need to trust in the Lord because he is your "*help and shield*". God alone is the one who can help you in times of trouble and trial, in sickness and sadness. He is the only one who is solid and secure, who is reliable and trustworthy. He alone can protect you and shield you.

So you must trust in him. This too is repeated three times to drive this message home.

To trust God means to rely on him, lean on him, depend on him, and look to him.

Are you trusting in the Lord? Will you trust in him in sickness and in health, in poverty and in riches, when all is going well and when everything turns to custard?

We can be confident of receiving help from the Lord, and we can trust him, and third, we can expect

### **3. Blessing From the Lord**

In verses 12-13 it is the **people speaking**. They begin, "The Lord remembers us...." As they sang this psalm at the Passover they were conscious that God had remembered them when he rescued Israel from their slavery in Egypt. This psalm may also express their thanks to the Lord for their return from exile. There were many occasions when God had remembered his people and had protected them and delivered them.

All this made them confident that he would bless them in the future, that he would show them his kindness, his favour, his mercy, and that he would do so generously, richly and fully.

The word "bless" is used five times in these four verses. Calvin wrote, "The repetition of the word bless is intended to mark the uninterrupted stream of his loving-kindness."

And Spurgeon wrote, "The Lord has many blessings, each one worthy to be remembered, he blesses and blesses and blesses again... blessing does not impoverish the Lord."

This confidence of God's blessing is expressed three times, as in the previous verses, on the house of Israel, the house of Aaron and on those who fear the Lord. God will bless his people in general and all the persons who make up his people; he will bless the church and every Christian.

And he will bless "small and great alike" (v 13).

This means he will bless the little children of this congregation as well as the senior members, and everyone in between.

This could also refer to the different positions Christians occupy in life: God will bless the prince and the pauper, the patriarch and the peasant, the learned and the ignorant – all who fear him will be blessed. If you love the Lord and walk in his ways then God will show you his favour, both in this life and in the next.

This theme of blessing continues in verses 14-15 as **the priests** pronounce their blessing on the people, saying; *“May the Lord make you increase, both you and your children.”*

The very first blessing recorded in the Bible is God’s blessing to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden when he said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28).

God fulfilled that blessing to Jacob and his sons when they were in Egypt and they multiplied greatly, so much so that the Egyptians became afraid of them.

And after God led them out of Egypt Moses said to them, “May the Lord, the God of your fathers, increase you a thousand times and bless you as he has promised” (Deuteronomy 1:11).

After the return from the exile the people of Israel were small in number and so the priests blessed them, “May the Lord make you increase, both you and your children.”

This is a blessing of God we want to receive today. We want the church to increase as more children are born to Christian parents.

Sometimes the Lord withholds this blessing from Christian parents and they are not able to have children, or not as many children as they want to. When this happens we need to accept that this is the will of the Lord.

Yet the church does grow as children are born into covenant families and as they are taught the ways of the Lord. We want to see this blessing of the Lord continue in the church from one generation to the next.

We also want the church to grow through conversion as more people hear the message about Jesus, repent of their sin and believe in him.

The priests continue their blessing in verse 15 where they say, *“May you be blessed by the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”*

This is a general blessing which is comprehensive in its scope. “By specifying nothing it includes everything”. (Leupold)

This is very similar to the blessing Melchizedek gave to Abraham (Genesis 14:19). Melchizedek was King of Salem and priest of God Most High. He anticipated the coming of the Lord Jesus who would be the King of kings and the great High Priest over the house of God (Hebrews 7).

Through the Lord Jesus we receive every blessing we need, both physically and spiritually; the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ “has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). In Ephesians chapter 1 the apostle Paul gives us a long list of these great blessings of election, redemption, forgiveness, the revelation of his will and our union with Christ.

Today, “May you be blessed by the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”

**4.** We can be confident of receiving *help* from the Lord, so we can *trust* him, and receive his *blessing*, and all this must lead to **Praise to the Lord** (verses 16-18).

The psalm declares that “*The highest heavens belong to the Lord*”. Literally it reads, “The heavens, the heavens are the Lord’s.” He made the heavens and he dwells in them.

“*But the earth he has given to man.*” The earth is our home, this is where we live and work and play; this is where we live under God’s rule and care and this is where we enjoy his great blessings.

This great Creator God deserves our praise and adoration. This is why he made us – to praise him and give him the glory. This is how the psalm began – “Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name be the glory.”

Remember that this psalm was written out of a troubled situation; the people of God asked for his help so they might continue to live and praise him.

They said, “*It is not the dead who praise the Lord, those who go down into silence.*” When you die you can’t praise God anymore on this earth. Corpses do not praise the Lord. Cemeteries are still and silent places – there is no sound of singing and no praise of God.

Rather, “*It is we who praise the Lord....*” We are still living and so we have the opportunity to praise God. This is a privilege and a joy, but it is also an obligation and a duty – a responsibility we want to fulfil because of the many blessings God has given to us. It is our joyful privilege to praise the Lord. We can do that this morning and also this afternoon for every Sunday of this year.

We can do this “*both now and forevermore*”. We can do this now, but as New Testament believers, we know that we can continue to do this after we die. This expectation was there in the Old Testament but is much clearer to us now after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. We know that when we die with faith in the Lord Jesus our soul goes immediately to be with God in heaven and we will praise him for all eternity!

A final quote from Spurgeon expresses this great truth; “Even eternity cannot exhaust the reasons why God should be glorified... Though the dead cannot, and the wicked will not, and the careless do not praise God, yet we will shout ‘Hallelujah’ forever and ever. Amen.”