

The Father of Modern Missions as he has been called, William Carey dedicated His life to seeing the gospel spread to the most unreached places in the world. In 1793, the British native left everything to serve in India, where he would serve and die after 50 years. Though he lacked a formal education, he had a knack for languages, leading him to his life's passion of translating the Bible into as many Indian dialects as possible. He established a translation and print facility where he would give untold hours to this meticulous work.

Everything was going as planned. the mission was succeeding.

“On March 11, 1812, Carey was teaching in Calcutta. While he was gone, a fire started in the printing room. His associate, William Ward, smelled smoke and called for help. Despite many hours of exhaustive efforts to fight the fire, the building burned to the ground. Carey's entire library, his completed Sanskrit dictionary, part of his Bengal dictionary, two grammar books, and ten translations of the Bible were lost. Gone also were the type sets for printing fourteen different languages. Vast quantities of English paper, priceless dictionaries, deeds, and account books were all gone. This was before the cloud.

When Carey returned home to see the devastation, he wept saying, ‘In one short evening the labors of years have been consumed.’

Imagine the temptation to doubt God at that moment. God calls you to India. You leave everything. You spend years working on something, and it burns to the ground.

Listen to Carey's humble, trust-filled response, *“How unsearchable are the ways of God. I had lately brought some things to the utmost perfection of which they seemed capable, and contemplated the missionary establishment with perhaps too much self-congratulation. The Lord has laid me low, that I may look more simply to him.”* He took little time off to mourn, and then he was back at it, in a correspondence he writes, “we are not discouraged; indeed the work is already begun again in every language. We are cast down but not in despair.”

The fire would be used by God in a way no one expected. As the flames spread through his shop, so news of Carey and his efforts spread all over India, Europe, and America. Funds and workers began pouring in to support the cause. “By 1832, Carey's new publishing facility had completed Bibles and portions of the Bible in forty-four languages and dialects.” (Story taken from the One Year Christian History)

In the midst of hardship and confusion, the call to Carey was to trust. Even though he couldn't see how it would be worked for good, even if he couldn't connect the dots, the call was to walk through the fire trusting God and His sovereign plan.

Maybe this morning that's you. All you see is flames and all you feel is heat. Your life is characterized by stress, anxiety, weakness, depression or confusion, life isn't unfolding the way you thought it would. God feels distant and detached. Maybe there is disease or loss. Could be on a larger level, or down to the day to day, the moments where your kids are going crazy and you are about to lose it, or sitting in traffic, or ?

The taunting voices are real, whether from others or in your own head. God doesn't exist. God doesn't love you. God won't show up again. And the temptation is real, don't trust in God, trust in something more tangible. Get a quick fix.

The Israelites were also no strangers to being put in this similar situation. As we open up Psalm 115 this morning they are in a similar situation. Israel is hurting and in trouble. This psalm has been quoted before in great victories, To God be the glory, not to us, is the popular refrain. But the context here is very different. It's not an MVP player who gets the mic and gives all thanks to God, it's the voice of the player who gets cut. It's the opposite of victory and celebration. God had promised Israel at the calling of Abraham that they would be the nation to bless all nations. That's their destiny. But as we get to this part in the story, Israel is in exile. They

aren't in their land, they are weak, broken, enslaved, small and insignificant, under a foreign king's reign, unable to even worship God the way they want. And even if this was written shortly after exile, they are still in a similar situation.

It's also an occasion for other nations to taunt Israel and the Israelite God.

And into this taunting and temptation the psalmist writes Psalm 115 with one main exhortation—Trust in the Lord. But the psalmist is not asking for blind, irrational trust. He wants to answer the question with rock solid reasons. He's going to give the Israelites, and us by extension, three reasons for why we can trust God. We can trust God because He's sovereign, because He's better than idols, and because He loves us.

1. Trust God because He's sovereign

“Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness. why should the nations say where is their God? Our God is in the heavens, He does all that he pleases.”

Trust begins with a recognition that God alone deserves glory. Think of it as praise and worship. It's the rightful recognition that God is in a class alone, that He alone deserves worship. This is the battle we are in, we are in a worship war. Is glory going to go to God (praise and worship) or is it going to go to ourselves or something else. The repeat of not to us, not to us, highlights the emphasis here as well as the temptation. It could have said, to you, to you be glory, but it's interesting that it says, not to us, not to us. Why? Because we so naturally crave worship. We so want praise and worship to be directed at ourselves. Which is just silly when you think about it. That's why you need the Bible to remind us, “God is in the heavens, He does whatever He pleases.” This brings to mind when God was conquering Job's pride, “Where were you when I formed the galaxies?” Hmm... I guess I'm not that great. It's so irrational, but that's what we do, that's called sin. Sin is glorifying something other than God. And we like to steal it for ourselves.

What's interesting about this prayer though is it's context. Think about it. The Israelites are beat up, bruised, and confused. They want help. They need help. They need rescuing. Why don't they just say, “God help us!” That would be an appropriate and natural prayer, right? Instead they pray for God to glorify His name. You want to pray well, pray for God to glorify His name. You might say, that doesn't make any sense. If I pray for God to glorify His name, how would that impact me?

Where here's what's amazing; God has stamped His name on Israel. He located His presence and His Name there. He's their God. Throughout history God has been making a name for Himself. You got all these nations, essentially like little 1st graders on the playground, all saying how awesome their god is. My god can beat up your god. And whichever god brings the most abundance, prosperity, or protection to the people, is the greatest god. If two armies fight, it's the army that wins who has the greatest god. When Yahweh became the God of Abraham and His offspring, He became personally invested in the god wars, to do what, to make His name great among the nations. How's he going to do that—through Israel. So as Israel goes, so the fame of God goes.

God's name, that is is fame and glory and reputation, is at stake and displayed through Israel. For example, God beats the crud out of Pharaoh, who was considered to be the greatest god at the time, they go head to head in the plague battles. God wins, and swallows up the Egyptian armies in the water, without the people of God laying a finger on them. God tells Moses, as they are backed up against the water by the Egyptians who are there to slaughter them. You need only to be still, wait and watch for your deliverance. The Israelite God is bigger than the Egyptian god.

But here the Israelites are in exile. And to the nations, looks like God has abandoned Israel.

v.2 “Why should the nations say, “Where is their God” Huh, Israel, you ain’t so bad. Your God ain’t great. Look at you!”

How should you respond to that? v.3 Our God is in the heavens, thank you, very much. The reason you can’t see Him is because He doesn’t live in a house made by hands. He made everything you see. And as for His power, v.3b “He does all that He pleases.” He does whatever He wants. Whatever He wants to do, He does. Period. Nothing can restrain Him. Nothing and no one can come against Him. That’s what it means to be sovereign. He is by Himself in a class and category completely alone. To Him alone belong glory.

If our God does not do something, it’s not because His hands are tied—it’s because He chooses not to do it. That means there’s a reason for it. Don’t make any claim just yet about how great our God is. The story isn’t over.

This of God’s sovereignty and His glory bookends the chapter. We see it pick back up in **v.16, The heavens are the Lord’s heaven’s, but the earth he has given to the children of man. 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!**”

There’s again the psalmist lifting our eyes to God’s heavenly throne. The response to God’s glory is praise. They had some idea of the resurrection, even if limited here, that for them it’s time to praise God and with a praise of God that will continue forever.

We can trust God because He’s sovereign He will glorify His Name. Your pain, suffering, trial, addiction is not sovereign. He is. He does whatever He pleases.

2. Trust God because He’s better than Idols

The psalmist moves to contrast dead Idols with the living God. (4-8, 14-15)

Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat.

The psalmist showcases the futility of idols. They are powerless. They have no life in themselves. And then V.8 the tragic conclusion, **“Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.”**

What does he mean that you become like them? He means you become dead. The idol is lifeless. It’s dead. Those who make them become like them, dead, and so do those who trust in them. Idols destroy life.

The idea of idols might seem foreign to you. Either because you haven’t been around them, or because we have advanced beyond such primitive thinking. But when you think about it, an idol can be anything! The definition of an idol, by this psalm, is simply something that you trust in. For ultimate satisfaction and pleasure, for acceptance and approval, for purpose and worth. If you are trusting in anything other than God, then it’s an idol.

It doesn’t have to be a wooden statue, it could be your career, your spouse, family, money, sex, your reputation. It could be a social cause, a political platform, your education, or even your own religious performance. It could be sex, drugs, alcohol, food, body image or your health. It’s limited only by your imagination.

Idols are the things we can’t stop thinking about, the things we will give anything for, or the things that make us defensive when they are threatened, or the thing that drives us to despair when it’s taken from us.

It's all a lie. Idols promise life but can't deliver. Idols demand more and more until they leave you dead. **Psalm 16:4, "the sorrows of those who chase after other gods multiply."**

listen to what the secular author David Wallace articulated in his commencement speech to a graduating class of 2005...

"Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of god... to worship... is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money and things, if they are where you tap real meaning in life, then you will never have enough, never feel you have enough... Worship your own body and beauty and sexual allure, and you will always feel ugly.... Worship power, and you will end up feeling weak and afraid, and you will need ever more power over others to numb you to your own fear. Worship your intellect, being seen as smart, you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out. Look, the insidious thing about these forms of worship is not that they are evil or sinful; it is that they're unconscious. They are default settings."

Two years after giving this speech, Wallace committed suicide. He too was chasing an idol and it destroyed him. Although he could articulate the enslaving nature of idols well, he did not know how to get free.

Idols are about trust, and trust is about worship, and worship is something we are always doing. It's not a faucet that we turn on and off. Harold Best says it well, "When we sin, worship doesn't stop, it changes direction."

What are you aiming your worship at this morning? That is the thing that you are trusting in. If it's an idol, sooner or later that idol is going to destroy you. You will go down to the grave empty.

The psalmist doesn't want us ignorant. And he's not trying to be a killjoy. Exactly the opposite.

The good news is that while idols take life, God gives life. The psalmist wants to draw a sharp contrast between idols and God, to show us how irrational and stupid we are to worship idols.

God is the Living God, and He is the giver of life and life abundant. The implied contrast with the list of what idols can't do, is that God does all these things. God speaks. God sees. God hears. God smells. God feels and God walks with His people. Idols don't have the power to bless, but God does. That's clearly articulated in...

v.14-15, "May the Lord give you increase, you and your children! May you be blessed by the Lord, who made heaven and earth!"

Another little jab here is that Idols are made from what God has made. I love that!

Essentially what this is, is a reiteration of the promise given to Abraham, that God is the giver of the Promise Land, overflowing with blessing. Think garden of Eden. Life, joy, peace, righteousness, unending. It's paradise. God is a giver of life. As Spurgeon says, "Blessing does not impoverish the Lord... It is his nature to bless, it is his prerogative to bless, it is his glory to bless, it is his delight to bless; he has promised to bless, and therefore be sure of this, that he will bless and bless and bless without ceasing." -Spurgeon

Listen to journey of Bernhard Langer. Golfer. Turned Pro at 15 and wins the most coveted tournament in all the world, the Masters championship in 1985. Thousands and thousands of hours dedicated to this cause. And he gets it. After the media blitz, gets in his car to head to Hilton Head for the next tournament. Felt empty after the win, wept on the side of the road. That week walks into a tour bible study and gives his life to Christ. Wins the masters in 1993, gives God all the glory, not because it was the cool thing to do, but because he was eager to praise God, and tell the world he has found something far more satisfying.

What we need is an encounter with the living God, to be satisfied in Him, to taste and see How good He is, how excellence are His attributes, which would make all other pleasures evaporate. It's like the first time I tasted cookies and creme Ice cream. I have never since been to an ice-cream shop and ordered vanilla. I don't even know why they sell it. Only God satisfies. Only God can deliver. Only God can give you value and meaning, acceptance, and approval. God gives life forever.

His people have praise on their lips and will praise Him forever.

2 Corinthians 3:17 "transformed from one degree of glory to another." Beholding and Becoming. We are either becoming like idols in their death, or becoming like Christ in His life.

3. Finally, trust God because He loves us

O Israel, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield. (This was sung in corporate worship, and it's like different folks have different parts to sing, so it's this back and forth of those exhorting Israel to trust with those talking about Israel's God.)

O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield. You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield.

The Lord has remembered us; He will bless us; he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron; he will bless those who fear the LORD, both the small and the great.

This is where the psalmist connects the dots for us, and we reach the climax of the psalm. We usually think in linear terms, the climax coming at the end of the story. The Hebrews commonly used chiasmic structures and placed the climax in the middle. A chiasmic structure— you could think about climbing and descending a mountain. You got basecamp on either side that correspond to each other, as well as certain points of elevation, with the pinnacle being in the middle of the journey. meaning it's a grilled cheese with layers of butter and bread on both sides and the cheese in the middle, and that's what your after, the cheese.

Scholars debate exactly where these breaks are in the text, but here's my best attempt.

A — Prayer for God's glory (1-3)

B — Idols take life (4-8)

C — Trust in God (9-11)

D - The Lord has remembered us (12a)

C' — Blessing of God (12b-13)

B' — God gives life (14-16)

A' — Praise of God's glory (17-18)

There is a 3-fold repeat of trust God followed by a 3-fold repeat of He will bless us. Why can we trust God and trust that He will bless us, because of 12a, set right in the center of the psalm, "**The Lord has remembered us; He will bless us.**"

What's the big deal here? You ever felt forgotten? The Lord remembering His people is a huge deal. It's remembering, as in, being mindful of, a mind full of you. God's mind is full of you. And it's remembering with implied action. It's the same word used when God was going to flood the whole hearth and it says God remembered Noah. When God remembers His people, it means He acts on their behalf. The language of remembering pulls us back to the covenant that God has entered into Israel with for the sake of His great name. Over and over again we also see this same word, God remembered His covenant. God remembered his covenant.

The bedrock of our trust for us in God points up to His sovereignty, which has been intricately tied to our prosperity. He has stamped His name on us, therefore he will not depart from us until He makes His Name great through us! If sovereignty scares you, then here is the comfort, it's connected to His steadfast love and faithfulness to you.

The psalmist here, though, only has a limited view of how God would bring about making His name great. There was a problem. You see the other half of the covenant promise was that Israel was that it was conditional upon their obedience, they had to obey God in order for the full blessing to come forward. Israel would keep disobeying, they would keep pursuing idols, and so they were not allowed to enter into that glory. That's actually why they are in exile. They could only gaze upon the promise from afar. The Israelites were enslaved, under a foreign king. Their hope was the full restoration of their nation, but it remained in ruins.

Their situation is hopeless. Idols keep pulling their hearts away from God. And our situation is the same today. Our sin problem runs deep. No matter how good we become, there are twisted motives of self-glory lurking beneath the surface. The Israelites didn't need a new nation, they needed a new heart. And the same is true for us. We can't help worshiping and trusting in other gods.

In the gospel, God comes to rescue us from our idolatry, and He does so in the most unthinkable way. And it's here that the love of God gets put on full display. It's here where the sovereign God of the universe, who reigns in the heavens, comes near. Not in a cold-business like manner, but on a passionate rescue mission for His bride. What will it take to win our hearts back to Him, and to crush our idols? A cross. Interestingly, this psalm would have been sung by Jesus just hours before His crucifixion as they celebrated the Passover meal. I can't but imagine it may have been in Jesus' mind.

Idols demand our sacrifice until we are left dead. Jesus gives Himself sacrificially to give us life.

Idols don't have a mouth to speak, but Jesus' mouth cries, Father forgive them for they know not what they do, and in agony declares, it is finished.

Idols can't see but Jesus's eyes fill with blood as he looks on the sinner with mercy.

Idols can't hear, but Jesus' hears the mocking of the crowds saying, "Where is your God, now? Let His God save Him."

Idols can't touch or walk, but Jesus's hands and feet are nailed to a cross.

How would God make His Name great in Israel? By saving sinners through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. He would literally become "their help and shield" as he absorbed the judgement due to His people. This is love.

As Jesus comes out of the grave, conquering sin and death, He is lifted up above every name that could be named, and in so purchases life and life abundant forever for the people of God. The Israelite God wins in the end. He's sovereign, full of love, and does whatever He pleases.

That church, you can hold on to. Whether hardship or comfort is your current condition, the glory of God and your greatest joy is your eternal destiny. Let us trust God, and while we have breath now, let us praise the Lord.