

Psalm 115

The Psalm begins with a declaration of the rightful recipient of all of the glory of the earth and its people. The Psalmist's desire springs off the page with the opening words saying "not to us, but to your name give glory." Most of us know that God has the rightful claim to glory but today's Psalm offers an interesting contrast between God and false gods that illuminates some of the reason for God's unique standing as the recipient of our praise.

1. The difference between God and false gods
 - a. As we consider this contrast for a moment, it is important to note that literal idols are almost certainly on the Psalmist's mind but this does not mean that the only false gods that exist are true statutes or entities that are ascribed deistic qualities
 - b. Instead, we must understand that there are many gods that do not have names and/or temples on the physical landscape
 - c. John Calvin once famously said that our hearts are "idol making factories"
 - i. You and I are subject to all kinds of idolatrous tendencies and pursuits
 - ii. These would include "gods" like the ones mentioned but they also include "things, pursuits or aspirations" that take our time, energy and passion away from God's glory
 - iii. Some of those things might be "good" but they cease to be good when they become the end of our desires
 - iv. For instance, family is a good thing but it is a gift, not something to be worshipped
 - v. Work is a good thing but its ultimate telos, or goal, does not terminate on itself or on us, its end is God's glory and our faithful carrying out of His Divine mandate to exercise dominion
 - vi. Games, hobbies and the like can be marvelous pursuits that relax our soul and lead us to revel in the God who gives us the ability to have fun but they can also become the center of our world and take our time and energy away from faithfulness and right worship
2. Some of the reasons why God trumps false gods
 - a. The Psalmist here gives us a few things that idols simply can't accomplish, when we contrast these with God's grace in each area, we have reason to praise His name
 - b. First, we see that idols "have mouths but do not speak"
 - i. An idol is an inanimate object, it simply does not have any life
 - ii. It cannot communicate desires or directions and it certainly lacks the power to carry out any precept
 - iii. Conversely, God in His mercy has spoken
 - iv. His Word:
 1. Creates all things
 2. Sustains all things
 3. Reveals to us the source of hope, meaning and joy
 4. Terminates on His Son

- v. In all these things, we see God's mercy in revealing Himself to us through His ability to speak
- c. Second, idols do not hear
 - i. They are not alive and not perceptive to the needs of their worshippers
 - ii. A prayer to an idol is pointless and a desire to be loved and heard is never met
 - iii. Conversely, our God hears His children
 - 1. We pray to Him believing that He is aware and attentive
 - 2. He responds to our prayers and loves it when we come before Him to offer our requests and thanksgivings
 - 3. In this, we enjoy a true relationship with the God of the universe that is leveraged both for His glory and our good
 - 4. What a reason to praise!
- d. Third, idols do not see
 - i. The idea here is perhaps multi-faceted but the basic point must at least be that false gods are not perceptive to the world around them
 - ii. They simply don't know what's going on and, therefore cannot help their worshippers
 - iii. Conversely, our God is aware of us at all times
 - 1. His plan takes into account every threat
 - 2. His provision includes every need He perceives
 - 3. His concern means we can trust that nothing has befallen us that is outside of His grasp and/or outside of His knowledge
 - iv. Our God knows your struggles and, therefore, is able to respond when necessary