

Once more we have to admit that we don't know exactly what was going on in Israel when this psalm was written. It could have been a drought or a famine, or maybe Israel had lost an important battle against their enemies. It might have been after Israel came back from exile in Babylon. Whatever the crisis was, the people were confused. They just couldn't figure out why the LORD wasn't doing anything to help them.

And their enemies were making fun of them: Where is their God? They always talk so much about their God, Yahweh. How they're His chosen people. How He gave them the land, and how He sends the rain and makes the crops grow and stands up for them against their enemies. So where is He now?

The thing that made those questions painful was that the Israelites were actually asking those questions, too. Where is God? What's He doing? Why is He letting this happen to us? And it's not necessarily wrong to ask those questions. But we have to watch out how we ask them.

You can ask them in such a way that what you really mean is, God's supposed to meet all my expectations and answer all my questions. And I can't trust Him unless He promises to make everything go the way I want it to.

But there's a right way to ask, How does this trouble, this sickness, this sorrow, this loss, line up with God's promises? And then go back to the Bible, to read again what God has actually promised. That's what the psalmist did. And that completely changed the way he looked at things. He set his agenda aside; he let go of all of his ideas about how God was supposed to do things. And he submitted himself to God's agenda. That's what those opening words mean: Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but, to Your Name be glory, because of Your love and Your faithfulness.

In other words, the great issue here is not what we want. Is not You making our problems go away. The great issue at stake here is Your glory.

When we're in trouble, we think that the best thing that could happen is that God would make it go away. Because we believe that we can only be happy if our life goes the way we want it to go. But God says, That's not My highest priority. My highest priority is to glorify Myself.

That doesn't mean that we have to just resign ourselves to that, and say, I guess God cares more about His glory than about what happens to me. This is good news for us. Because when God called us to be His people, He attached His glory to our salvation. His glory depends on how He treats us.

So we don't have to worry about how things turn out for us. Because in the most important sense, we already know how things are going to turn out. When God adopted us to be His children, He was saying, This is what I'm like: I can love My enemies; I can love unloveable people. And I can forgive sinners. When I sent My Son to die for sinners, I revealed how far My love can go.

And so the psalmist turns the mockery back on Israel's enemies. We'll tell you where our God is: our God is in the heavens; He does all that He pleases. This is how we can settle our own fears and doubts. Remember: our God is in the heavens, and He does whatever He pleases.

We call that, God's sovereignty. Sometimes people think that makes God some kind of puppet master, and we're just puppets on strings. It means that He doesn't have to answer to anyone for what He does, and that there's no rhyme or reason to what He does, so we can never be sure how He might decide to deal with us.

But God has told us what pleases Him. Paul says in Ephesians 1, God made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ: to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one Head, even Christ. And this is how God has worked out what pleases Him: in Christ, we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him Who works out everything in

conformity with the purpose of His will.

That is God's purpose: to bring Himself glory by saving us in Jesus Christ. And no matter what might happen in your life, God always uses it to serve His purpose. So ultimately, it doesn't matter if God makes our problems go away, or not. Because no matter what, He's going to glorify Himself by saving His people.

Psalm 115 is part of a collection of psalms that the people of Israel sang every year at the Passover. God commanded them to celebrate the Passover every year. Because on that day, He had shown them, and the world, His love and faithfulness. He showed what it means for them, as His chosen people, that He is in heaven, and He does whatever He pleases. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt. Pharaoh looked invincible. And the gods of Egypt, who had given pharaoh so much power, seemed all-powerful themselves. They looked so capable: they had mouths, and eyes, and ears, and noses and hands and feet. But when God came to save Israel, those gods didn't say a thing; because they couldn't speak, or see, or smell, or hear, or feel, or walk, or even utter a sound with their throats, for that matter.

This is what we need to do in the crisis. We need to look at God. We need to remind ourselves that our God is in heaven, and He does whatever pleases Him. And remember His mighty acts of salvation. In the cross, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has defeated our most powerful enemies, enemies that seem invincible: sin and death.

This is why Christ has commands believers to worship every Sunday: to remember that Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week, and that we have eternal life in Him. This is why He gave us the Lord's Supper. To strengthen our faith in His death for us. Christ says, Never forget what God did for you, on that day. Look at your life, and face whatever is happening to you, in the light of the cross. God glorified Himself there by saving you.

In verses 9-11, the priests are speaking to the people. This is how you must respond when you hear the gospel of salvation: you have to believe it. O Israel, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield. 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.

And in verses 12 and 13, the people answered: We do believe it! We know what God promised in His Word; we know what He did when He saved us from slavery in Egypt, so we know that even now, in this crisis, The LORD remembers us, and He will bless us; He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron; He will bless those who fear Him, both small and great alike.

Then the priests pronounced the blessing: May the LORD give you increase, you and your children! May you be blessed by the LORD, Who made heaven and earth!

God pronounces that blessing on His people when they worship Him. And we need to think about that. It's not a wish. It doesn't say, We hope that this will happen to you. It's a pronouncement; it's a declaration: The LORD, Who made heaven and earth, will bless you. There's nothing you need that He can't give you, that He won't do for you.

He speaks to our children, too. God works in a very practical way, in bringing our children to faith. He uses their parents' confession. He uses the example that their fathers and mothers set for them. Especially in times of trouble. It's vital for the faith of our children that they hear us speak about our sorrows and our trials and our questions in the light of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. That we set our agendas aside, and pray only that God will glorify His Name, because of His love and His faithfulness. And we acknowledge that He is sovereign, and He has the right, and the wisdom, to decide how He will glorify Himself in our bodies.

The psalm closes with a confession: The heavens are the LORD's heavens, 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!

This is what our life is all about. This is our whole responsibility, and all our desire. Paul said in Ephesians 1, This is why God saved us: that we might be for the praise of His glory. And that that is our great desire, when we suffer, when we experience disappointments, when there are questions gathering like clouds on the horizon: that we extol the LORD for His love and His faithfulness. That we bring Him glory, in the way we speak about Him.