



That song we just sang, *Not To Us*, reminds me of William Wilberforce, the British politician and one of the great Christian statesmen of history. For years he fought against the evils of slavery in the British Commonwealth. Wilberforce was also a lover of the Psalms. On March 25, 1807, Parliament passed the bill for the abolition of the slave trade wherever the British flag flew. This was the culmination of everything he'd been about for 50 years. His first response to this victory was to meditate on his favorite verse, Psalm 115:1, which he often had meditated on during the years of his fight against slavery, "*Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.*"

It's Not About Us!

I've been thinking about this verse for several months now, along with the rest of Psalm 115. I've called this message, "It's Not About Us" because that sums up the message of this psalm. The song put it well, "It's not for us, it's all for you... Not to us, but to your name be the glory."

You'd think that would be self evident. If God is both our Creator and our Redeemer how could it be any different? Not only did he make us, he sustains us. Every breath we take is dependent upon him. And when we were lost due to our own rebellion and sin, he came and found us. It's not about us! Our lives were meant to revolve around him. We're like a child's spinning top. Part of what allows a top to spin is the tip, which is the center point. The top rotates around the tip, but if the tip isn't in the very center, it quickly begins to wobble in ever-widening circles, until it finally flops over on the floor and comes to a stop.

It's the same with people. We're created for God to be at the center point of our life, everything rotating around him and his purposes, but when we put something else in the center we begin to wobble. Sometimes it's even good things that become the center, things like a job or a relationship. When that happens life eventually spins out of control.

You'd think that would be obvious to those of us in the church, but I guess it's not. In a recent message, Victoria Osteen addressed a massive congregation in Houston as her husband Joel beamed in the background. She told them how important it is to realize their devotion to God isn't really about God, but about themselves. She says, "I just want to encourage every one of us to realize when we obey God, we're not doing it for God...we're doing it for ourselves, because God takes pleasure when we are happy..." She continued: "So, I want you to know this morning — Just do good for your own self... When you come to church, when you worship him, you're not doing it for God really. You're doing it for yourself, because that's what makes God happy. Amen?" The congregation responded with a loud "Amen." I wish

they would have said, "Not to us, Lord, not to us, but to your name be the glory." Because, you see, what's true about individual people is also true for us as a church. It's not about us; it's about him.

Inside your bulletin today you'll find a card with these words. I'd like for this to be our rallying cry for the coming year. Two years ago it was "Sow more seed." Last year it was "Stay One." Put this on your refrigerator, bulletin board or bathroom mirror as a reminder—it's not about us; it's about him. Memorize Psalm 115:1 and let it sink deeply into the soil of your heart until it becomes your instinctive response to every circumstance and every challenge and every call to serve. As part of that I'd like to offer and challenge you with four resolutions that come out of this Psalm.

We Resolve to Seek His Glory and Not Our Own

First, the most obvious thing is our ultimate purpose in all we do is to bring glory to him, not to us. It's about spreading his fame and his reputation and his name, not ours. I said this to our staff this week: It's not about our career advancement or enjoyment. It's not about CPC being the biggest or the coolest church on the peninsula. None of that matters. It's about God. It's about people coming to see through us more of his glory, beauty, power and majesty.

Do you know why that's so important to us? It's the last line: because of his love and faithfulness. Not only have we experienced his love in our own life, but whatever good has come out of this place, whatever fruit we've been able to bear, whatever lives have been touched for eternity, it's all because of his love and faithfulness. I think about a young man who comes from a broken home and was dabbling with drugs. After coming to the North Campus and recommitting his life to Jesus, he's now married to a Christian woman, works full time, goes to school part time, and serves in our Edge ministry. Not to us, Lord, but to your name be the glory because of your love and faithfulness.

We have a great mission statement that doesn't exist just so we have something to put on our walls; it drives everything we do: to make and mature more followers of Christ. That's what we're all about, but honestly there's something missing from that statement. It the **Why?** It's the **What For?** The **Why** and the **What for** is the glory of God. To make and mature more followers of Christ for the glory of God. I like that better! I'm not saying we're going to change it, but I like it better.

We Resolve to Trust God Despite the Mocking of the Nations

Second, we resolve to trust God despite the mocking of the nations. Look at verse 2, "*Why do the nations say, 'Where is their God?'*" So the occasion for the writing of this Psalm wasn't one

of victory but one in which God's people were being taunted by their idolatrous neighbors. "Where is your God? We can't see him? We can't touch him? He doesn't appear to be doing you much good at all."

Then the psalmist answers his own question. Where is your God? He says, "***Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.***" No one tells him what to do. He has no limitations or restraints upon him. In the next few verses he makes this long list of things their gods made by human hands can't do: they can't speak, see, hear, smell, feel or walk. He even says in verse 8 those who make them and trust them will be like them. So they'll become as impotent as their idols!

But then he says to the people of God, "***All you Israelites, trust in the Lord—he is their help and shield. House of Aaron, trust in the Lord—he is their help and shield. You who fear him, trust in the Lord—he is their help and shield.***" He's speaking to you and me. He's speaking to our church, not just a few of us but all of us. Living for the glory of God means we trust God despite the mocking of the nations.

We live in an idolatrous culture. The idea of living for God's glory rather than our own is an anathema. We may not carve idols out of wood, but we've gone a step further and made ourselves an idol. We think we can do whatever **we** please. There's a mentality that we can make something happen if **we** can get enough experts and figure out how to do it right. That's why we plan more than we pray. There's also a mentality it's all about what pleases me. How do I like the music? How do I like the preaching? How do I like the kind of people here? This past week our South Campus pastor, Shawn Peterson, was meeting with a guy and asked him if there was anything he or the church could do to help him. He thought about it and said, "Let me reverse that question. Is there anything I can do to help our church?" Imagine the impact we could make if everyone thought like that.

We Resolve to Believe God will Bless Us and Cause Us to Flourish

Third, we resolve to believe God will bless us and cause us to flourish. He goes on in verse 12, "***The Lord remembers us and will bless us: He will bless his people Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron, he will bless those who fear the Lord—small and great alike. May the Lord cause you to flourish, both you and your children. May you be blessed by the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.***" In other words, God can do for us what idols can't. He can bless us. He can cause us to flourish. This doesn't always mean material blessing, but spiritual blessing in relationship with God and others.

I heard of a woman this week who came to WBS. Her personal life and marriage were in shambles. She'd never really been exposed to church or to God's Word. Very early on she realized God's Word had the power to change everything. So she began to ask the Lord to change her from the inside out. At the end of that year of WBS, she stood up and said, "When I started I thought my marriage was beyond repair, but God grabbed me with his

Word, and he taught me baby steps of obedience, simply doing my part, not focusing on my husband's part. I'm here to tell you: God has outdone himself. He's given me such a renewed love for my husband and a joy in obeying my True Bridegroom, and our marriage is turning. My husband comes regularly to CPC now. We both have softened hearts to him and each other. God is to be praised." Only God could do that. He does bless his people; he does cause us to flourish.

We Resolve to Bless and Praise God Both Now and Forevermore

I love how she ended her testimony with the words, "God is to be praised." Listen to how Psalm 115 ends, "***The highest heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth he has given to mankind. It is not the dead who praise the Lord, those who go down to the place of silence...***" You can see the Old Testament saints didn't have a well defined understanding of the hope of heaven as we do. In their minds, we should praise God while we're still alive because we can't do it in the grave. Of course, we know in full what they only had a glimpse of, that our song of praise will continue after we die because Jesus conquered death for us.

But there's still some truth in what he says. It's found in those words, "The highest heavens belong to the Lord, but the earth he has given to mankind." It's not that God doesn't bother himself with things on earth or that he has no authority here, rather the idea is that he's entrusted the earth to us. It's like we're trustees. We have a guardianship over the earth and that won't last forever. The challenge and the opportunity life on earth presents us is unique. What will we do with this opportunity? Will we use it to extol and praise our God? The psalmist says, We will! So our last resolve is to bless and praise God both now and forevermore.

The thing is, we have more reason to do that than he did. William Cowper wrote a hymn, *There Is A Fountain Filled With Blood*, in which he talks about this very thing: "E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply, Redeeming love has been my theme (song), and shall be till I die." You see what Cowper is saying? That he'd come to see the stream of grace the flowing wounds supply, and so he's resolved to sing of Jesus' redeeming blood until he dies. He's not going to wait until heaven to do that. He's going to do that now.

That's why he ends this way, "It is we who extol the Lord, both now and forevermore. Praise the Lord" Why? Because not to us, Lord, not to us, but to Your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness. Will you resolve as a part of this church to seek his glory and not your own? We have a big vision because God-sized glory requires a God-sized vision. But will you resolve to trust him despite the mocking of the nations? Will you resolve to believe he will bless us and cause us to flourish? Will you resolve to bless and praise his name both now and forevermore?

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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