

# Psalm 115:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.

## Analysis

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**Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.** This verse opens with passionate self-denial—emphatic repetition rejecting human glory to ascribe all glory to God. The doubled "not unto us" intensifies the renunciation of self-glory, human credit, and pride.

"Not unto us" (לא לנו/lo lanu) repeats twice for emphasis. In Hebrew poetry, repetition signals urgency and importance. The psalmist doesn't merely demur from glory but forcefully rejects it. This isn't false humility but accurate theology: humans originate nothing worthy of glory. All good gifts come from above (James 1:17). Any accomplishment, victory, or blessing derives ultimately from divine grace.

"O LORD" (הָיְהָ/Yahweh) invokes God's covenant name. This isn't abstract deity but personal, promise-keeping God who revealed Himself to Moses and bound Himself to Israel. The appeal is to covenant relationship—the LORD who claimed Israel as His people.

"But unto thy name give glory" (תְּנַعֲמֵךְ שְׁמְךָ לְ כָבֹד/leshimkha ten kavod) redirects all glory to God's name—His revealed character, reputation, and nature. Kavod (glory) means weight, heaviness, honor, splendor. It conveys substantial reality, not empty praise. God's name deserves glory because it represents who He truly is: faithful, merciful, powerful, holy.

"For thy mercy" (על-חסדך/al-chasdecha) provides first reason for ascribing glory to God. Chesed is covenant love, loyal love, steadfast kindness—God's unwavering commitment to His covenant people despite their unfaithfulness. This mercy isn't sentimental tolerance but covenant faithfulness maintaining relationship when people deserve abandonment.

"And for thy truth's sake" (על-אמתך/al-amitecha) adds second reason. Emet means truth, faithfulness, reliability. God's word proves absolutely trustworthy; His promises never fail; His character remains constant. These twin attributes—mercy and truth—appear throughout Scripture, supremely demonstrated in Jesus Christ, "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

## Historical Context

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Psalm 115 belongs to the Egyptian Hallel (Psalms 113-118), sung during Passover and major festivals. The psalm's context likely involves mocking from pagan nations: "Where is now their God?" (v.2). Israel faced ridicule for trusting invisible God while surrounded by nations with tangible idols and impressive military might.

The opening renunciation of human glory contrasts sharply with ancient Near Eastern royal ideology. Kings typically claimed divine status or divine partnership in victories. Egyptian pharaohs presented themselves as gods incarnate. Mesopotamian rulers built monuments celebrating their achievements. Even Israel's neighbors attributed success to their gods' power manifested through royal might.

Against this, Israel's theology insisted: glory belongs to God alone. When David defeated Goliath, he declared: "that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel...for the battle is the LORD's" (1 Samuel 17:46-47). When Gideon routed Midian with 300 men, God ensured Israel couldn't claim credit: "lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me" (Judges 7:2).

The Reformation motto Soli Deo Gloria (Glory to God Alone) echoes this verse. Luther, Calvin, and other Reformers insisted salvation belongs wholly to God's grace, not human merit. This challenged medieval church's system of works-

righteousness where humans could claim partial credit for salvation. The Reformers returned to Scripture's consistent testimony: "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory."

Modern application remains urgent. Human pride constantly seeks glory, credit, recognition. Social media amplifies self-promotion. Success tempts attribution to personal skill rather than divine blessing. This verse calls radical reorientation: deliberately, repeatedly ascribing all glory to God, acknowledging His mercy and truth as sources of every blessing.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

## Study Questions

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1. Why does the psalmist repeat 'not unto us' twice, and what does this teach about the human tendency toward self-glory?
2. How can believers practically ascribe glory to God's name in daily life, work, relationships, and ministry?
3. What is the relationship between God's mercy (chesed) and truth (emet), and why must both be acknowledged?
4. How does rejecting human glory differ from false humility or low self-esteem?

## Interlinear Text

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לֹא תְּנַסֵּךְ לְאֶת־יְהוָה

H3808 H0 Not unto us O LORD

H3068

לֹא תְּנַסֵּךְ לְאֶת־יְהוָה

H3808 H0 H3588

לֹא תְּשַׁמְּךָ

תְּנַסֵּךְ כְּבָדָעַל

לְאֶת־יְהוָה

not unto us but unto thy name give glory for thy mercy

H8034

H5414

H3519

H2617

עַל

H5921

אֶת-מְתֻqָּה:

and for thy truth's

H571

## Additional Cross-References

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**Isaiah 48:11** (Glory): For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another.

**Psalms 96:8** (Glory): Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts.

**Ezekiel 20:14** (Parallel theme): But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out.

**Ephesians 1:6** (Grace): To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

**Ezekiel 36:32** (References Lord): Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel.

**Psalms 61:7** (Grace): He shall abide before God for ever: O prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him.

**Ezekiel 36:22** (References Lord): Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went.

**Joshua 7:9** (Parallel theme): For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?

**Daniel 9:19** (References Lord): O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.

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