

SBC – Sept. 13, 2026

Psalm 117:1-2 (NKJV)

“Universal Praise of God” – Part One

Psalm 117 is the middle chapter in the Bible, and it is the shortest chapter in the Bible. However, while it is short, it is deep. Martin Luther devoted 36 pages to expositing this Psalm, including 4 categories. One category was: Prophecy (the Gentiles will participate in gospel blessings). This certainly is a MAJOR emphasis in this Psalm.

So, as those who are Gentile by background, this Psalm should have a special place in our hearts.

We don't know who wrote the Psalm or what the specific occasion may have been.

Psalm 117 is one of the “Hallel Psalms” (Ps. 113-118). The Jews traditionally sang these songs at their major festivals; namely, Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Therefore, it is believed that Jesus would very probably have sung this song with His disciples the night before He was crucified (cf. Mt. 26:30; Mk. 14:26).

Slide # 1

Psalm 117

“Universal Praise of God”

v. 1 – A Call for All Peoples to Praise the LORD

v. 2 – Reasons to Praise the LORD

Psalm 117 (NKJV)

1 Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!

The Psalm begins with the high praise word “Hallelujah,” which literally means “Praise YHWH!” The Hebrew word “hallel,” translated as praise, means to boast, rave about, or celebrate. Hallelujah means a celebratory boast about YHWH – the covenant God of Israel.

As people we are not to boast in ourselves but we are to boast in our God.

Slide # 2

Psalms 44:8 (NKJV)

8 In God we boast all day long, And praise Your name forever. Selah

Throughout the OT and the Psalms, we constantly see the exhortation for God's people, Israel, to praise the LORD, but here the call is for "all you Gentiles" to praise the LORD.

The Jews knew from the OT that they were the favored people of God. And indeed they were called to be a separated people. But this did not mean that God did not love the Gentiles or that His plan made no provision for them.

Even though the Jews have a very special role in the plan of God, the intention all along has been to include Gentiles – people of all ethnic backgrounds.

Slide # 3**Genesis 12:3 (NKJV)**

3 I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And **in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**"

The word "Gentiles" here refers to all people who are non-Jews. They too are called on to praise the LORD. This applies to all Gentiles – to all people groups without exception.

If Jesus sang this Psalm the night before His crucifixion, as most scholars believe, it has special significance in that He was about to give His life for all people. Provision was to be made for everyone.

There is a double emphasis in verse 1 – Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!

To "laud" means to speak well of, to boast about, or to extol.

And note it very specifically that it says that it is YHWH who is to be praised by the Gentiles. YHWH is the God of Israel. YHWH is God's covenant name – emphasizing His covenant relationship with Israel.

This is not just a general call to praise some God in general – but a specific call to praise the covenant God of Israel.

God has uniquely revealed Himself to and through Israel. They are the people through whom God has chosen to reveal Himself to the world. The prophets were Jewish, the Messiah was Jewish, the apostles were Jewish. The Bible is a Jewish book!

Now the Gentiles are called on to recognize the one true God as revealed through Israel, and they are called on to praise Him!

The calling of Israel was not merely for the sake of Israel, but rather for the sake of the whole world.

Slide # 4

Isaiah 56:6–7 (NKJV)

6 “Also the sons of the foreigner Who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, And to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants— Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, And holds fast My covenant—

7 Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices Will be accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.”

The praise of the LORD is to be a mark of every believer!

In the early days of the Church, the apostle Paul, with great zeal, sought to show from the OT Scriptures that on the basis of FAITH both Jew and Gentile have a place at God’s table. Indeed, in the Church there is total spiritual equality! This is a major emphasis in what is commonly considered Paul’s greatest letter, that is, the book of Romans. In Romans 15, he develops this thought at length from the OT Scriptures and, in doing so, cites Psalm 117.

Romans 14:1-15:13 is one long exhortation on the importance of Biblical Christian unity! This shows the importance of this subject.

In Romans 15:8 Paul says...

Slide # 5

Romans 15:8 (NKJV)

8 Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, **to confirm the promises** made to the fathers,

Jesus came to confirm and fulfill God's truth in relation to the OT covenant promises made to the Jewish fathers. But it also had a Gentile focus in view.

Slide # 6

Romans 15:9 (NKJV)

9 and **that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy**, as it is written: "For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name."

God's plan had in view not only Israel but also the Gentiles in accordance with OT prophecy.

And then note that Paul says, ***"as it is written,"*** which he then follows up with 4 OT quotes to show that God's plan and purpose has always had both Jew and Gentile in view ultimately.

Slide # 7

- 1. "For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name." – Rom. 15:9**

This quote is found in 2 Samuel 22:50 and Ps. 18:49, which indicate David's testimony and worship extended beyond the Jews and also included the Gentiles.

Slide # 8

- 2. "And again he says: 'Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people!' – Rom. 15:10**

This quote is from Deut. 32:43. The Gentiles' participation in worship with Jews is foreseen in this text. The Gentiles are not an afterthought. They were in the plan all along.

Slide # 9

3. “And again: ‘Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!’ – Rom. 15:11

This quote is from Psalm 117, showing that God is a God for all people.

Slide # 10

4. And again, Isaiah says: "There shall be a root of Jesse; And He who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, In Him the Gentiles shall hope." – Rom. 15:12

This quote is from Isaiah 11:10 – a text that relates to the Messianic kingdom, showing that the Gentiles have a part in the plan.

Slide # 11

In Romans 15, there is a progression of thought beginning in verse 8 that shows that God is the God of the Gentiles as well as the God of the Jews.

- v. 9 - Jews testifying to Gentiles
- v. 10 – Gentiles rejoicing with Jews
- v. 11 – Gentiles and all people called to praise
- v. 12 – Gentiles under the rule of Messiah
- v. 12 – Gentiles hope in Messiah

And in this section, where Paul strives to show God’s inclusion of the Gentiles in His plan, in Romans 15:11 he quotes from Psalm 117:1.

Having established that God is to be praised by all peoples, the writer now tells us WHY we should do so.

2 For His merciful kindness is great toward us, And the truth of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!

“Merciful kindness” is the rich Hebrew word “hesed”.

The word “hesed” is used 248 times in the OT (cf. Jer. 9:24; 32:18; Lam. 3:22; Dan. 9:4). This has been called an undefinable word. The KJV translators initially translated it 14 different ways, eventually ending up with the compound word "loving –kindness". It is often translated as “steadfast love”, “loyal love”, or “covenant loyalty.”

It underscores God's covenant FAITHFULNESS or covenant love. It is God's FAITHFULNESS flavored with MERCY.

Slide # 12

Hesed is the idea of faithful love in action and often in the OT refers to God's lovingkindness expressed in His covenant relationship with Israel (His "loyal love" to His "Wife" Israel = His "loyalty to covenant"). God's **hesed** denotes persistent and unconditional tenderness, kindness, and mercy, a relationship in which He seeks after man with love and mercy. **Hesed** expresses both God's loyalty to His covenant and His love for His people, along with a faithfulness to keep His promises. – **Precept Austin**

Slide # 13

“*Hesed* is not only a matter of obligation; it is also of generosity. It is not only a matter of loyalty, but also of mercy. Hesed implies personal involvement and commitment in a relationship beyond the rule of law.” – **W.E. Vine**

We have a NT language that comes very close to the nuance of “hesed” in the OT. Do you know what it is? It is the word Grace in combination with mercy. Grace and mercy in combination come very close to the idea of hesed, with an emphasis on faithfulness. Grace and mercy held in faithfulness in the context of a covenant relationship.

The Hebrew actually says **His hesed hesed is great**, with the idea of God's loyal, covenant love repeated twice for emphasis.

– **David Guzik**

The bottom line is hesed is God's faithfulness to His covenant promises. For this He is to be praised! God is absolutely faithful to His promises! There is no wavering or fickleness.

And get this: The Gentiles are to praise God because they have observed God's covenant faithfulness to Israel.

Notice the writer says, “His hesed is great toward us” – meaning the Jews.

Israel as a people has been exceedingly unfaithful, but God has ever been faithful. He has not renounced His covenant relationship with them. At the end of OT history, what is the testimony?

Slide # 14

Malachi 3:6 (NKJV)

6 “For I am the LORD, **I do not change**; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.

Lamentations 3:22 (NKJV)

22 Through the LORD’s **mercies** [*hesed*] we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not.

The word “great” is more literally translated as “prevailed.” God’s hesed has prevailed in spite of Israel’s unfaithfulness. Where sin abounded, grace has abounded much more.

Indeed, GREAT is God’s hesed toward Israel! It speaks volumes of the kind of God that He is! He is to ever be praised for being the God of covenant loyalty by all people, and this faithfulness is exhibited chiefly in His covenant faithfulness to Israel.

Can you see why I say it is an extremely blasphemous position to say God has scrapped His covenant promises to Israel, as replacement theology says. That makes God a completely different kind of God. It makes Him a God who can be unfaithful. It invalidates “hesed.” It invalidates His sacred name YHWH – which refers to Him as unchanging in character.

Instead of the Gentile saying God has changed in relation to Israel, they should be praising Him for being a God of covenant loyalty. After all if God is not faithful to His covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the Jews, why should we think He will now be faithful to us.

God has a special warning to Gentile believers who think God is done with Israel.

Slide # 15

Romans 11:25 (NKJV)

25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should **be wise in your own opinion**, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

Yes, blindness has happened to Israel, but only in part. Yes, blindness has happened to Israel, but it is not permanent. It is only UNTIL the fulness of the Gentiles has come in.

And then, as sort of a double (or at least related) emphasis, he says, God is to be praised because “***the truth of the LORD endures forever.***”

The word “hesed” is often accompanied by the word “truth” (cf. Ps. 108:4; 115:1; 138:2). They are partner words and harmonize perfectly in illustrating the faithfulness of God.

God’s enduring truth can be understood as His enduring faithfulness. The word “truth” in Hebrew means “to be firm” or “unshakable.”

That idea mirrors the idea of hesed faithfulness. God’s character does not change. He is totally reliable. He is never fickle. He can be absolutely counted on to be totally faithful!

At the end of the day, God’s character cannot change, and so His promises cannot change! Therefore, we do not need to fret about emotions and feelings. We don’t have to be concerned about circumstances.

Whatever we are going through, God is still God. He doesn’t change. His loyal love is always loyal. His truth (faithfulness) endures.

In the end, all that we have are the promises of God, and in the promises of God we have everything. As Peter says, we have been given “exceedingly great and precious promises (2 Pet. 1:4). He is ever a God of hesed faithfulness, whose truth endures forever.

1. In His attribute—he is always faithful.
 2. In His revelation—always infallible.
 3. In His action—always according to promise.
- ***Spurgeon*** in “The Treasury of David.”

Consequently, He is to be praised!

And so this shortest of all the Psalms, this shortest of all the chapters, ends as it began with “***Praise the Lord!***”

Indeed, great is the Lord and greatly to be praised! Not only by the Jews, but also by the Gentiles – by all peoples!

And a great part of the Gentiles' praise is to be in reference to God's faithfulness to the Jews!

They have been the most stiff-necked of all people, and yet God has been faithful. Prophecy has been and is being fulfilled to the letter in this regard. It truly is a wonder to behold!

Exhibit A in God's faithfulness is the Jew!

An unknown author wrote:

How odd of God
To choose the Jew,
But not so odd
As those who choose
The Jewish God
And hate the Jew.

Great is God's hesed (covenant loyalty) to His people Israel.
Great is His enduring faithfulness!

Indeed, great is the LORD and greatly to be praised!

Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles!