

Psalm 76 • The Giver of Victories

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So, Psalm chapter 76. Let's pray, shall we?

Lord, as we get into this second half of the Psalms, we pray, Lord God, that Your Holy Spirit would lead and guide our study of the Word.

We really, we believe, Lord, that Your Word is inspired. We believe that it is God-breathed, and we believe that it's beneficial for us to go through these studies and to gain a heart of understanding.

Lord, I pray that each and every one of us would be willing to look at ourselves in the reflection of Your Word tonight and allow that Word to really challenge what's going on in our lives right now. And, Lord, give us the strength to apply the Scriptures. Help us to put them into practice in our homes, in our personal devotional life, in our marriages, our work, and our service to You.

We look to You, Father. We look to You to speak and to bring wisdom. And we ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and our King, amen.

Psalm 76. We are in the Psalms, which are referred to as the collections of Asaph. Asaph, as you'll recall, was a great worship leader, singer, and musician during the time of David and Solomon. Psalm 76 is a Psalm that was sung during the celebration of victory, whatever the victory may have been. It was meant to be a song of jubilation, or, as we would say, a jubilant song of praise to God for the victory that He had given.

And so it begins simply, saying in verse 1:

*"In Judah God is known;
his name is great in Israel.*

*² His abode (which means his dwelling place) has been established in Salem,
his dwelling place in Zion." (ESV)*

And by the way, Salem is actually Shalem. It is a shortened version of Yarushalem, or as you and I know it better, Jerusalem. That is his dwelling place; the psalmist says, "...in Zion."

And it says in verse 3,

*“There he broke the flashing arrows,
the shield, the sword, and the weapons of war.”*

And this is just a poetic way of describing the power of the Lord, overwhelming the enemy. So right away, the psalmist is just beginning a word of praise and saying, the Lord has fought on our behalf, and He has. He has come against the enemy, and He has been victorious. And he says in verse 4,

“Glorious are you (Notice how the victory is pointed toward God.), more majestic than the mountains full of prey.

*⁵ The stouthearted (Now, he's referring to the enemies again that came against them.) were stripped of their spoil;
they sank into sleep;
all the men of war
were unable to use their hands.*

*⁶ At your rebuke, O God of Jacob,
both rider and horse lay stunned.”*

So, in these verses, the psalmist is recalling the intervention of the Lord on behalf of His people, stripping the power of the enemy away and completely overwhelming the enemy. He says in verse 7,

*“But you, you are to be feared!
Who can stand before you
when once your anger is roused?*

*⁸ From the heavens you uttered judgment;
the earth feared and was still,*

*⁹ when God arose to establish judgment,
to save all the humble of the earth.”*

And notice, you'll notice here that the victory of the Lord is referred to as the judgment of the Lord because it is assumed that God was bringing judgment upon the enemies of Israel. And that's why he refers to it as the judgment of the Lord when he speaks of this victory. And then verse 10, I have to tell you right off the bat, is a very difficult verse to translate. It says,

*“Surely the wrath of man shall praise you;
the remnant of wrath you will put on like a belt.”*

If you have a different Bible translation on your lap this evening, you're going to potentially read some different words there. To be completely honest with you, this is a really challenging Hebrew phrase, and commentators and

translators are unsure whether the topic is God's wrath or man's wrath and whether it's God's wrath that brings praise or how somehow God is going to use man's wrath to bring praise. But either way, it doesn't really matter because the whole point of the verse is to say that God is glorified in the midst of his judgments. And then in verse 11, he says,

*“Make your vows to the Lord your God and perform them;
let all around him bring gifts
to him who is to be feared,
¹² who cuts off the spirit of princes,
who is to be feared by the kings of the earth.”*

And I like those last couple of verses because those are good summary verses of really what is the essence of this passage, which is that God is the reason for our victories. That may sound like a very simple statement, but you'd be surprised how many people go through situations in life where they have a successful situation, which God would consider a victory, but they don't attribute it to the Lord.

They attribute it to their happenstance or dumb luck or wow, didn't that work out great, or look what I did, or something like that, when in fact we are to acknowledge the Lord in all of our ways, including our victories, including those things which go well. And that's what this Psalm is really all about. It's about praising God. It's about attributing victory to Him.

And I got to tell you, when I was a brand new Christian, I used to think people were weird when they talked about the victory of God or when they would give God credit for things in their life. I remember thinking to myself, I don't know, that sounds a little super spiritual to me. Was it really the Lord, or did things just work out for you? Or did you finally decide to get smart and stop being stupid or something like that? I mean, those are the things that would go through my head.

I remember really struggling with that for a period of time until, as I matured in the Lord and as I grew and had a greater understanding of the Word of God, I see that our lives are in His hands and to recognize and to acknowledge Him in all of our ways is what we're called to do. And to attribute those things to the goodness and the grace of God is an actual sign of maturity, not of super spirituality or something that is weird and something we shouldn't do.

I want to show you on the screen a passage from 1 Corinthians chapter 15 where Paul writes and he says,

1 Corinthians 15:57 (ESV)

But thank be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I'll tell you that in context, Paul is talking about victory over the flesh. He's talking about victory over sin and death. He's talking about victory over the world. And that's what he's referring to when he makes this reference. But I believe that it's one of these particular passages that you and I can attribute to whatever victory the Lord may have brought into our life.

And we can say, with the apostle Paul, “...*thanks be to God,*” He has given the victory... Whatever it may be. And honestly, if there's one thing we see from the Scripture, and the example of Scripture, it is that mankind has trouble attributing victory to God. We like to take it upon ourselves.

In fact, you'll remember in some of Israel's history, God went to great lengths to make sure that the nation of Israel couldn't brag about what they had done. In the case of Gideon, when he was told by God to go up against the Midianite army, which was this horde of people, this huge army, Gideon didn't have that many people, but he had a pretty good-sized army when they all got together to go fight against the Midianites.

But the Lord spoke to him and said, too many people. Send some of them home. Tell them whoever is quaking with fear to go ahead and just go home. You're not any use anyway, sort of a thing. So a bunch of guys just left. They're like, alright, take it off. (Judges 7:2-3)

And then he went through that other weird thing where how they drank water out of the brook, that determined whether or not he was going to keep those guys and send the other guys home.

He ended up with 300 men, and he was still pretty scared. And that's why God said, hey, if you still need a little more encouragement, just take somebody, go down to the camp, and just listen to them talking in the enemy camp.

Just sneak down into their camp and put your ear to their tent and just hear what they're saying. And of course, that encouraged Gideon all the more. But they went up against these hordes of the Midianites with 300 men. (Judges 7:4-7 and Judges 7:9-11)

And why did God do that? Because He knew of the propensity of the Israelites to say, look what we did! Aren't we cool? He says, listen, if I would, and yet to be sure, God could have done it with three men. He could have done it with one man.

But the point is, God had to make it in such a way that it was absolutely, positively shown that this was the hand of the Lord, and there's no bragging in the presence of God. And so, if something good has happened in your life recently, we're to be people who are willing to praise the Lord and to lift up His name and say, thank You, Lord.

Now let me just say this, even as a young believer, I didn't understand people doing that. Unbelievers are going to understand it even less. So what am I saying? Well, I'm not really sure. I think you need to be led by the Spirit, honestly, when you're talking to unbelievers about what's going on in your life.

I do think there's a place for giving glory to the Lord and giving credit to the Lord. But just understand this: unbelievers aren't going to get it. They might even get angry at you for crediting the Lord. So just be circumspect about how you say it.