

# PSALM 76

This psalm seems to have been penned upon occasion of some great victory obtained by the church over some threatening enemy or other, and designed to grace the triumph. The Septuagint calls it, “A song upon the Assyrians,” whence many good interpreters conjecture that it was penned when Sennacherib's army, then besieging Jerusalem, was entirely cut off by a destroying angel in Hezekiah's time; and several passages in the psalm are very applicable to that work of wonder: but there was a religious triumph upon occasion of another victory, in Jehoshaphat's time, which might as well be the subject of this psalm (~~1~~2 Chronicles 20:28), and it might be called “a song of Asaph” because always sung by the sons of Asaph. Or it might be penned by Asaph who lived in David's time, upon occasion of the many triumphs with which God delighted to honour that reign. Upon occasion of this glorious victory, whatever it was,

- I.** The psalmist congratulates the happiness of the church in having God so nigh (v. 1-3).
- II.** He celebrates the glory of God's power, which this was an illustrious instance of (v. 4-6).
- III.** He infers hence what reason all have to fear before him (v. 7-9). And,
- IV.** What reason his people have to trust in him and to pay their vows to him (v. 10-12). It is a psalm proper for a thanksgiving day, upon the account of public successes, and not improper at other times, because it is never out of season to glorify God for the great things he has done for his church formerly, especially for the victories of the Redeemer over the powers of darkness, which all those Old-Testament victories were types of, at least those that are celebrated in the psalms.

## ~~478~~ PSALM 76:1-6

### TRIUMPH IN GOD

*To the chief musician on Neginoth. A psalm or song of Asaph.*

The church is here triumphant even in the midst of its militant state. The psalmist, in the church's name, triumphs here in God, the centre of all our triumphs.

**I.** In the revelation God had made of himself to them, v. 1. It is the honour and privilege of Judah and Israel that among them *God is known*, and where he is known *his name* will be *great*. God is known as he is pleased to make himself known; and those are happy to whom he discovers himself — happy people that have their land filled with the knowledge of God, happy persons that have their hearts filled with that knowledge. In Judah God was known as he was not known in other nations, which made the favour the greater, inasmuch as it was distinguishing, ~~479~~ Psalm 147:19, 20.

**II.** In the tokens of God's special presence with them in his ordinances, v. 2. In the whole land of Judah and Israel God was known and his name was great; but *in Salem, in Zion*, were *his tabernacle* and *his dwelling-place*. There he kept court; there he received the homage of his people by their sacrifices and entertained them by the feasts upon the sacrifices; thither they came to address themselves to him, and thence by his oracles he issued out his orders; there he recorded his name, and of that place he said, *Her will I dwell, for I have desired it*. It is the glory and happiness of a people to have God among them by his ordinances; but his dwelling-place is a tabernacle, a movable dwelling. *Yet a little while is that light with us*.

**III.** In the victories they had obtained over their enemies (v. 3): *There broke he the arrows of the bow*. Observe how threatening the danger was. Though Judah and Israel, Salem and Zion, were thus privileged, yet war is raised against them, and the weapons of war are furbished.

**1.** Here are bow and arrows, shield and sword, and all for battle; but all are broken and rendered useless. And it was done there,

**(1.)** In Judah and in Israel, in favour of that people near to God. While the weapons of war were used against other nations they answered their end, but, when turned against that holy nation, they were immediately broken. The Chaldee paraphrases it thus: When the house of Israel did his will he placed his majesty among them, and there he broke the arrows of the bow; while they kept closely to his service they were great and safe, and every thing went well with them. Or,

**(2.)** In the tabernacle and dwelling-place in Zion, there he broke the arrows of the bow; it was done in the field of battle, and yet it is said to be done in the sanctuary, because done in answer to the prayers which God's people there made to him and in the performance of the promises which he there made to them, of both which see that instance, <sup><4015></sup>2 Chronicles 20:5, 14. Public successes are owing as much to what is done in the church as to what is done in the camp. Now,

**2.** This victory redounded very much,

**(1.)** To the immortal honour of Israel's God (v. 4): *Thou art, and hast manifested thyself to be, more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey.*

**[1.]** "Than the great and mighty ones of the earth in general, who are high, and think themselves firmly fixed like mountains, but are really mountains of prey, oppressive to all about them. It is their glory to destroy; it is thine to deliver."

**[2.]** "Than our invaders in particular. When they besieged the cities of Judah, they cast up mounts against them, and raised batteries; but thou art more able to protect us than they are to annoy us." Wherein the enemies of the church deal proudly it will appear that God is above them.

**(2.)** To the perpetual disgrace of the enemies of Israel, v. 5, 6. They were *stouthearted*, men of great courage and resolution, flushed with their former victories, enraged against Israel, confident of success; they were *men of might*, robust and fit for service; they had *chariots and horses*, which were then greatly valued and trusted to in war, <sup><5107></sup>Psalm 20:7. But all this force was of no avail when it was levelled against Jerusalem.

**[1.]** *The stouthearted have despoiled and disarmed themselves* (so some read it); when God pleases he can make his enemies to weaken and destroy themselves. *They have slept*, not the sleep of the righteous, who

sleep in Jesus, but *their sleep*, the sleep of sinners, that shall awake to everlasting shame and contempt.

[2.] The men of might can no more *find their hands* than the stout-hearted can their spirit. As the bold men are cowed, so the strong men are lamed, and cannot so much as find their hands, to save their own heads, much less to hurt their enemies.

[3.] The chariots and horses may be truly said to be *cast into a dead sleep* when their drivers and their riders were so. God did but speak the word, as the God of Jacob that commands deliverances for Jacob, and, at his rebuke, the chariot and horse were both cast into a dead sleep. When the men were laid dead upon the spot by the destroying angel the chariot and horse were not at all formidable. See the power and efficacy of God's rebukes. With what pleasure may we Christians apply all this to the advantages we enjoy by the Redeemer! It is through him that God is known; it is in him that God's name is great; to him it is owing that God has a tabernacle and a dwelling-place in his church. He it was that vanquished the strong man armed, spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly.

## PSALM 76:7-12

### THE DEFENCE AND GLORY OF ISRAEL

This glorious victory with which God had graced and blessed his church is here made to speak three things: —

**I.** Terror to God's enemies (v. 7-9): “*Thou, even thou, art to be feared; thy majesty is to be revered, thy sovereignty to be submitted to, and thy justice to be dreaded by those that have offended thee.*” Let all the world learn by this event to stand in awe of the great God.

**1.** Let all be afraid of his wrath against the daring impiety of sinners: *Who may stand in thy sight from the minute that thou art angry? If God be a consuming fire, how can chaff and stubble stand before him, though his anger be kindled but a little?* <sup>1000</sup>Psalm 2:12.

**2.** Let all be afraid of his jealousy for oppressed innocency and the injured cause of his own people: “*Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from*

heaven, then when thou didst arise to save all the meek of the earth (v. 8, 9); and then *the earth feared and was still*, waiting what would be the issue of those glorious appearances of thine.” Note,

(1.) God's people are the *meek of the earth* (<sup><381B></sup>Zechariah 2:3), the *quiet in the land* (<sup><381D></sup>Psalms 35:20), that can bear any wrong, but do none.

(2.) Though the meek of the earth are by their meekness exposed to injury, yet God will, sooner or later, appear for their salvation, and plead their cause.

(3.) When God comes to save *all the meek of the earth*, he will *cause judgment to be heard from heaven*; he will make the world know that he is angry at the oppressors of his people, and takes what is done against them as done against himself. The righteous God long seems to keep silence, yet, sooner or later, he will make judgment to be heard.

(4.) When God is speaking judgment from heaven it is time for the earth to compose itself into an awful and reverent silence: *The earth feared and was still*, as silence is made by proclamation when the court sits. *Be still and know that I am God*, <sup><381E></sup>Psalms 46:10. *Be silent, O all flesh! before the Lord, for he is raised up to judgment*, <sup><381F></sup>Zechariah 2:13. Those that suppose this psalm to have been penned upon the occasion of the routing of Sennacherib's army take it for granted that the descent of the destroying angel, who did the execution, was accompanied with thunder, by which *God caused judgment to be heard from heaven*, and that the earth feared (that is, there was an earthquake), but it was soon over. But this is altogether uncertain.

**II.** Comfort to God's people, v. 10. We live in a very angry provoking world; we often feel much, and are apt to fear more, from the wrath of man, which seems boundless. But this is a great comfort to us,

1. That as far as God permits the wrath of man to break forth at any time he will make it turn to his praise, will bring honour to himself and serve his own purposes by it: *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee*, not only by the checks given to it, when it shall be forced to confess its own impotency, but even by the liberty given to it for a time. The hardships which God's people suffer by the wrath of their enemies are made to redound to the glory of God and his grace; and the more *the heathen rage and plot against the Lord and his anointed* the more will God be praised

for setting *his King upon his holy hill of Zion* in spite of them, <sup>(911)</sup>Psalm 2:1, 6. When the heavenly hosts make this the matter of their thanksgiving-song that God has *taken to himself his great power and has reigned, though the nations were angry* (<sup>(6117)</sup>Revelation 11:17, 18), then the wrath of man adds lustre to the praises of God.

2. That what will not turn to his praise shall not be suffered to break out: *The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain*. Men must never permit sin, because they cannot check it when they will; but God can. He can set bounds to the wrath of man, as he does to the raging sea. *Hitherto it shall come and no further; here shall its proud waves be stayed*. God restrained the remainder of Sennacherib's rage, for he put *a hook in his nose and a bridle in his jaws* (<sup>(2372)</sup>Isaiah 37:29); and, though he permitted him to talk big, he restrained him from doing what he designed.

**III.** Duty to all, v. 11, 12. Let all submit themselves to this great God and become his loyal subjects. Observe,

1. The duty required of us all, all that are about him, that have any dependence upon him or any occasion to approach to him; and who is there that has not? We are therefore every one of us commanded to do our homage to the King of kings: *Vow and pay*; that is, take an oath of allegiance to him and make conscience of keeping it. Vow to be his, and pay what you vow. Bind your souls with a bond to him (for that is the nature of a vow), and then live up to the obligations you have laid upon yourselves; for *better it is not to vow than to vow and not to pay*. And, having taken him for our King, let us bring presents to him, as subjects to their sovereign, <sup>(607)</sup>1 Samuel 10:27. *Send you the lamb to the ruler of the land*, <sup>(236)</sup>Isaiah 16:1. Not that God needs any present we can bring, or can be benefited by it; but thus we must give him honour and own that we have our all from him. Our prayers and praises, and especially our hearts, are the presents we should bring to the Lord our God.

2. The reasons to enforce this duty: *Render to all their due, fear to whom fear is due*; and is it not due to God? Yes;

(1.) He ought to be feared: *He is the fear* (so the word is); his name is glorious and fearful,; and he is the proper object of our fear; with him is terrible majesty. The God of Abraham is called *the fear of Isaac* (<sup>(414)</sup>Genesis 31:42), and we are commanded *to make him our fear*,

<sup><2183</sup>Isaiah 8:13. When we bring presents to him we must have an eye to him as greatly to be feared; for he is terrible in his holy places.

(2.) He will be feared, even by those who think it their own sole prerogative to be feared (v. 12): He shall *cut off the spirit of princes*; he shall slip it off as easily as we slip off a flower from the stalk or a bunch of grapes from the vine; so the word signifies. He can dispirit those that are most daring and make them heartless; for he is, or will be, *terrible to the kings of the earth*; and sooner or later, if they be not so wise as to submit themselves to him, he will force them to call in vain to *rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from his wrath*, <sup><4185</sup>Revelation 6:16. Since there is no contending with God, it is as much our wisdom as it is our duty to submit to him.