



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Psalms 76: 1-12

2001

"The Lion Of Zion"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you, Mark. And we are looking again at the psalms, Psalm 76. We looked at Psalm 73 last week, which is a psalm of Asaph. And this, too, is a psalm of Asaph, Psalm 76,

**76** God is known in Judah;

His name is great in Israel.

<sup>2</sup> His tabernacle is in Salem;

His dwelling place also is in Zion.

<sup>3</sup> There He broke the flaming arrows,

The shield and the sword and the weapons of war.

*Selah.*

<sup>4</sup> You are resplendent,

More majestic than the mountains of prey.

<sup>5</sup> The stouthearted were plundered,

They sank into sleep;

And none of the warriors could use his hands.

<sup>6</sup> At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob,

Both rider and horse were cast into a dead sleep.

<sup>7</sup> You, even You, are to be feared;

And who may stand in Your presence when once You are angry?

<sup>8</sup> You caused judgment to be heard from heaven;

The earth feared and was still

<sup>9</sup> When God arose to judgment,

To save all the humble of the earth. *Selah*.

<sup>10</sup> For the wrath of man shall praise You;

With a remnant of wrath You will gird Yourself.

<sup>11</sup> Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfill *them*;

Let all who are around Him bring gifts to Him who is to be feared.

<sup>12</sup> He will cut off the spirit of princes;

He is feared by the kings of the earth.

Psalm 76: 1-12

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we do thank You for this time together as we come before You to Your throne of grace—hopefully, (as the Psalm would encourage us to do), as the humble. It is the humble that You save: It is those who have recognized that they have nothing in and of themselves in which to boast, that all of their, (and our), righteousnesses are as “filthy rags.” We come empty handed to You for grace—and we recognize that You give it freely to those who seek it, those who come to You, those who turn to You.

And so Father, we come in that sense; we come as humble men and women. And that is the reason we come because we know there's nothing in us. We cannot do the things that we must do in and of ourselves: We can't understand this Psalm, we can't implement this Psalm, we can't understand it, believe it, and live in light of it—apart from Your grace. And so we pray for that.

We're thankful that we can come to You. You invite us to do so every moment of our life—to live at the foot of the throne of grace, seeking Your help in time of need. And that's all the time—and we recognize that LORD.

And at this time we need Your teaching; and we can, not only come to the throne of grace and seek Your help, but we know we have One who lives within us as believers in Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God, who teaches. He is the encourager, and we pray for that. We pray for His ministry: That it would be effective within our hearts; that He would teach us; that He would enlighten us, and that we'd understand the things that we've read and what we will think about in the next hour.

And I pray that You would guide our thinking; and You would build us up in the faith, You would strengthen us, You'd fortify us for the day ahead, the week ahead, and that we would live in light of these things. This is a Psalm that declares Your power, Your greatness, and how the enemy cannot stand before You. And we live in that kind of a world that is full of enemies. This is not our home, this is not our goal in life—not this place, for we're passing through it, (but we don't do so in our own strength), and You bless us and You watch over us. That's the great encouragement of this Psalm; and I pray that we will all get that and understand it and appreciate who You are, the great and sovereign God of the universe who has made Himself known to us. We have a relationship with the all-powerful, all-knowing God—that is a great privilege.

So bless us, LORD, spiritually in this sense, but we also need Your help and Your blessings materially. 'Every good thing', as we've just sung, comes from You. You're the Creator, You're the sustainer—and there are some who have particular needs, physical needs, health issues, and I pray for them. You know who they are, LORD, and You know their need. Encourage those who are afflicted and help them to know that these aren't things outside of Your will or outside of Your concern—that the almighty God is concerned. So bless those who are in physical need.

And bless those who are experiencing life's trials that we face, we pray for Your help in the midst of them; give relief and give a sense of Your presence. And help all of us to remember that You work everything together for our good and to Your glory.

So LORD, bless Your people, and bless us now. May we worship You well, and may we learn. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

(Message) Psalm 76 has been called a 'War Psalm'. It has been called one of the 'Fighting Psalms', and all with good reason. In it, God is a warrior who conquers His enemies and cares for His people. So Christian armies have been inspired by it. The French Huguenots and the Scottish Covenanters both sang it as they marched to battle. Psalm 76 was sung in thanksgiving services when the English celebrated the defeat of the Spanish armada in 1588. It is very much a 'Martial Psalm'.

But the battle we fight is spiritual. In the Book of Hebrews, (11:13), Christians are described as marching through this world like pilgrims passing through an alien land. It's a dangerous journey, but we're not alone. We read there, in Hebrews chapter 2, that we have a leader, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is called "the author of their salvation", (vs10, NASB), which is also well translated, "the captain of their salvation", (KJV), and He is leading us along. He's leading us through this world; He's leading us to heaven and to the kingdom to come. And this Psalm gives us a picture of how He leads us and how He fights for us all along the way. He is our protector; He is all powerful; And He is well able to save.

That truth encouraged Asaph, the writer of Psalm 76, and here he celebrates God's power to save, His defense of His people, and His future triumph over evil. He begins with perhaps the greatest statement in the Psalm, one of the great statements of the Bible, "God is known in Judah...His tabernacle is in Salem." That's his major point.

In Psalm 73, Asaph began, "God is good to Israel." Here, "God is known in Judah." In Psalm 73 he taught, that in spite of all of the appearances, in spite of what's going on around us, in spite of all of the evil that we see, in spite of all the disappointments that we experience, in spite of the fact that the wicked seem to prosper and the righteous seem to be oppressed, (and in fact are in so many ways), nevertheless, "God is good." It's that proposition that we must believe. That's how he begins Psalm 73—and it's as if

to say, 'This is where we must begin in our thinking. Regardless of everything you see around you, God is good to Israel.'

And here in Psalm 76, in spite of all of the materialistic claims of the world, the skepticism of our age, and the bad beliefs of past ages, God is—and He is known He was "known in Judah." He is now known in the church. God is not some hidden, unknown deity. He's made Himself known.

And He's not just revealed Himself but He has graciously established a relationship with people. —That's the Gospel. It is Good News to a world in darkness. It was good news in Asaph's day. There was light in Israel. There was salvation there. God has spoken. He has revealed Himself, and could actually be found by those who want to seek Him. He was in a place; He was dwelling in Judah with a people He had chosen.

Now, some might think that these first verses appear provincial and narrow: 'God is known in this one place, not everywhere. God has a relationship with one people, not others—it appears so exclusive'. —But the Bible is exclusive; it doesn't allow varieties of ideas about God. It is not inclusive of the religions of the world—it is exclusive of all of them.

These verses were literally true. Before Christ came, under the Old Covenant in the Old Testament, God was actually "known in Judah". His house, His tabernacle was in Salem, in Jerusalem. In those days, any person who wanted to know God had to turn to Israel and its religion. As Jesus told the woman of Samaria in John chapter 4, verse 22, "Salvation is of the Jews."

God has now given the fuller revelation of Himself in His Son, in the Lord Jesus Christ, who said of Himself, "I and the Father are one." (Jn 10:30). Today, all who want to know God must know Him in Christ, must turn to Christ. Well, that's exclusive. There is one God. There's one Savior. There's one way to God and to salvation, and that's through the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well Asaph is declaring that. In an age when every nation had a different God, when paganism and polytheism was the accepted world view, Asaph declared that,

'the true God is in Zion'. He had revealed Himself to Abraham and his descendants—and He had a relationship with them. They were His chosen people, so "His tabernacle is in Salem", (which is literally, "His *lair* is in Salem"). (vs2).

A *lair* is 'a den of lions'. And this intentionally suggests a *lion*, which is a not uncommon figure of the LORD throughout the Bible. Amos said that, "The LORD roars from Zion." (Amos 1:2). Jeremiah that, "He will roar from on high." (Jer 25:3).

So not only has the LORD revealed Himself, He's established a relationship with men; with all, who by His grace, come to Him. And He is their defender: 'Like a roaring lion His defense of His people is fierce.' That's what the Psalm celebrates. God is—and He has revealed Himself. And what He has revealed about Himself is that He is powerful and loyal.

He is the God of the covenant. That is, He's entered into a covenant relationship with a people. He has reached an agreement with a people. He has made them promises, and He keeps His covenant agreement. He keeps that relationship, He keeps His promises, He's loyal—and He defends His people; verse 3, 'In Zion', (at the gates of Jerusalem), "There He broke the flaming arrows, the shield and the sword and the weapons of war."

We're not told what army He destroyed here. It may be that Asaph was not thinking of one particular army or one particular victory, but recalling past victories. Many would fit the description that he gives.

The point he's making is about the LORD's power. His power is great. His power is seen in the weapons taken from the enemy: "Flaming arrows, shield and sword." They all failed against Him. No matter how great and how skilled and how well equipped the army is, it is no match for Him. No worldly power can stand against the Lord God.

Verses 5 and 6,

"The stouthearted were plundered,

They sank into sleep;

And none of the warriors could use his hands.

At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob,  
Both rider and horse were cast into a dead sleep."

As Asaph reflected on the LORD's defense of His people, I don't think He was thinking of one specific military encounter, one particular victory that the LORD had over His enemies. But certainly, as he reflected on the LORD's power and what He had done over Israel's history, he may well have recalled the destruction of Egypt at the Red Sea—how Pharaoh had been broken by the plagues and finally let the people go, only to break his word and pursue after them with his chariots.

It was an irrational act, considering all that he'd experienced, all the power that he'd seen from the God in those ten plagues that had come upon the land, and how it had consistently defeated him. Nevertheless, he continued to oppose God. Well that was an irrational act. But then he was driven by greed, he was driven by anger, and because of all of that, through all of that, he raced to destruction when his army drowned in the sea.

On the other side were the children of Israel. And there Moses, who witnessed all of this, composed a hymn about the event—and he sang in that hymn, a praise to God: "The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea." (Exo 15:1), a great victory of God over His people's enemy.

And there were others. When Joshua led Israel into Canaan to take possession of the land that God had given to His people, the LORD went with them. He went before them, and He fought for them: He knocked down the walls of Jericho; as the Israelites pursued the Amorites, the LORD 'made the sun to stand still' and He 'threw large stones from heaven on them', the enemy. (Jos 10: 11-13).

In the early days of the judges, He defeated Sisera. The Israelites were no match for that Canaanite army. It was a great army of its day—it was, I guess we'd call it, a mechanized army in its day for they had 900 iron chariots. Israel had nothing: They were a poor people, they were poorly equipped. But Barak led them into battle and the text

tells us that the LORD routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army with, "the edge of the sword". (Judg 4:16).

And all through Israel's history you have that kind of thing played out. The LORD gave His people great victories: gave them victories through Gideon, Samson, Samuel and others. The author of Hebrews mentions them, almost in passing; 'Time would fail him', he says, 'if he spoke about Gideon...', and he goes on and gives a list of these men.—And that 'Great Hall of Faith' in Hebrews 11, verse 33, where he says of them, "who by faith conquered kingdoms..." meaning, 'They trusted—and God conquered.' They obeyed and God gave them the victory.

He always honors faith. He always honors obedience. So in light of all of this, in light of who God is, Asaph declares, "You, even You, are to be feared", 'You're to be obeyed.' And that's a warning to all who oppose the LORD and attack His people. It's a warning to stop attacking, stop opposing, and submit to Him. But of course, men don't do that. They don't listen to the Word of God. They reject the Word of God. And so, as a result of that, they don't listen to the warning.

That doesn't frustrate God. He can't be stopped. In fact, it all works to His glory and always, always accomplishes His will, even when man is rebellious. In fact, it is through man's rebellion that God achieves His purpose. That's what Asaph says in verse 10, "For the wrath of man shall praise Thee." And that has rightly been called one of the most striking sayings in the Psalter. —And it defines, at least in part, the greatness of God's power.

There are all kinds of power. After the first atomic blast in New Mexico, Robert Oppenheimer recalled the line from the Bhagavad Gita, "I am become death, the destroyer of worlds", (and that may be the Hindu idea of divine power; it is destructive). And God's power can be destructive. He will evaporate this world and the universe in fire.—Peter tells us that in 2 Peter, chapter 3, in verse 10.



God is all powerful; but His power is never of a fatalistic kind. It's not power that causes wanton destruction. It is creative power. It is power that blesses. It's from the fire that He will make a "new heavens and new earth". (2Pet 3:11). His power blesses His people—and it's always for His glory. And His power is so complete that He even causes man's wrath to praise Him. He did that when He defeated Pharaoh.

Paul teaches that; he makes that very point in Romans chapter 9, verse 17, where he quotes the LORD from Exodus, chapter 9, in verse 16. And there, in Romans 9:17, he writes, "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.' "

In other words, 'Pharaoh, you think you're a god, you think you're a powerful man, you think you can dictate what happens? I put you there—and I put you there in all your power and all your splendor for one purpose, and that's to bring you down and show My power—and so that My power and My name would be broadcast throughout the earth!' And of course, it was.

When the next generation finally comes under Joshua's leadership, you will remember the spies that go to Jericho and Rahab informs them that she knew who this God was, who the LORD was: That He is the one that defeated the Egyptians and it caused terrible fear in all of the people. So He accomplished His purpose; the LORD was glorified in this king who opposed Him.

Now there are examples of that throughout the Bible and history. One of those is the overthrow of Sennacherib, who invaded Judah in the days of Hezekiah. And I choose that one because the words of Psalm 76 fit closely the account that is given of it; and so much so that some have thought that that is what this Psalm is about. It's found in 2 Kings 19, and 2 Chronicles 32, and Isaiah 36. That's three places in the Old Testament where that event is recorded—which indicates, from the number of times that it's repeated, that it's obviously a very important event.

And a number of things are significant about it that fit very well with the lesson from this Psalm. First of all, it was almost catastrophic. Judah was almost swept away by the great Assyrian army, which had swept over the near east and defeated every army, every nation, every city that it had fought against. And now this horde had come up to the very walls of Jerusalem.

Now this is significant because it happened after there was a great revival in Judah. Hezekiah was one of Israel's greatest kings. He took down 'the high places'. You read about the kings of Judah and you read about this one and that one, and they were, 'a good king and they got rid of the idols'. But they never would get rid of 'the high places' that Solomon had built. And then Hezekiah comes and he gets rid of the idols; and he also gets rid of 'the high places'; and he made Judah worship at the one altar that was at the temple.

All of those altars on the mountains and the hills around Jerusalem were finally swept away. And then he directs Judah to the one true God—and there's a great revival. In fact, it was so great that even people from the northern kingdom came down to Jerusalem and celebrated Passover and worshiped. So, it was a great event.

But it was after that revival, that great turning to the LORD that Sennacherib came—which might give us pause: Is that how revival is rewarded? With tribulation?

No. But that is how a revival is tested. Our faith is frequently tested by the LORD, not to demoralize us, not to defeat us, not to harm us, but to strengthen us. And it was revival that prepared the people for that great challenge. And they responded—they trusted the LORD.

Hezekiah encouraged the people. He gave a sermon, (he gave a kind of a 'pep talk', for lack of a better way of putting it), but a sermon in which he told them not to be afraid of the king of Assyria. In fact, his words were, "With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God, to help us and fight our battles." (2Ch 32:8). That's always so for God's people. We are being led through this world by our "captain", by the Lord Jesus

Christ, (Heb 2:19), —He fights our battles. And He's always faithful to do it, we simply need to trust Him. Hezekiah did.

The Assyrians mocked his faith. They stood at the walls of the city and boasted they would destroy it, just as they'd destroyed all of the other nations that they had fought, 'The gods of those people could not save them, and Hezekiah's God would not be able to save him.'

So, they come before the walls of Jerusalem and make that great boast, (which was a denial of what Asaph said at the top of this Psalm). "God is known in Judah", this is where God is. Nowhere else. It was 'A challenge to the LORD', that these men made; and one which He used to make 'the wrath of man praise Him'. Hezekiah had told the people the LORD is with us and will fight our battles.

And so Hezekiah the king, and Isaiah the prophet, responded to all of this, to this Assyrian challenge, by getting on their knees and praying to the LORD. In fact, the text says, "They cried to heaven." (2Ch 32:20).

And heaven heard; God answered them. He sent His angel, who moved through the Assyrian camp, and in one night put to death 185,000 men. Sennacherib, (with what was left of his army), limped back to Nineveh; to his capital in Assyria—and a few years later went to his temple to worship, where his sons killed him. Murdered him there in his temple. His god didn't help him, didn't protect him, because his god is no god. The God is in Judah, in Zion!

Well, that's an example of the greatness of God. The greatness of the enemy, (and the confidence of its boast), all serve to magnify the LORD's greatness in His victory and show Him to be the powerful defender of His people. He is, 'The lion who roars from Zion.' He was then—He is now.

He fights our battles, which are every bit as real as those of this Psalm. Our enemies are every bit as threatening as the Assyrians. Men today deny the LORD. They deny His existence; 'This is strictly a materialistic universe.' They deny the truth of the Word of God. And they certainly deny the exclusiveness of the Gospel.

So what do we do in a world like this? Do we run and hide? Well, no, we must stand for the truth, and we must speak the truth—and we must trust in the LORD. A church historian, Adolph von Harnack, described the early Christian apologists, the defenders of the faith, the men of the second and third century, as men who were bold and confident.

Harnack was not an evangelical; he was not one who would believe as we believe. But nevertheless, he spoke of these men and he spoke of them as men who spoke from a position of firm belief. They knew the Gospel was true. They took on the pagans and the philosophers of their day and they did so without fear—and they did so with a sense of spiritual superiority. And so he wrote, " 'We have been rescued from darkness and lifted into light', such was the chant that rose from a chorus of Christians during those early centuries." It was intellectual truth and lucidity in which they reveled and glorified.

They believed it. They believed that the Word of God, like the author of Hebrews tells us in Hebrews, chapter 4 is "living and active". (vs12). It's powerful: You can speak it and it has its work. It's not like any other word; the Spirit of God is in it, and with it, and directs it. And so these were bold men, and they proclaimed the truth, and they defended the Gospel.

And where are those pagans and those philosophers today? All vanquished by the Gospel. And it will be the same for us, as we stand firm in the Gospel and proclaim it. Unbelievers boast like those Assyrians, but they will not win; God will prevail. His church will stand—that's what the Lord Jesus promised, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Mat 16:18). We have that assurance. He cannot be frustrated.

The greatness of God's power is seen in its wisdom that, 'He makes the wrath of man to praise Him'. (vs10). He so controls everything that He brings good out of evil. The greatest demonstration of that is, of course, Christ and what He did at Calvary. Peter explained it in Acts chapter 2, in verse 23 on the day of Pentecost, when he said that,

'Jews and Gentiles nailed Christ to the cross'—but it happened, "by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God."

There was a plan in all of this, (it didn't just 'begin'), God wasn't reacting to the Romans and the Jewish leaders. From all eternity there had been this plan—and Christ was sent to carry out that plan. And what these men did in their anger and their hate and their sin, (because it was "by the hands of evil men", (ibid), as Peter puts it), through all of that God accomplished His purpose.

And then he adds, "But God raised Him up again." (vs24). In other words, they were allowed to put Him a cross, they were allowed to put Him in a grave—but they couldn't keep Him there. God's plan was for salvation. And that is, as I say, the greatest example of all of this in, 'making the wrath of man to praise Him', because He used the wrath of man to accomplish salvation.

He used their sin to bring about the removal of our sin; on the cross Christ paid for those sins. Paul talks about this throughout his letters, but in Colossians chapter 2, verse 14 he wrote that He "canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us." So think of your sin as a debt and you have all these notes against you; and there's this long, great slate that has every charge that's against you. It's there—and at the cross, Christ erased it all. It's gone. Past, present, future—all gone. Every debt has been paid, even your debt of unbelief. It's paid. That's what Christ did.

And then, Paul says, "He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made public display of them, having triumphed over them." (vs15). He defeated the demonic powers that we wrestle against, that we fight against, and that Paul speaks of in Ephesians 6. He defeated them—and all of their fiery darts. So in the words of verse 3 of our Psalm, "He broke the flaming arrows...and weapons of war."

So, our enemies have been defeated. Our enemies cannot defeat us. However, this doesn't mean we're not in a battle; this doesn't mean that there's now peace. There's not. We're living in a hostile world. But the victory has been achieved; Christ has

already won!—And we are in Christ and Christ is leading us through this world. And not only that, He's seated at the right hand of the Father as our king and our priest—and He's praying for us, constantly, every moment.

He's praying for you right now, each one of you, individually, praying for you. And praying for you with wisdom, and praying for you with precision. He knows our situation. He knows our condition. He knows that every one of us are just dust, and He knows the besetting sins that we all have. He knows it. And He knows how to give us help. He knows how to meet our need in our time of need. And He does that, because not only is He our priest, He's our king. He has all power and authority in heaven and earth, and He meets the needs that we have. That's how our 'Captain' is leading us through this world, so that we can say with the author of Hebrews, as he does at the end of his book, "The LORD is my helper, I will not be afraid." (Heb 13:6).

Are you afraid? Are some of you facing circumstances in life that cause you to tremble and cause you to worry? We all do at some time. And I don't want to be glib about any of these things, but the Psalm teaches us that we don't need to be afraid. The Book of Hebrews, (that we will spend some time in in the next few weeks), teaches us that we don't need be afraid. God is at work. He's at work in us today. He's ruling and governing today. And that's illustrated for us by this Psalm on how He's doing that.

So that's today. But there is a future aspect to this Psalm—an eschatological meaning. The day is coming when God will put an end to all opposition in a great future day of judgment, "the day of the Lord", which is what some commentators feel Asaph is describing in verses 8-10. Asaph praises God's power in the past. But, as the commentator Derek Kidner states, "These verses are a vision of the end time."

These verses are written in the *past tense*, but this is a common way among the prophets of describing an event that is so certain to occur that it is presented as *already* having happened. We talked about that, was it last week? I mentioned Romans chapter 8, in verse 30(b), where Paul says, "...whom He called, He also justified; and those whom He justified, He also *glorified*." *Glorified* is in the past tense. But that's a future event;

we've not yet been glorified. But what Paul is saying is, 'It's so certain that we will be—that we will triumph, that the resurrection will happen for every believer in Jesus Christ and we will be glorified—that it's as though it's already occurred.

Grammarians call this “the prophetic perfect”. The “perfect tense” is ‘the past tense’, and it's not uncommon to read prophecies that are written in the past tense. And sometimes they're translated in the future tense. One example of that is Isaiah 9:6, "A child will be born to you, a Son will be given." That's actually in the perfect tense, (in the past tense). But Isaiah was saying, ‘It is so certain to occur that it's as though it's already happened.’

And that seems to be true here, because in these verses, the psalmist's vision widens to include the whole earth. And God, here, is no longer enthroned in Zion but in heaven; and He speaks from there. He speaks judgment from heaven. In verse 7, Asaph asks, "Who may stand in Your presence when once You are angry?" And ‘Once You are pouring out Your wrath, who can stand before that?’ And the answer, of course, is, ‘No one!’

We have an example of this in Revelation 6 where the kings of the earth, and the rich, and the strong, and the slaves, (vs15), (it's a way of saying all mankind, from the greatest to the least), all of them are in terror, and they're hiding themselves in the caves among the rocks. And they pray, not to God, but to the mountains and the rocks, that they will fall on them “...and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb...” And the reason they pray that, is they say, "...for the great day of wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (vs16-17).

Well, that answers Asaph's question, "Who may stand in Your presence when once You are angry?" And the answer is, ‘No one.’ No one in our own strength can stand.

But the God who judges is also the God who saves. And He's able to make us stand by His mercy. Verse 9 gives us the promise, that He will “save all the humble of the earth.” Those who recognize their sin, those who recognize their need of the Savior, those who turn to Christ will be delivered when He returns in power to establish His

kingdom on this earth. They escape the judgment because they believed in Him who took the judgment for them.

Now, the world is no more enamored of that than it is of anything else. It's no more accepting of God's final judgment than it is of the exclusive nature of the Gospel. And it complains about that—it complains about the idea of judgment; of a God who would be angry; of the wrath of God—and rejects that as being unjust and unworthy of God: 'God is love. God doesn't do that. That's an archaic idea of God. He's not a wrathful God. He's not a God of justice. He's a God of love who, (if He's even involved in things anymore), is just doing kindly things, supporting us in whatever we do.'

Well, God is just. "And regardless of their complaints", as James Boyce wrote, "it doesn't matter. This is a futile response. God will do His will." That's true. He's unfrustratable—He will do His will. So the wise response is for men to humble themselves, turn to Him—and live.

That's Asaph's counsel at the end, in the last verses—both to believers and non-believers. First to believers, to Israel, in verse 11, "Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfill *them*. Let all who are around Him bring gifts to Him who is to be feared." It's a command—it's a command to be loyal to the One who delivered them from disaster and who's done that consistently. He has been faithful to His people. He's been faithful to provide for them, to protect them, so they owed Him their loyalty and their devotion.

And that's no less true for us. We who have been saved from our sin, from the wrath to come by the Lord Jesus Christ, must be grateful. We must show gratitude and live that way—live thankfully and obediently. We are under obligation to do that because He is God—and we're His creation, His creatures. And the best way to do that, the purest way to do that, the right way to do that, is not to obey out of a sense of obligation, but out of a sense of love and thankfulness for what He's done.



But it's so easy...so easy to receive life, eternal life, and good things from the hand of God...and then forget the source of our blessings. Good King Hezekiah did that after his great deliverance. God blessed him materially, made him very, very wealthy. And the text says that he wasn't thankful, "because his heart was proud." (2Ch 32:25). And when that was exposed, Hezekiah repented.

But that's the danger: To become self-satisfied and forget the LORD. Everything we have comes from Him. He blesses us. Even our trials are for our good. Remember, Psalm 73, Asaph was troubled by the wicked. They were prospering, and the righteous were not; they were suffering. And yet, what he comes to through this crisis of faith is that statement that he makes at the very beginning of the Psalm, "Surely God is good to Israel." Regardless of the trials, God is good to Israel.

Regardless of what happens in your life, it is for your good. He is able to bring good out of bad—and He does that. You and I can't see it now. It takes faith to accept that, but that is the case, and that is the truth. He is blessing you. He has blessed you. He has blessed you and He has blessed me in more ways than you and I know. We'll spend eternity learning about those things.

The Psalm ends with a warning to the great and powerful. Their day will end; judgment is coming. Therefore the unbelieving must turn to Him because if they do not, they will be cut off from the earth. How do they turn? They humble themselves for that's who He saves; verse 9, He saves "the humble of the earth." The humble are those who have yielded to the LORD and believed.

If there are any here who've not done that, look to Him. We come to the end of the hour, we come to the end of the end of the Psalm, and it is an exhortation to humble yourself. Really, it's a warning of judgment that's coming. And so if any have not done that, we ask you to do that, to come to Him, to humble yourself. Recognize that you're a

sinner, that you need a Savior. And this is the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Trust in Him. He receives all who do.

And you who have, (I hope it's every one of you), we too, must trust in Him. And we must humble ourselves daily. And we must be loyal to Him and do that out of gratitude for what He's done for us. Devote ourselves to Him in our thoughts and our deeds, and live for Him. We can do that only by His grace. We can come to Him only by grace. We can live by faith only by grace. And so, we need to look to Him to supply us with that grace. Let's do that. Let's pray.

Father, we do thank You for Your goodness, and we do pray for Your grace that we would be men and women who live faithful, devoted lives to You. Not simply because it's our duty to do that, (it certainly is), but we have every reason to live for You and to be faithful to You in our thoughts as well as our deeds because of all that You've done for us, all that You are presently doing for us, all that You will yet do for us—we give You thanks for that. We thank you for what Christ has done for us at Calvary. We thank you for what He will yet do for us when He returns. We give You thanks for all of that in His name. Amen.

*(End of Audio)*