

Let's Thank God The Righteous Judge

Psalm 75

Introduction: 1) In Genesis 18:25 we find one of the great questions of life and of the Bible, put forward for our careful consideration and meditation: “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Will God always do right? Will God someday make things right? Things go wrong and life seems unfair. Will the God of all the earth do right? The answer to those questions is a resounding yes! God will indeed do right and as the Lord says in Psalm 75:2, I will do it, “When I choose the proper or appointed time.” His way. His time. Never early. Never late. Always right on time.

2) In Psalm 73:12 the psalmist complains because the ungodly “are always at ease; They increase in riches.” Psalm 75 says that evaluation is premature and short-sighted. God is near, His judgment right on time; the wicked will get their full and just desert (v. 8).

3) – This is a psalm of Asaph (as are Psalms 73-83, and Psalm 50). Asaph was one of David’s 3 chief musicians and the sons of Asaph were Levitical singers.

– The theme of Psalm 75 is one of thanksgiving for God’s righteous judgment. He will take down the wicked and He will exalt the righteous (v. 10).

– It is of some interest to note that Psalm 75 finds parallels in two well-known passages of Scripture: 1) the song of Hannah, mother of Samuel (1 Sam 2:1-10), and the song of Mary, the Magnificat, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1:46-55). In 1 Samuel 2 Hannah says:

Do not keep talking so proudly
or let your mouth speak such arrogance,
for the LORD is a God who knows,
and by him deeds are weighed. . . .

The LORD brings death and makes alive;
he brings down to the grave and raises up.
The LORD sends poverty and wealth;

he humbles and he exalts. . . .

For the foundations of the earth are the LORD's;
upon them he has set the world (1 Sam 2:3, 6-8)

And in Mary's Magnificat part of that song says,

He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their
inmost thoughts.

He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good things (Luke 1:51-53).

– Psalm 75 is Psalm 1 played out in a very clear and sovereign way. The tune “do not destroy” in the superscription has led some to believe the psalm was written by a descendant of Asaph just prior to the Assyrian invasion (2 Kings 18-19). That tragic date for the northern kingdom of Israel was 722 B.C. This evil empire is descending on us. There are international, political and social storm clouds on the horizon. God, what will you do? Will you make things right?

– The structure of this psalm is somewhat complex and uncertain, though a study built around 4 stanzas or movements seems wise, as various aspects of God's activity are the occasion for our gratitude and thanksgiving.

I. Thank God for His wonderful works. 75:1

- The psalm begins on the note of thanksgiving. The repetition of “we give thanks” adds intensity and emphasis to the thankfulness that is expressed.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:18 reminds us, “In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” Here the psalmist says “thank You, O God, thank you,” and for a very specific reason: For Your Name is near; [Men] declare Your wonderful works” (*NASV*).

- God is near because He is the omnipresent God. He is not a localized, tribal deity limited by geography. Any place you go and anywhere you serve, He is already there waiting on you.
- God also is near because the declaration of His “wondrous works” draws us to Him in worship and gratitude for what He has done for us in the past. Past remembering is the basis for present rejoicing! By remembering and retelling His wonderful acts in redemptive history, particularly the Exodus and the Conquest of the Promised Land, we are comforted and encouraged because we have evidence that this is a God, our God, who draws close to His people.
- Illustration: When Timothy was hit by a car at the age of 3, right in front of our house, God came near, He came close. Though his status was uncertain for several days, the peace of God enveloped Charlotte and me as our God came near allowing us, His children, to draw close and snuggle with their heavenly Father.

Transition: However, the nearness of God and His wondrous works can be seen in a different kind of way as well. Note secondly that we should:

II. Thank God for His providential judgments. 75:2-5

- In verses 2-5 it appears that God is speaking. His speech or oracle naturally divides into 2 parts with 2 different audiences in view: 1) vs. 2-3 it is the righteous; 2) vs. 4-5 it is the “wicked” and “boastful” (*NIV*, “arrogant”).
- Our Lord makes a critical theological and pastoral declaration to the righteous, to those who thank Him and enjoy His nearness, His presence.
- First, “when I choose the proper (appointed) time, I will judge uprightly (*NASV*, “with equity”). This is both a word of encouragement and a word of instruction.

I will judge justly, but in my own way and my own time. It may not fit your schedule or be according to your plan, but it will fit mine. Why might God delay in His judgment? James Boice notes 2 reasons: 1) to allow time for repentance and salvation (Rom. 2:3-4; 2 Pet. 3:9), and 2) to allow evil to work itself out and come to full fruition. In Genesis 15:16 God told Abraham that “the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure (Gen. 15:16). God accomplishes His purposes in and through evil. We may not understand or see what He is doing, but He knows exactly what He is doing, why He is doing it, and how He is doing it. He has an appointed time.

- Second, everything may appear to be falling apart and going to pieces, but our Lord is in control. The earth and its inhabitant may appear to dissolve (*NASV*, “melt”; *NIV*, “quake”). World orders, nations and societies may crumble about us and waste away into nothingness. They may appear as a mere blip on the radar screen of history. In contrast, God says, “I set up its pillars firmly.” The *NASV* renders it, “it is I who have firmly set its pillars.”
 - The “I” is emphatic and intensive.
 - “Its” refers to “the earth and its inhabitants.”
 - In the ancient world Egypt, Assyrian, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome came and went but God graciously and sovereignly upholds His world.
 - Trot out Napoleon, Lenin, Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Amin, or Hussein. They come and go but God graciously and sovereignly holds the whole world in His hands.

- Germany and Japan, Russia and China, Great Britain and America, they will rise and they will fall, but as the hymn so wondrously affirms “Our God is marching on!”

Illustration: Paul asked me as a little boy, “do I fear someone will push a button and kill everybody with a nuclear bomb?” I said no. Why? Because our God sets up the pillars of His earth firmly.

- *The Message*: “When the earth goes topsy-turvy, and nobody knows which end is up, I nail it all down; I put everything in place again.”
- So “Selah!” Meditate and think on that.
- In vs. 2-3 our God encourages the righteous. Now in vs. 4-5 He confronts the wicked. A chiasmic pattern is clearly evident.
- Pride and boasting are detestable things to God. Proverbs 6:17 says the Lord hates “a proud look.” Thus the psalmist records our God as saying, “To the arrogant I say, boast no more” (*NIV*). The arrogant are those who live life with no regard for God and boast of their independence and self-determination. They are those who “speak with a stiff neck.” The *NIV* says “an outstretched neck.”
- To these wicked ones God adds, “Do not lift up the horn. Do not lift up your horn on high (*NIV*, “against heaven”).
- Today, we would say they shake their fist in God’s face and boldly claim, “I do not need you. I will not obey you. I will not honor you!” “I will live life my way!”

- Illustration: We saw a blatant example of such boastful arrogance and self-deluded pride recently when Kathy Griffin received her first Emmy award for her reality program “Kathy Griffin: My Life on the D-list.” Upon winning Ms. Griffin walked to the podium and said, “Can you believe this s**t? I guess hell froze over...a lot of people come up here and thank Jesus for this award. I want you to know that no one had less to do with this award than Jesus. So, all I can say is s**k it, Jesus. This award is my God now.” (Sept. 8, 2007).
- Jesus said in Matthew 12:36-37, “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”
- “When I chose the appointed time, I will judge fairly.” It will certainly be fair. It will also be unforgettable and unforgivable for those who life up their horn at God. Matthew Henry said, “Those who love darkness rather than light shall have their doom accordingly.” (Lawson, 376).

III. Thank God for His Universal Sovereignty

75:6-8

- These words come from the psalmist as he reflects back on the words of God in vs. 2-5. Interestingly, each verse begins with the same Hebrew work (*ki*) translated “for, but, and for” in our English text.
- The wicked in vs. 4-5 seek to exalt themselves. However, they are only fooling themselves as are those who follow these self-exalting titans of ego. They completely misunderstand who raises one up and puts another down.

- Exaltation does not come from the east, the west, or the south. It comes from above, from God who judges. You may lift up your horn, but God will break it. You may lift up your fist and God will smash it. No one can escape His eye. No one can escape His judgment.
- At the appointed time, in His time, “He puts down one and exalts another.” As Proverbs 3:34 says, “He resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.”
- Jesus makes it plain in Matthew 23:12, “whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”
- How do we know this is what will happen? How do we know this will come to pass? Because God’s Word says so. Verse 8 provides a powerful and dreadful image. The wrath and judgment of God is compared to a cup in Jehovah’s hand. In that cup there is wine. It is foaming and fully mixed. This is a picture of a powerful, hot, foaming concoction that is poured down the throats of evil men to the dregs, to the very last drop in the cup.
- Numerous times the cup of God’s wrath appears in the Bible (Is. 51:17; Jere. 25:15-38; 49:12; 51:7; Rev. 18:6). Yet its most memorable occurrences are found on the lips of Jesus who in Mark 10:38 spoke of a cup He must drink, and in John 18:11 where he said, “Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?”
- You see the wicked of vs. 4-5 are you and I without Christ. The cup of boiling, foaming judgment of v.8 is the cup of God’s judgment we should be forced to drink. Yet, in amazing, saving grace, Jesus drank it for each of us, down to the very last drop. In sovereign grace He took on Himself the wrath and judgment

of a just Judge that I should have received. He was put down for me, that I might be exalted in Him. For this we indeed give thanks.

IV. Thank God for His Covental Faithfulness 75:9-10

- The final stanza parallels to some degree stanza 1, especially v. 9. In v. 1 there is thanksgiving, in v. 9 there is praise. The personal pronoun “I” appears 3 times, replacing the “we” of v. 1. This psalm ends on an intensely personal note.
- Having received a righteous promise of justice from the Righteous Judge of the universe, the psalmist shouts 1) I will declare the truth of your ways (vs. 6-8) forever; 2) I will sing praises to the God of Jacob, that is the covenant keeping God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. What you did in the past in caring for and protecting your people, you also will do in the future. It will be at your appointed time and not necessarily ours, but it will come to pass, because you judge uprightly. You will make things right.
- Energized and emboldened by God’s sovereign faithfulness, the psalmist joins his voice to that of the Lord’s in vs. 4-5, using similar terminology.
 - The horns (strength, power) of the wicked, I too will cut off. In word and deed I will stand against the wicked in the power and might of my God, the God of Jacob.
 - The horns (strength, power) of the righteous, those whom God declares righteous in His sight, I too (implied) will exalt. Kidner says it beautifully of the way God’s children promote His cause, “there will be a time for power without aggression, and glory without pride” (p. 273).

Conclusion

This Is My Father's World

By Maltbie D. Babcock

(1901)

This is my Father's world. O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet.
This is my Father's world: why should my heart be sad?
The Lord is King; let the heavens sing!
God reigns; let the earth be glad!

This is my Father's world, praying I may see His face.
I open my eyes, and in glad surprise, "The Lord is in this place."
This is my Father's world, from the shining courts above,
The Beloved One, Jesus His Son,
Came – a pledge of priceless love.

This is my Father's world, should my heart be ever sad?
The Lord is King – let the heavens ring. God reigns – let the earth be glad.
This is my Father's world. Now closer to Heaven I'm bound,
For dear to God is the earth Christ trod.
This world is holy ground.

(slightly revised by Danny Akin)