

# 17. Psalm 74-77

November 30, 2014

## Psalm 75

*Psalm 75:1-10 We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks! For Your wondrous works declare that Your name is near. 2 "When I choose the proper time, I will judge uprightly. 3 The earth and all its inhabitants are dissolved; I set up its pillars firmly. Selah 4 'I said to the boastful, 'Do not deal boastfully,' And to the wicked, 'Do not lift up the horn. 5 Do not lift up your horn on high; Do not speak with a stiff neck.'"*

*6 For exaltation comes neither from the east Nor from the west nor from the south. 7 But God is the Judge: He puts down one, And exalts another . 8 For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, And the wine is red; It is fully mixed, and He pours it out; Surely its dregs shall all the wicked of the earth Drain and drink down. 9 But I will declare forever, I will sing praises to the God of Jacob. 10 'All the horns of the wicked I will also cut off , But the horns of the righteous shall be exalted."*

Thanksgiving Day became nothing more than a day of football games on TV and eating until your stomach says, "Uncle." Of course, it used to be a day before Black Friday that all the merchants used to wait for the day , but now they came up with a new idea 'Early Black Friday' that starts from Thursday evening to get more business. Satan and his human cohorts effectively have removed the idea of ' Thanksgiving' to God from the secular minds of Americans.

I don't think that Christians are all that different when it comes to giving thanks to the Lord. Like little children, we have to be reminded to thank the Lord for His kindness, mercy, love, as well as those difficult times we experience.

*Philippians 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;*

Whenever we pray to the Lord, we should acknowledge whom we are praying to; what He has allowed us to have so far; and what He will do for us. It is so easy for us to concentrate on what we want from Him so much that we often forget whom we are speaking to – the God of the universe who is not owned by anyone, rather who owns everything and everyone including us. He is NOT our slave whom we can call with a little bell. We are supposed to be His servants as the followers of Christ. Let's not forget that.

The Lord is abundantly patient, but the time will come for Him to judge all mankind. Though He may let wicked individuals and nations go unpunished and even the godly may pray for their deliverance for long periods of time, the Lord will suddenly introduce "the appointed time" for judgment.

The oracle of God is given here in v2-4 as an assurance to His own people that He is faithful to fulfill His promises. Regardless of how long their adversity may last, He is sovereign and has a time appointed for their vindication. The Lord is in control, even when it seems that everything is falling to pieces.

There are three things that go hand in hand in human corruption – pride, idolatry , and immorality. I am sure that all the humanistic scholars and liberal biblical scholars would adamantly disagree with me, but I am getting this conclusion from the Word of God and the human history. Show me one ancient kingdom still standing

with the exception of Israel – Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, to name a few. The only reason Israel is still existing is due to God’s promises and His faithfulness, not of their own merit or power. Every ancient kingdom that embraced their own idol worship with pride and rampant in immorality came to ruin.

Even the modern day nations that once flourished their splendors around the world because they upheld the Lord are on the way to their ruin. Two of the best examples are the United Kingdom and America. Instead of worshiping the Lord, they’d rather worship themselves and celebrities; instead of honoring their marriages, they’d rather pursue their sexual pleasure at the cost of their families; instead of seeking the truth, they’d rather demand their distorted ways to be accepted over the truth. If they don’t get their way, they call those who stand with the truth “bigots” and many other horrible names.

In v5, we find the word ‘horn’ which is ‘qeren’ in Hebrew. The word ‘horn’ in the OT often represents “power”.

V6 and 7 of this chapter are the verses that all of us should memorize and keep them in our hearts at all time. We are living in the age of dog eat dog world. The vast majority of people are in their self-promotion mode. We must realize that no promotion or exaltation would come unless the Lord grants it. But we also must realize that the Lord may allow us to have a particular promotion what we want bad, but not what He wants us to have, so that He can teach us a lesson. As I taught you guys before, the worst thing that can ever happen to us is getting what we want, but not what the Lord wants. We will regret having it every minute of it.

## **Psalm 76**

*Psalm 76:1-9 In Judah God is known; His name is great in Israel. 2 In Salem also is His tabernacle, And His dwelling place in Zion. 3 There He broke the arrows of the bow, The shield and sword of battle. Selah 4 You are more glorious and excellent Than the mountains of prey. 5 The stouthearted were plundered; They have sunk into their sleep; And none of the mighty men have found the use of their hands. 6 At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob, Both the chariot and horse were cast into a dead sleep. 7 You, Yourself, are to be feared; And who may stand in Your presence When once You are angry? 8 You caused judgment to be heard from heaven; The earth feared and was still, 9 When God arose to judgment, To deliver all the oppressed of the earth. Selah*

As we read this portion of Scripture, some of you might be wondering where this Salem was. It certainly is not Salem, OR. It is a nickname for Jerusalem. The first mention of Salem can be found in Genesis 14:

*Genesis 14:18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High.*

We will study more about King Melchizedek of Salem when we study the Book of Hebrews.

Among the biblical scholars there are differences for this chapter. What else is new, right? One says that it was written by one of the descendants of Asaph when the children of Israel were brought back out of the Assyrians captivity, while others say that it is highly unlikely that this psalm is to be associated with any one particular victory. But they both agree that it is about the victorious Lord over any enemies. No power is threat to him.

When we are facing our own giants of life, it is easy to crumble under the sheer presence of the pressure that mounts up against us whether it is illness, finance, or family relationship. But the Lord is faithful to be there with us at all time, not necessarily getting us out of each and every situation. He is our Protector and Shield and Stronghold.

Make no mistake about this. Our enemy satan and his cohort demons are strong enemies. We need to have a healthy respect for their power, but we also must remember that our God has no rival.

*Ephesians 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.*

The reason we need to “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” is because satan wants to take us away from that. The Lord is our power base. The devil wants to separate us from God, because the moment he takes us away from Him, we are open prey and a sitting duck. Thus, the devil wants to put a wedge between God and us by discouraging us, keeping us away from prayers and the Bible, and coming to church and having fellowship with other Christian believers. Do not fall into that trap.

## **Psalm 77**

*Psalm 77:1-15 I cried out to God with my voice -- To God with my voice; And He gave ear to me. 2 In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; My hand was stretched out in the night without ceasing; My soul refused to be comforted. 3 I remembered God, and was troubled; I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah 4 You hold my eyelids open; I am so troubled that I cannot speak. 5 I have considered the days of old, The years of ancient times. 6 I call to remembrance my song in the night; I meditate within my heart, And my spirit makes diligent search. 7 Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more? 8 Has His mercy ceased forever? Has His promise failed forevermore? 9 Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Selah 10 And I said, “This is my anguish; But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.” 11 I will remember the works of the Lord; Surely I will remember Your wonders of old. 12 I will also meditate on all Your work, And talk of Your deeds. 13 Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary; Who is so great a God as our God? 14 You are the God who does wonders; You have declared Your strength among the peoples. 15 You have with Your arm redeemed Your people, The sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah*

Some time ago, I read a story that a tragedy left a family with a void that nothing could fill. A toddler chasing a cat wandered into the road and was run over by a delivery truck. A 4-year-old girl watched in shocked silence as her parents cradled the lifeless body of her little sister. For years, the cold emptiness of that moment encapsulated the family in sadness. Feelings were frozen. The only comfort was numbness. Relief was unimaginable.

Author Ann Voskamp, the author of the New York Times Bestseller, “One Thousand Gifts”, was the 4-year-old, and the sorrow surrounding her sister’s death formed her view of life and God. The world she grew up in had little concept of grace. Joy was an idea that had no basis in reality to her.

But as a young mother, she set out to discover the elusive thing the Bible calls joy. The words for ‘joy’ and ‘grace’ come from the Greek word “chairō”, which she found

out is at the center of the Greek word for "thanksgiving ." 'Could it be that simple?' she wondered. To test her discovery, Voskamp decided to give thanks for 1,000 gifts she already had. She started slowly but soon gratefulness to the Lord was flowing freely.

Just as Jesus gave thanks before, not after, raising Lazarus from the dead in John 11, Voskamp discovered that giving thanks brought to life feelings of joy that had died along with her sister. The joy of living comes from a heart of thanksgiving for the Lord.

In my opinion chapter 77 sums up the two previous chapters. While we are giving thanks to the Lord for His love and faithfulness, He shows Himself strong in our hearts. Consequently the terrifying giants in our life, all of a sudden, lose their facades and show us in their actual sizes as just another obstacles of life that we must overcome.

God has been, is, and will always be. The reflection on His acts in the past is comforting to those who need him in the present. The name of God "Most High " in v10 goes back to the patriarch Abraham in Genesis14:

*Genesis 14:22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth*

The Hebrew word for 'Most High' is "El Elyown". Its annotation is 'the Creator and Protector of creation'. He has promised in the Bible that He protects His own and will not leave, nor forsake them. If He does not, His reputation is on the line. He will not do that.

*2 Samuel 22:3-4 The God of my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, My stronghold and my refuge; My Savior, You save me from violence. 4 I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; So shall I be saved from my enemies.*

*2 Thessalonians 3:3 But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.*

### **Applications**

- 1) We don't need more to be thankful for, we just need to be more thankful for what we already have.
- 2) It is the Lord who decides who gets promoted, not us. He is our Master , not us. We are mere servants of God.
- 3) Safety is not the absence of danger but the presence of God.
- 4) True joy comes from thanksgiving to the Lord in spite of the situation we are in.