

WHO CAN STAND WHEN GOD FIGHTS?

Psalm 76: 1-12 and Revelation 6: 12-17

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It is a joy for me to know, and to tell you all today, that not only in Judah, is God known, as we read here in Psalm 76: 1. Not only is God's name great in Israel. His name is great right here in Sweetwater County, Wyoming. Is that true for you? Many mock God and scoff at Him, but He is able to take the heat, and His great Name will be great eternally. There are imposters who like to think they are great. In our day, few men are as proud as Silvio Berlusconi. His name is great in Italy. He is an Italian politician, entrepreneur, media tycoon, a frequent criminal defendant, and a convicted tax evader. Silvio Berlusconi served three times as the Prime Minister of Italy, from 1994 to 1995, from 2001 to 2006 and from 2008 to 2011. Silvio Berlusconi has had 2,700 legal hearings against him, which is a record. A world record! He says, "The lies that have been invented about me have given me a very bad reputation abroad. Italians know very well that none of these facts are true." Silvio Berlusconi is a very wealthy man—worth over six billion dollars. Born in 1936, at age 78, he says of himself these amazing haughty words: "I am the Jesus Christ of politics. I am a patient victim, I put up with everyone, I sacrifice myself for everyone. I am the best political leader in Europe and in the world. There is no-one on the world stage who can compete with me."

Asaph, the psalmist, under divine inspiration, speaking of God, says in Psalm 76: 7, "But You, (God) You are to be feared. Who can stand before You?" Silvio Berlusconi sounds like a great man. He speaks of himself as being a great man, but is he really a great man? No human being is ever great who is great in his own eyes. God's word is clear in Proverbs 16: 18, 19 "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor, than to divide the spoil, (even if it is 6 billion dollars) with the proud." Asaph records about the enemies of God in Psalm 76: 5, 6, "The stouthearted were stripped of their spoil; they sank into sleep; all the men of war were unable to use their hands. At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob, both rider and horse lay stunned." Maybe each of us have a bit of Silvio Berlusconi in us, and we think we are great, but at times, we've just made a couple unfortunate choices.

Like King Sennacherib of Assyria, and his General Rabshekah, have any of us come up against the Lord and lost badly like they did? This psalm, Psalm 76 is the story of the victory of our Lord God, the Almighty, after King Hezekiah of Judah poured out his woe before the Lord and begged the Lord not to let Judah be destroyed by King Sennacherib. The king of Assyria promised he would wipe

Judah off the map. All Hezekiah could do was to lay out the threats of Sennacherib and General Rabshekah before the Lord God. The Lord took it from there as Isaiah 36 and 37 announce the facts. Listen to the Word of the Lord from Isaiah 37: 15-20 as Hezekiah poured out his heart to God. We read, “And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD: “O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, enthroned above the cherubim, You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; You have made heaven and earth. Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to mock the living God. Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire. For they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. Therefore they were destroyed. So now, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone are the LORD.” Well, how did God respond to King Hezekiah’s prayer? Read Isaiah 37: 36-38. We read, “And the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned home and lived at Nineveh. And as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, Adrammelech and Sharezer, his sons, struck him down with the sword. And after they escaped into the land of Ararat, Esarhaddon his son reigned in his place.” Sennacherib and Rabshekah thought they were great, until they tried to stand before the Lord. Soon, they lay stunned, dead on the ground.

Maybe within us still, be honest today. Is there a bit of triumphalism left in us to say, “I could be worth millions or billions today, except for one bad investment, one bad choice. Think again. On April 12, 1976, Ronald Wayne, one of the three co-founders of Apple Computers, decided it was wise to sell his 10% share in the company for \$800. He got an additional \$1500 because he was willing to give up all future rights in Apple. Today, Apple Computer is said to be the most valuable company in the world, worth \$600 billion dollars. Ronald Wayne’s 10% share today would now be worth \$60 billion dollars, except for one unwise choice. Again I read Psalm 76: 5—“The stouthearted were stripped of their spoil.” Can you imagine giving up your 10% share in a \$600 billion dollar company? Yet, millions of people do something far worse every single day. Americans—our fellow citizens do this by selling their soul for whatever seems most important to them in the moment. Instead of looking at their life as an opportunity to make a long term investment in the things that please God, they sell their soul for cheap thrills and instant satisfaction, for pennies on the dollar! These are those to whom Jesus posed the question, "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and loses his own soul? Or what would a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). Even \$60 billion dollars is here today and gone tomorrow, but the soul is eternal.

Psalm 76 has made me think over and over—“Who is great? Who is powerful? Who is rich? Who is glorious and majestic? Whose Name is great? Who is to be feared? Who utters judgment from heaven? Who establishes judgment on earth? Who saves the humble of the earth? Who is to be feared by the kings, the presidents and the dictators of the earth? Who should President Obama and Putin and former and 50th Prime Minister of Italy, Silvio Berlusconi fear and tremble before? Who can stand before the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our great God? Who can inwardly sing before the Lord, “How great I am, how great I am?” Beloved, do any of us think that or do some of us suffer from the prideful sin of wanting the glory and demanding the controls? George Gordon Liddy, Watergate conspirator, when he was released from prison, foolishly said: "I have found within myself all I need and all I ever shall need. I am a man of great faith, but my faith is in George Gordon Liddy. I have never failed me."

David Rhodes once said, “Pride is the dandelion of the soul. Its roots go deep; only a little left behind, sprouts again. Its seeds lodge in the tiniest encouraging cracks. And it flourishes in good soil: The danger of pride is that it feeds on goodness.” Pride also feeds on overconfidence in our own strength, just like Sennacherib and General Rabshekah. I remember well the history lesson during the Civil War. During the Battle of the Wilderness, Union general John Sedgwick was inspecting his troops. At one point, he came to a parapet, over which he gazed out in the direction of the enemy. His officers suggested that this was unwise and perhaps he ought to duck while passing the parapet. "Nonsense," snapped the General. "They couldn't hit an elephant at this distance." A moment later General Sedgwick fell to the ground, fatally wounded. Today, God is directing me and you, and us as a church to bring Him glory. Why?—For His mighty presence, His majestic power, and His marvelous purpose. Learn today to bring God glory that He will not share. What are these three lessons God is calling us to learn.

GLORIFY GOD FOR HIS MIGHTY PRESENCE. (I.) Notice three strong statements here about the mighty presence of God. (1) **The presence of His Name is great in Israel.** Notice verse 1. “In Judah, God is known; His name is great in Israel.” Is the Lord well known among us here today? Where did we get this idea that the presence of God is great and mighty? Let’s not run first to the New Testament. Let’s look at the OT, at our Judeo-Christian roots in the land of Israel. Long before Columbus discovered America, long before Abraham Lincoln gave his Gettysburg Address, and long before we landed on the moon, God’s name was great. Where? It was in Israel; in Judah. The land and the people and the Book of the Law and Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—for 4,000 years, the Name of the Lord has

been well known by the Jews. Right in the middle of this little country of Israel that could fit inside Sweetwater County, in Israel God provided a ram caught in a thicket, telling Abraham not to slay his son Isaac. In Israel, God showed Boaz and Ruth that He is our Kinsman-Redeemer. It was for Israel that God raised up Moses and led 3 million Israelites in the Exodus across the burning desert sands to the Promised Land. It was the Israelites who saw all the miracles of the crossing of the Red Sea and the Jordan, water coming from a smitten rock, and bread and meat falling from heaven. It was an Israelite shepherd boy, David, who killed Goliath. It was in Israel where God bestowed the greatest earthly wisdom known to man to one man, King Solomon. God listened to King Hezekiah's prayer and slew 185,000 men in Assyria's army. Notice the Hebrew word known in verse 1—"In Judah, God is known." The Hebrew word **yada**, means to know intimately. Who knew God intimately long before the Israeli prophets words were fulfilled in Jesus' virgin birth? Do you remember David's charge to Solomon in I Chronicles 28:9? It could be given to each of us to give to our children. David said, "And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve Him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek Him, He will be found by you, but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever? Do we know well the God of Judah, whose Name is great in Israel? Millions reject him as Pharaoh did before Moses. Do you remember Pharaoh's words in Exodus 5: 2, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, and moreover, I will not let Israel go." **The presence of God's Name is great in Israel.** (1)

The presence of God's mighty tabernacle and temple (2) is established in Salem, that's Jerusalem—that dwelling place called Zion. Notice verse 2. "His abode has been established in Salem, His dwelling place in Zion." Where do we get this idea of worship in the dwelling place or house of the Lord? It is from the tent, the tabernacle, and later, the temple in Jerusalem, the place of God's Shekinah glory and presence and protection for His people? It's from Judah, Israel, and David wrote in Psalm 27: 5, "For He will hide me in His shelter in the day of trouble; He will conceal me under the cover of His tent; He will lift me high upon a rock." (3) **The presence of God stops the enemies of God's people.** It has always been so, for Israel, Judah, and we are, as believing Gentiles, grafted into the vine. We too know what Psalm 76: 3 means in our own lives. We read, "There He broke the flashing arrows, the shield, the sword, and the weapons of war. Selah. Notice the word there. There in Israel, because God chose to place His tent and tabernacle and temple there—there is where history has recorded some of its greatest battles and showdowns. The enemy and evil cannot stand the presence of God, with His goodness, righteousness and holiness. All of hell and Satan's minions with millions

on the earth will do anything or everything possible to stamp out God and His people. Since the murder of Abel by Cain, it's been so. Remember Pharaoh's plan to stamp out all the Jewish baby boys? Remember what God did to Egypt and Pharaoh's first born sons? So how does God win the showdowns? He personally breaks the flashing arrows. The Hebrew word for flashing arrows is **resheph**. Resheph means a live coal, lightning, an arrow flaming, an arrow flashing through the air, or hot thunderbolts. In today's world, God still knows how to break into bullets that fly out of muzzles of guns, canons and missiles and bombs. Armaments are worthless against God. In the presence of God, all weaponry and all firepower is like shooting spit wads at God. The word for broke or brake is **shabar**. Shabar means to break in pieces, to rip or tear apart and crush to smithereens completely. It means to dismantle and make worthless and to quench. God disables all weapons, armaments, artillery, and nuclear stockpiles. One day, the biggest showdown of all—Armageddon will happen and God will shabar the reshephs. He will show the world that they cannot by any means destroy Israel and the Jews. As we read about the wrath of the Lamb, this morning in Revelation 6: 12-17, no one with any nuclear weapons will be able to stand against God. Read Zechariah 14 and see that the enemies' eyes will melt in their sockets. God's presence is more nuclear than man's atomic bombs. Even though God has done so much for Israel throughout her history, and is still fighting for Israel today, He has even greater things to do in the days ahead. Beloved, keep your eyes on Israel. Bless Israel. Watch Israel. Our blessing is found in blessing her. Soon and very soon, Israel will repent, believe and receive Messiah whom they pierced. The world will never lack proof that God is very active there in Israel, in Judah. Secondly,

GLORIFY GOD FOR HIS MAJESTIC POWER. (II.) Notice Psalm 76: 4-9. Let's break this down. First, (1) **Look carefully at God's power in disabling and annihilating His enemies' warriors.** Asaph tells us in verses 4-5, "Glorious are You, more majestic than the mountains of prey. The stouthearted were stripped of their spoil; they sank into sleep; all the men of war were unable to use their hands." Who better than us folk here in Sweetwater County know more about the majesty of God's mighty mountains of prey, where we love to go fish and hunt. Those majestic mountains are where we go to get away on vacation—we go for the quiet, the beauty, and the clean water and clean air. We love the majestic mountains, but grander than the Grand Teton is God. God is greater still, mightier than Gannett Peak, Pike's Peak, K-2 or Mt. Everest. Amazingly, God is also speaking of the mighty holy hill of Jerusalem where the 185,000 dead Assyrians lay dead on the ground, outside Jerusalem's city walls. He is more majestic than that mountain of prey. The most powerful warriors lay silent, worse than comatose, dead, incapable of raising their arms or fists to fight against God and His people. (2) **Look**

carefully at God’s power in disabling man’s vehicles of battle against Him.

Psalm 76:6, 7 states, “At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob, both rider and horse lay stunned. But You, (God) You are to be feared! Who can stand before You when once Your anger is roused?” The Hebrew word for rider is **rekeb**. Rekeb means chariot, vehicle of war, like an armed tank. It can also mean cavalry, a team of horses pulling a catapult. What is this dead sleep, laying stunned all about? Have you ever had a car or truck cast into a dead sleep; not even trying to start? Whether horse power by horses or horse power by combustion engines, they all fall dead. At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep. Remember Pharaoh’s chariots in the Red Sea as the Egyptian army panicked as their chariot wheels clogged up and would hardly move, swerved, and broke off before they all drowned—not one of them was left? God is able to disable men and their vehicles of war against Him, anytime, anywhere. When God finally decides, “Enough! and His anger is roused—disabling is a weak word for all He does. (3)

Look carefully at God’s power in disabling, judging and putting down all the oppressors of His people.

Notice verses 8-9. “From the heavens You uttered judgment; the earth feared and was still, when God arose to establish judgment, to save all the humble of the earth. Selah!” Think of it! Beloved, we can sing of God’s mighty presence and majestic power. Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered!

GLORIFY GOD FOR HIS MARVELOUS PURPOSE. (III.) Notice verses 10-

12. “Surely the wrath of man shall praise you; the remnant of wrath you will put on like a belt. Make your vows to the LORD your God and perform them; let all around Him bring gifts to Him who is to be feared, who cuts off the spirit of princes, who is to be feared by the kings of the earth.” What is God’s marvelous purpose? (1) **God marvelously purposes to actually use man’s war against Him to bring Him respect and honor.** We read in verse 10, “Surely the wrath of man shall praise You; the remnant of wrath You will put on like a belt.” The longer and the harder man fights against God in his wrath, the greater praise comes to God. God turns man’s wrath into praise for Him. God demonstrates His love and care and power by contrasting Himself to man’s stubborn attempts to annihilate God. God uses man’s wrath to bring Him respect and praise. God’s remnant of His own victorious wrath in converting man’s wrath into praise, God wears as a belt. Martin Luther said of this verse, “When men rage against Thee, Thou acquir’st renown; and when they rage still more, Thou art still well armed.” (2) **God marvelously purposes to use His victories in battle to generate and inspire loyalty to Him.**

Notice verse 11. “Make your vows to the Lord your God and perform them; let all around Him bring gifts to Him who is to be feared.” Let’s not miss what Asaph is teaching us. God’s victories for Israel and in our lives, we who grafted into the

vine—God’s victories should generate and inspire loyalty in many ways. Loyalty in worship, loyalty in putting God first in our finances and giving of our resources. God’s purpose is to be first in our lives. Very few times should we vow, but certain vows before God are vital. One vow we should make from our childhood is to obey the fifth commandment to honor our parents. Sometimes we will fail, but God forbid that we should break this commandment, which if we do, has a blessing of long life for each of us. Most importantly, we should vow to follow the Lord in our lives, loving Him with all our hearts, souls, mind, and strength. This includes vowing to honor God by loving those who hate us, forgiving those who spitefully use us, and putting God first in every decision we make. A third vow that we should make as we are released from our parents, is not a vow to break our vow to honor our parents—but a vow to honor a vow to our new spouse, something we as parents pray for often. Honoring our parents may well lead many of us to make a vow in marriage, a vow to stay loyal and true to the one whom God has given to be one with us. God takes us at our word and enables us by His indwelling Holy Spirit to keep our vows. What a marvelous purpose God has for parents and children, husbands and wives, and His believing Bride of Christ to our Husband the Lord Jesus to vow vows and perform them, as we fear and reverence the Lord, our God.

Lastly, (3) **God marvelously purposes to engender reverence and holy fear by all of us, including kings, and to eliminate those who refuse to bow before**

Him. Notice the last verse—v. 12. “Who cuts off the spirit of princes, who is to be feared/ revered by the kings of the earth.” In our world of persecution where God’s people are falsely accused, found guilty, attacked, beaten, imprisoned, tortured, and martyred, it’s good to know God’s purpose for our enemies, His enemies—He cuts off the spirit of those princes. Every abuser of God and His people will face the judgment bar of God. No one opposing God will ultimately get away with what they do. God, who once made Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus to praise Him, will still bring presidents and kings and rulers to their knees before Him. If every knee must bow, now or too late, why not now stand and praise the Lord? Now is the time to praise the Lord for His mighty presence, His majestic power, and His marvelous purpose. Don’t wait too late to praise Him—for the day is coming soon when the kings of the earth, and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful and everyone, slave and free will hide themselves in the caves and rocks and cry for them to fall on them and hide them from the face of Him who sits on the throne. (Rev. 6: 15) Praise the Lord now, and let Him fight your battles for none who come against our King will be able to stand. Amen.