

“God’s Wrath Displayed”
Psalm 76
(Preached at Trinity, August 21, 2011)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. God is love. God is merciful. God is kind. God is good. God is forgiving. God has a wonderful plan for your life. God will meet your needs.
All of these are impressions of God that are acceptable and widely preached today. We like hearing these attribute.
 2. **Psalm 76** presents an attribute of God that is seldom mentioned today – the wrath of God. Many Christians today seem embarrassed by this subject. They see the subject as bad for God’s public relations. It is much more palatable to present God as only loving, kind, and generous.
 3. Many see the God presented in the OT as being entirely contrary to the God of love taught in the NT. The truth is God is an unchanging God; the same yesterday, today, and forever. God’s holiness is displayed throughout the Bible and His terrible judgment upon sin cannot be denied.
 4. To deny the wrath of God is to expose a faulty understanding of sin, of God’s holiness, and of His anger over sin. Not only does God hate sin, He burns in anger over sin.
 5. Here we find here another psalm with Asaph designated as the author. The KJV, true the Hebrew text uses the term “Neginoth.” We’ve seen it in five previous psalms. This is the sixth and final time. It refers to a stringed instrument which tells us that it was meant to be sung while accompanied by stringed instruments.
 6. This psalm displays God’s holy hatred of His enemies. We’ll look at it under three heads:
 - I. The target of God’s wrath defined – **Verses 1-3**
 - II. The glory of God’s wrath displayed – **Verses 4-9**
 - III. The reverence that God’s wrath demands – **Verses 10-12**
- I. The target of God’s wrath defined – **Verses 1-3**
 - A. There are two distinctly different people in **Verses 1-3**
 1. **Verses 1-2** describe the people of God
 - a. **Verse 1** specified, “In Judah” – In Judah God is known and in Judah God is displayed
 - b. “In Israel” God’s name is great
 - (1) Although Judah and Israel were divided politically, the southern and northern kingdoms, God had His people in both nations.
 - (2) These are the people that eternally praise God
Psalm 75:9 – “But I will declare for ever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.”
 - c. “His name” describes the fullness of His divine essence. The lost man can learn much about God, but he will never be able to truly know Him. To truly know Him demands a relationship with Him.
 - d. Notice, God makes His abode with them – **Verse 2**

2. Notice the great contrast in **Verse 3**. From His dwelling place among His people He makes war against His enemies.
 - a. The implication is all who are not His people are His enemies
 - b. Notice also, the name for Jerusalem used here is “Salem” which is the Hebrew word for “peace.” There is no peace with God unless a person throws down his weapons and dwells with God. In the midst of assaults from the outside, there is peace with God.
- B. These two groups continue today and will continue until the end of the world
 1. God still has His people today. They know Him and are known by Him.
 - a. This is the great blessing of the New Covenant
Jeremiah 31:33-34 – “But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”
 - b. God can only be known through Jesus Christ – His name is that great name.
Acts 4:12 – “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”
 2. All who do not know God and dwell with Him are His enemies and are the targets of His terrible wrath.

II. The glory of God’s wrath displayed – **Verses 4-9**

- A. The context
 1. Most believe the context of this psalm is found in God’s great judgment upon the Assyrians when Sennacherib attacked Israel (**2 Kings 18-19**)
 Read **2 Kings 19:16-19**
 2. God’s reply to the Assyrians – **2 Kings 19:27-28**
 3. God’s wrath poured out – **2 Kings 19:35**
Psalm 76:5-6 – “The stouthearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands. ⁶ At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep.”
- B. The source of God’s wrath - **Psalm 76:4** – “Thou *art* more glorious *and* excellent than the mountains of prey.”
 1. The nations of the earth boast in their excellence. They rise up in defiance of God. Here they are referred to as “mountains of prey.” Kings and nations have always become powerful through violence and the shedding of blood.
 2. God is infinitely more glorious than all of His creation
 3. He dwells in infinite perfection and inhabits all holiness. Nothing defiled shall ever stand before Him.

4. In His perfect judgment He will destroy all that is not holy. The Assyrians attack upon Jerusalem was an attack upon God.
 5. God responded by displaying His anger:
Psalm 76:7 – “Thou, *even* thou, *art* to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?”
 God’s wrath is the display of His righteous anger
- C. We should also note that God’s glory is displayed in His wrath
1. After declaring “Thou *art* more glorious” the psalmist declares God’s destruction of His enemies
 2. God purposes His wrath to be displayed for all to see and take notice – They are meant to be seen and heard
Psalm 76:8 – “Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven”
Romans 1:18 – “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;”
 3. The Bible is full of accounts of God’s judgment.
 J.I. Packer – “One of the most striking things about the Bible is the vigor with which both Testaments emphasize the reality and terror of God’s wrath.”
 - a. The Flood, Sodom & Gomorrah, the Egyptian plagues and overthrow of Egyptian army, the judgment of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram whom the earth swallowed for their rebellion against the authority of Moses, and in the
Numbers 26:10 – “And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died, what time the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men: and they became a sign.”
 - b. And in the NT – Herod who was eaten of worms, Ananias and Sapphira, those who came to the Lord’s table unworthily.
But man does not heed the displays of God’s wrath
 4. All of the great tumults upon the earth reveals clearly that all is not well
 - a. Look around you. We see major earthquakes, a tsunami. In our own country we’ve seen devastating hurricanes, terrible tornados, flooding, fires
 - b. In addition we continue to see great suffering through disease and death
 - c. In spite of the great demonstrations of God’s judgment upon sin men will not repent. They deny their sin and they deny that their suffering is God’s judgment because of their sin
 5. All the earth should tremble at the displays of God’s judgment. They are meant to be seen and heard and all should fear and repent.
Psalm 76:8 – “Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still,”
 - a. Mankind will not repent, yet God continues to display His glory in the displays of His wrath

- b. Spurgeon: Man will not hear God's voice if he can help it, but God takes care to cause it to be heard. The echoes of that judgment executed on the haughty Assyrian are heard still, and will ring on down all the ages, to the praise of divine justice.”
- c. In the end every tongue will be silenced – guilty and charged
Romans 3:19 – “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”

III. The reverence that God’s wrath demands – **Verses 10-12**

- A. God’s purpose in His wrath is His own glory
 - 1. **Verse 10** declares that God’s wrath upon man brings Him praise
The NIV translates it: “Surely your wrath against men brings you praise”
 - 2. While God receives great glory in His display of mercy upon the elect, He also received glory in the display power, judgment, and wrath upon the wicked. God says to Pharaoh:
Romans 9:17 – “For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.”
 - 3. In the end every knee shall bow in His praise
Philippians 2:10-11 – “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; ¹¹ And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”
- B. But what about God’s people? How should we respond to God’s wrath?
 - 1. We owe Him great praise and thanksgiving
Psalms 76:11 – “Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God: let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared.”
 - 2. Those who have been delivered from His wrath owe Him obedience and worship
 - 3. Apart from God’s wondrous grace and His love in sending forth His Son to bear His wrath in our stead we would all be forever damned. God is worthy to be praised.
- C. We should also respond by praising Him in His righteous judgment – that His justice is perfect. We should see His wrath as the just display of His holy character.
 - 1. The world is angry at God’s judgments. They cry out during the hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes, fires. They cry out when disease strikes. And the thought of hell is unthinkable.
 - a. How can a loving God send people to an eternal hell? The world hates the thought of judgment, accountability, punishment
 - b. This is the ultimate motive behind Rob Bell’s book, “Love Wins”
His book takes the basic premise that ultimately God’s unfailing love will win out and every human being will be saved.

- c. Bell writes: *“A staggering number of people have been taught that a select few Christians will spend forever in a peaceful, joyous place called heaven, while the rest of humanity spends forever in torment and punishment in hell with no chance for anything better. It’s been clearly communicated to many that this belief is a central truth of the Christian faith and to reject it is, in essence, to reject Jesus. This is misguided and toxic and ultimately subverts the contagious spread of Jesus’ message of love, peace, forgiveness, and joy that our world desperately needs to hear.”*
2. But God’s love is never divorced from His holiness. And God’s holiness demands a detestation of sin. God’s wrath is the demonstration of His hatred of sin and His perfect justice.
Psalm 76:12 – “He shall cut off the spirit of princes: *he is terrible to the kings of the earth.*”
3. God’s people rejoice over God’s perfect justice. And we respond in worship.
Psalm 76:11 – “bring presents unto him that ought to be feared.”

Conclusion:

1. We must be faithful witnesses of God’s wrath.
2. The Gospel is not telling people our feelings about our relationship with Jesus. It is telling sinners of their need of a Savior. We must warn sinners of the consequence of sin – that God’s wrath is kindled against them.
3. This was preached in the past and must be preached today.
Jonathan Edwards: “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” preached at Enfield Massachusetts during the Great Awakening.
“People were convicted of their sin. They began sobbing and weeping. Some moaned loudly. Others clutched their chests and fell to the floor. At least once, Edwards stopped reading and looked up rather disgusted that people were making so much noise during his sermon. People began to call out “What must I do to be saved?” They reached for building columns and chair rails, something solid to hold onto, because they were sure that the floor of the church would suddenly open up and swallow them into the fires of hell under their feet.”
4. If you have not trusted Christ, are you denying His wrath? Do you not believe that God is angry with you? Do you think that you can avoid His wrath? You desperately need Jesus.