

“His Name Is Great”

Psalm 76

The superscription here is one we have seen before: “To the chief Musician on Neginoth.” The term Neginoth appears in several other psalms (4, 6, 54, 55, 61 [as Neginah], and 67) and refers to stringed instruments. While it primarily gives musical direction, it often appears **in psalms marked by prayer, reflection, and trust**, which fits well with the tone of the psalms in which it is found.

This psalm is not only a record of **what God has done**, but a declaration of **what those acts have revealed** — that “His name is great.” His greatness explains why His name is **remembered, feared, and praised**.

Psalm 76 follows naturally after Psalm 75. In Psalm 75, God declares that He will judge in righteousness and put down the proud in His appointed time. In Psalm 76, we see that truth **already demonstrated**. What God announced in Psalm 75 is presented here as something He has actually done. The God **who speaks** in Psalm 75 is the **God who acts** in Psalm 76.

No specific historical occasion is given in the superscription, and the psalm itself does not provide definitive details. Many have suggested it celebrates a great military deliverance during the time of the monarchy, and within the framework of the Psalms of Asaph, this would place the psalm during David’s era. While various possibilities have been proposed, the psalm does not require us to identify a single event. Whatever the occasion, the central truth remains unchanged: **God has made His name great** by demonstrating His sovereign power and righteous judgment in the midst of His people.

I. HIS NAME DECLARED (vs. 1-3) — GOD MADE KNOWN IN ZION

The central truth of these verses is that God’s name is great because He has made Himself known **through where He chooses and how He chooses**.

These verses answer the question: *How does God make His name known among the people?*

A. **God is known by Divine revelation, not human discovery (vs. 1).**

1. The principle in the term “God is known” is **passive in sense**.

- a) It doesn’t say that Judah knew God but **God is known** in Judah.
- b) Knowledge of God is the **result of God disclosing Himself to them**, not them discovering Him.
- c) The same God who made Himself known in Judah is **the God who, in Christ, came seeking the lost**.

Luke 19:10

¹⁰ For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

2. This is that **covenant language** we have seen so often in the psalms.

- a) Judah and Israel are not generic locations. God’s name is “great” **there** because **He chose to make it so**.
- b) They represent the people to whom God revealed Himself to **by covenant**.

B. **God makes His name known through His dwelling place (vs. 2).**

1. **“Salem” and “Zion”**

- a) **“Salem”** (same root as for “Shalom”) emphasizes **peace and completeness**.
- b) **“Zion”** emphasizes **kingship and divine rule**.
- c) Together, they present Jerusalem (*Jerushalem*) as God’s **chosen dwelling** and the **center of His reign on earth**.

2. We see in this psalm that **God's presence precedes His power.**
 3. God's name is great **because He draws near to man,** not because man reaches up to Him first.
- C. God declares His name by decisive intervention (vs. 3).
1. The first word of the verse — **"there"** (אֵינִי) — is crucial. It points directly back to Zion, where the **place of God's dwelling** becomes the **place of God's victory.**
 2. This verse speaks of **total disarmament.** The language is comprehensive — "arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle."
 3. There's no description of struggle — God is seen as **simply intervening decisively.**
- God's name is declared great not by words alone (vs. 1-2), but **by unmistakable acts** that leave no doubt **who intervened.**

II. HIS NAME DISPLAYED (VS. 4-9) — *GOD EXALTED ABOVE THE MIGHTY*

God's name is shown to be great (displayed) because **no human power can stand when He rises to act.** His greatness is demonstrated.

How does God make His greatness unmistakable to the world? The answer is found in these verses.

- A. God is shown to be greater than all sources of human strength (vs. 4).
 1. **"Mountains of prey"**
 - a) Likely refers to **strongholds** or centers of violent power.

b) It is symbolic of **kingdoms** and **empires** built on conquest.

c) It represents the **highest place of human dominance**.

2. There is **comparative language** here.

“More glorious and excellent” — God is not simply *another power* among powers; He is **manifestly superior**.

➤ God’s name is displayed as great because even the greatest powers of earth **are measured** — and found vastly inferior — **by comparison to Him**.

B. God overthrows the mighty without struggle or resistance (vs. 5-6).

1. Language of **helplessness**

a) “*The stouthearted are spoiled*”

(1) The idea behind “**stouthearted**” (אַבִּירֵי לֵב) refers to a strength independent of or opposed to God.

(2) “**Spoiled**” is pointing to being stripped or plundered.

b) “*They have slept their sleep*” — speaks of **sudden and total defeat**.

c) “*And none of the men of might have found their hands*” — they are **unable to act or defend themselves**.

2. There is no battle described: no battle between armies; no tactics or weapons. God does not fight **with** Israel — He fights **for** them.

3. Verse 6 is **decisive**.

a) **When God speaks**, the mightiest military assets

collapse.

Revelation 19:15

¹⁵ And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

- b) Chariots and horses are **symbols of imperial power** and are seen here as being neutralized.
- God's authority is so absolute that **His word alone is sufficient**.
- C. God's judgment produces fear, silence, and reverence (vs. 7-8).
 - 1. **Exclusive fear** — *"thou, even thou, art to be feared"*
 - a) **God alone** is the proper object of fear.
 - b) Any other fear of the power of man **is exposed as misplaced**.
 - 2. **The inability to stand against Him** — *"and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?"*
 - a) No one can endure **God's anger**.
 - b) Strength, position or rank of office, and preparation **are irrelevant**.
 - 3. The heavenly authority is such that it produces silence without argument. Silence here is not peace — **it's submission**.
- D. God's judgment reveals both His justice and His mercy (vs. 9)
 - 1. God **"arose"** — *"when God arose..."*

- a) Emphasizes **deliberate intervention**, not simply a response to a problem.
 - b) God does not always act immediately, but when He does, **the outcome is certain**.
- 2. Judgment and salvation are **found together**.
 - a) The same act that destroys the proud **delivers the meek**.
 - b) God's justice is never seen as detached **from His mercy**.
- 3. The "**meek**"
 - a) They are those **who do not rely** on power or violence.
 - b) And they are those who **wait upon God** rather than assert themselves.

III. HIS NAME DISTINGUISHED (VS. 10-12) — GOD PRAISED BY ALL THE EARTH

God's name is shown in these verses to be uniquely great because even the rebellion of mankind is **brought under His sovereignty**, and **all people** — willingly or unwillingly — **are compelled to recognize His supremacy**.

What is the inevitable result when God reveals and displays His greatness?

- A. God's sovereignty extends over mankind's rebellion (vs. 10).
 - 1. Human wrath **does not frustrate God**.
 - a) "*Wrath of man*" refers to **opposition, rebellion, and hostility**.
 - b) Even at its worst, man's wrath **never escapes God's control**.

2. God turns **rebellion into testimony**.

- a) This is not saying that man *intends* to praise God, but that God *uses* man's rebellion to **magnify His glory**.
- b) God is **the only One** who can do this.

3. Man's wrath is **restrained by God** — "*the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.*"

- a) God sets limits and no opposition goes **further than He allows**.
- b) The phrase implies **intentional, sovereign control**. Even as angry as man can get against God and His people, any evil that man can do to rebel against God is **used by God to bring praise unto Himself** by His sovereign will.

Exodus 9:16 (vs. 13-21) — **this is part of the message from Jehovah to Pharaoh through Moses**

¹⁶ And in very deed for this *cause* have I raised thee up, for to shew *in* thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.

- God's name is great because **nothing — not even rebellion — operates independently of Him**.

B. God is recognized as worthy of worship (vs. 11).

1. A call to **deliberate worship**

- a) To "*vow, and pay*" implies **commitment and follow-through**.
- b) God is not honored by impulse alone but **by faithfulness**.

2. Exclusive **devotion**

- a) "*The LORD your God*" — **covenantal language**
- b) Worship is not to be generic and it is not to be shared

for God alone is worthy.

Revelation 4:11

¹¹ Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Revelation 5:9

⁹ And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

Revelation 5:12

¹² Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

3. *“All that be round about Him”* — speaks of **universal reach**.

a) God’s reputation has extended beyond Israel.

b) His name is now recognized as **distinct among the nations**.

➤ God is not one deity among many — He is **the One who must be feared** (vs. 11b).

C. God is exalted above all earthly authority (vs. 12).

1. *“He shall cut off the spirit”*

a) Refers to breaking **pride, resolve, and self-exaltation**.

b) This points to the **frailty of earthly authority**.

2. There is **no exception for rulers** — *“the spirit of princes: he is terrible to the kings of the earth.”*

The highest human authority is **still accountable to God**.

3. **“Terrible”** in the biblical sense

- a) Not cruelty, but **awe-inspiring majesty**.
- b) God is seen as being feared **because He cannot be resisted**.

Conclusion:

Psalm 76 shows us a God whose greatness cannot be hidden. He is known because He reveals Himself (*His Name Declared*), feared because He subdues the mighty (*His Name Displayed*), and distinguished because none can stand before Him (*His Name Distinguished*).

His name is great — whether men acknowledge it or not — and the desire of the psalmist is for God’s people to live in reverent trust before Him.