

Psalm 75

The Message

75 We thank you, God, we thank you—
your Name is our favorite word;
your mighty works are all we talk about.

2-4 You say, "I'm calling this meeting to order,
I'm ready to set things right.

When the earth goes topsy-turvy
And nobody knows which end is up,
I nail it all down,
I put everything in place again.

I say to the smart alecks, 'That's enough,'
to the bullies, 'Not so fast.'"

5-6 Don't raise your fist against High God.
Don't raise your voice against Rock of Ages.
He's the One from east to west;
from desert to mountains, he's the One.

7-8 God rules: he brings this one down to his knees,
pulls that one up on her feet.

GOD has a cup in his hand,
a bowl of wine, full to the brim.
He draws from it and pours;
it's drained to the dregs.
Earth's wicked ones drink it all,
drink it down to the last bitter drop!

9-10 And I'm telling the story of God Eternal,
singing the praises of Jacob's God.
The fists of the wicked
are bloody stumps,

The arms of the righteous
are lofty green branches.

Michael Perry wrote a hymn based on Psalm 75:

O God, we thank you that your name
is known and feared through all the earth;
your sentence waits the appointed time ,
and thunder brings your judgments forth.

The proud you caution not to boast,
the wicked, not to raise their eyes;
for you are king from east to west,
and you alone shall have the praise.

We come before you, God of gods -
your power shall cut the wicked down;
we worship you as Lord of lords –
you lift us up to share your throne.

I didn't say he wrote a good hymn!

A relatively straightforward Psalm, as well as fairly short Psalm. Asaph, named in the heading, was one of the three Levitical family heads/families appointed by King David to lead worship in three worship centres. Asaph struck lucky: he/they got Jerusalem. It is thought that this Psalm might celebrate the rescue of Jerusalem from the Assyrian invasion which destroyed so many other countries and cities.

The paradox of divine sovereignty and human responsibility: this always has been and always will be quite a tricky one. So is the conviction that God decides who comes out on top: pushed to extremes, this would mean revolution was always wrong – but if nobody acted against an unjust ruler, would God ever have the chance of deciding who came out on top? Patient hope is commended; but I find myself,

impatiently, reciting the poem verse: "When all its work is done, the lie will rot. The truth is great, and will prevail: When none care whether it prevail or not".

The closeness of God is stated here as in many other Bible passages: e.g. Moses on God in everyday life – not requiring a journey to heaven. Jesus reinforces that message.

The cup of wrath/ cup of blessing is a familiar Biblical picture of how God works. Here in effect the same [wine] cup is blessing for some and curse for others: how you use the same experience is what matter, This helps make sense of what might otherwise be a too black and white distinction between "good" people and "wicked" people.

The horn is also an interesting concept: elk, stags, etc are distinguished by their horns. And a human "horn" can either be godly pride, blessed by God, or arrogant pride, condemned (and broken) by God.