



Community Group Discussion Guide

August 4, 2024

Psalm 75 | Divine Justice

MOTIVATE

Starter Question:

⇒ *What is one of your favorite courtroom dramas? How is justice typically dispensed?*

DISCUSS

The primary theme of Psalm 75 is God's judgment. Written by Asaph to the choirmaster, the superscription also states, "according to Do Not Destroy." It is commonly held that this indicates a known tune to which the psalm should be sung. Asaph was a Levitical priest and a chief worship leader. He wrote twelve psalms: Psalm 50, 73-83. Asaph became a father of a clan of temple musicians who served throughout the history of the tabernacle and the temple. Many of Asaph's psalms have to do with the judgment of God as well as calling God's people to fervent worship.

Found in Book 3 of Psalms, Psalm 75 is considered to be both a Thanksgiving Psalm and a Wisdom Psalm, expressing deep gratitude for God's justice in the world (see [Psalms Overview](#) for more information). The compilers of the book of Psalms often placed psalms alongside each other to help with interpretation of the individual psalms. Psalm 75 reads like a response to the questions and doubts of Psalm 74. Asaph was confident in divine justice and trusted that God would judge the wicked in His own time.

- ⇒ *Discuss why this truth is just as relevant today as it was in Asaph's time: God's name will not be mocked forever.*
- ⇒ *What assurance do we have that God is Judge and that He will judge?*

Psalm 75:1 *We give thanks to you, O God; we give thanks, for your name is near. We recount your wondrous deeds.*

This psalm begins with a burst of jubilant thanksgiving for God's strength and sovereignty as seen in His deeds on behalf of Israel. With one voice lifted toward heaven, God's people praised Him.

- ⇒ *Can you recount a wondrous deed God did for the Israelites? For you?*

The distant God of Psalm 74 is celebrated in Psalm 75 as the God whose name is near. The name of God is an extension of God Himself. It refers to His essence or the fullness of His infinite being. The entirety of God is near, ready to intervene, even when circumstances seem to indicate otherwise. Nothing can separate God's people from His presence (Romans 8:38-39).

- ⇒ *Can you describe a time when you were particularly aware of God's presence?*
- ⇒ *How will it give you hope to remember God's deeds and to remember His nearness?*

Psalm 75:2-3 "At the set time that I appoint I will judge with equity. **3** When the earth totters, and all its inhabitants, it is I who keep steady its pillars. *Selah*

Beginning in verse 2, God responded with words of assurance that not only will He judge, but He will judge in His time. After all, it is He who holds the earth's pillars firm in His hand and stabilizes world orders and crumbling societies through His common grace.¹ The God who created and sustains the world can be depended upon to establish justice and restore order as He sees fit.

- ⇒ **Why must we remember that God's justice will come at His appointed time?**
- ⇒ **Why is the phrase "I will judge with equity" an important theological truth?**

The term *selah* is a musical term that may mean pause, silence, crescendo, musical interlude, or indicate a change of instrument.

- ⇒ **Why might this be a good time for the worshippers to pause and consider what has just been stated by God?**

Psalm 75:4-5 *I say to the boastful, 'Do not boast,' and to the wicked, 'Do not lift up your horn; 5 do not lift up your horn on high, or speak with haughty neck.'*"

God continued to speak, issuing a warning to the wicked. In Scripture, the symbol of the horn had several meanings:

- A horn symbolized strength. This was probably derived from the physical hardness of the horn and the strength and power of horn-bearing animals.
- A horn symbolized status or dignity with overtones of power.
- A horn represented God's appointed strong one, normally a reference to a king.

Here, the phrase "lift up your horn" referred to a stubborn animal, such as an ox, that held its head high to keep a yoke from being placed on its shoulders by its master. The phrase expresses rebellion and stubbornness. (*The Illustrated Guide to Bible Customs and Curiosities*, by George W. Knight, page 122).

The wicked were arrogant people who were proud of their power. They believed their victories over God's people proved that their gods were stronger than Him. God warned against lifting up the horn in triumph to exult in victories won according to human perspective. At issue is human pride and self-exaltation. God will deal with the arrogant and those who mock and reject Him.

- ⇒ **How do these verses remind us that we are to stay humble and dependent on God?**

Psalm 75:6-8 *For not from the east or from the west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up, 7 but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another. 8 For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.*

¹ Lawson, S. (2004). [Psalms 1-75](#) (M. Anders, Ed.; Vol. 11, p. 377). Holman Reference.

The psalmist added his personal observations to what God had just spoken. No one from the east or the west or from the desert could exalt a man. Only God can do that. In other words, whether a person is lifted up or brought down, such promotion or demotion belongs to God alone. He brings some people down in retribution and exalts others in reward.² All of this is entirely within God's providential control, and He will act when the time is right in His eyes.

⇒ ***Why is it vital we remember that God's judgment will be a historical reality every created human must face?***

Pride and rebellion will not go unpunished. God will intervene to right the balance toward His standards of justice. In verse 8, God is portrayed as holding a cup. This symbolizes God's judgment upon the proud. The cup was full of foaming wine mixed with spices, potent and powerful. God poured it out, as though forcing His wrath down the throats of the wicked, making them drink it down to the dregs. They would drink the cup of divine wrath down to the last drop.³

The image of God's cup of judgment was a common one among the prophets (Jeremiah 25:15; 49:12; Ezekiel 23:32-34; Isaiah 51:17). Jesus spoke of the cup of God's wrath and judgment in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39-42). John included a similar theme in Revelation 14:9-10.

⇒ ***How should God's coming judgment challenge us to take the gospel to the world?***

Psalm 75:9-10 *But I will declare it forever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob. 10 All the horns of the wicked I will cut off, but the horns of the righteous shall be lifted up.*

In these final two verses, an individual worshiper responded to what had been previously spoken in this psalm. He vowed to sing praises to the God of Jacob—a reference to God's covenants with Abraham and his descendants. This was a vow to worship God for His righteous judgments which would exalt the humble and bring down the proud.

This worshiper concluded by aligning himself with God. He would cut off the horns of the wicked in order to humble them, he pledged, just as God promised to do. But the horns of the righteous would be lifted up, or promoted and rewarded by the hand of God. In other words, God will do as He promises in matters of judgment.⁴

⇒ ***Is there a tension between praising God for who He is and praising God for His judgment? If so, how do we reconcile this tension?***

⇒ ***What declarations can you make about God's justice?***

TRANSFORM

1. Make personal application: Living in a fallen world, believers are faced with injustices on every side. These inequities can cause us to become discouraged. In times of widespread wrongs, our confidence must remain fixed on God, who promises to judge rightly. He will never abandon those who trust in Him. He is always near to help His people.

² Lawson, S. (2004). [Psalms 1–75](#) (M. Anders, Ed.; Vol. 11, pp. 377–378). Holman Reference.

³ Lawson, S. (2004). [Psalms 1–75](#) (M. Anders, Ed.; Vol. 11, pp. 377–378). Holman Reference.

⁴ Lawson, S. (2004). [Psalms 1–75](#) (M. Anders, Ed.; Vol. 11, p. 378). Holman Reference.

- ⇒ ***How can you rest in God and rely upon His protection?***
- ⇒ ***Discuss this quote: Whether this punishment upon the wicked is to be inflicted in this life, or in the final day of judgment, divine justice will be served.*** ⁵
- ⇒ ***Knowing God's judgment is coming, how should you live each day?***

2. Pray: Give thanks to God for His nearness. Praise Him for specific wondrous deeds He has performed in your life. Confess your pridefulness. Ask Him to give you greater understanding of His judgment. Pray for Him to use this understanding to give you a heart for those who are in rebellion to Him.

STUDY

Resources used, compiled from, and quoted:

- *Holman New Testament Commentary, Psalms 1-75 pages 376-379.*
- *The NIV Application Commentary, pages 97-109.*
- *Shepherd's Notes, Psalm 51-100, pages 42-43.*

⁵ Lawson, S. (2004). [Psalms 1-75](#) (M. Anders, Ed.; Vol. 11, p. 378). Holman Reference.