

# Exalted in Christ

Psalm 75:1-10  
*Halifax, 5 January 2003*

## **Introduction**

How sad it is when the church seems to have lost its influence in the world.

- Surely, it must have seemed that way when the people of God were slaves in Egypt...
- How troubling it must have been to the few who loved God's kingdom in the days of the judges—when Israel was so often taken under the dominion of her enemies because of her wickedness
- And in Daniel's day when the King of Babylon conquered them, destroyed the temple, and brought them into captivity.
- You can see how apostate the church was when Jesus appeared in the world—how difficult those days must have been for those few who truly sought Him.
- And although the gospel broke out into the all the world after He came, there were still days of great apostasy and darkness.
  - There was the time when Arius seemed to lead the whole world to deny the Trinity until God finally raised up Athanasius to silence him.
  - Then there were the days prior to the reformation when man made traditions almost completely eclipsed the word of God.
- And my brothers and sisters, it is sad in our day too!
  - The church is so confused and so much in the darkness that division characterises us more than unity.
  - When God blesses us, He gives us true unity—He gives us one heart and one way—together we confess His way!
  - The church as a whole has little influence in our nation today—we are largely regarded as irrelevant!

But I have been showing you in our studies in Daniel that even in one of Church's very darkest hours:

- the Babylonian captivity; God was able to cause His servants to have influence.
- He did wonderful things for Daniel and His companions as they served Him in Babylon,
  - reminding them and all who loved His kingdom that He was still reigning and that He still had plans to bless His people.

Psalm 75 is a song that belongs to all who are truly in Jesus Christ in such dark times.

- Psalm 74 shows us what things were like when this Psalm was composed:
  - Just glance through that Psalm
    - READ v. 1, v. 18, v. 22-23.
- The world can become so swollen with pride in the church's dark days,
  - and that is hard for us to deal with as God's people...
- But Psalm 75 teaches us that God is still governing and that He will still exalt Christ and His church even in those times...
  - And so this Psalm encourages us to keep pursuing His kingdom.

**I. The Psalm opens by leading us to give thanks to God.**

- v. 1: "We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks!"
- A. Giving thanks is one the most important things to do in times of darkness.
1. The Bible says, "in everything give thanks."
    - a. One of the hardest times to do that is in the difficult times when God seems to be far away from His church.
      - Our tendency at such times is to forget what God has done for us and forget what He has shown us about Himself and His relationship to us.
      - Rather than giving thanks, we begin to grumble and say, "I would have been better for us if we had remained in Egypt."
    - b. The word translated "give thanks" is a rich word that includes the idea not only of thanksgiving, but also of confession.
      - In fact, the same word is used to refer to the confession of sin.
        - It is speaking the truth...
          - If about yourself, then it is the truth about your sin and what you have done...
          - If about God, then the truth about His greatness and what He has done.
      - When you speak truly about God and what He has done—if you are His child...
        - That confession comes out as thanksgiving and praise.
        - You speak of His greatness, His mercy, His power, His wisdom and give thanks for His gracious working in you and His people.
  2. But still, it is difficult for us to do this when the church seems weak
    - That is why the resolution is repeated twice in this Psalm:
      - "We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks!"

- We certainly cannot repay God for the things that He has done, but it is our duty to give thanks—
    - You dishonour Him if you don't, and it won't be long until you have started to grumble.
  - How much difference it would have made if the children of Israel had given thanks when they were in the wilderness...
    - It would have made it much more difficult for them to complain.
- B. Verse 1 also teaches the reason we are to give thanks—even in the dark times—
- It is because God's name is near in the display of His wonderful works.
    1. For His name to be near means that He is showing Himself to us—
      - that He is near in ways that we can understand.
      - a. You see, we can't comprehend God unless He shows Himself to us, and whatever He shows us is His name.
      - b. This includes everything from His word to His miraculous acts to His daily provision of our food.
        - But the focus of this passage is on His wonderful works which refers to His miraculous works that He performs for His people.
        - These are in particular His mighty works of redemption that show that He is near to us and that He cares for His church.
    2. In times of darkness, we are to think about God's wonderful works that He has performed for His people...
      - which wonderful works have often been performed in times of greatest darkness and hardship for His people.
      - a. For example, in Egypt, the godly among the people remembered and gave thanks for how God had appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and that sustained them that He was near.
        - They remembered He had revealed His name as a God who was near to bless them.
      - b. In the time of the Judges, the godly gave thanks for how God had delivered them out of Egypt in past generations, and how He had brought them into the land of promise.
        - This helped them to remember that God will never forsake His people, but will continue to work in the midst and to sustain them.

TRANS> We are to recount God's wonderful works in all these things—

- even as we have been doing in our study of Daniel—
    - Giving thanks for how God upheld Daniel in the captivity and made His name known in the Kings courts...
      - How this helps us to confess His sovereignty in our day...
3. But most of all we are recount the wonderful works that He performed for us in Jesus Christ.
- a. As those who live in the time subsequent to the appearing of Christ,
    - His coming and His work is the wonderful work of God that shines above all others...
      - And that all the others point to!
      - Here is something to glory in!
  - b. Christ is the great climax and focal point for all God's works for us!
    - 1) In Him, we truly see that God is near to us!
      - In your trials, you may be tempted to deny rather than confess God...
      - But if you remember what God has done for you in Jesus Christ, you can only confess and give thanks.
    - 2) In Christ, God came to us in the greatest darkness of all!
      - He came to us when we were without strength and had nothing in us to commend us to God...
      - He came to us *because* we had nothing to commend us to God...
      - He came to deliver us from such a great darkness and to bring us into His kingdom of light.
  - c. See the wonderful works He did to show us that He was near in Christ?
    - 1) There were the signs and wonders that He performed.
      - These were to confirm to us that the Son of God Himself had come to save us.
      - He cast out Satan, He fed us, He healed us, He opened the eyes of the blind, He made the lame to walk, He raised the dead.
      - In all these acts, He confirmed to us what He preached—
        - that His kingdom had come...
        - that He had come to feed us spiritually and to heal us to open our blind eyes and to raise us from spiritual death...
        - His wonderful works declared that He was near.

- 2) Then there were the marvellous works of redemption themselves that He performed for us...
- There was His birth by which the Son of God clothed Himself with our flesh and was born of the Virgin Mary...
  - There was His virtuous life by which He fulfilled all righteousness for us in the face of many temptations and trials.
  - There was His death by which He atoned for our sins on the cross.
  - There was His resurrection by which He assured us of eternal life and of His acceptance by the Father as a sacrifice for our sins.
  - There was His ascension that culminated in the outpouring of the Spirit and the spread of the gospel to the nations.
- 3) Remembering is an essential part of worship!
- Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, saying,
    - "Do this in remembrance of Me."
  - As Israel remembered the Passover, so now we remember the greater Passover—
    - when God visited our sins upon Jesus Christ as our suffering substitute and set us free!
  - Can we remember such marvellous works without gratitude?
    - He has come so near to us!
    - No matter what your circumstances, there is so much to give thanks for!
- d. Surely we have reason to give thanks that God's name is near to us when we confess Jesus Christ!
- This is the foundation of our encouragement that God is near...
  - But the encouragement does not stop there...
    - God continues to reveal that He is near through fresh works of mercy in our day—
      - We see people converted...
      - We see people grow in His grace and stand in their trials...
      - We see answered prayer.
    - Nevertheless, the foundation of your glorying should always be Christ and Him crucified.

TRANS> And do you know what this encouragement enables you to do in dark times?

**II. It enables you to go forward with Christ in the great work of establishing His kingdom in this world.**

A. Jesus Christ is God Himself who has come to judge the world uprightly.

1. “Judging uprightly” refers to one who comes to straighten things out.
2. Do you remember what the role of the judges were in the book of Judges?
  - They were raised up to set things straight when everything had become disordered—
    - that is, when God’s people had become out of sync with God.
  - They came in times of darkness and restored light.
  - They called the people to repentance and delivered them from their enemies.
  - Another way to say it is that they brought Israel back under a right relationship with God—
    - they reformed the church and got it back on track with God when it had fallen into corruption and misery.
3. In coming to judge uprightly, Jesus comes to rule in the midst of His people.
  - a. When He advances His kingdom, He begins to judge or govern His people uprightly.
    - He leads us into fellowship and obedience to God and delivers us from the bondage of sin and from our enemies.
  - b. He comes at the appointed time to the appointed people—the people that God has given Him...
    - The beginning of verse two refers to what is appointed—
      - either the appointed people or the appointed time—
      - certainly both are true...
    - He comes to each person in the appointed time and brings Him into His glorious kingdom.
  - c. It is a beautiful thing when He comes...
    - Because He takes a people that are defiled and ruined and begins to lead them with wisdom and justice...
      - By His powerful working, they become gladly subject to God.
    - Under His authority and the gracious working of His Spirit, they grow beautiful and holy!

- He shepherds them, nourishing them in His own grace, chastening them when they go astray, quenching their thirst with His Spirit, and protecting them from all their enemies that would try to destroy them.
4. His work is described further in verse 3.
- a. Here you see the condition of the whole earth and its inhabitants apart from Christ's kingdom, apart from His gracious work.
    - The earth and its inhabitants are said to be dissolved or melted.
    - Without Him, the earth absolutely ruined—
      - As man's habitation, there is no reason for it to continue because man is ruined.
  - b. But Jesus Christ comes and sets up its pillars firmly!
    - He gathers a people in the earth to give God a reason not to destroy it!
    - For now it is the habitation not of ruined worthless people, but of a redeemed people.
    - God is pleased to sustain their habitation.
  - c. He came 2000 years ago to set up a kingdom that cannot be shaken and ruined and dissolved like the kingdoms of this world.
    - And now He is busy setting up the pillars of that kingdom.
    - He sets them up firmly so that they cannot be shaken.
      - Yes, this kingdom is founded on the everlasting blood of the covenant.
      - It is founded on His death for His people's sins.
      - It is founded on God's promise that cannot be broken because He has met the conditions of the covenant by His suffering and death.
      - It is sealed by the Spirit of God who is given to all of Christ's people when He comes to govern them.

TRANS> Clearly, this is a work that Jesus Christ alone can do.

B. But there is a sense in which He does not do this work alone.

1. You see, if you are a Christian, you are a member of His body—
  - you are one flesh with Him, you are His bride and He is the Bridegroom.
  - So, although He does it alone, He is not alone
    - He uses us as co-labourers to establish His kingdom.

- To put it another way, in singing this Psalm with Jesus Christ, you don't have to stop singing when you get to verse 2 and let Jesus sing a solo!
    - This is your work as a co-labourer with Him!
    - If Christ is your head, this is something that you do with Him and in Him, as a member of His body.
2. Christian, you have a part in both aspects of this work that we have looked at—judging uprightly and setting up its pillars!
- And what this means is that you should be encouraged to do these two things wherever God had put you!
    - a. You judge uprightly when you bring God's truth into this dark world
      - When you bring it to bear upon others.
        - 1) God gives you many opportunities to do this—
          - You do it in submitting to His lordship as an example to others.
            - As a child in your home, you influence your brothers and sisters by submitting to Christ and His word...
              - And not just your brothers and sisters, but also to those outside your home who see your example.
              - This is what Daniel did when he refused to defile himself in Babylon.
          - You also do it in speaking His word and His ways to others.
            - when a friend asks you for counsel and you direct him to God's ways...
        - 2) You are especially to judge for Him when you are put in a position of authority.
          - As a parent, you judge uprightly when you bring no your own selfish ideas, but God's word to govern your children...
            - you are Christ's minister in your home.
          - You also judge uprightly in your work when you lead others according to eternal truth.
      - Of course it is not *your* judgement that you bring to bear on the situation, but it is His judgement...
        - You have a part in governing with Christ—
          - He uses His people on the earth in their various places and callings to participate in His judging to set things straight.



- b. He also uses you to set up the pillars of the earth—
  - whether you are a mother who is working with little children at home,
    - or a truck driver who is carrying the gospel to the truck stops in your route.
    - or someone who prays faithfully for your local congregation to be strong and established in the Lord.
  - In all these ways, you are joining with Christ to do what you can to establish such foundations of the earth that can never be destroyed.
- c. It is this awareness that you are working with Christ wherever you are that causes you to have great boldness, even in the very darkest times—
  - It is this that has enabled believers to witness in the prison camp when everyone would have thought they would have given up...
    - or to be like Daniel and live for God in spite of threats and hostile powers that oppose and have overthrown the visible throne of David.
      - He was not intimidated because He knew that God was with Him and that God would perform His marvellous works.
      - God showed that His name was near not in working apart from Daniel, but in working through Daniel.

### **III. In the rest of the Psalm, Christ and His Church sing of how we urge the wicked to repent.**

- A. First in verses 4-5 we simply call them to stop their foolish behaviour.
  - 1. The command of Christ to repent is simple and straight forward—
    - a. To the boastful, He says, “Boast not”
      - To the wicked He says, “Do not lift up the horn.”
    - b. This is not a condemnation per se, but an admonition...
      - It is simply a call to turn from such foolish and rebellious ways!
      - You come to them with disappointment the same way you come to someone who is about to make a foolish decision and say—
        - “Don’t do that!”
        - “Don’t take that job!”
        - In this case—
          - “Don’t deal boastfully!”
          - “Don’t lift up the horn!”

- c. It is not just an admonition, but a gracious admonition!
    - There would be no reason for them to stop if there were not a promise of forgiveness to those who repent.
    - God graciously calls us to turn away from our sin because we can turn away and be reconciled to him!
    - When we repent, He accepts us.
2. This call to repentance points to the very heart of a sinner's problem.
- a. Of course there are different ways to describe sin, and this is but one,
    - but it is certainly a good one—
    - one that is helpful to a sinner who will hear!
  - b. It points to the fact that the sinner's main problem is pride!
    - 1) He is trying to live on his own....that is why he is said to boast!
      - He is trying to make his own way without God, without the Saviour that God has sent!
      - This is the height of arrogance—for a creature who did not produce himself, and who was designed to live under God's government and guidance, to think that he can make it on His own!
      - His very life—each breath that he takes—is given to him by God!
    - 2) The idea of lifting the horn is to try to establish his own kingdom by his own power.
      - The horn is a symbol of power and government.
        - Here is a fool trying to set up a government that is independent of the government of the God of the universe!
      - Does he honestly think that his rival kingdom will be able to stand?
        - No doubt, every sinner lives between the illusion that his own kingdom will stand
          - and the terrors of his own conscience—whatever is left of his conscience—which tells him it is all folly.
      - By coming to him and saying,
        - “Don't boast, don't lift up your horn on high,”
        - the goal is to awaken his conscience that he might arise out of his slumber and death and come to Christ.

B. Then in verses 6-8, Christ and His Church reason with the wicked.

1. We tell them that God is the only One who exalts...
  - a. We tell them that promotion or exaltation does not come from the east, the west or the south...
    - The east probably speaks of the wisdom and wealth that were found in the east when this was written.
    - The west probably speaks of the military forces that were found in the west among the islands of the Gentiles...
    - And the South probably refers to Egypt where the people of God sometimes foolishly looked for help when God had not commanded it.
  - b. People are always attributing whatever success they have to second causes...
    - And always looking to second causes for hope...
    - They attribute success to a happy turn of circumstances,
      - or to their own wisdom or strength or wealth—
      - or to the wisdom or strength of others who have helped them.
    - Certainly, God ordinarily uses such second causes,
      - but that does not for a moment change the fact that He is the primary cause of all good things that come to us—of all exaltation!
  - c. The cure for arrogance is to see that God alone is the one who exalts.
    - As it says in verse 7, “God is the Judge: He puts down one, and exalts another.”
      - He has absolute sovereignty in the matter—so that it is absolute folly to think that you will enjoy any kind of continued success if God is not for you.
    - If you are raised up by Him and you are not reconciled to Him, you are only raised up for a time for God’s purpose—
      - You have no security!
      - Like Pharaoh, God says,
        - “For this cause I have raised you up, that I might make my power known through you.”
      - Your final end has nothing to do with your present success—
        - everything depends on your relationship with Him.

TRANS> And do you know what happens to those that try to live on their own?

- Those who disregard the true and living God?

- It says in verse 8.
2. God makes them drink His cup of judgement!
- a. He has such a cup in His hand and it is a terrible cup—
    - It is filled with the strongest wine...
      - READ> v. 8
    - The contents of this cup are described in Rev. 14:10:
      - "he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.
      - The contents are also spoken of in Psalm 11:6:
        - Ps 11:6 Upon the wicked He will rain coals; Fire and brimstone and a burning wind *Shall be* the portion of their cup.
  - b. And once God gives you this cup, it is too late...
    - You will be forced to drink it all!
      - That's what it means when it says
        - "Surely its dregs shall all the wicked of the earth drain and drink down."
        - Not one drop of God's appointed judgement will be spilled or left in the cup—even the dregs must be swallowed.
  - c. Why is such a horrible judgement pronounced?
    - It is to awaken sinners before it is too late!
    - It is not an unjust judgement—we may not see that so clearly now, but we will in the day that it comes...
      - There will be no escape in excuses or cries of injustice.
      - When the glory and majesty of God is seen by eyes that have been blinded by denying Him, no one will question the justice of such judgement.
      - But the warning is given in grace while there is still time to repent!
      - Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your heart!

TRANS> For there is also a great reward for Christ and His Church!

C. Christ and His people will be able to go on doing what they began to do at the beginning of this Psalm forever!

- namely—sing praises to the God of Jacob, declaring and delighting in His wonderful works wrought for them!
  - What a contrast with those who must drink the bitter cup!
1. Do you remember what Christ says in Psalm 22 in His humiliation on the cross?
    - a. He says that when God delivers Him, He will call His church together and tell them about the glorious deliverance...
      - He will tell them about His deliverance from the grave for their sake!
      - He will gather them together and preach the gospel to them, and then He will lead them in songs of praise to God.
    - b. We will rejoice in God’s wonderful work for us in Christ forever and ever.
      - We praise God for exalting Christ, even when He had bound Himself to His church that was filled with nothing but wicked sinners who deserve to drink the cup of God’s wrath.
      - Jesus Himself drank the cup for all of us and is now entitled to praise God forever—and not without us because He drank the cup for us!
        - We are raised with Him to new life—
          - to praise God forever for His glorious deliverance!
  2. This is called “singing praises to the God of Jacob” in verse 9.
    - Why Jacob?
      - a. Just think about Jacob—
        - He was in a time of great darkness, just like this world is, just like the church often is, just like Jesus Himself was when He went to the cross...
        - He was running from his brother and God came to him and promised to bless him...
          - And He did bless him!
      - b. And you remember what Jacob said?
        - He said, “If you bless me as you have said, I will worship you—I will give a tenth of all I have to support your worship.”
          - He promised to declare what God had done for him and his seed—how God had saved him and blessed him.
        - Jesus made the same promise when He was on the cross.
          - He gathers His children together to praise Him, and they give a tenth of all their increase to support his worship—that the gospel might be proclaimed and that they might praise His name.

- And in this Psalm we call this “declaring forever and singing praises to the God of Jacob” because Jacob was a type of Christ.
    - He was desperate for his life and God had mercy on Him.
    - Jesus was desperate for His life—
      - that is, for the life of His body the church—
      - and God heard Him and delivered Him, even raising Him from the dead and then by and by raising all His people with Him!
    - He praises God’s name—He praises the God of Jacob with His people for this wonderful work which shows that God is near.
3. Verse 10 shows that everything has to do with Christ and your connection to Him.
- a. You should not try to establish some other kingdom, but rather should bow humbly to Him.
    - Do you see why this is so?
  - b. Because He will also cut off the horns of the wicked...
    - If you try to establish your own kingdom apart from Christ, you will drink the bitter cup of God’s wrath and indignation.
    - In verse 7 He showed that God will put down the one who exalts himself—who lifts up his horn against Christ—to establish his own kingdom and go his own way without Christ.
      - It doesn’t matter if that way is sweet and loveable in the eyes of man.
      - Such a person will not participate in Christ’s exaltation—
        - the One whom God has exalted because of His suffering and death for sinners.
      - Such a man can have his own kingdom, but his kingdom will not last.
        - If He rejects Christ, Christ will cut Him off and all hope of exaltation for that man will be lost.
        - If you deny Him, He will also deny you.
  - c. But the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.
    - What a great contrast!
    - You who are in Christ will be exalted in and with Christ—the One who has been exalted to praise God forever.
    - He and all the members of His body will be exalted.

- And that will be so even if you are in darkness now.
  - The world passes by many of the best of God's people and they are never exalted or recognised here—
  - They are either persecuted or ignored...
  - But their reward will be great in Heaven because Christ will reward them openly.
    - The first will be last and the last will be first!
  
- d. What all this means, brothers and sisters—you who truly love Christ and believe on His name—is that you can sing verse 9 and 10 with Jesus.
  - You too can confess that you will sing praises to the God of Jacob—the God who delivers His people—forever!
  - There is only one government in the world—yea, in the universe.
    - Either you submit to that government or you perish.

### **Conclusion>**

But in the world, it often seems that things are the other way around.

- It often seems that those who follow Christ are made to suffer and to be humbled and debased.
- And that is true!
  - That is why, if you expect to keep going on for Christ, it is so important for you to give thanks to God and recount His wonderful works in Jesus Christ.
  - This is what will remind you always that God is near, and that He will surely bless His Son and all those who belong to Him.