

Wrath Restrained

Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

Psalm 76: 10

All citations are to the *KJV*

Q What does this mean, ‘the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain’?

A For context, we will cover the verses that precede this verse and comment briefly:

1 In Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel. **2** In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion.

The psalm begins by exalting the name of Jehovah as the great guarding warrior of Israel. Jerusalem is the meeting place with His people (‘tabernacle’); His figurative place of abode is Zion (a parallel reference to Jerusalem).

3 There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle. Selah. **4** Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey. **5** The stouthearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands [fighting power – *Ed.*]. **6** At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep.

In behalf of His people Jehovah has routinely defeated (‘spoiled’) their enemies, now in the sleep of death, their weapons of war (‘chariots’ [charioteers]) obliterated. Adam Clarke, the commentator, opines that ‘*There brake*’ refers to the LORD’s forestalling the flaming arrows of Sennacherib’s army, vs. 5 and 6 describing the destruction that came over the armed host in the night (while they ‘slept their sleep’).*

7 Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?

8 Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still, **9** When God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth. Selah.

When roused in defence of the righteous (‘the meek’), God’s anger was, is, and will yet be in ‘the latter days’ – the time of judgement upon earth – terrifying to behold. The godly and obedient will be saved in that day of restoration and peace.

Now, the answer to the question:

10 *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.*

Peake’s Commentary has this: ‘This may mean that even the violent acts of the wicked *are taken up* [melded – *Ed*] into the divine purpose, or that the suppression of the wicked will redound to God’s praise . . . God makes the remnants of human wrath into an *ornament for himself*.’ By thus thwarting the purposes of evildoers – whose works are the bidding of Satan – Jehovah demonstrates that he has anticipated their incorrigible behaviour but has brought forth good from their malign intentions.

Thus will the Almighty cause their collective wrath to praise Him – the opposite of what they intended – and *He will curb their excesses*.

We come now to the coda, whereby this psalm, or song, of Asaph, draws to a close, with hortatory instructions:

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. **12** He shall cut off the spirit of princes: he is terrible to the kings of the earth.

* For this account see 2 Kings 18: 13 – to chap. 19: 1-37.
