

# Exposition on Psalm 77

by St. Augustine

---

*The sermon emphasizes the importance of seeking God Himself, rather than just seeking temporal things, and finding comfort in His mercy and eternal years.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 76:1-2, Psalm 76:4, Psalm 76:7, Psalm 76:10-11, Psalm 77:1, Psalm 77:3-4, Psalm 77:7

**Topics:** "Seeking God", "Tribulation"

---

## Description

St. Augustine preaches about the Psalms, interpreting the congregation as those who leap over to reach Christ Jesus, emphasizing the importance of seeking God for Himself and not just for material blessings. He delves into the concept of tribulation, urging listeners to seek God in times of trouble and to consider this earthly life as a tribulation itself. St. Augustine reflects on the weariness of the soul, the need to find comfort in God alone, and the importance of delighting in God's works and meditating on eternal years.

---

## Transcript

1. This Psalm's lintel is thus inscribed: Unto the end, for Idithun, a Psalm to Asaph himself. What Unto the end is, you know. Idithun is interpreted leaping over those men, Asaph is interpreted a congregation. Here therefore there is speaking a congregation that leaps over, in order that it may reach the End, which is Christ Jesus.. ..

2. With my voice, he says, to the Lord I have cried Psalm 76:1. But many men cry unto the Lord for the sake of getting riches and avoiding losses, for the safety of their friends, for the security of their house, for temporal felicity, for secular dignity, lastly, even for mere soundness of body, which is the inheritance of the poor man. For such and such like things many men do cry unto the Lord; scarce one for the sake of the Lord Himself. For an easy thing it is for a man to desire anything of the Lord, and not to desire the Lord Himself; as if forsooth that which He gives could be sweeter than Himself that gives. Whosoever therefore does cry unto the Lord for the sake of any other thing, is not yet one that leaps over....He does indeed hearken to you at the time when thou dost seek Himself, not when through Himself thou dost seek any other thing. It has been said of some men, They cried, and there was no one to save them; to the Lord, and He hearkened not unto them. For why? Because the voice of them was not unto the Lord. This the Scripture does express in another place, where it says of such men, On the Lord they have not called. Unto Him they have not ceased to cry, and yet upon the Lord they have not called. What is, upon the Lord they have not called? They have not called the Lord unto themselves: they have not invited the Lord to their heart, they would not have themselves inhabited by the Lord. And therefore what has befallen them?

They have trembled with fear where fear was not. They have trembled about the loss of things present, for the reason that they were not full of Him, upon whom they have not called. They have not loved gratis, so that after the loss of temporal things they could say, As it has pleased the Lord, so has been done, be the name of the Lord blessed. Job 1:21 Therefore this man says, My voice is unto the Lord, and He does hearken unto me. Let him show us how this comes to pass.

3. In the day of tribulation I have sought out God Psalm 76:2. Who are you that doest this thing? In the day of your tribulation take heed what you seek out. If a jail be the cause of tribulation, you seek to get forth from jail: if fever be the cause of tribulation, you seek health: if hunger be the cause of tribulation, you seek fullness: if losses be the cause of tribulation, you seek gain: if expatriation be the cause of tribulation, you seek the home of your flesh. And why should I name all things, or when could I name all things? Do you wish to be one leaping over? In the day of your tribulation seek out God: not through God some other thing, but out of tribulation God, that to this end God may take away tribulation, that you may without anxiety cleave unto God. In the day of my tribulation, I have sought out God: not any other thing, but God I have sought out. And how have you sought out? With my hands in the night before Him....

4. Tribulation must not be thought to be this or that in particular. For every individual that does not yet leap over, thinks that as yet to be no tribulation, unless it be a thing which may have befallen this life of some sad occasion: but this man, that leaps over, does count this whole life to be his tribulation. For so much does he love his supernal country, that the earthly pilgrimage is of itself the greatest tribulation. For how can this life be otherwise than a tribulation, I pray you?

How can that not be a tribulation, the whole whereof has been called temptation? You have it written in the book of Job, Job 7:1 is not human life a temptation upon earth? Hath he said, human life is tempted upon earth? Nay, but life itself is a temptation. If therefore temptation, it must surely be a tribulation. In this tribulation therefore, that is to say in this life, this man that leaps over has sought out God. How? With my hands, he says. What is, with my hands? With my works.

For he was not seeking any thing corporeal, so that he might find and handle something which he had lost, so that he might seek with hands coin, gold, silver, vesture, in short everything which can be held in the hands. Howbeit, even our Lord Jesus Christ Himself willed Himself to be sought after with hands, when to His doubting disciple He showed the scars. John 20:27 ...What then, to us belongs not the seeking with hands? It belongs to us, as I have said, to seek with works.

When so? In the night. What is, in the night? In this age. For it is night until there shine forth day in the glorified advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. For would ye see how it is night? Unless we had here had a lantern, we should have remained in darkness. For Peter says, We too have more sure the prophetic discourse, whereunto ye do well to give heed, as to a lantern shining in a dark place, until day shine, and the day-star arise in your hearts. 2 Peter 1:19 There is therefore to come day after this night, meanwhile in this night a lantern is not lacking.

And this is perchance what we are now doing: by explaining these passages, we are bringing in a lantern, in order that we may rejoice in this night. Which indeed ought always to be burning in your houses. For to such men is said, The Spirit quench ye not. 1 Thessalonians 5:19 And as though explaining what he was saying, he continues and says, Prophecy despise ye not: that is, let the lantern always shine in you. And even this light by comparison with a sort of ineffable day is called night.

For the very life of believers by comparison with the life of unbelievers is day....Night and day-- day in comparison with unbelievers, night in comparison with the Angels. For the Angels have a day, which we have not yet. Already we have one that unbelievers have not: but not yet have believers that which Angels have: but they will have, at the time when they will be equal to the Angels of God, that which has been promised to them in the Resurrection. Matthew 22:30 In this then which is now day and yet night; night in comparison with the future day for which we yearn, day in comparison with the past night which we have renounced: in this night then, I say, let us seek God with our hands.

Let not works cease, let us seek God, be there no idle yearning. If we are in the way, let us expend our means in order that we may be able to reach the end. With hands let us seek God....With my hands in the night before Him, and I have not been deceived.

5. ...My soul has refused to be comforted Psalm 76:2. So great weariness did here possess me, that my soul did close the door against all comfort. Whence such weariness to him? It may be that his vineyard has been hailed on, or his olive has yielded no fruit, or the vintage has been interrupted by rain. Whence the weariness to him? Hear this out of another Psalm. For therein is the voice of the same: weariness has bowed me down, because of sinners forsaking Your law. He says then that he was overcome with so great weariness because of this sort of evil thing; so as that his soul refused to be comforted. Weariness had well near swallowed him up, and sorrow had engulfed him altogether beyond remedy, he refuses to be comforted. What then remained? In the first place, see whence he is comforted. Had he not waited for one who might condole with him?. ..I have been mindful of God, and I have been delighted Psalm 76:3. My hands had not wrought in vain, they had found a great comforter. While not being idle, I have been mindful of God, and I have been delighted. God must therefore be praised, of whom this man being mindful, has been delighted, and has been comforted in sorrowful case, and refreshed when safety was in a manner despaired of: God must therefore be praised. In fine, because he has been comforted, in continuation he says, I have babbled. In that same comfort being made mindful of God, I have been delighted, and have babbled. What is, I have babbled? I have rejoiced, I have exulted in speaking. For babblers they are properly called, that by the common people are named talkative, who at the approach of joy are neither able nor willing to be silent. This man has become such an one. And again he says what? And my spirit has fainted.

6. With weariness he had pined away; by calling to mind God, he had been delighted, again in babbling he had fainted: what follows? All mine enemies have anticipated watches Psalm 76:4. All mine enemies have kept watch over me; they have exceeded in keeping watch over me; in watching they have been beforehand with me. Where do they not lay traps? Have not mine enemies anticipated all watches? For who are these enemies, but they of whom the Apostle says, You have not wrestling against flesh and blood. Ephesians 6:12 ...Against the devil and his angels we are waging hostilities. Rulers of the world he has called them, because they do themselves rule the lovers of the world. For they do not rule the world, as if they were rulers of heaven and earth: but he is calling sinners the world....With the devil and his angels there is no concord. They do themselves grudge us the kingdom of Heaven. They cannot at all be appeased towards us: because all mine enemies have anticipated watches. They have watched more to deceive than I to guard myself. For how can they have done otherwise than anticipate watches, that have set everywhere scandals, everywhere traps? Weariness does invest the heart, we have to fear lest sorrow swallow us up: in joy to fear lest the spirit faint in babbling: all mine enemies have anticipated watches. In fine, in the midst of that same babbling, whiles you are speaking, and art speaking without fear, how much is oft-times found which enemies would lay hold of and censure, whereon they would even found

accusation and slander-- he said so, he thought so, he spoke so! What should man do, save that which follows? I have been troubled, and I spoke not. Therefore when he was troubled, lest in his babbling enemies anticipating watches should seek and find slanders, he spoke not....

7. I have thought on ancient days Psalm 76:5. Now he, as if he were one who had been beaten out of doors, has taken refuge within: he is conversing in the secret place of his own heart. And let him declare to us what he is doing there. It is well with him. Observe what things he is thinking of, I pray you. He is within, in his own house he is thinking of ancient days. No one says to him, you have spoken ill: no one says to him, you have spoken much: no one says to him, you have thought perversely. Thus may it be well with him, may God aid him: let him think of the ancient days, and let him tell us what he has done in his very inner chamber, whereunto he has arrived, over what he has leaped, where he has abode. I have thought on ancient days; and of eternal years I have been mindful. What are eternal years? It is a mighty thought. See whether this thought requires anything but great silence. Apart from all noise without, from all tumult of things human let him remain quiet within, that would think of those eternal years. Are the years wherein we are eternal, or those wherein our ancestors have been, or those wherein our posterity are to be? Far be it that they should be esteemed eternal. For what part of these years does remain? Behold we speak and say, in this year: and what have we got of this year, save the one day wherein we are. For the former days of this year have already gone by, and are not to be had; but the future days have not yet come. In one day we are, and we say, in this year: nay rather say thou, today, if you desire to speak of anything present. For of the whole year what have you got that is present? Whatsoever thereof is past, is no longer; whatsoever thereof is future, is not yet: how then, this year? Amend the expression: say, today. You speak truth, henceforth I will say, today. Again observe this too, how today the morning hours have already past, the future hours have not yet come. This too therefore amend: say, in this hour. And of this hour what have you got? Some moments thereof have already gone by, those that are future have not yet come. Say, in this moment. In what moment? While I am uttering syllables, if I shall speak two syllables, the latter does not sound until the former has gone by: in a word, in that same one syllable, if it chance to have two letters, the latter letter does not sound, until the former has gone by. What then have we got of these years? These years are changeable: the eternal years must be thought on, years that stand, that are not made up of days that come and depart; years whereof in another place the Scripture says to God, But You are the Self-same, and Your years shall not fail. On these years this man that leaps over, not in babbling without, but in silence has thought.

8. And I have meditated in the night with my heart Psalm 76:6. No slanderous person seeks for snares in his words, in his heart he has meditated. I babbled. Behold there is the former babbling. Watch again, that your spirit faint not. I did not, he says, I did not so babble as if it were abroad: in another way now. How now? I did babble, and did search out my spirit. If he were searching the earth to find veins of gold, no one would say that he was foolish; nay, many men would call him wise, for desiring to come at gold: how great treasures has a man within, and he digs not! This man was examining his spirit, and was speaking with that same his spirit, and in the very speaking he was babbling. He was questioning himself, was examining himself, was judge over himself. And he continues; I did search my spirit. He had to fear lest he should stay within his own spirit: for he had babbled without; and because all his enemies had anticipated watches, he found there sorrow, and his spirit fainted. He that did babble without, lo, now does begin to babble within in safety, where being alone in secret, he is thinking on eternal years....

9. And you have found what? God will not repel for everlasting Psalm 76:7. Weariness he had found in this life; in no place a trustworthy, in no place a fearless comfort. Unto whatsoever men he betook himself, in

them he found scandal, or feared it. In no place therefore was he free from care. An evil thing it was for him to hold his peace, lest perchance he should keep silence from good words; to speak and babble without was painful to him, lest all his enemies, anticipating watches, should seek slanders in his words. Being exceedingly straitened in this life, he thought much of another life, where there is not this trial. And when is he to arrive there? For it cannot but be evident that our suffering here is the anger of God. This thing is spoken of in Isaiah, I will not be an avenger unto you for everlasting, nor will I be angry with you at all times. Isaiah 57:16 ...Will this anger of God always abide? This man has not found this in silence. For he says what? God will not repel for everlasting, and He will not add any more that it should be well-pleasing to Him still. That is, that it should be well-pleasing to Him still to repel, and He will not add the repelling for everlasting. He must needs recall to Himself His servants, He must needs receive fugitives returning to the Lord, He must needs hearken to the voice of them that are in fetters. Or unto the end will He cut off mercy from generation to generation? Psalm 76:8.

10. Or will God forget to be merciful? Psalm 76:9. In you, from you unto another there is no mercy unless God bestow it on you: and shall God Himself forget mercy? The stream runs: shall the spring itself be dried up? Or shall God forget to be merciful: or shall He keep back in anger His mercies? That is, shall He be so angry, as that He will not have mercy? He will more easily keep back anger than mercy.

11. And I said. Now leaping over himself he has said what? Now I have begun: Psalm 76:10, when I had gone out even from myself. Here henceforth there is no danger: for even to remain in myself, was danger. And I said, Now I have begun: this is the changing of the right hand of the Lofty One. Now the Lofty One has begun to change me: now I have begun something wherein I am secure: now I have entered a certain palace of joys, wherein no enemy is to be feared: now I have begun to be in that region, where all mine enemies do not anticipate watches. Now I have begun: this is the changing of the right hand of the Lofty One.

12. I have been mindful of the works of the Lord Psalm 76:11. Now behold him roaming among the works of the Lord. For he was babbling without, and being made sorrowful thereby his spirit fainted: he babbled within with his own heart, and with his spirit, and having searched out that same spirit he was mindful of the eternal years, was mindful of the mercy of the Lord, how God will not repel him for everlasting; and he began now fearlessly to rejoice in His works, fearlessly to exult in the same. Let us hear now those very works, and let us too exult. But let even us leap over in our affections, and not rejoice in things temporal. For we too have our bed. Why do we not enter therein? Why do we not abide in silence? Why do we not search out our spirit? Why do we not think on the eternal years? Why do we not rejoice in the works of God? In such sort now let us hear, and let us take delight in Himself speaking, in order that when we shall have departed hence, we may do that which we used to do while He spoke; if only we are making the beginning of Him whereof he spoke in, Now I have begun. To rejoice in the works of God, is to forget even yourself, if you can delight in Him alone. For what is a better thing than He? Do you not see that, when you return to yourself, you return to a worse thing? for I shall be mindful from the beginning of Your wonderful works.

13. And I will meditate on all Your works, and on Your affections I will babble Psalm 76:12. Behold the third babbling! He babbled without, when he hinted; he babbled in his spirit within, when he advanced: he babbled on the works of God, when he arrived at the place toward which he advanced. And on Your affections: not on any affections. What man does live without affections? And do ye suppose, brethren, that they who fear God, worship God, love God, have not any affections? Will you indeed suppose and dare to suppose, that painting, the theatre, hunting, hawking, fishing, engage the affections, and the

meditation on God does not engage certain interior affections of its own, while we contemplate the universe, and place before our eyes the spectacle of the natural world, and therein labour to discover the Maker, and find Him nowhere unpleasing, but pleasing above all things?

14. O God, Your way is in the Holy One Psalm 76:13. He is contemplating now the works of the mercy of God around us, out of these he is babbling, and in these affections he is exulting. At first he is beginning from thence, Your way is in the Holy One? What is that way of Yours which is in the Holy One? I am, He says, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. John 14:6 Return therefore, you men, from your affections...Who is a great God, like our God? Gentiles have their affections regarding their gods, they adore idols, they have eyes and they see not; ears they have and they hear not; feet they have and they walk not. Why do you walk to a God that walks not? I do not, he says, worship such things, and what do you worship? The divinity which is there. You then worship that whereof has been said elsewhere, for the Gods of the nations are demons. You either worship idols, or devils. Neither idols, nor devils, he says. And what do you worship? The stars, sun, moon, those things celestial. How much better Him that has made both things earthly and things celestial. Who is a great God like our God?

15. You are the God that doest wonderful things alone Psalm 76:14. You are indeed a great God, doing wonderful things in body, in soul; alone doing them. The deaf have heard, the blind have seen, the feeble have recovered, the dead have risen, the paralytic have been strengthened. But these miracles were at that time performed on bodies, let us see those wrought on the soul. Sober are those that were a little before drunken, believers are those that were a little before worshippers of idols: their goods they bestow on the poor that did rob before those of others...Wonderful things alone. Moses too did them, but not alone: Elias too did them, even Eliseus did them, the Apostles too did them, but no one of them alone. That they might have power to do them, You were with them: when You did them they were not with You. For they were not with You when You did them, inasmuch as You made even these very men. How alone? Is it perchance the Father, and not the Son? Or the Son, and not the Father? Nay, but Father and Son and Holy Ghost. For it is not three Gods but one God that does wonderful things alone, and even in this very leaper-over. For even his leaping over and arriving at these things was a miracle of God: when he was babbling within with his own spirit, in order that he might leap over even that same spirit of his, and might delight in the works of God, he then did wonderful things himself. But God has done what? You have made known unto the people Your power. Thence this congregation of Asaph leaping over; because He has made known in the peoples His virtue. What virtue of His has He made known in the peoples? But we preach Christ crucified,...Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 1 Corinthians 1:23 If then the virtue of God is Christ, He has made known Christ in the peoples. Do we not yet perceive so much as this; and are we so unwise, are we lying so much below, do we so leap over nothing, as that we see not this?

16. You have redeemed in Your arm Your people Psalm 76:15. With Your arm, that is, with Your power. And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Isaiah 53:1 You have redeemed in Your arm Your people, the sons of Israel and of Joseph. How as if two peoples, the sons of Israel and of Joseph? Are not the sons of Joseph among the sons of Israel?...He has admonished us of some distinction to be made. Let us search out our spirit, perchance God has placed there something-- God whom we ought even by night to seek with our hands, in order that we may not be deceived-- perchance we shall discover even ourselves in this distinction of sons of Israel and of Joseph. By Joseph He has willed another people to be understood, has willed that the people of the Gentiles be understood. Why the people of the Gentiles by Joseph? Because Joseph was sold into Egypt by his brethren. Genesis 37:28 That Joseph whom the

brethren envied, and sold him into Egypt, when sold into Egypt, toiled, was humbled; when made known and exalted, flourished, reigned. And by all these things he has signified what? What but Christ sold by His brethren, banished from His own land, as it were into the Egypt of the Gentiles? There at first humbled, when the Martyrs were suffering persecutions: now exalted, as we see; inasmuch as there has been fulfilled in Him, There shall adore Him all kinds of the earth, all nations shall serve Him. Therefore Joseph is the people of the Gentiles, but Israel the people of the Hebrew nation. God has redeemed His people, the sons of Israel and of Joseph. By means of what? By means of the corner stone, Ephesians 2:20 wherein the two walls have been joined together.

17. And he continues how? The waters have seen You, O God, and they have feared and the abysses have been troubled Psalm 76:16. What are the waters? The peoples. What are these waters has been asked in the Apocalypse, Revelation 17:15 the answer was, the peoples. There we find most clearly waters put by a figure for peoples. But above he had said, You have made known in the peoples Your virtue. With reason therefore, the waters have seen You, and they have feared. They have been changed because they have feared. What are the abysses? The depths of waters. What man among the peoples is not troubled, when the conscience is smitten? You seek the depth of the sea, what is deeper than human conscience? That is the depth which was troubled, when God redeemed with His arm His people. In what manner were the abysses troubled? When all men poured forth their consciences in confession.

18. In praises of God, in confessions of sins, in hymns and in songs, in prayers, There is a multitude of the sound of waters. The clouds have uttered a voice Psalm 76:17. Thence that sound of waters, thence the troubling of the abysses, because the clouds have uttered a voice. What clouds? The preachers of the word of truth. What clouds? Those concerning which God does menace a certain vineyard, which instead of grape had brought forth thorns and He says, I will command My clouds, that they rain no rain upon it.

Isaiah 5:6 In a word, the Apostles forsaking the Jews, went to the Gentiles: in preaching Christ among all nations, the clouds have uttered a voice. For Your arrows have gone through. Those same voices of the clouds He has again called arrows. For the words of the Evangelists were arrows. For these things are allegories. For properly neither an arrow is rain, nor rain is an arrow: but yet the word of God is both an arrow because it does smite; and rain because it does water.

Let no one therefore any longer wonder at the troubling of the abysses, when Your arrows have gone through. What is, have gone through? They have not stopped in the ears, but they have pierced the heart. The voice of Your thunder is in the wheel Psalm 76:18. What is this? How are we to understand it? May the Lord give aid. When boys we were wont to imagine, whenever we heard thunderings from Heaven, that carriages were going forth as it were from the stables. For thunder does make a sort of rolling like carriages.

Must we return to these boyish thoughts, in order to understand, the voice of Your thunder is in the wheel, as though God has certain carriages in the clouds, and the passing along of the carriages does raise that sound? Far be it. This is boyish, vain, trifling. What is then, The voice of Your thunder is in the wheel? Your voice rolls. Not even this do I understand. What shall we do? Let us question Idithun himself, to see whether perchance he may himself explain what he has said: The voice, he says, of Your thunder is in the wheel.

I do not understand. I will hear what you say, Your lightnings have appeared to the round world. Say then, I had no understanding. The round world is a wheel. For the circuit of the round world is with reason called

also an orb: whence also a small wheel is called an orbiculus. The voice of Your thunder is in the wheel: Your lightnings have appeared to the round world. Those clouds in a wheel have gone about the round world, have gone about with thundering and with lightning, they have shaken the abyss, with commandments they have thundered, with miracles they have lightened.

Unto every land has gone forth the sound of them, and unto the ends of the orb the words of them. The land has been moved and made to tremble: that is, all men that dwell in the land. But by a figure the land itself is sea. Why? Because all nations are called by the name of sea, inasmuch as human life is bitter, and exposed to storms and tempests. Moreover if you observe this, how men devour one another like fishes, how the stronger does swallow up the weaker-- it is then a sea, unto it the Evangelists went.

19. Your way is in the sea Psalm 76:19. But now Your way was in the Holy One, now Your way is in the sea: because the Holy One Himself is in the sea, and with reason even did walk upon the waters of the sea. Matthew 14:25 Your way is in the sea, that is, Your Christ is preached among the Gentiles....Your way is in the sea, and Your paths in many waters, that is, in many peoples. And Your footsteps will not be known. He has touched certain, and wonder were it if it be not those same Jews. Behold now the mercy of Christ has been so published to the Gentiles, that Your way is in the sea. Your footsteps will not be known. How so, by whom will they not be known, save by those who still say, Christ has not yet come? Why do they say, Christ has not yet come? Because they do not yet recognise Him walking on the sea.

20. You have led home Your people like sheep in the hand of Moses and of Aaron Psalm 76:20. Why He has added this is somewhat difficult to discover....They banished Christ; sick as they were, they would not have Him for their Saviour; but He began to be among the Gentiles, and among all nations, among many peoples. Nevertheless, a remnant of that people has been saved. The ungrateful multitude has remained without, even the halting breadth of Jacob's thigh. Genesis 32:32 For the breadth of the thigh is understood of the multitude of lineage, and among the greater part of the Israelites a certain multitude became vain and foolish, so as not to know the steps of Christ on the waters. You have led home Your people like sheep, and they have not known You. Though You have done such great benefits unto them, hast divided sea, hast made them pass over dry land between waters, hast drowned in the waves pursuing enemies, in the desert hast rained manna for their hunger, leading them home by the hand of Moses and Aaron: still they thrust You from them, so that in the sea was Your Way, and Your steps they knew not.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/st-augustine/exposition-on-psalm-77/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**