

## God's Sheltered Ones

Jesus in the Psalms

Psalm 83

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### I. Defective Prayers?

Psalm 83 is an *imprecatory psalm* – a psalm which invokes God's \_\_\_\_\_ on certain people.

### II. Do not keep silent, O God!

A. *Thema*: Do not be silent, O God! (1 cf. Jdg 6:12-13)

First and foremost, when the enemies of God attack the people of God, we call upon God to give ear and answer our cries for help and deliverance.

B. *Occasion*: Your enemies have formed a confederacy against Your people (2-8)

Second, Asaph teaches us to lay out the dire circumstances to God. While God is omniscient and knows all things, when we are desiring God to awaken and deliver us from our troubles, it is fitting to describe those troubles to Him. So Asaph vividly describes the *occasion* of this psalm: God's *enemies*, those who *bate Him*, have *conspired together* to destroy God's people, who are *the apple of His eye* (Zech 2:8). To attack God's people, in other words, is to attack God Himself. It is likely that this psalm was composed to be relevant for any attack on God's people from their neighbors.

C. *Plea*: Confound, dismay, and convert Your enemies (9-18 cf. Judges 4, 6-7)

Finally, Asaph teaches us to pray that God would deliver us from their conspiracy even as He has delivered His people in the past. Asaph calls to mind God's acts of salvation through the judges Gideon (9a, 11) and Deborah (10). Like this new confederacy, these enemies of old had tried to destroy God's people and seize their inheritance (12). Asaph wants God to *pursue* these enemies, *frighten* them, and *shame* (humble) them in order *that they may seek God's Name* (15-16). Even while suffering attack, in other words, Asaph teaches us to pray for the conversion of our enemies. Asaph's passion is for all peoples to confess that Yahweh is the Living God, the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer of all (18).



### III. Application

A. We should cry out to God for salvation in times of trouble (1 Cor 3:16-17)

Psalm 83 reminds us that the people of God are precious to God. We are God's people, His "sheltered ones." So we can appeal to Him in times of trouble to give heed to deliver us.

<sup>16</sup>Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? <sup>17</sup>If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. (1 Cor 3:16-17)

B. We should pray against the evil purposes of God's enemies (Gen 3:15)

Second, we should pray against the evil purposes of God's enemies. At this point, certain Christians get uncomfortable. The Reformation Study Bible remarks in its notes on Psalm 83, "Instead of calling upon the Lord to destroy our flesh-and-blood enemies, we call upon Him to vanquish the spiritual forces of evil." Is this accurate? I suggest that it is not. Immediately after the Fall, God Himself established an *antithesis* in the world: "And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel" (Gen 3:15). Notice that \_\_\_\_\_ placed enmity between Satan and the woman. Consider some ways that this *antithesis* reveals God's gracious intervention in human history:

- First, this *antithesis* reveals itself among men who recoil naturally from evil. We have an internal sense of right and wrong, *our consciences alternately accusing or else excusing us* (cf. Rom 2:15).
- Second, this *antithesis*, this enmity between the Serpent and the Woman, contains the first preaching of the Gospel: one day God would send a Seed of the Woman to conquer the Serpent: "He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."
- Finally, this *antithesis* is realized among specific people in history. God speaks of enmity between *the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman*: "I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed..." Men are either members of the kingdom of darkness or the kingdom of light.

There are times when it is fitting to pronounce curses upon certain people. Jesus pronounced seven \_\_\_\_\_ upon the scribes and Pharisees, "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites..." (Mt 23:13-36). Paul wrote to Timothy, "Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works" (2 Tim 4:14 cf. Rev 6:10). Psalm 83 provides us with guidance when such prayers are appropriate. *When men and nations reveal their hatred for God by plotting to destroy and persecute His people, His \_\_\_\_\_, then it is appropriate to cry out to God to protect us and destroy His enemies.* Thus, Martin Luther explains that when we pray that God's kingdom come, then we "must put all the opposition to this in one pile and say: 'Curses, maledictions and disgrace upon every other name and every other kingdom. May they be ruined and torn apart and may all their schemes and wisdom and plans run aground.'"

C. We should pray for the conversion of God's enemies (cf. Rom 12:17-21)

Asaph teaches us to pray that God would use His judgments to bring even our enemies to faith. "Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Your name, O Lord... that they may know that You, whose name alone is the Lord, are the Most High over all the earth" (16-18). One way God destroys His enemies is by converting them into \_\_\_\_\_. Thus, a proper use of the imprecatory prayers will always remember the purpose of Christ's Incarnation: to reconcile men to God. "For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them" (Lk 9:56). So while praying that God would vindicate us and judge our enemies, we do good to our enemies (Rom 12:17-21).

### IV. Conclusion