

PSALM 83 A PLEA FOR HELP AGAINST UNITED ENEMIES

This Psalm naturally divided itself into two parts, separated by the word *Selah*. The first part (verses 1-8) describes Israel's extremity, and the second (verses 9-18) contains their supplication to the Lord.

The psalmist begins with an earnest invocation of God's help, beseeching Him to break His apparent inactivity and silence. It only requires His Voice to breathe in the dreary silence, and the foes will be scattered! And there is strong reason for His intervention; for these are His enemies, who riot and roar like the hoarse chafing of an angry sea. It is "thy people" who are the object of their crafty conspiracy, and it is implied that they are hated for that very reason – because they are God's people. This privileged position that they enjoy evokes the heathen's rage, but it is the ground of Israel's confidence as they plead with their God for His Almighty protection. They are His "hidden ones," and there is not one man nor devil in all the hostile world that is able to pluck us from our safe hiding-place in the hollow of His hand! But the idea of preciousness – as well as that of protection – is included in the phrase, "hidden ones." People store their treasures in secret places, where no other eye can see them; and similarly, God hides His treasures in the "secret of His face." How vain, then, are the evil plotters' whisperings against such a "hidden" people!

The conspiracy of the united enemies of the people of God aims for nothing short of blotting out their existence and their very name. Therefore, it is high-handed opposition to the Lord's counsel; their wicked confederacy is ac-

Overview of the Psalm, adapted from Charles Spurgeon:

This composition is entitled "a Song or Psalm of Asaph." The patriotic poet sings again of wars and imminent dangers, but it is no Godless song of a thoughtless nation entering upon war with a light heart. Asaph the seer is well aware of the serious dangers arising from the powerful united enemies; but his soul, in faith, rests itself upon Jehovah – while, as a poet-preacher, he excites his countrymen to prayer by means of this sacred lyric.

The Asaph who penned this song was, in all probability, the person referred to in 2 Chronicles 20:14; for the internal evidence referring the subject of the Psalm to the times of King Jehoshaphat is overwhelming. The division in the camp of the confederate peoples in the wilderness of Tekoa not only broke up their league, but also led to a mutual slaughter – which crippled the power of some of the nations for many years after. They thought to destroy Israel, but they ended up destroying each other.

An appeal to God, in a general manner, fills verses 1-4; and then the Psalmist enters into details of the league (verses 5-8). This leads to an earnest entreaty for the overthrow of the enemy (verses 9-15), with an expression of desire that God's glory may be promoted thereby (verses 16-18).



tually against Him. The true antagonists are not Israel and the world, but God and the world. Calmness, courage, and confidence spring in the heart with such thoughts! Those who are assured that they are “hidden” in God may look out from their hiding-place – as from a safe islet on the wildest seas – and fear nothing! And all who desire to be “hidden” in Christ may freely come to Him and find refuge there!

The enemies’ confederacy is formidable, but the Psalmist does not enumerate its members (verses 6-8) merely in order to emphasize Israel’s danger. He is contrasting this miscellaneous conglomeration of many peoples with the Almighty One, against whom they are vainly banded together! Faith can look, without trembling, upon all the strong battalions of her spiritual enemies; for she knows that one poor man, with God at his back, outnumbers them all! Let them come from the east, west, south, and north! Let them close around the people of God if they so desire, for He alone is mightier than they.

The Psalm rises to high poetic fervor and imaginative beauty in the terrible petitions of verses 13-16. But there is a deeper desire in the Psalmist’s heart than simply seeing the destruction of the enemies. He wishes that they would be turned into God’s friends! And therefore, he wishes for their chastisement, as the means to that end. “That they may seek thy face, Jehovah,” is the sum of his aspirations; and it is the inmost meaning of God’s punitive acts. The one great purpose of all the judgments that He brings upon this world is none other than what the Psalmist contemplated as the outcome of the defeat of this confederacy of God’s enemies – namely, that rebels may seek His face; not in enforced submission, but with true desire to sun themselves in His light, and with heartfelt acknowledgment of His Name as supreme throughout all the earth. The thought of the Lord standing alone in His majestic omnipotence, while the world is vainly arrayed against Him, is prominent in the close of the Psalm. He alone is the Most High. He is revealed to men by His Name, and the highest good of all mankind is to know that this sovereign Name is unique and high above all creatures – whether they are hostile or obedient to Him. The universal extension of that Name must be the deepest wish of all who have learned for themselves how strong a fortress that name is, against the world which rises up against them! Their desires for the foes of God and themselves are not in harmony with God’s heart, nor with the Psalmist’s song, unless they are that His enemies may be led – by the defeat of their enterprises and their experiencing of the weight of God’s hand – to lovingly and obediently bow before the Name which, whether they recognize it or not, is high above all the earth!

Lord Jesus, we beseech You to hide us in Yourself and Your righteousness. And we pray that we may daily live, by faith, in the enjoyment of it, until faith is swallowed up in sight! Amen.