

Psalm 83 — A Prayer for God’s Intervention Against Evil Alliances

A Psalm of Asaph.

Overview

Psalm 83 is a passionate prayer rising from a time of national crisis. The psalmist sees a growing coalition of enemies determined to wipe out Israel—and by extension, oppose the purposes of God. Asaph pleads for divine intervention, not just to save Israel, but so that the nations would recognize God’s authority and name.

This psalm doesn’t just look backward to past victories; it looks upward in desperate dependence on the God who acts in righteousness and justice.

Verses 1–4: A Plea for God to Break His Silence

*“Do not keep silent, O God!
Do not hold Your peace,
And do not be still, O God!
For behold, Your enemies make a tumult;
And those who hate You have lifted up their head.
They have taken crafty counsel against Your people,
And consulted together against Your sheltered ones.
They have said, ‘Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation,
That the name of Israel may be remembered no more.’” (vv. 1–4)*

The psalm opens with urgency: *God, please speak! Act! Do not remain silent!* The enemy’s plans are not subtle—they openly conspire to destroy Israel, both as a nation and a people. Their hatred is not just against Israel but against God Himself, whose promises and covenant define her existence.

Personal Application:

There are times when evil seems bold and unchecked, and it feels like heaven is silent. Have you ever pleaded with God, “Why aren’t You doing something?” Psalm 83 reminds us that we can—and should—bring that kind of honest lament to the Lord. We don’t pray to a distant deity but to a God who has acted in history and still rules with justice.

Verses 5–8: A Confederation of Opposition

*“For they have consulted together with one consent;
They form a confederacy against You:
The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites;
Moab and the Hagrites;
Geba, Ammon, and Amalek;
Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre;
Assyria also has joined with them;
They have helped the children of Lot.” (vv. 5–8)*

Asaph lists ten nations (symbolic of completeness) that have united against Israel. But notice—he says they are confederate against God (v. 5). Attacking God’s people is ultimately an act of rebellion against God Himself.

Theological Reflection:

This passage isn't about political enemies alone—it reflects a broader truth: that there is a spiritual opposition in the world that resists God’s purposes. This isn’t a call for believers to take up arms against people—it’s a call to prayer, trusting God to defend truth, preserve His promises, and reveal His glory.

Verses 9–12: A Call for God to Act as He Has in the Past

*“Deal with them as with Midian,
As with Sisera,
As with Jabin at the Brook Kishon...
Make their nobles like Oreb and like Zeeb,
Yes, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna,
Who said, ‘Let us take for ourselves
The pastures of God for a possession.’”* (vv. 9–12)

Asaph asks God to act again as He did in the time of the Judges—when He delivered Israel from overwhelming enemies by His power alone (see Judges 4–8). These past victories are invoked not for revenge, but as reminders that God has defended His people before—and He can do it again.

Personal Application:

When you face opposition or crisis, look back at how God has come through for you—or others—in the past. Let His track record shape your prayers. Asaph wasn't pretending to be strong; he was remembering that God is.

Verses 13–15: A Prayer for Justice and Humbling

*“O my God, make them like the whirling dust,
Like the chaff before the wind!
As the fire burns the woods,
And as the flame sets the mountains on fire,
So pursue them with Your tempest,
And frighten them with Your storm.”* (vv. 13–15)

These vivid images describe a desire for God to scatter and overwhelm the enemy—not out of hatred, but to put a stop to evil. The storm of divine judgment is not revenge—it’s the righteous answer to defiant rebellion.

Verses 16–18: That They May Know Your Name

*“Fill their faces with shame,
That they may seek Your name, O Lord.
Let them be confounded and dismayed forever;
Yes, let them be put to shame and perish,*

*That they may know that You,
Whose name alone is the Lord,
Are the Most High over all the earth.” (vv. 16–18)*

Here we find the ultimate purpose of the psalm: not merely Israel’s survival, but God’s glory and recognition among the nations. The desire isn’t just that enemies be stopped—it’s that they would come to know who God truly is.

“That they may know that You... are the Most High over all the earth.”

Personal Application:

When we ask God to act in the world—whether in justice, revival, or deliverance—our deepest desire should be that people would see His greatness. Let your cries for intervention be shaped by a longing for His name to be honored. The hope is not merely for evil to fail but for hearts to turn to God in awe and truth.

Conclusion: When Evil Rises, God’s People Must Look Up

Psalm 83 is a model of faith-filled protest. It recognizes that there are real enemies, real injustices, and real threats—but it also affirms that God is not absent, even when He seems silent.

The psalmist doesn’t lash out in fear—he calls out to the God of covenant, power, and justice, and places the outcome in God’s hands.

Let this psalm remind you:

- You can be honest with God when the world seems dark.
- God’s silence is not absence—He hears.
- His past faithfulness is your foundation for present prayer.
- God desires that all people—even His enemies—would come to know His name.
- The end goal is not vengeance—but worship.