

“The Mighty Shall Fall”
Psalm 83
(Preached at Trinity, October 9, 2011)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. The Church has always been under attack from Satan and the forces of hell.
 - A. From the very beginning Satan sought to destroy it from the face of the earth.
We read of persecution from the pages of Scripture.
Acts 8:1 KJV - "And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles."
 - B. Large portions of the Book of Revelation uncover Satan's insidious plot to destroy the church.
Revelation 17:6 KJV - "And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration."
 - C. Persecution has always been the lot of Christianity
1 Peter 4:12-13 KJV - "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:
¹³ But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy."
 - D. But Christ has always defended His Church
Matthew 16:18 KJV - "upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."
Romans 8:35-37 KJV - "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. ³⁷ Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."
 - E. Every true local church experiences the hatred of this world. Our own church has been slandered untold times. Yet Christ continues to defend His church.
 - F. And, of course, the Church of Christ has always been under attack by Satan's lies and deceits as he continually tries to undermine the truth
2 Corinthians 11:13-15 KJV - "For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. ¹⁵ Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."
 - G. And what are our greatest weapons?
 1. We have the mighty sword of the Word of God. Truth always prevails!
 2. We have the gift of prayer—the privilege of being able to call upon our Almighty God to come in our defense, even when the foes seem to outnumber us, even when we are powerless to defend ourselves.

- H. And this is true of each of us as individuals – Satan attacks the Kingdom of God from many different angles. As God’s people we can cry out to Him to defend us!
2. But we must remember, God sometimes seems to delay in coming to our defense. We are sometimes left confused with such delays. The reasons for delay are innumerable, hidden in the infinite mind and purposes of God. Sometimes it’s due to our own sin. Sometimes it’s because of our over confidence. Sometimes God delays in order to humble us and cause us to cry out to Him.

LBC: Chapter 5:5 – *Of Divine Providence*

“The most wise, righteous, and gracious God doth oftentimes leave for a season his own children to manifold temptations and the corruptions of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled; and to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon himself; and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for other just and holy ends. So that whatsoever befalls any of his elect is by his appointment, for his glory, and their good.”

3. Such is the message behind **Psalm 83**. This is the last of the Psalms of Asaph. He is stirred over the trouble of Israel and excites his brethren to prayer as he leads them in crying out to God,
Psalm 83:1 KJV - "Keep not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God."

As to the exact context we can’t say for sure. We don’t have any specific examples of so great an attack upon Israel.

- A. Some think it refers to the great threat upon Judah during the time of Jehoshaphat as recorded in **2 Chronicles 20**
2 Chronicles 20:1 KJV - "It came to pass after this also, *that* the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them *other* beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle."
2 Chronicles 20:3-4 KJV - "And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. ⁴ And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask *help* of the LORD: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD."
2 Chronicles 20:9 KJV - "If, *when* evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name *is* in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help."
- B. Others think it refers to the sum of Israel’s enemies from beginning to end.
3. We can divide this psalm into three sections.
- I. **Verses 1-8** – A Call upon God to acknowledge the enemy’s design to destroy them
- II. **Verses 9-16** – A Cry to God to come forth in justice and jealousy to destroy His enemies and preserve His church
- III. **Verses 17-18** – A Climactic Conclusion

- I. **Verses 1-8** – A Call upon God to acknowledge the enemy’s design to destroy them
- A. Asaph sets up his argument before God - “For, lo” - NASB - “For behold”
1. **Verse 2** – They are God’s enemies, those that hate God and elevated themselves – NASB – “those who hate You have exalted themselves”
 2. **Verse 3** – They have set themselves against God’s own people
Psalm 83:3 KJV - "against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones." – The word for “hidden” literally means “treasured”
Hidden in the sense of preserving and protecting that which is most valuable
ESV & NASB = "Your treasured ones."
NIV - "against those you cherish."
 3. **Verse 4** – They have the purpose of utter destruction
Psalm 83:4 KJV - " that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance."
 4. **Verses 5-8** – It would seem that the whole world were in one accord to destroy God’s people
The word for “confederate” in **Verse 5** is בְּרִיתַת beriyth – Covenant –
This was a league of nations that had bound together with the common goal of destroying Israel.
- B. The implication is Asaph thought God was ignoring the plight of His people
Psalm 83:1 KJV - "Keep not thou silence"
1. Literally they are saying, "do not remain quiet"
Asaph is pleading before God that in contrast to His apparent silence, Israel’s enemies are marching towards their destruction.
 2. We must never pretend that God is inactive in this world
It may seem that the wicked are escaping God’s judgment and prevailing upon the earth.
 3. The truth is they will not win.
- II. **Verses 9-15** – A Cry to God to come forth in justice and jealousy to destroy His enemies and preserve His church
- A. Asaph sends forth an imprecatory prayer for God to crush these enemies as He crushed their enemies in the past.
Psalm 83:9 KJV - "Do unto them as *unto* the Midianites"
1. He calls by name some particular enemies that God crushed during the time when Gideon was Judge over Israel
 2. Sisera and Jabin
Judges 4:2-3 KJV - " And the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles. ³ And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel."
Judges 4:15 KJV - "And the LORD discomfited Sisera, and all *his* chariots, and all *his* host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off *his* chariot, and fled away on his feet."

Judges 4:18 KJV - "And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into the tent, she covered him with a mantle."

Judges 4:21 KJV - "Then Jael Heber's wife took a nail of the tent, and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep and weary. So he died."

3. Zebah and Zalmunna – Kings of Midian and Oreb and Zeeb – princes of Midian – **Verse 11**

Judges 7:25 KJV - "And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan."

4. **Verse 13** - God made them like dung, like whirling chaff blown in the wind
The word for “wheel” describes something that rolls or spins
The NIV translates it “tumbleweed” – the remains of a dead bush that rolls about
5. **Verse 14** – Like fire that burns hot for a brief season but soon disappears to ashes.
6. The wrath of God comes upon them as an unexpected storm. They cannot resist His wrath.

- B. Many of this earth’s powerful men seem strong for a season – but they soon go the way of all men and most are soon forgotten
 1. How often do you hear the names of Oreb and Zeeb today? Fearful in their own day but where are they today?
 2. They make their boast – they rattle their sabers, they make men tremble before them. They strut along as if they are greater than God for a brief season than then He crushes them.
 3. The power and might of these so called great ones is soon forgotten
 - a. I remember the former Soviet Union and its powerful leaders Nikita Khrushchev – Soviet Premier from 1958-1964, Leonid Brezhnev, Mikhail Gorbachev
For some of you, you’ve never heard of them – like tumbleweed they are gone
 - b. The other leaders of today will face the same fate
Muammar Qaddafi is already gone, Bashar al-Assad, Kim il-Sung, Mahmud Ahmadinejad.
 - c. How long before the name Osama Ben Laden will be forgotten
 4. The same is true of the multitudes that have risen up to overthrow the church and they too are crushed beneath the mighty hand of God – His kingdom is everlasting
- C. What are you worrying about today?
 - Is it a health concern?
 - Is it a problem you are having with a member of your extended family?
 - Is it a problem with a child?
 - Is it a marital problem?

- Is it a problem you are having at work?
- Perhaps you are one of the ones fearful about the economy, the international scene, terrorism

III. Verses 16-18 – A Climactic Conclusion

- A. As we read this through the window of the New Covenant there is an evangelistic tone to this conclusion even as Asaph calls down God's judgment upon their enemies.
- Asaph prays that his enemies would be humbled
Psalm 83:16 KJV - " Fill their faces with shame"
 - But Asaph isn't praying this with any positive idea towards his enemies. Asaph's meaning here is that his enemies would be disgraced.
 - John Calvin: "It is not the saving knowledge of God which is here spoken of, but that acknowledgement of him which his irresistible power extorts from the wicked."
 - Asaph is praying that God would crush each one these enemies in His judgment just as He did to the Midianites in days past.
 - Asaph is praying that God will bring them low in judgment. He is praying that like Pharaoh, they would be humiliated.
 - In **Verse 17** he is praying that God would destroy them forever
Psalm 83:17 KJV - "Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish:"
 - Just as it was true of Pharaoh and every other lost man, because of the absolute wickedness of their hearts these enemies were bent on their wicked plans and so they would perish in their sins.
 And the ultimate shame will take place upon the Day of Judgment when all will be exposed.
 - But although these mighty men did not turn from their arrogant wickedness and God crushed them in His judgment, we can hear in these words hope.
 In the New Covenant God humbles men, shaming them to repentance
Psalm 83:16 KJV - "Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD."
 - This is the nature of coming to Christ. As we come face to face with the living God we are humbled and bought low
- B. Our message in evangelism is to declare the claim of God upon the lives of all men
Psalm 83:18 KJV - "That *men* may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth."
- It is true that every knee shall bow before God – even as they are crushed beneath His judgment
 - Asaph is declaring the great name of God – God Most High who rules the earth. He has in mind God ruling in perfect judgment.
 - But in the Gospel there is hope for all who turn.