

# PROTECTED AND PRESERVED

## (Sermon Summary)

### Reading: Psalm 68: 1-20.

We are dividing up the Psalm into two parts. This is arbitrary as it is all of one piece. In the part we are looking at today we especially see the Lord's preservation of His people, though we also see His victory over His enemies. His people are in the wilderness and deserts (v4). We have the backdrop of Sinai (v8). Enemies like Og of Bashan are mentioned (v15). We find there are remarkable contrasts with such powerful enemies, but despite this, the Lord's people are protected.

#### 1. Who are we?

We are described as a needy people (v9, v10). We are described as languishing. We can seem very small in a very big world. We are like Israel of old, surrounded by powerful enemies. The words used to describe God's people tell us about their state of neediness. They are 'fatherless' and 'widows' (v5). They are spoken of as being solitary, defenceless and vulnerable. They are prisoners (v6). It is a case of women up against armies (v11). They are an insignificant people more suited to the lowly position among the sheepfolds (v13). Like the church in Philadelphia, they are a people of little strength.

It is true that we are surrounded by many difficulties and obstacles. All kinds of threats stand out against us. We are aware of how the Government's on-line safety proposals can be used against preaching of God's word. So too we are rightly concerned about the so-called gay conversion therapy ban. There are many attacks upon the freedom of believers and the church in general to proclaim and live out Biblical truth.

We might even say that v20 is like our church's motto text. There have been threats to our survival and yet we have survived by the grace of God. We are protected and preserved. There have been some hard things but then we have had the joy of a wedding recently. There is hope and a future held out to us in these things.

#### 2. God's protection.

It is so much part of the nature of God to protect and defend the defenceless. He is known as the strength of Israel. God cares for His people. He cares for His church. He is the one who dwells above in His holy habitation (v5). He is a leader (v7) who rides on the clouds (v4). He is known as the God of His people's salvation (v19, v20). God's power is deployed for the good of His people to defend them from their enemies. He provides

rain for His people to help them in their weary pilgrimage (v9). We feel often like stopping, so weary we are from being on our pilgrimage. We feel burdened, weighed down, full of worries, yet we are helped onwards.

At times there is a cheering word for us to encourage us forwards (Proverbs 25:25). Perhaps a friend brings us a reminder of the goodness of God. We find the words of a hymn comforting and expressing something important to us. There are various reliefs He brings to us. We simply do not know the how often we are benefiting from the work of angels on our behalf. There are scores of Providences where what we had feared simply had not happened. God had over-ruled for His people.

### **3. Eternally secure.**

We might wonder, given how precarious our existence might seem to be, whether this protection will continue forever. The answer is that it will. God has in mind a greater plan that we shall ever fully understand. He is the God of our salvation, and salvation is His work to perform. He has the power, the will, the desire and the affection to bring His plans to pass. Once we are His, we are always His. The rebellious are made His captives (v18). There is an exchange of gifts, as He takes from what we bring, improves it and adds significantly to it. He improves our resources and adds to them.

He is to us a Father who protects. He does not take us out of this evil world. He keeps us in our positions. The wait can be tiring and we might be left wondering what He is doing. But His hold on us is unassailable and He cannot fail. This is why we can have confidence and sing. We are able to have great boldness amidst many foes and many uncertainties.