

## **PROTECT YOUR TREASURED ONES!**

Psalm 83: 1-18 and II Chronicles 20: 1-12 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

The One who saved us is the One who keeps us. When we cross a busy street with small children, we put out our hand and say, “Sweetheart, hold on tight.” Our little ones grasp our hand as tightly as they can. But think about it. Would we ever depend on their grasp? But would any of you ever depend on their grasp. It is our grip on their hand that holds them and keeps them secure. In Philippians 3: 12, Paul insists, “Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me” (Phil. 3:12). Or more exactly, “Christ has a grip on me!” In the ESV, Paul says, “Christ has made me His own.” One thing is certain: It is not our grip on God that keeps us safe, but it is, in fact, the power of Jesus’ grasp on us that holds us safe. No one can take us out of His grasp, not the devil, not even ourselves. Once we’re in His hands, He won’t let go. We have this assurance from the words of Jesus in John 10: 28-29, “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand” Does God protect His treasured ones, His Bride? We are doubly safe! Doubly safe, you say? Yes! Our Father is on one side and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is on the other side of us, clasping us in their own divine personal Father grip and Savior grip. These are the hands that shaped the mountains and oceans and flung the stars into space. Nothing in this life or the next “shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:39). We can pray, “Father, I thank You for the nail-pierced hands that reached out in love and took me by my hand. You have led me by Your right hand throughout life. I trust You to hold me and keep me safe to the end. Yes, Yes, God protects His treasured ones.

But the Spirit of God within me spoke to me as I prepared this message. He spoke to remind me there are ways that He, the Holy Spirit living within my heart also protects me and helps me not to sin. So listen, beloved! You will be tested on whether you believe, heed and follow this message today. Christians often say, “I know Jesus has forgiven me of my sin and shame, but I still desire to keep on sinning. What does the Holy Spirit do, the third person of the Trinity—what does He do when He sees us struggling? What does He do to protect His treasured ones? Let’s look at Galatians 5:16–25, which speaks directly to this. “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness,

orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.” Here are four ways the Holy Spirit protects His treasured ones. **(1) The Holy Spirit fights our sinful desires.** There is an inner war inside the believer—a fight between the Holy Spirit and the flesh. God forbid when we ignore the voice of the Holy Spirit saying “No!” **(2) The Holy Spirit makes the works of the flesh evident to us** warning us that if we practice sinning, we will not inherit the kingdom of God. Gal. 5: 19-21. **(3) The Holy Spirit produces fruit in us.** Galatians 5: 22. **(4) The Holy Spirit empowers us to put sin to death by keeping in step with Him.** Think of it! We are triply safe. As believers, we are all protected as God’s treasured ones by God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Now Asaph was not as aware of being triply safe perhaps as we are, but in Psalm 83: 3, he told the Lord, “They consult together against Your treasured ones.”

Israel, beloved is almost always in the headlines of the news. God has chosen Israel to belong to Himself. This makes them the special target and object of Satan's hatred and also of all those who follow Satan. It was that way in the days of Asaph 3,000 years ago, and nothing has changed. All the promises of the Old Testament depend on God’s salvation and His restoration of Israel. God’s establishing of His Kingdom over which Messiah Jesus will rule, depends and revolves around the ultimate deliverance of Israel. Israel is God's chosen people. To interpret properly the Scripture, to rightly divide the Word of truth, you have to take prophecy literally. Many theologians today believe the promises to Israel have been transferred from Israel to the church. Beloved, God will not forget His promises to Abraham. Psalm 83 is all about God’s intention and this inspired psalm is Asaph’s divinely inspired cry and prophecy of God’s protection of His treasured one—Israel. But don’t despair, beloved. We as God’s children, as Gentiles, wild olive shoots (God’s church) have been grafted into God’s cultivated olive tree, Israel (Romans 11: 11-24) and we have become part of God’s protected treasured ones. As God’s protected treasured ones, we need to tap into the heart of God by learning this psalm of Asaph. **Psalm 83 has four pictures of action—strong action we need to pray for so God will teach us what to do when we as God’s treasured ones feel threatened.**

**THERE COMES A TIME TO CRY OUT AND CALL OUT FOR GOD TO PROTECT US, HIS TREASURED ONES.** (I.) Notice Psalm 83: 1. 2. Perhaps in your life today, you have reached such a time to cry out to God and call out to Him to protect you, His treasured one. We read, “O God, do not keep silence; do not

hold your peace or be still, O God. For behold, Your enemies make an uproar; those who hate You have raised their heads.” This psalm is a cry for help against a world in arms. There comes a time when we must acknowledge we are facing an emergency and we need God to act now. Don’t mistake this cry and call for a demand or a command. Nevertheless, Asaph feels led from the Holy Spirit to pray with authority-and not to hold back. There are times when we cry out and call out to God that the only way we can survive the storm is to speak above it. Asaph tells the Lord there is a very strong reason for God to intervene and act now. That reason is because Israel’s enemies are His enemies. There is no historical time that seems to perfectly fit Asaph’s description of God-hating enemies united against Israel. Nevertheless, one battle fits better than any other and it is in the time of King Jehoshaphat. The year is 896 BC. The Moabites, the Ammonites and the Meunites were gathered against Jehoshaphat. The Hebrew word “meunim” could very well include Asaph’s list of the tents of Edom, the Ishmaelites, Moab and Hagrites, Gebal and Ammon and Amalek, Philistia, Tyre, and Asshur, and even the children of Lot.

One thing is certain. What a motley assembly came against King Jehoshaphat. It has well been said that “hatred is a very potent cement.” Even the most discordant enemies may at times be fused together in the face and the fire of a common animosity. When the Day of the Lord comes as Zechariah 14 speaks when Jesus returns. In that day, God says, in Zechariah “For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. On that day His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives.” Beloved on that day, Zechariah says that there will be a tremendous earthquake that divides the city of Jerusalem and in the valley of the earthquake, the people of God will flee. Then God will strike the nations gathered against Israel, and their eyes will melt in their sockets—it sounds atomic. That day is yet to come. Yet Asaph seems to be prophesying a day that may have been nearer—a day in 896 BC.

If that is so, we know Jehoshaphat proclaimed a fast for all Israel to seek the Lord. The last thing the king prayed in II Chronicles 20: 12 was “We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You.” Now when we cry out to God not to be silent, often He speaks! You say how? Often He raises up an ambassador, someone who will speak His Word. What do you think happened as the king opened himself up to God telling Him his eyes and the nation’s eyes were on the Lord? Listen to II Chronicles 20: 13-17. “Meanwhile all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. And the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a

Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. And he said, “Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you, ‘Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God's. Tomorrow go down against them. Behold, they will come up by the ascent of Ziz. You will find them at the end of the valley, east of the wilderness of Jeruel. You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.’ Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you.” Beloved, first of all, when we cry to God to speak, know He often will bring a word to us from one of His ambassadors. He will speak. One caution I give us all. Don’t ever try to speak a word for God that sounds good, when God hasn’t truly spoken. It is an evil thing. Only speak when God the Holy Spirit will not let you be silent. Secondly,

**THERE COMES A TIME TO ADMIT TO GOD THE PLACE WE ARE IN, AND THE ENEMY’S PLOT AGAINST GOD’S TREASURED ONES. (II.)**

Notice Psalm 83: 3-8. “They lay crafty plans against Your people: they consult together against Your treasured ones. They say, “Come, let us wipe them out as a nation: let the name of Israel be remembered no more!” For they conspire with one accord; against You they make a covenant—the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagrites, Gebal and Ammon and Amalek, Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre; Asshur also has joined them; they are the strong arm of the children of Lot. Selah.” This is not a conspiracy theory. The truth was, ‘it was a conspiracy’—v. 5—a covenanted conspiracy probably with sacrifices, libations poured out, and blood sacrifices made to idols. Their covenant, v. 4 was to “come, let us wipe them out as a nation.” Is there such a desire yet today against Israel? Absolutely! On October 27, 2005, soon nine years ago, the New York Times reported from Tehran — Iran's conservative new president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, said Wednesday that Israel must be "wiped off the map" and that attacks by Palestinians would destroy it, the ISNA press agency reported. Ahmadinejad was speaking to an audience of about 4,000 students at a program called "The World Without Zionism," in preparation for an annual anti-Israel demonstration on the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan.”

Beloved, when pride talks, it talks a good game, a mean game. It makes an uproar. Pride exalts itself and forgets exactly who it is fighting—that it isn’t only the enemies of God, but in all the arrogance, the puffed-up bluster and boasting, pride is following in the fall of Lucifer who fell from heaven. Pride has lifted up its heel against God Himself. When pride conspires, the threats are real and the plans are diabolical, deceitful, and shrewd. But the comfort in telling God all about our struggles is that as His treasured ones, His people who are precious to Him, God’s

promise is certain. Isaiah 54: 15, 17 is powerful protection. “If anyone stirs up strife, it is not from Me; Whoever stirs up strife with you shall fall because of you...No weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall confute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord and their vindication is from, declares the Lord.” Just when we are in the cross-hairs of the enemies destructive plans to wipe us out and erase our memory, just when multitudes have united against us and God. I love the chorus we used to sing in camp as a boy. “If God be for us, who can stand against us. He’s a rock in a weary land, He has worlds at His command; We cannot fall with His mighty arms around us. His word is stronger than the stubborn sword.” Thirdly,

**THERE COMES A TIME TO ASK GOD TO REPEAT HIS VICTORIES OF OLD AGAINST HIS ENEMIES TO PROTECT HIS TREASURED ONES.**

(III.) Psalm 83: 9-17, “Do to them as you did to Midian, as to Sisera and Jabin at the river Kishon, who were destroyed at En-dor, who became dung for the ground. Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna, who said, “Let us take possession for ourselves of the pastures of God. O my God, make them like whirling dust, like chaff before the wind. As fire consumes the forest, as the flame sets the mountains ablaze, so may You pursue them with Your tempest and terrify them with Your hurricane! Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Your name, O LORD. Let them be put to shame and dismayed forever; let them perish in disgrace.” Asaph was calling God’s people back to the days of the Judges. What are the victories Asaph asked to happen again? What is this victory against Midian? It happened in Judges 7: 12 when the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the people of the East lay along the valley like locusts in abundance, and their camels were without number, as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance. And how did God deliver Israel? It was by a fearful man named Gideon with 300 men with trumpets and empty jars with torches lit inside those jars. They captured the two princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb. They killed Oreb at the rock of Oreb and Zeeb, they killed at the winepress of Zeeb, and brought back their heads to Gideon. Then they pursued the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna and the once fearful Gideon killed them himself. What about Sisera and Jabin? Jabin, the king of Canaan was killed by Deborah and Barak, and Sisera, the General of Jabin’s army was killed in the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite. Jael let the General rest in her tent and then when he was sleeping, she drove a tent peg through the General’s temple until the tent peg went into the ground. These victories Asaph was crying for were violent deaths for Israel’s enemy and God’s enemy. The defeat of the Canaanites under Deborah, Jael and Barak happened at the foot of Mt. Tabor, where the town of Endor lies, where the defeated army of the Canaanites became fertilizer, dung for the ground. When we

begin to pray for God to act against the enemies of His people, the pictures of God's victories all over the Old Testament testify that God wins big.

When does God repeat His victories of old? He does, v. 12 when His enemies say, "Let us take possession for ourselves of the pastures of God." Beloved, the enemies of Israel today are not just fighting Israel. Ultimately, they are fighting God. Asaph was not done with his pictures of victory. He called in verses 13-15 for (1) for God to make His enemies like whirling dust, and like chaff before the wind. The picture has God coming down as in a tornado to wipe out the enemy. (2) for God to consume them like a forest fire's flame sets a mountain ablaze, and (3) for God to pursue the enemy with His tempest and terrify them with His hurricane. Verses 16-17 show Asaph praying for God to change the destiny of God's enemies from planned victory to destruction and shame, perishing in disgrace. Fourthly,

### **THERE COMES A TIME TO SING AS GOD PROTECTS HIS**

**TREASURED ONES.** (IV.) v. 18. Why do we sing? "That they may know that You alone, whose name is the Lord, are the Most High over all the earth." Now what happened in 896 BC? Let's read about it in II Chronicles 20: 18-23. "Then Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD, worshiping the LORD. And the Levites, of the Kohathites and the Korahites, stood up to praise the LORD, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice. And they rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa. And when they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed." And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and said, "Give thanks to the LORD, for His steadfast love endures forever." And when they began to sing and praise, the LORD set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed. For the men of Ammon and Moab rose against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, devoting them to destruction, and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they all helped to destroy one another." Beloved, when the battle is too great for us, there comes a time to rest in the word of the Lord, and to sing to the Lord before the enemy. I believe it's getting high time for the church to sing again. "Give thanks to the Lord, our God and King His love endures forever For He is good He is above all things His love endures forever Sing praise, sing praise, sing praise With a might hand and outstretched arm, His love endures forever. For the life that's been reborn His love endures forever Sing praise, sing praise Sing praise, sing praise Forever God is faithful Forever God is strong Forever God is faithful Forever and ever, forever." Amen.