

O GOD, DO NOT KEEP SILENCE – PSALM 83

INTRODUCTION

1. There is a famous quote attributed to Edmund Burke which says, “*All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.*”
2. But what about when it appears to us that God is doing nothing?
3. How do we, as the people of God, deal with the proliferation of evil and immorality when we feel that God is silent and isn’t working to stop it?
4. The last of the psalms of Asaph (***Psalms 50, 73-83***), helps us think through such times.

DISCUSSION

I. A PRAYER FOR GOD’S ACTION

- A. This song begins with a prayer to God, a prayer that He will no longer be silent, but speak and that He will no longer be still, but take action (***Ps. 83:1***).
 - i. Although there are no imperatives here, this threefold petition speaks of emotion, urgency, and longing.
 - ii. Even though Scripture assures us that God never sleeps and knows all, there are times where we may have doubts (***Ps. 121:4***).
- B. What is the problem this time?
- C. The problem is that God’s enemies, which we will see are nations that are enemies of Israel, are making an uproar (***Ps. 83:2***).
 - i. The Hebrew word translated uproar or tumult is picturing a noisy and rebellious chaos in contrast to God’s silence.
 - ii. In the Psalter, this problem with the nations is nothing new (***Ps. 2:1***).
- D. This time the enemies of God are conspiring against the people of God to wipe them out (***Ps. 83:2-5***).
 - i. Notice the psalmist says these are plotting against “your people” and “your treasured ones,” the people God has covenanted to protect.
 - ii. But they aren’t only plotting against the people of God, they are also in league against God Himself – “against you they make a covenant!”
- E. The list of these nations is a veritable “who’s who” of Old Testament bad guys (***Ps. 83:6-8***).
 - i. Here we find descendants of Esau, Ishmael, Lot, and Hagar.
 - ii. But we also find enemies stretching from the time of David up until the divided Kingdom (***Exod. 17:8-16; 2 Kings 15:19***).
- F. What we see in the first half of the psalm is that enemies surround Israel.
- G. While there is no historical occasion where all these nations united this way, it expresses the people’s desperation at being attacked and oppressed by evil foreign nations.
- H. And it is this that makes it easy for other generations of God’s people to take up the psalm and make it their own.
- I. Today we still hear threats against the nation of Israel but as Christians we know that God’s covenant in Christ is no longer concerned with a particular nation.
- J. Now the Church, the people of God in Christ, are God’s “treasured ones” (***Titus 2:14; Exod. 19:5***).
- K. We are engaged in a struggle with evil and foes who are conspiring against God and His people and we need God’s strength and help (***1 Pet. 5:8; Eph. 6:10-12***).

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- L. God teaches us in this psalm that when we feel like He is idle, and we are struggling we need to seek Him in prayer (**1 Pet. 5:6-7; Eph. 6:18**).

II. A PRAYER FOR GOD’S VENGEANCE

- A. What action does the psalmist want God to take?
- B. The second half of the psalm begins with a recounting of God’s deliverance and vengeance on Israel’s enemies of the past (**Ps. 83:9-12**).
 - i. Midian recalls Gideon’s victory over them and their leaders Oreb, Zeeb, Zebah, and Zalmunna (**Judg. 6-8**).
 - ii. Sisera and Jabin recall the victory of Deborah, Jael, and Barak (**Judg. 4-5**).
 - iii. The psalmist prays that God will deal with these present foes the way He did with these in the past.
- C. Then the psalmist also envisions God’s vengeance through the destructive power of nature (**Ps. 83:13-15**).
 - i. Tumbleweed, dust, and chaff are dead and of no use (**Ps. 1:4-5**).
 - ii. Fire surrounds and consumes everything in its path (**Isa. 10:16-19; Deut. 32:22**).
 - iii. The psalmist wants God to harm, to destroy these nations.
- D. But notice that while the psalmist calls for God’s intervention and vengeance, there is a two-fold purpose to his plea.
- E. First, the psalmist desires that through God’s action these enemies might be shamed and seek God (**Ps. 83:16**).
- F. Second, that they might learn that He alone is God over all the earth (**Ps. 83:17-18**).
- G. Again, as God’s people today we have similar struggles and here we find an approved remedy.
- H. God’s action and vengeance in the past assures us that He will, in His time, bring justice and victory over evil so we must be patient and trust (**Rom. 12:19-21**).
- I. But while we wait, we aren’t left to struggle and agonize with no remedy.
- J. As we noted before, we need to turn to God in prayer.
- K. We need to love our enemies and pray for their repentance and their salvation (**Matt. 5:43-48; 2 Pet. 3:9; 2 Tim. 2:23-26**).
- L. We can also pray that if they will not turn from their evil ways that God will deliver us, take vengeance, and make them know that He alone is God (**2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 6:10**).

CONCLUSION

1. “All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.”
2. Psalm 82 ended with a plea for God to judge the earth and take back the nations (**Ps. 82:8**).
3. And here in Psalm 83, we are reminded that in the end, God will avenge Himself and His people (**Rom. 12:19; 2 Thess. 1:7-9**).
4. God is not aloof but is working out His purposes to reconcile all things to Himself in Jesus (**Eph. 1:9-10**).
5. While we may sometimes feel like God is doing nothing, Scripture reminds us that that is not true (**Rom. 8:28**).
6. As God’s people today we must trust in God and trust in His process (**Heb. 11:6**).
7. We must trust that the God of the earth will judge rightly (**Gen. 18:25**).
8. We must live holy lives that bring Him glory and draw others to Him (**Matt. 5:13-16; 2 Pet. 3:11-14**).
9. And when we feel that God is silent and not acting, let us seek Him fervently in prayer as the psalmist does trusting in God’s will, timing, and justice (**Phil. 1:6; 2:10-11**).