

Psalm 20

This Psalm and the following one form a pair, describing the people's intercession and thanksgiving before and after a battle in which they are led by the king.

Psalms 20:1-5 [New King James] *“May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble; may the name of the God of Jacob defend you; may He send you help from the sanctuary, and strengthen you out of Zion; may He remember all your offerings, and accept your burnt sacrifice. Selah. May He grant you according to your heart's desire, and fulfil all your purpose. We will rejoice in your salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners! May the LORD fulfil all your petitions.”*

Such a prayer as this can help us to prepare for some great challenge in our lives.

David knew that trust should be placed in the Lord more than any human power.

This Psalm may have been prompted by the events of 2 Samuel 10. The “You” is singular throughout and identified in **verse 6** as the Lord's anointed.

In this one man the whole people see themselves embodied and their national life sustained.

In reality such a role as described here is too big for any but the Messiah, who is thus foreshadowed.

The same person is referred to as life sustaining and protector [**Lamentations 4:20**] and a constant guide and counsellor [**2 Samuel 21:17**] as the “*Light of Israel.*”

The divine name is a token of God's self-revelation and His readiness to be invoked [**verse 7**] with the added reminder here of His commitment to Jacob and his posterity.

Israel was marked out as God's possession with the added idea of acting on His behalf, [**Numbers 6:22-24; 2 Chronicles 14:11**].

All these aspects of God's relationship with His chosen people are carried over into the New Testament, [John 14:14; John 17:6; Acts 3:1-16].

The word “*sanctuary*” is the Hebrew word “*qodesh*” meaning holiness and a synonym of Zion, signified God's presence.

This spirit of prayer is very different from that of reliance on the ark itself in the days of Eli, or on sacrifices in the days of the prophets, as a means of forcing God's hand.

It is God who confers the entire value to the sacrifices and offerings. This is the gradual movement away for objects to assist our prayerful relationship with God to the worship “*in spirit and in truth*” [John 4:23] within the New Covenant.

This prayer and thanksgiving in these two Psalms acknowledge the very limited expectation of human counsel, or plans, [**Proverbs 19:21**].

Isaiah 11:1-5 [New King James] *“There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. His delight is in the fear of the LORD, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist.”*

Referring to the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, the only sure source of wise planning for the future and answer to our prayers.

Ephesians 3:20-21 [New King James] *“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”*

Only by the indwelling and active presence of the Spirit of Christ [**Romans 8:9**], the Holy Spirit will our hopes and prayers find fulfilment.

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 [New King James] *“Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

The end product of our plans, prayers and petitions should be to bring glory and honour to our Saviour Jesus Christ.

“Set up our banners” is one word in Hebrew “*dâgal*” meaning to be conspicuous, referring to the orderly array of the tribes of Israel in **Numbers 2:2** indicating that our prayers and petitions need to be well thought out, with direction and purpose.

Psalms 20:6-8 [King James] *“Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright.”*

A sudden change to assurance of God’s response is found in almost every suppliant Psalm, is most telling evidence of an answering touch from God, almost as if we saw the singer of the Psalm’s face light up in recognition of the love and faithfulness of the Creator God whom we worship.

Even the dimensions of the vision are enlarged, the help first sought from Zion [verse 2] is now seen as being sent from heaven itself.

The place where people place their trust is contrasted [verse 7].

As long in human history there have been armies and weapons of war, nations and human leaders have trusted in them and their power, but such power does not last, but eventually vanish into the dust.

Because God alone can eternally preserve a nation or individual, we should put our confidence in Him.

Psalms 20:9 [Literal Translation of Hebrew] *“Lord, give victory, the King will answer us in the day of our calling.”*

The final phrase has a telling echo of the opening verse.

The fact that the day of trouble and prayers of wishful optimism have turned into confidence and realistic faith, shows just what rightly directed prayer will accomplish, not only in circumstances but also in the person making the petition.