

Psalm 20

Title: Praying Before the Battle

Author and Date: David

Key Verse: Psalm 20:1, 6, 9

Outline

- A. The Lord answers in the day of trouble (verses 1-3).
- B. The Lord answers in the day of triumph (verses 4-6).
- C. The Lord answers in the day of trust (verses 7-9).

Notes

Title: "For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David." See the notes on Psalm 3 and Psalm 4.

Verse 1: In the Bible, one's "name" stands for all that he is in person and character. "The name of ... God" refers to the Lord's authority and power (see Ezra 5:1; Psa. 44:20; Jer. 26:16; Mic. 4:5). In this psalm, the people pray for "thee" (verses 1-4), the king. The faithful people of Israel (the "we" of verses 5, 7, and 8) pray for the king before he goes into battle. They ask for the Lord's power and presence to aid him. Reference to the Lord's "name" is also found in verse 5 and verse 7. Those praying for the king believed that the Lord would answer him in the day of trouble and save him (see also Psa. 86:7; 91:15). The God who answers is the same God who protected the patriarchs; the "God of Jacob" (see Ex. 3:6, 15; 4:5; 2 Sam. 23:1; Psa. 46:7, 11). Psalm 20 is a picture of the people praying before the battle (anticipation). Psalm 21 is a picture of the people praising after the battle (reflection).

Verse 2: "The sanctuary" and "Zion" (KJV) are references to the tabernacle in Jerusalem where God meets Israel in a special way (see 1 Sam. 4:3-8; Psa. 63:2). The Lord answered "from the sanctuary" (verse 2) and "from his holy heaven" (verse 6).

Verse 3: The people understand that the proper "offerings" and "burnt sacrifice" (KJV) of the king are necessary before the Lord will answer. For the word "Selah", consult the notes on Psalm 3:2.

Verse 6: There is confidence in prayer. "Now know I" (KJV) are words of confidence. "His anointed" (KJV) is a reference to the king, most likely King David. The singular "I" in this verse may be King David, a priest or Levite, or one of the faithful people in the crowd who is praying.

Verse 4-7: The words "counsel" (battle plans), "triumph" (ASV), "set up our banners", "chariots", and "horses" are references to battle. This psalm is most likely offered by

the faithful people of Israel for David as they prayed and prepared before going into battle. For kings preparing for battle, see 1 Samuel 7:9-10; 13:9-12; 1 Kings 8:44-45; and 2 Chronicles 20:4-19. For some of David's battles, see 2 Samuel 8-10.

Verse 9: "King" (capitalized in some versions) is parallel to "Jehovah" (Lord) in the first part of the verse. This is a reference to the Lord as King of kings. The heavenly King (Jehovah) will answer and save the earthly king (David).

Questions

1. When does the Lord answer prayer and what does the Lord do (verse 1)?
2. Where does the Lord's help come from (verse 2)?
3. What does the Lord remember and accept (verse 3)?
4. What does the Lord grant and fulfill (verse 4)?
5. What do the faithful of Israel triumph in (verse 5)?
6. Who does the Lord save? Where and how does the Lord answer prayer (verse 6)?
7. What do some trust in and what do the faithful of Israel trust in (verse 7)?
8. What position do Israel's enemies have and what position do the faithful of Israel have (verse 8)?
9. What request do the faithful of Israel have (verse 9)?

Applications for Today

1. Don't wait until you get into trouble to pray. Always kneel before you fight. Pray before going into any battle (verses 1, 6, and 9). What is to be added to the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:18)?
2. Pray for the nation's leader (verses 1-4). What did Paul say about praying for the nation's leaders and rulers (1 Tim. 2:1-2)?
3. Success comes after sacrifice. Prayer must be accompanied with the proper offerings and sacrifices (verse 3). What do Christians offer up to God (Rom. 12:1; Heb. 13:15; 1 Pet. 2:5)?
4. There is confidence in prayer (verse 6). What gives the Christian boldness and confidence in prayer (1 Jn. 5:14-15)?
5. Triumph, salvation, and strength come from the Lord, not from military might (verse 7). What did Jonathan say about the Lord's salvation (1 Sam. 14:6)? How did David face Goliath (1 Sam. 17:45)? What did Isaiah say concerning Egypt's might (Isa. 31:1-3)? What did Zechariah say about Zerubbabel finishing the temple (Zechariah 4:6)? What did Paul say about victory (Rom. 8:35-39)?
6. Days of trouble (verses 1-3) can become days of triumph (verses 4-6) if we trust in the name of the Lord (verses 7-9). Who can and should be trusted each day (Psa. 9:10; 33:16-21)?