

**SBC – March 24, 2024**  
**Psalm 20 (NKJV)**  
**“God Gives the Victory”**

**Psalm 20 (NKJV)**  
**To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.**

David as he so often does attributes this Psalm to the Chief Musician.

However, this particular Psalm is different from most of David’s Psalms. It reflects the voice of a multitude that is praying for David as he is preparing to enter into military battle. This is seen in the first-person plural (We) seen throughout most of the Psalm (20:1-5; 7-9). However, in verse 6 David interjects in the first-person singular.

So it seems this Psalm is reflective of a prayer meeting prior to David going out to battle where there is much intercession being made for David.

Psalm 20 and 21 are partner Psalms. Psalm 20 emphasizes asking for victory; while 21 is the celebration of the victory. Both are Royal Psalms and both are Military Psalms.

**Slide # 1**

**Psalm 20**  
**“God Gives the Victory”**

- A. The People Pray for the King vv. 1-5
- B. Confidence In & Dependence Upon the LORD vv. 6-9

**1 May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble; May the name of the God of Jacob defend you;**

Before the army went out to battle they were first to dedicate themselves to the Lord.

**Slide # 2**

**Deuteronomy 20:2–4 (NKJV)**

**2** So it shall be, when you are on the verge of battle, that **the priest shall approach and speak to the people.**

**3** And he shall say to them, ‘Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them;

**4** for the LORD your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.’

For the Jews the way they prepared for battle was to focus on the Lord realizing He was the One that gives the victory.

The “you” they are praying for is singular and is shown to be Lord’s anointed as seen in verse 6. This would be king David. In praying for David they are really praying for David and all his troops.

The day of trouble in view here is the day of battle. War is always ugly – it is a day of trouble. They are praying for God to answer their prayer for victory in this day.

And specifically, they are asking the God of Jacob to defend him. They are definitely asking for the favor and protection of God to be upon David.

Hebrew Poetry repeats the same basic idea with slight variation to make an emphasis. This is basically what we have in Ps. 20:1.

**2 May He send you help from the sanctuary, And strengthen you out of Zion;**

The sanctuary represented the place of God’s special presence as did the holy hill of Zion in Jerusalem. God’s ark, but not the Temple, was present there at this time.

They are asking that God would send help and strength from His holy presence. In terms of application Spurgeon wrote...

“This verse is a benediction befitting a [Sunday] morning, and may be the salutation either of a pastor to his people, or of a church to its minister.” - (*Charles Spurgeon*)

**3 May He remember all your offerings, And accept your burnt sacrifice. Selah**

Offerings and sacrifice were expressions of worship and devotion to God. It is thought that the offerings were in effect “gratitude offerings” and that the sacrifice was a “burnt offering” denoting surrender and commitment.

The sentiment is for God to honor these offerings. God was not pleased with all offerings. Those just going through the ritual without any heart worship were not pleasing to Him.

**Selah** is a common word in the OT being found there 74 times. Most scholars believe it signified a reflective pause with the idea – stop and think about this – or stop and soak this in. Some also think it may have indicated a musical interlude of some kind.

**4 May He grant you according to your heart's desire, And fulfill all your purpose.**

This is not just a general prayer request: “God give him whatever he wants.” There is a military context here. The sense is, “May God grant you the victory that you desire in battle.”

David’s purpose was to be victorious for the Lord’s glory and for the good of his people. So the request that David would “fulfill all his purpose” was in keeping with God’s good purpose for His leadership rule over His people. They are really praying that David would be successful in what God has called him to do in defeating the enemies of God and His people.

We know that as we pray in keeping with God’s will He answers those prayers.

**Slide # 3**

**1 John 5:14–15 (NKJV)**

**14** Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that **if we ask anything according to His will,** He hears us.

**15** And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

We don’t just have a blank check in prayer – we have a blank check with the purpose being God’s glory in the memo. If it is truly according to the will of God for His glory then we can be assured that He will answer.

Once again, we see that God’s method is to work through prayer. Prayer is relational. In prayer we recognize our dependence upon God. As He works we see Him work and give Him praise. In this way God is glorified.

God has a purpose for every life and it is appropriate to pray that we would fulfill that purpose whatever it may be. We work out our salvation through prayer.

**Slide # 4**

**John 17:4 (NKJV)**

**4** I have glorified You on the earth. **I have finished the work** which You have given Me to do.

**2 Timothy 4:7 (NKJV)**

**7** I have fought the good fight, **I have finished the race**, I have kept the faith.

How wonderful to FINISH what God has purposed for us to do. That is really what matters. We want to finish well. And that happens as we pray.

**5 We will rejoice in your salvation, And in the name of our God we will set up our banners! May the LORD fulfill all your petitions.**

They have prayed and now they are anticipating that God will give deliverance. They proclaim that in the name of God they will set up their banners.

Banners were flags or signs of victory and celebration. They were tokens of triumph that they would set up to the glory of God – giving Him all the credit for the victory. Perhaps they would fly a sign with YHWH RULES on it – or “Our God is Number One”.

**Slide # 5****Exodus 17:15 (NKJV)**

**15** And Moses built **an altar** and called its name, **The-LORD-Is-My-Banner**;

The central verse in the Psalm is verse 5, a confident affirmation of victory before the battle even started. – **Warren Wiersbe**

And yet there is a lingering prayer, “May the LORD fulfill all your petitions.” May the LORD answer all your specific prayer requests. In the heat of the battle may you see answers to specific prayers.

That is a great way to pray for someone. We as God’s children are all in the middle of spiritual warfare. We all need prayer. At the end of the most detailed passage on spiritual warfare in the NT as found in Eph. 6:10-20; Paul says this:

**Slide # 6**

**Ephesians 6:18 (NKJV)**

**18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—**

We all need prayer: Indeed, may God hear and answer our petitions in the heat of the battle.

**6 Now I know that the LORD saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven With the saving strength of His right hand.**

This prayer service to send David and his men out was sort of like a spiritual pep-rally. David at this point interjects an affirmation of faith. He knows with confidence that the LORD will save His anointed – which happened to be him. He was sure God would rescue him and not allow him to go down in defeat.

He was confident of answered prayer – that God would indeed answer these sincere prayers that were being offered up for him. David as a man of faith knew God works through prayer.

He saw God as answering from His holy heaven – right from the throne room of heaven. And he expected God to powerfully intervene with His right hand. The right hand was often used as a symbol of strength and power.

**Slide # 7****Exodus 15:6 (NKJV)**

**6 “Your right hand, O LORD, has become glorious in power; Your right hand, O LORD, has dashed the enemy in pieces.**

When David refers to himself as the Lord’s “anointed” it is the idea that he was God’s special chosen leader. In the OT priests and kings were anointed with oil showing that they had a special calling upon their lives to serve in a special leadership role.

All the God-ordained kings of Israel were the Lord’s anointed, but there was a prophesied One Who would be THE ANOINTED ONE – which is what the word Messiah means. It means “anointed One”. And then the Hebrew word Messiah finds its counterpart in the NT in the word “Christ”. “The Christ” is literally “the anointed One”.

**Slide # 8****Psalm 2:2 (NKJV)**

2 The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and **against His Anointed**, saying,

**Psalm 2:6 (NKJV)**

6 "Yet I have **set My King** On My holy hill of Zion."

**7 Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.**

Chariots and horses in bible times represented military power. It would be comparable today to talking about tanks and jet fighters.

This is where people most naturally would put their confidence. The army that had the greatest number of chariots and horses would be favored to win.

But when you add God into the mix that changes everything. God had specifically told His people that their trust was not to be in horses.

The king was not to multiply horses and put his trust in these human resources.

**Slide # 9****Deuteronomy 17:16 (NKJV)**

16 But **he shall not multiply horses** for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the LORD has said to you, 'You shall not return that way again.'

**Proverbs 21:31 (NKJV)**

31 The horse is prepared for the day of battle, But **deliverance is of the LORD.**

**Slide # 10****Psalm 33:16–17 (NKJV)**

16 **No king is saved by the multitude of an army**; A mighty man is not delivered by great strength.

**17 A horse is a vain hope for safety**; Neither shall it deliver any by its great strength.

People of faith realize God may use whatever he wants to use, but victory is always a matter of God. Strength is with the Lord. Safety is of the Lord!

The issue here is one of TRUST! It is part of human nature to naturally put our trust in other things – other than God Himself Who is to be the object of our trust.

### **Slide # 11**

#### **Jeremiah 17:5–8 (NKJV)**

**5** Thus says the LORD: “**Cursed is the man who trusts in man** And **makes flesh his strength**, Whose heart departs from the LORD.

**6** For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, And shall not see when good comes, But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, In a salt land which is not inhabited.

**7** “**Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD**, And **whose hope is the LORD**.

**8** For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.

This is the GREAT issue in life. Will we trust in the Lord or will we trust in man? People put their confidence in something. And ultimately it consistently comes back to this: Will we trust in the Lord or will we trust in man and his resources? Will we trust in what God can do for us; or will we trust in our own abilities?

This is not to say we shouldn't be responsible, but God often puts us in situations where the issue is this: Where is our trust going to be? And the next verse shows what the terrible tendency of humanity tends to be.

### **Slide # 12**

#### **Jeremiah 17:9 (NKJV)**

**9** “The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?”

In contrast to those who trust in human resources – in chariots and horses, the people of faith say, “But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.”

The word “remember” (Heb. Zakar) means to keep in memory or to ponder. It is so easy for us as humans to forget God. Oh, not totally, but it is easy to lose sight of Him in the sense He is not top of mind in the heat of the battle.

Suddenly our mindset shifts to taking stock in what human wisdom and human strength can do for us. We see this with professing Christians who put their stock in politics, in riches, in their own smarts, or whatever it may be. Even God’s people can get sidetracked into man-centered thinking.

Dr. Robert Dick Wilson was a professor of Hebrew at Princeton Seminary in the early part of the last century. He knew almost 40 languages! But he was not only a scholar; he was a man of faith.

Once Wilson went to the seminary chapel to listen to his former student, Donald Grey Barnhouse, who returned to preach.

Afterwards, he said to Barnhouse, “If you come back again, I will not come to hear you preach. I only come once. I am glad that you are a **big-godder**. When my boys come back, I come to see if they are **big-godders or little-godders**, and then I know what their ministry will be.” Barnhouse asked him to explain. Wilson replied, “Well, some men have a little god and they are always in trouble with him. He can’t do any miracles. He can’t take care of the inspiration and transmission of the Scripture to us. He doesn’t intervene on behalf of His people. They have a little god and I call them little-godders. Then there are those who have a **great God**. He speaks and it is done. He commands and it stands fast. He knows how to show Himself strong on behalf of them that fear Him. You have a great God; and He will bless your ministry” (Barnhouse, *Let Me Illustrate* [Revell], pp. 132-133).

People of faith are “big godders”. They serve a BIG GOD Who has no problem taking care of them. And therefore they TRUST in Him!

To keep the LORD in mind builds confidence and trust. No wonder the Bible says, “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.” (Col. 3:4). Whereas others are focused on flesh resources, the people of faith are focused on God. That’s the emphasis of this entire Psalm. It’s all about looking to God for the victory and depending on Him!



The name of the LORD refers to His person, His character, His attributes – all that He stands for.

### **Slide # 13**

#### **Proverbs 18:10 (NKJV)**

**10** The **name of the LORD is a strong tower**; The righteous run to it and are safe.

The righteous, the people of faith take cover in the Lord! He is our strong tower!

In the spiritual war, in which we are all engaged, the first and necessary step to victory is, to renounce all confidence in the wisdom and strength of nature and the world; and to remember, that we can do nothing, but in the name, by the merits, through the power, and for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord, and our God. – **George Horne**

And how does this work out?

#### **8 They have bowed down and fallen; But we have risen and stand upright.**

The testimony of God's people is that those who put their trust in chariots and horses are bowed down and fall. They are given over to total defeat!

But in contrast they say, "we have risen and stand upright". God's people of faith are left standing because they put their faith in Him.

In the book of Revelation in the Tribulation Period when the earth is shaken, the stars are falling, every mountain and island are moved out of their place.

### **Slide # 14**

#### **Revelation 6:17 (NKJV)**

**17** For the great day of His wrath has come, and **who is able to stand?**"

And then the answer is given in the next chapter where suddenly we find a great multitude **STANDING** before the throne. Mind you, they are found standing. How did they get there?

**Slide # 15****Revelation 7:13–14 (NKJV)**

**13** Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "**Who are these** arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?"

**14** And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and **washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**"

In the end those found standing are those who come to faith in Jesus and are washed in the blood of the Lamb. There is no other ultimate safe place.

Faith honors God and God honors faith! People of faith in the end are ones left standing!

**9 Save, LORD! May the King answer us when we call.**

This could also be translated as:

**Psalm 20:9 (ESV)**

**9** O LORD, save the king! May he answer us when we call.

As such the Psalm ends as it began. David and the people of faith were confident that God would answer prayer, but it hadn't happened yet, and so they continued to pray. We need to pray it through. There is not time to let up or coast!

We pray before the battle, on the way to the battle, and through the battle. Every step of the way we need to be in prayer.

Life is to be handled with prayer which is indicative of the walk of faith. Faith and prayer go together.

**Ephesians 6:16 (NKJV)**

**16** above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

John Fletcher (a contemporary of John Wesley) was known to greet friends by saying, "***Do I meet you praying?***" Great question!

God works victory through prayer. God help us to handle life and all its challenges with prayer. It is the key to victory as seen in Psalm 20!