

## OUR HELP IN TROUBLED TIMES

### Psalm 20

**Intro:** I related to you last Sunday that when Lucille and I finished memorizing the over one hundred Bible verses in the Topical Memory System of the Navigators (the organization in which our Jerry Bridges has spent most of his adult life), we were encouraged to go on memorizing three verses a week of our own choosing. One of the verses that I chose during that time was Psalm 20:7, “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.” Now all of you who are doing our memory work this year, will be memorizing it. Actually the word trust in the beginning of the verse is not in the original text, but was added by the translators of the KJV. The translators of the RSV chose the word “boast,” which is suitable too. Anyone reading the OT knows how important chariots and horses were in ancient warfare. Armies were usually valued according to the number of chariots they had with trained drivers and/or horses upon which they could put riders. This was a Psalm of David, you can see from the heading of the Psalm, and David, like any other king, had many chariots and horses. It was like we might boast today in tanks and planes and ships and the size of our military manpower. So David was not saying that they should not have chariots and horses, but he was saying that that was not where his trust, or his people’s trust, should be. He concluded by saying, “but we,” all of us, those who go to war and those who stay at home, “will remember the Name of the Lord our God.”

Bible expositors who have written on this Psalm and Psalm 21 say that the two are a pair. Graham Scroggie expressed it this way:

Both are battle songs; the twentieth precedes the encounter, and the twenty-first follows it; the one is prayer, and the other is praise; the one anticipates, and the other reflects (*The Psalms*, p. 131).

So Psalm 20 gives us the preparation for the battle, and verse 7 tells us where their confidence was.

The Psalm is divided into three parts:

- I. The prayer of the people (vv. 1-5).
- II. The response of a single person, probably David himself (vv. 6-8). And the Psalm concludes with:
- III. A Final Prayer of the people as he leads the horses and chariots into battle (v. 9).

I hope that we can see this morning that a consideration of the whole Psalm makes any single verse more meaningful. And the single verse I am talking about is verse 7. Dr. Scroggie said that the message of the Psalm is that we are always to kneel before we fight. We can expand that by saying that the Psalm teaches us that we always need to pray before we do anything. We need to make sure that our trust is in the Lord. Often when the people of God in the OT prayed, they didn't have to do the fighting. Even when we are not facing any particular conflict, it is always best to pray first.

Now let us look at the Psalm:

### **I. THE PRAYER OF THE PEOPLE (Psa. 20:1-5).**

This shows the humility of King David because he is the one who recorded what happened before he went to war. We can be sure that he, and possibly prayed long, but when he recorded the preparation that was made for the battle, he did not speak of himself, nor of those who were going into the battle with him with the chariots and horses, *but he spoke of the prayer of the people for whom David and his men were going into the battle.*

In verse 1 we see that to the people it was not just important for them to pray, but they needed to make sure that “the Lord” was hearing them. This called for what Ezra characteristically did. He prepared his heart to seek the Lord in His Word, and to make sure that he was doing it. The Apostle John wrote later telling the Church how they could be sure that the Lord was hearing their prayer. His words are in 1 John 5:14-15:

14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us:

15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

Then the people followed that first statement in verse 1 with a second very important word of prayer. It was this: “the Name of the God of Jacob defend thee.”

In our main text (v. 7) we have an emphasis upon “the name of the Lord our God.”

And in verse 5 we have this statement in the prayer of the people: “We

## Psalm 20 (3)

will rejoice in Thy salvation, and in the Name of our God we will set up our banners.”

I think that it was Spurgeon who said that in verse 1 they did not mention that God was the God of Abraham because that might have been higher than they were, but they identified with Jacob because he was more like they were. That may be true, but at least they knew that God was still a God for them like He had been to Jacob even though Jacob’s record was not the best. It is encouraging to see that the people believed that God was faithful to His people even when His people were not faithful to Him.

“The Name of the God of Jacob,” and “the name of our God” (v. 5), and “the name of the Lord our God” (v. 7), all remind us that God’s names reveal Who He is. Even today when we come to the Lord in prayer, we are told to pray in His Name. This shows our God-given right to come to the Lord for His help. All of us should acquaint ourselves with the names of God and of Christ in Scripture. There is hardly anything that will strengthen our faith like dwelling upon the Names of God. None of us has seen God, nor have we seen Christ, but we know them by their Names.

And notice that we find in the names of God assurance that He will defend us in our times of need.

While David was alive the temple had not yet been built, and so that was not the “sanctuary” that the people mentioned in verse 2. But they did have a place, modest though it may have been, where the presence of the Lord was manifested among them. And so you can see when you put both statements of verse 2 together that the God of history with Jacob was the same God who was present with them in Zion, which speaks of Jerusalem. How comforting should be the unchanging character of God. What He has been, He is now, and always will be. So His faithfulness to His people in the past is assurance of His faithfulness to us today!

In verse 3 they were asking to the Lord to remember all of David’s offerings, and David’s burnt sacrifices. David was an example to his people. And they were assured that, while the Lord is never indebted to us, yet there is a sense in which our obedience to God in the past gives us the confidence to expect the Lord’s blessing in our times of need.

And what a commentary verses 4 and 5 are on the character of David

according to the minds and hearts of his people.

I have often been impressed in the epistles of Paul in the NT that when a church was doing well, that was actually an encouragement for him to pray for them. Possibly that was because Paul knew that the Lord would be busy doing what he could to cause the believers a setback. Here in Psalm 20 King David's godliness was obviously and encouragement to his people to pray for him, knowing that God would answer their prayers. It ought to make us ask the question about ourselves, If the Lord blessed me according to the obedience and faithfulness of my life, how much blessing would He give me. As we learned in Psalm 1, "Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Does that describe me? Does it describe you? If we are obedient to the Lord, we are going to be blessed. And the positive side is just as important: "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate . . ."

The people were looking for all of the evidence in David's life which would lead them to believe that the Lord was ready to hear their prayers for David, and to bless him! There is much food here for us to feed on.

To fulfil David's counsel meant that God's will was his will. The purposes he had were right in line with the purposes of God. What a testimony the people of Israel were giving to David by their prayer.

Verse 5 concludes their prayer on the same note. David was truly a man after God's heart. And the people could confidently pray that the Lord would fulfill all of David's petitions knowing that David wanted to see the Lord's will done for the Lord's glory. David was blessed to have such people supporting him, but they, in turn, could be very thankful that they had such a King to lead them. As you and I well know, not all of the kings of Israel and Judah could be described like David was being described. In fact, very few of them measured up spiritually to David.

Now we come to the response of a single person, as indicated by the pronoun "I." So let's call this second point:

## **II. DAVID'S RESPONSE (Psa. 20:6-8).**

Some expositors take it that by the words, "His anointed," that David was speaking of the Messiah. That may be, but we must remember that David

was also the Lord's "anointed" – anointed as King over Israel, and anointed for salvation. David was one of God's elect, just as you and I are if we are saved.

Notice that this was a learning experience for David. He said, "Now I know," but "know" what? The people had been assured that God was hearing their prayer, and now David says that he is also assured. David knew that God had heard him, and had heard the people, and would work for him "with the saving strength of his right hand." Notice that the Lord hears in heaven what His people pray on earth, and "from His holy heaven" He acts "with the saving strength of His right hand." Distance is no problem for the Lord, nor does distance ever keep Him from hearing what His people say in their prayers. This was a very important experience in the life of David. "Now I know . . ." Can we say that, or are our ideas of God restricted to what we and other people, even the Lord's people, can hear and do.

Then we have our verse: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses." It is good to have them. It is necessary that we have them. *But they must not be what we are trusting in.* What should be true of us? "But we will remember the name of the Lord our God." This speaks of a present fact, and a clear intention regarding the future. This is what each one of us should be able to say, and it is a fact of life that we should never forget.

The greatest guarantee that we have that we will not forget, is the reading of the Word, and then meditating on it.

There have been many times that we have forgotten God altogether, haven't there? We need to cultivate the habit of remembering the Lord from the time we get up in the morning until we go to bed at night. That is why we come to the Lord's Supper. We do it in remembrance of Him.

When we remember the Lord, the enemy is brought down; we are risen and are standing upright. The battle may be fierce, but there is never any doubt as far as the outcome is concerned. "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57).

### **III. THE FINAL PRAYER OF THE PEOPLE (Psa. 20:9).**

As King David goes off to war with his chariots and horses, we could render this prayer, "Give victory to the king, O Lord, in the day of our

calling.

Derek Kidner concludes his comments on this great Psalm with these words:

The fact that the time of trouble has been made the time of prayer makes the buoyant spirit of verses 6-8 a matter, not of wishful optimism, but of realistic faith (p. 103).

**Concl:** In many respects this is a day of trouble (Psa. 20:1) for all of us, but there are not many days here on earth that are not trouble in one form or other. That is why it is so important for all of us to turn our troubles into prayer. If we do, we will always carry away with us a “now I know,” know more about God, know more about our Savior, know more about ourselves, and know more about the ways of the Lord. When you have a King who prays, this produces a people who pray, and the two, by the grace of God, make an unbeatable combination.