

Psalm 20
by Pastor Roy Hogan

Psalm 20 is yet another of the Psalm attributed to David. This Psalm speaks of a nation, Israel, at war.

War is a terrible thing. No person in a right mind would prefer war as a solution to conflict between human beings. The carnage war leaves behind is bitter and disgusting. My father was a frontline foot-soldier in World War II. I have heard him, and my mother as well, speak of the awfulness of war. Father spoke more than once about the winter of 1944-1945 when he served in the forest of Germany. He was a member of the troops assigned to penetrate the vast fortress Hitler had assembled around his country, Germany. The combat was fierce and virtually hand-to-hand. Father lived in a fox-hole for months. During this dreadful winter with deep snow and bitter cold, he said he was only in a building one time for a brief time over a span of several months. So close was the enemy that if a soldier left their foxhole for even a brief time, the enemy would be in the hole when the soldier returned. Mom was scared by the war. When Dad was drafted and went away to fight, they had two small children and mother was expecting a third. Mother suffered from the war though it was thousands of miles away.

Throughout Bible history, God seemed to use war as a way to whip rebellious nation. Reading the Old Testament, we frequently encounter war. Often, the war involves the nation Israel. Sometimes, God engaged Israel in war to chastise them for wrongdoing. Other times, Israel went to war to punish other nations. Not long after Israel's liberation from the Egyptians, they encountered war in the wilderness. By the divine purpose and knowledge of God, he allowed Israel to occupy Canaan-land by means of war. Do you remember as child marching around Jericho in Sunday School class?

David was a warrior. The first notoriety in his life was when he took down Goliath. He added to his fame and favor among the

people when the people said of David “Saul has slain his thousands, but David his ten-thousands.” This Psalm 20 is precious to any person who has known conflict. You may not have been in the army of your nation, but you have had personal battles. Perhaps it was a battle involving conflict with family or an employer or the government. Not all war involves guns. Bear in mind, civilization will end with Battle Armageddon.

It is said of Psalm 20 that it is instruction to prepare one for conflict. Let us take a look. This Psalm can be divided in two parts: verse 1-5 are a plea from the people to their king; verse 6-9 is a plea of the king unto God for help for his people.

20:1-3

The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee; 2 Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion; 3 Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice;

Selah

Have you ever experienced a day of trouble? If you have not, I predict the day of trouble will come. I wish when trouble came, it only last one hour or, better, a few minutes. To speak of the period of trouble as a day is meaningful. Trouble can appear at sunrise and last through morning, afternoon, evening, and night and be there awaiting when you wake the next day. Trouble can accompany you to breakfast, to lunch, to dinner and on to the bedtime snack. Trouble can take a shower with you, watch you comb your hair and brush your teeth, and then get in your vehicle and go to work with you. Trouble punches the time-clock at the workplace, gets on the forklift with you then, walks to your car with you at quitting time. A day of trouble is a complete cycle of your life. I wish it were an hour in length.

Folk tend to get religious in time of war. Men are often guilty of living a double-standard. Those who perhaps have ridiculed David now are rooting for him to get in touch with God in this dreadful

time of war. In the USA, those who ridicule our leader, the President, would side with him and urge him to call on God if this nation were attacked. There are no Democrats and Republicans in time of war. I have been in church all my lifetime. Many have been to occasions when I have seen folk who profess to be saved leave God in good times and come to him in time of trouble. This is making mockery of the Christian faith.

The people of Israel are pulling and hoping for their king to get in touch with God. In verse 1, they hope for him to contact God through prayer as they plea “the Lord hear thee.” In time of national emergency, one would hope their leader can pray and get in touch with God. Are you in touch with God? Should you get that dreaded call from emergency personnel that one of your loved ones has been in an awful accident, can you reach God? I have often said one of the worst spiritual conditions I find myself in is when I have to pray before I am able to pray. Often, there is no time for such an approach. All of God’s people need a constant lifeline with God.

The people are asking their king, David, to call on *the name of the God of Jacob*. Jacob is perhaps the most interesting character in the Bible. He was a schemer. He was an arm-twister. He was cunning and crafty. I have often said if anyone could drive God crazy, Jacob would have done so. If you want to see the longsuffering of God toward man, visit the life of Jacob in the book of Genesis. The *God of Jacob* puts up with us despite our behavior. The *God of Jacob* loves us despite the way we treat him and fellow man. He loves us despite our faults and short-comings. I am glad God is willing to come where we are.

Verse 2 speaks of the plea for wisdom and strength that the leaders and people of the nation need in this time of distress. The sanctuary provides help in the form of knowledge. Psalm 73:17 *Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.* When we meet God in the sanctuary, we get great understanding. Hannah went to the sanctuary at Shiloh concerning

her infertility. Zachariah understood in the temple God's plan to send forth a baby, John the Baptist, to the womb of his wife Elizabeth.

Verse 2 offers a plea to Zion. Zion is the Pentagon of David. It is the source we go to when he need strength. In Zion we get the arsenal, the weapons, we need for battle. We need both the sanctuary and Zion in time of crisis.

The word collateral means something of value that stands good for a loan. Collateral insures that the load will be repaid. Do you have any collateral with God? David had collateral with God. He needs a loan from God. He needs God's wisdom and might to lead the army into battle against the enemy. It is a good thing that he had collateral. Verse 3 points back to David's collateral in the form of his faithfulness to present offerings and sacrifices to God. When trouble comes, will you have anything in the bank? Have you been faithful to God? Build collateral today for the storm that is coming tomorrow. Someday, the doctor may say it is cancer. Then, you will be glad you were faithful to God's house, to his Bible, and to him in tithes and offerings. You will have collateral. The word Selah appears at the end of verse 3. The word means "pause and meditate."

20:4-5

*Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel.
5 We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we
will set up our banners: the LORD fulfil all thy petitions.*

These two verses further point to the people's desire that their king get his instruction from God. Fortunately, there were citizens in the nation of Israel who believed God was the solution and the way to victory- *Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel.* We need more heart knowledge and less head knowledge. If you can pray, you can have knowledge in your heart sent to you by God.

Sadly, America is far from God. Should tragedy, such as war, come, how many citizens would demand our leader follow God's plan? New York state at one time had a simple voluntary prayer in the public schools that went like this: "Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence on Thee and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers, and our country." The US Supreme Court ruled this prayer unconstitutional and the people rejoice at its removal from the schools. If this is the notion of the citizens of this nation, only few would encourage our leader to get advice from God.

The word banner appearing in verse 5 is an interesting word. The word means "the chiefest." We have no one to help us that is higher than God. He is the chief among ten thousand. If God be for us and our nation, who can be against us?

20:6

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.

The "I" in this verse is David speaking. He knew the able hand of God having seen God at work in the past. Notice the word *saveth* is the past tense form. It is common in the Bible that men looked to the past at what the hand of God had done in days gone by. The hand of God helped David slay a lion and a bear. The hand of God helped him bring down Goliath. At the end of the first battle the children had in the wilderness, Moses instructed Joshua to write down the victory no doubt for the purpose of reflecting back on it.

Do you have any experiences with God? Trials are not welcome in our lives. Yet, when a trial comes it is comforting to be able to look back and see what God did in the past.

20:7

Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

America has treaties with other countries that they believe will ensure peace with that country. America has thousands of men and women in uniform. America has an amazing arsenal. We have 21st century horses and chariots. We do not call them horses or chariots, but tanks, planes, and missiles.

David had an army. The army had bows and spears. David did not disband his army simply because he had faith in God. That would have been foolish. David had great generals like Joab, perhaps the greatest leader of any army in any period in history. But, his trust was not in men. The frontline of his army was his faith in God. *We will remember the name of the Lord our God.*

20:8-9

They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright. 9 Save, LORD: let the king hear us when we call.

Do you have battles in life? If so, who do you trust in? It was the prayers of the saints of God that brought our men home from World War II. Fifty million service men and civilians died in World War II. My father came home. Bless the name of the Lord our God.