

Israel's Hymnal  
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## PSALM TWENTY

[Pss 20:1] Jehovah answer thee in the day of trouble; The name of the God of Jacob set thee up on high;  
[Pss 20:2] Send thee help from the sanctuary, And strengthen thee out of Zion;  
[Pss 20:3] Remember all thy offerings, And accept thy burnt-sacrifice; Selah  
[Pss 20:4] Grant thee thy heart's desire, And fulfill all thy counsel.  
[Pss 20:5] We will triumph in thy salvation, And in the name of our God we will set up our banners:  
Jehovah fulfill all thy petitions.  
[Pss 20:6] Now know I that Jehovah saveth his anointed; He will answer him from his holy heaven With  
the saving strength of his right hand.  
[Pss 20:7] Some [trust] in chariots, and some in horses; But we will make mention of the name of  
Jehovah our God.  
[Pss 20:8] They are bowed down and fallen; But we are risen, and stand upright.  
[Pss 20:9] Save, Jehovah: Let the King answer us when we call.

## SEEKING GOD FOR VICTORY

- I. The background which is presupposed by Psalm 20 (II Chron., Chap. 20)
- II. The congregation's expression of good wishes for the king as he entered the battle (vss. 1-4)
- III. The congregation's expression of confidence of victory (vss. 5-8)
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Psalms 20 and 21 are companions. This statement being true, one must study them together. This fact is recognized by the leading commentators. Psalm 20 consists of a record, with its necessary inferences, of King David's seeking the face of the Lord and His blessings upon him as he undertook one of his great wars, possibly the greatest of his history--the war against the Ammonites. After this divine service, the forces of Israel went into action. The war was won. Then there was held a thanksgiving service at the Temple in praise to God for His having answered the prayer and having granted victory.

God promised to give Israel rest if she would only trust Him and follow His will. This is set forth in Leviticus 26:1-13 and Deuteronomy 28:1-14. Had Israel been faithful and true to God in her relations with Him and with one another, the Lord would have given this absolute rest to His Chosen People. Palestine would have been a veritable paradise; a modern utopia. There would have been no crop failures, no pestilences, no wars; on the contrary there would have been peace, joy, and happiness. Israel would have been the ideal kingdom with God's glory overshadowing the people, had she only been obedient to the divine will. Moreover, never would there have crossed her frontiers a single soldier of a hostile power, the reason

being that the Lord would have stood guard at her frontiers. Such are the promises that were made to Israel upon the condition of her faithfulness and loyalty to Him.

Instead, however, of following the Lord and trusting Him and allowing Him to pour out His blessings upon her, Israel continued to go off into sin and to reject the divine will. Her history therefore has been one of sorrows distress, and much blood. War after war has come upon the nation; pogrom after pogrom has been launched against this helpless people. According to Daniel's prophecy wars are determined against the City of Jerusalem and the holy people Israel unto the end of this age.

God warned Israel through Moses not to deal in horses and the war chariots. Nevertheless, in absolute violation of the prohibition, the kings of Israel continued in a lucrative trade of importing the war chariots and horses out of Egypt for other countries. Isaiah, in enumerating the sins of Israel, said that the land was full of horses, that is, war horses (Isa. 2:7).

When Israel would not have God's first plan for her, she had to accept the consequences of her disobedience and lack of surrender. The result was that there were continual wars. She had to be armed to the utmost in order to repel attacks that were launched against her. Such national distress is the price which the disobedient and rebellious house of Israel paid for their disregarding the will of God. Sin and disobedience never pay.

#### I. The background which is presupposed by Psalm 20 (II Chron., chap. 20)

In II Samuel, chapters 11 and 12, we have a record of the war which David waged against the Ammonites, and from which he came forth victorious. It was purely and solely because of the fact that the king trusted in God and looked to Him for deliverance. It is true that, during the process of the war, David committed his greatest sin (if we may think of some sins being greater than others). Notwithstanding this fact, God gave victory.

There is echoed in Psalm 20 the fact that David implored divine assistance and help before entering the war. Echoes of such prayers and the rendering of divine services are reflected in the first four verses of this psalm.

In order that we might have some definite idea as to the type of service in which David engaged, let us turn to II Chronicles, chapter 20. In this passage we read the account of the invasion of Judah by the forces of the children of Ammon, Edom, and Moab. The invaders came around the lower end of the Dead Sea and entered Judah from the south; then came up as far as En-gedi, which is on its western shore. The presence of the enemy was discovered and reported to Jerusalem at once. Jehoshaphat was king. He was one of four outstanding, good kings who sat upon the throne of David, and who did his utmost in carrying out spiritual and religious reforms. When the news reached Jerusalem, Jehoshaphat feared and set himself to seek Jehovah. In doing this, he proclaimed, first of all, a fast throughout all the country. Then he gathered together the people of Judah for a great service in seeking and in imploring the blessing and protection of God. Probably only the leaders or the representatives of the people appeared at the Temple. It is a great thing to have a spiritual man as the leader of a nation, especially during times of crises. At this service the king presided and began the ceremonies by prayer. This is one of the most marvelous pleadings with God found in the Bible. It appears in II Chronicles 20:5-13. In this petition the prophet took his stand upon the bare-naked Word of God and the plans revealed therein. There is a ringing note

of deep sincerity and faith resounding throughout. When the king finished, the Spirit of God came upon Jahaziel, the son of Zechariah, who brought a message from God, which is found in verses 15-19. This answer from the Almighty is likewise one of the most comforting messages that God could send to His people at a time of distress and of national calamity. The Lord instructed the people what to do, how they should go out to battle, not trusting their own arms or forces, but trusting Him implicitly; for the battle was to be Jehovah's and not theirs.

On the following morning Jehoshaphat led the forces out to battle. As they were approaching the enemy, he insisted that the people should trust in Jehovah their God in order that they might "be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." Then the king took counsel with his advisers and instructed the people to place singers at the head of the advancing army, who would give thanks to God for His loving-kindness. The Lord, cooperating with them, "set liers-in-wait against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, that were come against Judah; and they were smitten. For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another" (II Chron. 20:22,23).

After the Lord delivered the foes into the hand of Jehoshaphat, they named the place where the battle was won "The valley of Beracah unto this day {the day when this record was written}" (II Chron. 20:26). Then the army, led by the king, returned to Jerusalem and engaged in a thanksgiving and praise service for the deliverance which the Lord had granted His people.

## II. The congregation's expression of good wishes for the king as he entered the battle

20 Jehovah answer thee in the day of trouble;  
The name of the God of Jacob set thee up on high;  
2 Send thee help from the sanctuary, And strengthen thee out of Zion;  
3 Remember all thy offerings, And accept thy burnt-sacrifices;  
4 Grant thee thy heart's desire, And fulfil all thy counsel (vss. 1-4).

That David offered sacrifices is implied in verse 3 by the following language:  
"Remember all thy offerings, And accept thy burnt-sacrifice ..."

We may assume from this that, at the beginning of the service, David had the proper offerings and sacrifices made. We may also believe that earnest prayer and intercession were offered to God in behalf of the king by the people at this crisis. Thus when the offerings were ended, the people in a mighty chorus voiced the desire that the Lord would answer the king in the day of trouble--in the war into which he was entering--and "set thee up on high ..." This expression means that they desired the Lord's granting victory for the king. Moreover, they prayed that the Lord would send help to him out of the sanctuary, the tabernacle, and strengthen him out of Zion. The sanctuary, or tabernacle had been in Gilgal when Israel first entered the land. Then it was removed to Shiloh in the central plateau country. Later it was brought down to Jerusalem.

God chose Zion as the place where He would place His name and where He would meet with His people in worship. Thus throughout the Mosaic economy, God is represented as dwelling there and of answering their petitions from the sanctuary in Zion.

In verse 3 reference is made to the offerings and sacrifices which had been made. The people prayed that the Lord would accept these and thus bless David in bringing deliverance to him.

In verse 4 we see this petition: "Grant thee thy heart's desire, And fulfill all thy counsel." Obviously the king had expressed certain desires. Doubtless when the services were held, he made a speech and told the people the real causes of the war. (It was a war of aggression on the part of Ammon.) In all probability David made certain promises to the people and held up certain ideals before them. It is quite evident that they were pleased with his desires or plans. Thus they prayed that the Lord would grant him his heart's desire and would fulfill his counsel. David with his staff had drawn up the plans of the war and how to prosecute the conflict and bring it to a successful conclusion. Thus the people prayed that the Lord's blessings might be with the king and that the country might be delivered from the evil.

### III. The congregation's expression of confidence of victory

5 We will triumph in thy salvation,  
And in the name of our God we will set up our banners:  
Jehovah fulfill all thy petitions.  
6 Now know I that Jehovah saveth his anointed;  
He will answer him from his holy heaven  
with the saving strength of his right hand.  
7 Some trust in chariots, and some in horses;  
But we will make mention of the name of Jehovah our God.  
8 They are bowed down and fallen;  
But we are risen, and stand upright (vss. 5-8).

The congregation, with thunderous applause, declared (vs. 5): "We will triumph in thy salvation." They were convinced that God had heard the petitions of the king and had accepted his sacrifices. Thus they were confident that victory was certain. To them it was just as real as if the war had been fought and the victory was actually won. This is the way faith visualizes things. In the king's victory their victory and success lay. The welfare of a people is always wrapped up in their ruler. If he is on God's side and is pleasing Him, God will grant blessings that they otherwise could not obtain.

In the same verse appear these words: "And in the name of our God we will set up our banners ..." When the new world was discovered, the various explorers came ashore, planted the banner of the country from which they had come, and laid claim to the territory upon which they had landed. Thus they set up their banners or flags in the name of their native lands. The people of Israel assured the king as he was going into war that they would unfurl the battle flags and would set them up or plant them in the name of God that is, that they would do these things as servants of His and in His name and to His glory and honor. They were convinced that this would please the Lord, since they had already implored divine favor and had the conviction in their hearts that God had heard and answered prayer.

Once again, in the last clause of verse 5, the people, still speaking to the king, said: "Jehovah fulfill all thy petitions." Of course the big petition of the hour then was deliverance from the aggressor and the

subjection of the enemy. Although that was the pressing need of the hour, there were many other vital issues before the nation and before each individual. The same is true today with reference to the leaders of our country, who have the burdens of state on their shoulders, and who likewise have burdens and troubles of their own. David undoubtedly had many burdens and difficulties out of which he could not extricate himself. But the people, enthusiastic over their king, kept praying God's richest blessings upon him.

After the chorus of the congregation died down, there spoke one by the Spirit of God, expressing his own personal conviction: "Now know I that Jehovah saveth his anointed ..." (vs. 6). Doubtless the Spirit of God made a revelation to this speaker, and he expressed it in these words. It is interesting to study the Bible and see the certainty that is expressed by various ones in regard to different things. For instance, the Apostle Paul said, "And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good ..." (Rom. 8:28). Job declared that he knew that his Redeemer liveth (Job 19:25). It does confirm and strengthen one's faith to pursue such a line of study as the profound conviction that is expressed throughout the Scriptures by various writers concerning their knowledge of certain things pertaining to the spiritual realities of our holy faith.

"His anointed" in verse 6 refers to David, who was the anointed king of Israel. The word, anointed, means messiah. God always did deliver His anointed kings, when they called upon Him in true faith and in utter dependence upon Him. This one expressed the conviction that God would save "his anointed" and answer him from heaven "With the saving strength of his right hand"--with His omnipotent power. God did do this in the case of David.

But David and all the other kings who sat upon the throne of Judah were types of the true Anointed One, Israel's Saviour and Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. God heard Him when He cried to Him for deliverance. The word, Christian, comes from the word, Christ, or anointed. Every Christian is an anointed one. Everyone who has been born again has been baptized in the one Spirit into the one body and made to partake of the energizing of the same Spirit. Thus every Christian is an anointed one; and everyone who is thus anointed has access to the throne of grace to which he can come at any time and obtain mercy and grace to assist in every crisis. It is indeed a wonderful thing to have a Saviour who is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by Him.

Thus far in this psalm the people constituting the congregation and the individual who spoke the words of verse 6 expressed their conviction that God would bring the deliverance for which prayer and service had been rendered. The conviction was borne upon the congregation that God would deliver Israel and would defeat those who depended upon the arm of flesh for deliverance. Thus in verse 7 the congregation was led to voice this sentiment:

Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses;  
But we will make mention of the name of Jehovah our God.

Someone has incorrectly said that God is on the side of the biggest guns. This is Satan's lie. God is on the side of the one who gets over on His side. We sometimes hear people say, "Trust God and keep your powder dry." There is very little trust in those who take this attitude. Of course, God expects the people to be practical and not to be foolhardy. This Scripture is in the Book:

16 There is no king saved by the multitude of a host:  
 A mighty man is not delivered by great strength.  
 17 A horse is a vain thing for safety;  
 Neither doth he deliver any by his great power.  
 18 Behold, the eye of Jehovah is upon them that fear him,  
 Upon them that hope in his lovingkindness;  
 19 To deliver their soul from death,  
 And to keep them alive in famine (Ps. 33:16-19).

All who put their trust in the arm of flesh and in human weapons will go down in defeat. On the other hand, those who really turn to God and trust Him for victory are delivered.

By faith the worshipping congregation saw the end of the conflict and thus they declared,

They are bowed down and fallen; But we are risen, and stand upright (20:8).

Those referred to by the pronoun, they, were of course the enemies of Israel. Here is a vision of the complete defeat and overthrow of the enemy on the one hand; and of Israel's triumph and victory on the other.

#### IV. Closing prayer for victory

Save, Jehovah; Let the King answer us when we call (vs. 9).

Though the sentiment throughout the psalm expresses conviction that God had heard and had answered prayer, the congregation prayed in conclusion the petition found in verse 9. God delights to exercise the faith of His people. He calls upon them to come repeatedly to Him with the same request until He grants the petition. Of course, one must be certain that the cause is right and just, and that the thing for which request is being made is in perfect alignment with the will of God. When a person is convinced of this fact, he may and should come before the Lord often with the same petition until He does grant the request.

Prayer changes things. Prayer brings victory.