

## PSALM 20

Created by David for the congregation to pray about him – his success is their life and prosperity. See John 11.

From Zion – from the sanctuary – God of Jacob. All sources of spiritual inheritance to aid King in his duties for the Nation of Israel.

Desire – plans – this is what David is passionate about, the Plan of David.

Shout for joy – Israel succeeds when David succeeds.

Answers come from Heaven – this world doesn't have what Israel needs.

Save the King!

See John 17 for the requests of the King – the Son. Also other prayers of Jesus.

There are two ways to interpret this Psalm – one is the wrong way, and one is the right way.

The wrong way is if we think it's about *us*. On the surface it looks as if whoever is praying (the title says it's David) is telling us that he hopes God will bless us richly. "May the LORD answer *you*." "May God protect *you*." "May the LORD remember *your* sacrifices." And since David got answers to his prayers, we now turn to God hopeful that he will give us what we want.

The problem with that is that we want to "fill in the blanks" with things that *we* want. So people who irritate us or hinder us are the "enemy," "distress" refers to the problems of life, "help" means God will give us things we need in our lives to solve our personal problems.

But God doesn't necessarily consider our "crises" to be his problem. Usually we asked for the problems we have because we've been too casual about our relationship to him or downright rebellious against his demands of us. Like a father who steps back and lets his wayward son learn the hard way, the problems of life are designed to teach us hard lessons and bring us back to him. (Hebrews 12) What is worse is if someone despises God altogether; then, according to Proverbs 1, he really will let them sink in their problems and suffer the consequences for punishment.

But there *are* issues that motivate God to act immediately.

- Whoever is an enemy of God and trying to destroy the spiritual life of his children or of his Church is going to find an army on the horizon. God moves in wrath against his spiritual enemies. And who is an "enemy" of God? Whoever is fighting against the Kingdom and the glory of God, whoever works against the King and his program. David systematically destroyed his enemies, so that the People of God could live in peace and

obedience to their God in the Promised Land. The wrong leaders are in charge; they need to be replaced with holy men. Jerusalem is in ruins; we need to rebuild it to its former glory.

- “Help” will come from the God of Jacob. Why is this important? Because God *richly* blessed Jacob, and Jacob didn’t do a thing to deserve any of it. But what did distinguish Jacob is that he desperately wanted the Covenant blessings, so much so that he wrestled with the Firstborn all night to get them. And so God gave him his heart’s desire. This God stands ready to help us, with those same Blessings, if we are like Jacob – desperate for the Son’s Inheritance.
- “Support” comes only from Zion. That’s where the King lives; that’s where the Temple is. All our resources come from the House of God. It’s not *this* world that we need, it’s the Treasures of Heaven. We may even lose things in this world in our struggles against the enemy; but God fills us with his inheritance as a replacement – something that Paul considered far more valuable than any trouble he had to go through by comparison. (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)
- “Remembering all your offerings” refers to the moment when the son dedicated his entire life to God. See Psalm 2; Romans 12:1-2. He died to this world; he now belongs to his Father in Heaven and lives for his service. A son who hasn’t been living like a son has deserted the One who called him. The Father is faithful *to his children* – not to strangers. This is Family now; God takes care of his Family, because they live to glorify him.
- Now we get into the Psalm even deeper: “your heart’s desire,” “your plans,” “your petitions” – what do these refer to? Don’t think you will impress God if they involve anything apart from his will, his desire, his plans. We are sinners, and ignorant ones at that. God alone knows that is good and right. When someone gets on the same page that God is working on, *then* God listens to their prayers. And what would these desires and plans involve? The same program that David was so dedicated to implementing in Israel.

It’s in verses 6-9 that we start realizing the true direction of this Psalm. God’s “anointed” can be none other than the King himself. The ordinary citizens of the Kingdom are not in a position to do the will of God on the national level; they have not the skills, resources nor authority for such a massive task. The King, however, has been appointed by God to do this job and he has the resources of Heaven backing him up. That’s why it says the Lord saves his anointed, the Lord will answer the anointed’s prayers – because only in that way is the will of God going to rule on earth. David is the right man for the job. He depends not on earthly powers, but on the Name of the Lord. That’s why the Bible tells us that he succeeded in everything that he did.

Now if this Psalm is about how God will bless the King (verses 6-9) who alone is in the position to carry out the Plan, that means we have to go back and look at the first 5 verses again. They are *not about us*. These are not “blessings” that God wants for us. They are blessings that [someone] should want for the King. Turn the thing around: imagine an Israelite praying this petition for his King, pleading with God to bless David

with these riches. If David is so richly blessed, what will happen to the rest of the people? They will prosper as well. As the King succeeds, the entire nation succeeds. Individuals may prosper on their own in their own life circumstances; but the King is the key to the entire nation: if he fails, we all fail; if he prospers, we all prosper – in the riches of Heaven.

So in the end, what's really going on here is that David is *teaching us how to pray for him*. According to his role in establishing the proper worship for Israel, he's giving us a model for how to pray for the King's success. Everyone at the Temple stood and sang these words to God, imploring his blessings on their *leader*. They depend on his faithfulness to God.

### ***Jesus the Christ***

I wonder how many Christians have thought to pray for the King. Almost all our prayers focus on ourselves, on what we want, as if God is totally concerned with our individual needs and problems. As I mentioned previously, our “needs and problems” may not be a crisis to him.

What *is* a crisis is the state of Christ's Church. The Body of Christ is suffering at the hands of our modern godless culture, our materialism, our rebellion against his authority, our destructive handling of his eternal Word. David's Plan isn't even on our modern agenda, and it shows. Religion is man-centered, self-centered, and consumer driven.

This Psalm teaches us where our hearts should be. What we should want is to see the King succeed. We want to see Jesus destroy his enemies once and for all: the world, the flesh, the devil. We want to see the fullness of God's riches in the hands of Christ the rightful Heir, who then passes them on to his subjects. The whole tree grows by virtue of the Root drawing in nourishment. (Isaiah 11) We want to follow Jesus as he leads us into the presence of God *as a Church*, not just individually. We want to see Jesus rule in all things, in all ways, in this world and in the Church. And we want to see Jesus doing what only he can do – rebuilding the House of God using us as “living stones,” enabling us with special gifts, opening up circumstances so that we can use those gifts for the benefit of others. This is David's Plan – and it's supposed to be the Plan of Christ's Church as well.

And therefore we are to pray for Christ's success, that *he* might be filled with the Treasures of his Father, that his Plan will succeed on earth. And when he does, *then* we will also share in his glory.

This is how you need to pray. Your success in your personal life means nothing if Christ's Kingdom doesn't succeed.

He must increase, but I must decrease. (John 3:30)

Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. (John 17:24)

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3:1-4)