

# PSALM 20

It is the will of God that prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings, should be made, in special manner, for kings and all in authority. This psalm is a prayer, and the next a thanksgiving, for the king. David was a martial prince, much in war. Either this psalm was penned upon occasion of some particular expedition of his, or, in general, as a form to be used in the daily service of the church for him. In this psalm we may observe,

**I.** What it is they beg of God for the king (v. 1-4).

**II.** With what assurance they beg it. The people triumph (v. 5), the prince (v. 6), both together (v. 7, 8), and so he concludes with a prayer to God for audience (v. 9). In this, David may well be looked upon as a type of Christ, to whose kingdom and its interests among men the church was, in every age, a hearty well-wisher.

## PSALM 20:1-5

### THE SUBJECT'S PRAYER FOR THE SOVEREIGN

*To the chief musician. A psalm of David.*

This prayer for David is entitled *a psalm of David*; nor was it any absurdity at all for him who was divinely inspired to draw up a directory, or form of prayer, to be used in the congregation for himself and those in authority under him; nay it is very proper for those who desire the prayers of their friends to tell them particularly what they would have to be asked of God for them. Note, Even great and good men, and those that know ever so well how to pray for themselves, must not despise, but earnestly desire, the prayers of others for them, even those that are their inferiors in all respects. Paul often begged of his friends to pray for him. Magistrates and those in power ought to esteem and encourage praying people, to reckon them their strength (<sup>3015</sup>Zechariah 12:5, 10), and to do what they can for them, that they may have an interest in their prayers and may do nothing to forfeit it. Now observe here,

## I. What it is that they are taught to ask of God for the king.

**1.** That God would answer his prayers: *The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble* (v. 1), and *the Lord fulfil all thy petitions*, v. 5. Note,

(1.) Even the greatest of men may be much in trouble. It was often a day of trouble with David himself, of disappointment and distress, of treading down and of perplexity. Neither the crown on his head nor the grace in his heart would exempt him from the trouble.

(2.) Even the greatest of men must be much in prayer. David, though a man of business, a man of war, was constant to his devotions; though he had prophets, and priests, and many good people among his subjects, to pray for him, he did not think that excused him from praying for himself. Let none expect benefit by the prayers of the church, or of their ministers or friends for them, who are capable of praying for themselves, and yet neglect it. The prayers of others for us must be desired, not to supersede, but to second, our own for ourselves. Happy the people that have praying princes, to whose prayers they may thus say, *Amen*.

**2.** That God would protect his person, and preserve his life, in the perils of war: *“The name of the God of Jacob defend thee, and set thee out of the reach of thy enemies.”*

(1.) “Let God by his providence keep thee safe, even the God who preserved Jacob in the days of his trouble.” David had mighty men for his guards, but he commits himself, and his people commit him, to the care of the almighty God.

(2.) “Let God by his grace keep thee easy from the fear of evil. — ~~1810~~ Proverbs 18:10, *The name of the Lord is a strong tower, into which the righteous run by faith, and are safe*; let David be enabled to shelter himself in that strong tower, as he has done many a time.”

**3.** That God would enable him to go on in his undertakings for the public good — that, in the day of battle, he would *send him help out of the sanctuary, and strength out of Zion*, not from common providence, but from the ark of the covenant and the peculiar favour God bears to his chosen people Israel. That he would help him, in performance of the promises and in answer to the prayers made in the sanctuary. Mercies out of the sanctuary are the sweetest mercies, such as are the tokens of God’s peculiar love, the blessing of God, even our own God. Strength out of

Zion is spiritual strength, strength in the soul, in the inward man, and that is what we should most desire both for ourselves and others in services and sufferings.

**4.** That God would testify his gracious acceptance of the sacrifices he offered with his prayers, according to the law of that time, before he went out on a dangerous expedition: *The Lord remember all thy offerings and accept thy burnt-sacrifices* (v. 3), or *turn them to ashes*; that is, “The Lord give thee the victory and success which thou didst by prayer with sacrifices ask of him, and thereby give as full proof of his acceptance of the sacrifice as ever he did by kindling it with fire from heaven.” By this we may now know that God accepts our spiritual sacrifices, if by his Spirit he kindles in our souls a holy fire of pious and divine affection and with that makes our hearts burn within us.

**5.** That God would crown all his enterprises and noble designs for the public welfare with the desired success (v. 4): *The Lord grant thee according to thy own heart*. This they might in faith pray for, because they knew David was a man after God's own heart, and would design nothing but what was pleasing to him. Those who make it their business to glorify God may expect that God will, in one way or other, gratify them: and those who walk in his counsel may promise themselves that he will fulfil theirs. *Thou shalt devise a thing and it shall be established unto thee*.

**II.** What confidence they had of an answer of peace to these petitions for themselves and their good king (v. 5): “*We will rejoice in thy salvation*. We that are subjects will rejoice in the preservation and prosperity of our prince;” or, rather, “In thy salvation, O God! in thy power and promise to save, will we rejoice; that is it which we depend upon now, and which, in the issue, we shall have occasion greatly to rejoice in.” Those that have their eye still upon the salvation of the Lord shall have their hearts filled with the joy of that salvation: *In the name of our God will we set up our banners*.

**1.** “We will wage war in his name; we will see that our cause be good and make his glory our end in every expedition; we will ask counsel at his mouth, and take him along with us; we will follow his direction, implore his aid and depend upon it, and refer the issue to him.” David went against Goliath in the name of the Lord of hosts, <sup>(175)</sup> 1 Samuel 17:45.

(2.) “We will celebrate our victories in his name. When we lift up our banners in triumph, and set up our trophies, it shall be in the name of our God; he shall have all the glory of our success, and no instrument shall have any part of the honour that is due to him.”

In singing this we ought to offer up to God our hearty good wishes to the good government we are under and to the prosperity of it. But we may look further; these prayers for David are prophecies concerning Christ the Son of David, and in him they were abundantly answered; he undertook the work of our redemption, and made war upon the powers of darkness. In the day of trouble, when his soul was exceedingly sorrowful, the Lord heard him, heard him in that he feared (<sup>3807</sup>Hebrews 5:7), *sent him help out of the sanctuary*, sent an angel from heaven to strengthen him, took cognizance of his offering when he made his soul an offering for sin, and accepted his burnt-sacrifice, turned it to ashes, the fire that should have fastened upon the sinner fastening upon the sacrifice, with which God was well pleased. And he granted him according to his own heart, made him to see of the travail of his soul, to his satisfaction, prospered his good pleasure in his hand, fulfilled all his petitions for himself and us; for him the Father heareth always and his intercession is ever prevailing.

## <sup>4906</sup>PSALM 20:6-9

### THE SUBJECT'S PRAYER FOR THE SOVEREIGN

Here is, I. Holy David himself triumphing in the interest he had in the prayers of good people (v. 6): “*Now know I (I that pen the psalm know it) that the Lord saveth his anointed*, because he hath stirred up the hearts of the seed of Jacob to pray for him.” Note, It bodes well to any prince and people, and may justly be taken as a happy presage, when God pours upon them a spirit of prayer. If he see us seeking him, he will be found of us; if he cause us to hope in his word, he will establish his word to us. Now that so many who have an interest in heaven are praying for him he doubts not but that God will hear him, and grant him an answer of peace, which will,

1. Take its rise from above: *He will hear him from his holy heaven*, of which the sanctuary was a type (<sup>3803</sup>Hebrews 9:23), from the throne he hath prepared in heaven, of which the mercy-seat was a type.

2. It shall take its effect here below: He will hear him *with the saving strength of his right hand*; he will give a real answer to his prayers, and the prayers of his friends for him, not by letter, nor by word of mouth, but, which is much better, by his right hand, by the saving strength of his right hand. He will make it to appear that he hears him by what he does for him.

**II.** His people triumphing in God and their relation to him, and his revelation of himself to them, by which they distinguish themselves from those that live without God in the world.

1. See the difference between worldly people and godly people, in their confidences, v. 7. The children of this world trust in second causes, and think all is well if those do but smile upon them; they trust *in chariots and in horses*, and the more of them they can bring into the field the more sure they are of success in their wars; probably David has here an eye to the Syrians, whose forces consisted much of chariots and horsemen, as we find in the history of David's victories over them, ~~1000~~ 2 Samuel 8:4; 10:18. "But," say the Israelites, "we neither have chariots and horses to trust to nor do we want them, nor, if we had them, would we build our hopes of success upon that; *but we will remember, and rely upon, the name of the Lord our God*, upon the relation we stand in to him as the Lord our God and the knowledge we have of him by his name," that is, all that whereby he makes himself known; this we will remember and upon every remembrance of it will be encouraged. Note, those who make God and his name their praise may make God and his name their trust.

2. See the difference in the issue of their confidences and by that we are to judge of the wisdom of the choice; things are as they prove; see who will be ashamed of their confidence and who not, v. 8. "Those that trusted in their chariots and horses are brought down and fallen, and their chariots and horses were so far from saving them that they helped to sink them, and made them the easier and the richer prey to the conqueror, ~~1000~~ 2 Samuel 8:4. But we that trust in the name of the Lord our God not only stand upright, and keep our ground, but have risen, and have got ground against the enemy, and have triumphed over them." Note, A believing obedient trust in God and his name is the surest way both to preferment and to establishment, to rise and to stand upright, and this will stand us in stead when creature-confidences fail those that depend upon them.

**III.** They conclude their prayer for the king with a *Hosanna*, “*Save, now, we beseech thee, O Lord!*” v. 9. As we read this verse, it may be taken as a prayer that God would not only bless the king, “*Save, Lord, give him success,*” but that he would make him a blessing to them, “*Let the king hear us* when we call to him for justice and mercy.” Those that would have good of their magistrates must thus pray for them, for they, as all other creatures, are that to us (and no more) which God makes them to be. Or it may refer to the Messiah, that King, that King of kings; let him hear us when we call; let him come to us according to the promise, in the time appointed; let him, as the great Master of requests, receive all our petitions and present them to the Father. But many interpreters give another reading of this verse, by altering the pause, *Lord, save the king, and hear us when we call*; and so it is a summary of the whole psalm and is taken into our English Liturgy; *O Lord! save the king, and mercifully hear us when we call upon thee.*

In singing these verses we should encourage ourselves to trust in God, and stir up ourselves to pray earnestly, as we are in duty bound, for those in authority over us, that under them we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.