

GOD'S PEOPLE TRUST IN HIS NAME

Psalm 20: 1-9, especially 6-7 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Living in the Midwest has sensitized me to “the calm before the storm,” and that eerie silence just before a little white cloud, then a funnel cloud, and then the tornado crashes into all in its path as it picks up blades of wheat, sorghum, rye, flax, or oats, and the driving tornado wind drives those blades of grain like arrows deep into telephone poles. Some of you, like my wife, have lived next to the Gulf Coast and you too know that there is “the calm before the storm,”—an eerie moment of silence, just before the winds and rains of a hurricane crash in upon all those in its path. Similarly, life has its moments of calm. Battlefields lie quiet; then suddenly, at the signal of captains and generals, the bombardment, the bombs, and the guns and the torpedoes and all the weapons of war are unleashed. Psalm 20 is such a pause. Israel was ready for battle; the “day of trouble” had come. The foreign legions with their banners had arrived and they were ordered for war. But while the pagans with their superior earthly weapons, were trusting in chariots and horses, God’s people who esteemed Him most, trusted in His Name. In “the calm before the storm,” the commanders of Israel may have gone up to the tabernacle in Jerusalem with their troops, where the king spreads out the letters of threat before the Lord, and then king David offered his sacrifice and Israel was blessed for battle. Only when spiritual preparation is completed, can we go to face the foe..

Many of us want victory in life. We want to see success in everything we do. If we are like David, we simply ask God to deliver to us the victory. We too admit that our enemies trust in other things to gain victory. But we like David trust God. And like David, we pray to God “the big ask.” We pray for God’s miracles to fall on us. Nine times in Psalm 20, David claimed that God was going to do something for him to provide him victory. David prayed to God for victory in his circumstances. God helped David. David in his tight spot, asked God for help and God helped David, He can also help us. David prayed in Psalm 20, words we can pray to God. “God, answer me,” v. 1, “God protect me,” v. 1, “God, help me,” – v. 2, “God support me,” v. 2, “God, remember me, v. 3, God, regard me with favor,” v.3, “God grant me my heart’s desire,” v. 4, God, fulfill all my petitions, v. 5, and God, save me.” – v. 6. John Calvin said of this prayer, that it was a written prayer to be used by God’s people before every battle...The design of the Holy Spirit is also to deliver to the Church a common form of prayer, a prayer to be used by us whenever we are threatened by any danger.” Let me repeat these 9 petitions.

We can pray this prayer in times of marital conflict, in times of labor when a baby is about to be born, in times of sickness, in times when we fear for our lives, in times of struggle when we are weak, and helpless before the enemy of our soul, in times of struggling to rear our children for God, and in times when we know we have been calling the shots, justifying our behavior before God and others, justifying our grudges, our bitterness, and our unwillingness to truly forgive and go on to love our brothers and sisters in Jesus, as well as our relatives and friends.

Beloved, there are some blessed “take aways” for us in this psalm of preparation for battle that we all need today, whatever we are facing. I want us to focus on verses 6-7, and let’s notice these five blessed “take aways.”

THERE IS A BLESSEDNESS IN RECOGNIZING WE ARE IN A BATTLE.

(I.) When we look at the context of these two verses, it’s a day of battle ahead. We hear David’s prayer, in Psalm 20: 1, “May the Lord answer you in the day of battle or of trouble.” In Psalm 20: 7, the picture is that the battle is on, and the enemy has us outmanned as far as our earthly odds in the battle. People that know us see the horses and chariots coming against us, and they often conclude it’s just a matter of time until we are through, and Wyomingites say it, “done in.” Some years ago, one of our church families moved to Minnesota. Harry and Kathy Wells moved to St. Cloud. They wrote back to me, “Pastor, we miss the battle back in Rock Springs. Our church here in St. Cloud seems to have given up the battle some years ago.” Another family moved to Kalispell, Montana, Dan and Barb Thomas. Barb wrote saying. “There is a real battle going on in Rock Springs. I can see it clearer from here in Montana. I don’t see it so much here. Parents here seem to have given up fighting for their children, almost agreeing it is a lost cause.” Those are just two letters, but they illustrate that there is something valuable to recognize when we are in the battle and on the battlefield for our Lord. What I want us to know is that if you sense you and your spouse are in a battle, that you and your spouse and children are in a battle, rejoice. You are blessed if you recognize that there is still something worth battling for. Imagine the people of Israel who doubtless memorized David’s prayer. They didn’t struggle with praying a prayer written down, memorized and prayed together before times of battle.

When the forces of hell began to assail, and the enemy was setting up a siege ramp to capture Jerusalem and tear down its walls, they began to empathize with the king, who was leading them in prayers for victory. They were praying for the king the way we should pray for our presidents whether they are saved or not. We need to pray for our pastors when battles arise in our church. They were praying, “May God send you help from His sanctuary in Zion...May He grant you your heart’s desire. May we shout for joy over your salvation, and in the Name of our God we will set up our banners.” What I see in this first take-away is that when we are in a battle, God blesses us greatly when we begin praying earnestly for our leaders, in church, for our pastors, elders, deacons, deaconesses, teachers, and officers, in missions work, in our leader, and in his team.

This is a prayer for us to pray for our nation in our times of trouble, when the battle is about to begin, or when the battle is raging. This is a prayer that we need to pray in confidence like David prayed. Notice verse 5, “May we shout for joy over your salvation, and in the name of our God set up our banners. May the Lord fulfill all your petitions.” This little Hebrew word for fulfill in verse 4 is **mawlaw**. It means to accomplish, to fill to the brim, and to fill up what God has purposed. The unfurling of victory banners will come when our desires are God’s desires, and our

counsel is God's counsel. Then, all our petitions or prayers will be answered. I am so in awe of the priest, Eli on this point. For the most part, Eli was an unfaithful priest, who refused to discipline his sons. Yet Eli finally knew when Hannah's desires and God's counsel were the same. That's why Eli said to Hannah, in I Samuel 1: 17, "Go in peace; and may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to Him." Consider your prayers for others, even as Israel prayed for their king. Is your prayer for others something God has led you in your heart to pray? It is? Then may the God of Israel grant you your petition for His honor and for His glory, and may He fulfill all your plans. Stay in the battle for truth and righteousness. Are you on the battlefield for the Lord? Are you facing horses and chariots on all sides? Thank God if you are on the battlefield for the Lord. Thank God you are on the battlefield for the Lord in intercession for others who need your prayer right now. Is it true? Are you?

THERE IS A BLESSEDNESS IN KNOWING ASSUREDLY THAT THE GOD OF JACOB WILL PROTECT US. (II.)

We read in verse 6, "Now I know that the Lord saves His anointed." (verse 1: 2) David doubtless was reflecting on what God had done for him in past battles. Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever." (Hebrews 13: 8) God's track record is that He doesn't desert us in battle. We may say, "Yes, but I am calling on God in a day when I have been unfaithful to Him. I have fallen away from obedience to God. David was living out some of those days, as each of us have days when we have to repent of a rebellious attitude, or a bitter spirit, or an unloving demeanor, or like David, of shameful, lustful behavior. Why do you suppose David cried out on this occasion, "May the Name of the God of Jacob protect you?"

When we read in the Old Testament about the God of Israel, we think about the grandson of Abraham, the son of Isaac, who wrestled with God. We think of Jacob and of God who said to Jacob, "Let Me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob answered this divine wrestler, and (Genesis 32: 22-32) said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me." And the man from heaven wrestling with Jacob said, "What is your name?" And Jacob said, "Jacob." Then the heavenly man said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob (meaning cheater, deceiver, heel-snatcher) but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed."

When the Old Testament speaks of the God of Israel, it is often reminiscent of that wrestling match of Jacob with God, and it is speaking of Israel when Israel was being obedient to God. Yet when we read about praying to the God of Jacob, it at times is referring to days when the people of God were following their own sinful tendencies. Why didn't David say that Israel facing battle, should call on the God of Israel or the God of Abraham or Isaac? I wonder if it wasn't because this man after God's own heart who deceived the nation, in his sin of adultery with Bathsheba, and his killing of her husband, Uriah the Hittite, that David identified with Jacob. David too had been a cheater and deceiver. When we cry out to the God of Jacob, we come to God knowing that if there is help for Jacob and David,

there is hope for us too. I need that hope. Don't you? May the Lord hear us even when our track record with God is not as well off or as polished as we would like!

THERE IS A BLESSEDNESS IN EXPECTING GOD TO ANSWER US FROM HIS HOLY HEAVEN WITH HIS SAVING RIGHT HAND. (III.)

This was the assurance of king David, and it's true for any person whom God has called His anointed. Notice verse 6. "Now I know that the Lord saves His anointed." This is the confident assurance of success when we know our battle is being viewed from heaven under God's smile. All our prayers begin with a Divine impulse from God. We pray because God calls us to prayer. Though we are weak, even powerless, impotent spiritually, as we pray, our prayers set Omnipotence in motion. Even a whisper can set miracles in motion. Back in 1977, Mack Taunton wrote a song I love and have sung often. It's called, "Even Winds Whisper His Name." The words are, "Though man may try to ignore Him, His presence is woven in time. The stars leave not their assignment, The seasons repeat perfect rhyme; And oceans go where He placed them, Mountains His greatness proclaim, all things speak of His greatness. Even winds whisper His name. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. The heavens declare His glory, The dove toils not, yet is fed. And why have we any worry? The future is His, He has said, just place your trust in Jesus, and grasp His promises true. Lilies are arrayed in glory, so much more He'll do for you. Chorus: Even winds whisper His name, even winds whisper His name, of all things He is Master, of all things King, even winds whisper His name."

During the last three decades of the 19th century, Ira D. Sankey partnered with Dwight Lyman Moody in a series of religious revival campaigns, mainly in North America and Europe. Moody preached, and Sankey sang, as part of his musical ministry. Ira D. Sankey was traveling on a steamer on the Delaware River when he was recognized by some passengers who had seen his picture in the newspaper and knew he was associated with evangelist D. L. Moody. They asked him to sing one of his own compositions. Ira Sankey said I prefer to sing you an old hymn by William Bradbury, "Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us." He suggested everyone join him in the singing. One of the stanzas begins, "We are Thine; do thou befriend us; be the guardian of our way." When Ira Sankey finished, a man stepped out of the shadows and asked, "Were you in the army, Mr. Sankey?" "Yes, I joined up in 1860." "Did you do guard duty at night in Maryland, about 1862?" "Yes, I did." "I was in the Confederate Army," said the stranger. "I saw you one night at Sharpsburg, Georgia during the Battle of Antietam. I had you in my gun sight as you stood in the light of the full moon. Then, just as I was about to pull the trigger, you began to sing, "Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us." It was the same hymn you sang tonight. I couldn't shoot you." Beloved, how many times has God spared us!?

THERE IS A BLESSEDNESS IN TRUSTING IN THE NAME OF THE LORD WHEN OUR ENEMIES ARE TRUSTING IN CHARIOTS/HORSES. (IV.)

We read in verse 7, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the Name of the Lord our God." Verse 8 adds, "They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright." On March 9, 1839, the sides of a coal pit called "The High

Pressure,” near Musselburgh, Midlothian, in Scotland had a terrible collapse. The sides fell in. The shaft was filled up instantly, imprisoning ten men and three women miners. After trying every means of exit, they retired to a narrow space that was 18 feet by 24 feet and 3 and a half feet high. There they sat down and prepared to die after 14 hours of finding no way out. They began to pray and sing Psalm 20. The fourth verse they sang was, “In Thy salvation we will joy; In our God’s name we will display our banners; and the Lord Thy prayers all fulfill.” One man with knowledge of the mine told the men, “Follow me because water is flowing now higher and higher through the mine.” This leader asked each man to hold on to the shirt of the next and follow him. Three men were asked to carry the three ladies. Like badgers digging and clawing their way out, following the water that tried to drown them, at times it got higher than their heads, they came to safety. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but in 1839, in Scotland, in a trapped mine, John Nicholson, 36, James Reid, 35, George Campbell, 60, and his wife, Elizabeth, John Reid, 30, Peter Hay, 55, Thomas Reid, 60, James Reid, Jr. 30, and his wife, Helen, Jamieson Bennet, 27, George Pride, 19, and Janet Shaw, 30 were delivered. They all trusted in the name of the Lord, our God. Who do we trust in, in 2022?

THERE IS A BLESSEDNESS IN KNOWING THE LORD DESIRES TO FULFILL ALL OUR PETITIONS. (V.) Notice this memorized prayer of God’s people turned to pray not just for their nation but for their leader. (Notice verse They prayed, in verse 9, “O Lord, save the king! May He (that’s God) answer us when we call.” When you and I are praying the will of God, we are praying the promises of victory in which we can rejoice. When our prayers for others are so in sympathy with them because our hearts are right with each other and with God, we cannot help but claim that God’s will which we all agree on, then will lead to the fulfillment of our hopes and dreams, our heart’s desires, and plans. Let’s pray together, earnestly, repentantly, and pleadingly, for snow and rain for the next couple months. Let’s set up our banners when God answers our petitions.

But let’s be honest in our minds, this kind of confidence in the Name of the God of Jacob is not often easy to come by. It’s so tempting to trust in military power, political strength, and in legislative bodies to protect us and to bring us victory. We too often think it’s who will be our elected President that will save us. No leader, regardless or how godly, wise, or savvy he or she is, is able to lead us out of our cultural dilemmas in America, out of this cancel culture, from turning to transgender switching, and compromising to bow to the homosexual push to rule our land. There is no political or spiritual force that has ever done battle with God’s King, Jesus, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, who has ever won. Let’s give notice to our friends and neighbors that political parties are not the answer for America. Hear the Gospel beloved. Jesus is on the throne. He promises to fight for anyone of us who is willing to call out to Him and ask for victory in His Name. I ask today for the Holy Spirit of God to open our spiritual eyes to see the victory that God offers to His people. May we all see Jesus, who establishes His kingdom through His sacrificial love at Calvary, and not through chariots and horses. Amen.