

September 24, 2017
Sunday Morning Service
Series: Psalms
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as we prepare to hear from Psalm 20.

1. What other song has the same tune as “My Country ‘Tis of Thee?”
2. Discuss how a passage of Scripture can speak of the author’s circumstances, Christ’s circumstances, and our circumstances.
3. Can you think of any other psalms that apply in this way?
4. Is it fair for us to apply to us the truths Jesus spoke to the disciples?
5. What does 2 Timothy 3:16-17 teach about applying Scriptural principles?
6. What kind of caution must be used when making applications outside the immediate context of a text?

LORD SAVE THE KING!
Psalm 20

You are no doubt familiar with the song, “My Country ‘Tis of Thee.” It is a wonderful patriotic song that Samuel Francis Smith composed to be sung by a children’s choir on July 4, 1831 at an Independence Day celebration at Park Street Church in Boston.

Now the tune of this song introduces us to some very interesting quirks or maybe even conflicts. No one knows for sure who wrote the

tune or when it was written. It is often credited to John Bull in 1619. But others believe that Henry Cary wrote it sometime in the early 1700's. When the tune was written or who wrote it is not the interesting point. What makes me smile is that the tune to “My Country Tis of Thee,” written to celebrate America’s independence from Britain, is the tune for “God Save the Queen,” Great Britain’s national anthem!

“God Save the King” (it depends on which is in power at the time of the singing) was first performed in London in 1745. Here are the original lyrics of the first two verses:

God save great George our king
God save our noble king,
God save the king!
Send him victorious
Happy and glorious
Long to reign over us
God save the king!
God save great George our King!

O Lord our God arise,
Scatter his enemies
And make them fall;
Confound their politics,
Frustrate their knavish tricks,
On Thee our hopes we fix,
God save us all!

This national anthem, like most others, are songs of praise to the nation and a prayer to God (or a god) for protection and help. The singing of the national anthem is generally a way for the citizens to show loyalty to the crown or the nation. And yes, there are activists in Britain who refuse to sing this anthem because they protest that the text promotes violence.

Did Israel have a national anthem? Spurgeon called Psalm 20 Israel’s national anthem. It does seem to have the common traits of a song praying for God’s protection for the king and for the nation.

Listen to this song and see if it sounds like a national anthem:

May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob protect you! May he send you help from the sanctuary and give you support from Zion! May he remember all your offerings and regard with favor your burnt sacrifices! Selah. May he grant you your heart's desire and fulfill all your plans! 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! Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand. Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God. They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright. O LORD, save the king! May he answer us when we call (Psalm 20:1-9).

However, as in several of the songs David wrote, the scope of the application far exceeded the circumstances of David's day. Again, as in Psalm 18 and as we will see in Psalm 21, this song reveals the heart of David, but also points ahead to a prayer that should have been prayed for Messiah as He, suffering as the man of sorrows who was acquainted with grief, approached the trial of the cross. Remember Messiah's request to the disciples on the verge of that most traumatic trial: *"My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me"* (Matthew 26:38). They did not watch with Messiah and they did not pray for Him. Most never did.

Again, there is a threefold application of this psalm. It certainly applied to David's circumstances as the nation was generally in a state of war throughout his reign. The people needed to cry out to God to protect and prosper the nation, to save the king, as they went to battle against the enemies of God's people.

The song also applied to Messiah in a special way. Did the saints and prophets of the Old Testament times look forward with understanding to the Prophet like Moses who God would raise up to rule over His people? Did they along with Isaiah understand that Messiah would suffer greatly, be rejected and despised, be marred beyond recognition on His way to winning the great spiritual battle of eternity? If they did, would they not pray for God the Father to protect the "Eternal King" as He did battle with all the forces of hell?

Also, a third application involves us who love the King. We, too, can encourage one another with the words of the blessing we

read in verses one through five. We, too, can rejoice in the assurance we have that God saves His anointed as we trust in Him.

A Great Blessing (vv.1-5).

The first five verses of the psalm sound much like some of the blessings or benedictions we find in both the Old and New Testaments. Invoking the Lord's blessing on a friend or family (or in this case the king and his army) was not only acceptable but encouraged. Here are seven blessings or desires we have for the benefit of David the king, Jesus the King of kings, and even us who love the King.

First, *May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble (v.1a)!* Following our proposed applications we conclude, "May the eternal Father answer David." The appeal is to Yahweh who reveals to us that He is self-existing, eternally existing, depending on no one or nothing else. He is the creator of all things, people, laws of physics, and ideas. When David was in trouble, it only seemed sensible to ask the God of eternity to help.

And David was in trouble a lot. While he was a humble shepherd watching over a little peaceful flock of sheep on the Judean hillside, God called him to be the shepherd of His people. Because God gifted David to be a warrior, his life was destined for conflict. On one hand, he always had enemies because people like Saul were jealous that he was king. On the other hand, David created enemies because he was always fighting to protect God's people. David was not perfect, but, as his many psalms reveal, he had a great a heart for God, a love for God's law, and a desire that all would obey God. May the eternal God answer a man like that in his day of trouble.

Also, we can apply this blessing as: "May the eternal Father answer the Son." Jesus Christ, Messiah, who David pointed to in these words, is co-equal with the eternal Yahweh. However, in the Triune Godhead's plan for redeeming creation from sin, God the Son laid aside His equality to become one with humanity. Paul described the voluntary humility like this: *Though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself*

by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:6-8).

Just to lay aside the prerogatives of divinity and become a human would be trouble enough. But because He was God in the flesh, the world hated, despised, and rejected Him. Stirred by the sin principle and Satan himself, the world tortured and killed Messiah. Someone should have been praying that the Father would answer Him.

Also, it is a joy to apply the blessing to ourselves by interpreting it, “May the eternal Father answer me.” My trouble pales in comparison with the trouble David and Jesus endured. Comparatively, I face inconveniences that make my plush and leisurely life only a little less plush and leisurely. Nevertheless, like all of God’s children, sin troubles me. I am constantly troubled by sin. You no doubt are also troubled by sin, and many of you face other genuine difficulties that make life close to miserable. May Yahweh answer us when we cry out to Him.

Second, *May the name of the God of Jacob protect you (v.1b)*! “May God protect David.” The name of the God of Jacob was important to Jewish people like David. The nation of God’s chosen people were named for their father Jacob (*the supplanter*) who God named Israel (*God prevails*). Mention of God’s **name** speaks of the character, and, therefore, all the works of God that confirm His character. The holy and all-powerful God who created all things is able to protect people like David. Then, why was David often on the run? Why did David fear for his life? Why did David confess that he often felt threatened to death? Sure, David felt all those fears, but he died a very old man because God protected David throughout life as obviously as He protected David in his fight with Goliath.

“May God protect Messiah.” This might be a little harder for us to understand knowing that God the Son is equal with God the Father. Though Messiah was God in the flesh, He laid aside His divine self-protection to become vulnerable like the rest of us humans. Did God the Father protect God the Son? Yes! Absolutely. Then why were wicked men able to arrest, torture, and hang Jesus on the cross to die? What kind of protection was that?

Messiah’s suffering and death was necessary to carry out the Triune Godhead’s plan of redemption. In fact, it was only possible for

Messiah to complete the eternal plan IF the Father protected Him from Satan’s war. If Messiah would have failed and sinned, redemption for the rest of us was off the table. The great protection of the Father is seen most obviously as God the Son endured Satan’s tempting and victoriously rebuffed him.

Then “May God protect me” also. It would appear that God has not protected thousands of martyrs who died standing for God over the years. They can be added to those thousands of souls under the altar in heaven. John saw in heaven, *When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne (Revelation 6:9)*. The same people show up near the end of the book in chapter twenty where John recorded, *Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God . . . (Revelation 20:4)*.

The souls are from people martyred for their faith. They are special souls to God. God protects such people for eternity. God determines when is the end of each life. That we are able to come to the end without forsaking Him is because He protects us from the evil one. That is why we pray: “*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*” (*Matthew 6:13*). It is the same prayer for protection Jesus prayed for me: “*I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one*” (*John 17:15*).

Third, *May he send you help from the sanctuary and give you support from Zion (v.2)*! “May God send help to David from the sanctuary.” The sanctuary and Zion obviously refer to the tabernacle, the place where David placed the ark in Jerusalem. Because the ark symbolized the presence of God, David desired for God to send out help from His presence. Because God’s messengers may well be invisible, David did not always see the help God sent in physical form. But no doubt God answered this prayer.

“May God send help to the Christ from the sanctuary.” The old tabernacle is not the only place that would qualify as God’s sanctuary. In fact, that would be a pretty limited picture for God the Son the creator of all things. Rather, in this application we would conclude, from His sanctuary in heaven where the Father sits on His throne in majesty, He sent help to the Christ. Having endured Satan’s

temptations, the Son immediately experienced the supernatural help of divine messengers sent by the Father. Now see Him standing in that sanctuary in heaven, as the Lamb having been slain, the only one worthy to take the title deed of creation from the Father's hand and open the seals (Revelation 5:5-6).

"May God send help to me from the sanctuary." The ark is no longer in Jerusalem, so must be we will need to receive help from heaven – really! God literally sends out messengers from the heavenly sanctuary to help me. Speaking of the angels, the writer to the Hebrew believers wrote, *Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation (Hebrews 1:14)?* We have no understanding about how many there are, where they are, and what work they do. But we trust God to send us help from the sanctuary.

Fourth, *May he remember all your offerings and regard with favor your burnt sacrifices (v.3)!* Applied to David this means, "May God remember David's sacrifices." David often set the example for sacrifices before the people. When he brought the ark to Jerusalem, the sacrifice he provided for God's glory was astonishingly large (2 Samuel 6:13). He was even willing to sacrifice his life for God's people if necessary.

But the ultimate sacrifice or offering to God the Father came from the Son. "May God remember the Savior's sacrifices." No sacrifice compares to the sacrifice our Savior made to pay for sin. The wonderful news is that the Father does regard the Son's sacrifice of His life. Strangely, the Hebrew word translated *regard* in this verse is actually "fat." It refers to the fat of the sacrifices. If the people were sacrificing the best animals to God, they would be fat animals. The laws of the sacrifices in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy emphasize the burning of the fat. In that comparison, the sacrifice of Christ was the most acceptable sacrifice ever made.

"May God remember my sacrifices." Which ones? Are there any to remember? Recalling sacrifice made in God's service is not necessarily arrogant or an expression of pride. Consider the example of Nehemiah. Nehemiah prayed what appears to be an odd prayer when he said, "*Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God and for his service*" (Nehemiah 13:14). In fact, he prayed something like

this three times. Was he being self-concerned? No. Nehemiah set the example of sacrifice for the people. He did it for the Lord's glory. Unfortunately, the people didn't always follow very well.

It is good for us to remember that God provided the means for us to sacrifice and then prompted us to sacrifice for His service. It is not a reminder of how wonderful we are, but how wonderful God is.

Fifth, *May he grant you your heart's desire and fulfill all your plans (v.4)!* In keeping with our pattern, we say at this point, "May God fulfill David's desires." David was certainly familiar with this kind of request. It was David who wrote, *Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart (Psalm 37:4).* When David's delight was in the LORD, the LORD delighted to bring about his desires.

The same would be true when we make the application, "May God fulfill Messiah's desires." Obviously, no one desired the Father's perfect will more than the Son. Often He declared that he came to do the Father's will. His will, His plan was to complete the sacrifice for salvation. Praise God, His plan was fulfilled.

Do I not long for the same thing? "May God fulfill my desires." The word *delight* (Psalm 37:4) literally means to pamper. I need to make my thoughts and love for the LORD the most special part of my heart. We are challenged to protect and pamper our relationship with God. When you do, may He be delighted to fulfill your plans.

Sixth, *May we shout for joy over your salvation, and in the name of our God set up our banners (v.5a)!* "May David shout for joy over God's salvation." Some of the stories in 1 and 2 Samuel indicate that David shouted for joy when God saved him or the nation in battle. The Psalms are songs of praise in response to God's salvation.

But what about Christ? "May Christ shout for joy over God's salvation" doesn't seem to have any evidence to support it. How or when did Christ shout for joy? What about His last words on the cross? "It is finished" was not a cry of defeat. It was the shout of victory. It is difficult for us to see the suffering on the cross as a thing of joy. But the writer to the Hebrews taught us that completing the plan of salvation was a matter of joy for Jesus. *Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right*

hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2). “It is finished” was a shout of victory.

So also, “May I shout for joy over God’s salvation.” No one rejoices over the salvation God provides through Jesus if they see no need for it and reject it. We have truly come to grips with the need for salvation when we realize the law of God slays us and leaves us worthy of eternal punishment. To realize that apart from God’s salvation I will suffer in agony for eternity, I will rejoice in salvation.

Seventh, *May the LORD fulfill all your petitions (v.5b)!* We apply it to David saying, “May the eternal God answer David’s prayers.” The psalms are full of evidence that God has done this. Some of David’s prayers (2 Samuel 7) are still to be answered. But we are sure they will be.

How encouraging to stop to consider, “May the eternal God answer His Son’s prayers.” That the Father listens to the Son’s prayers should encourage us greatly. When Jesus prayed, “Not My will but Your’s be done,” was that not possibly the greatest of all prayers answered? But then we consider as well Christ’s prayers for us His followers (John 17). May God answer Jesus’ prayers indeed!

And “May the eternal God answer my prayers.” He does. He will.

A Great Assurance (vv.6-9).

From the seven blessings we come to the great assurances. One is that we know the Lord saves (v.6). *Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand (v.6).* We know that God protects His anointed. The LORD’s anointed are the people He has chosen. We are people God has chosen to do His will, people He has chosen to bring glory to Himself. If we need an example: the Hebrew word *mashyach* gives us the English word Messiah. We should have full confidence that God in heaven will save His people all the way into heaven for eternity.

God saves His special people by answering them in times of need. Therefore, we have assurance to know God answers from heaven. By observing God’s dealings with David (His anointed) and Jesus Christ (God’s anointed), I know that God hears and answers

prayer. When people are certain they belong to God, they delight to pray to God and expect God to answer.

At the same time, we also know there are choices in objects of trust (v.7). We have a certain assurance that *Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God (v.7).* In a very practical way, this means that many people trust in human strength. Horses and chariots are the products of human effort. The ancients bred horses to be strong and durable. They trained horses for battle. They built the most durable weapons for war. That was all human effort.

People like Pharaoh and the Midianites put great trust in chariots. Our peers copy the same kind of trust placed in armies, weapons, and leaders. They are not a good object for our faith.

Far better it should be for us who trust the name of the LORD our God (v.7b). That is one way that God’s anointed people are distinct. Our trust in the Lord does not make us lazy or foolish. We do the wisest thing we can to provide protection. We have insurance. We do appreciate a standing army. We do practice good diets and hygiene. But ultimately, we trust the character and work of the eternal, self-existent God who is our master. Why?

We also are assured that there are contrasting results. *They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright (v.8).* People who trust human strength are destined for destruction. Pharaoh’s chariots are in the bottom of the Red Sea. History is replete with the evidence of once great nations and fearsome leaders who are no more.

Conversely, people who trust the LORD are destined for exaltation. We will likely be the least of all people in this life. But our eyes and hope are set on eternity that our Christ won for us on the cross. “Cross-eyed” people have the best view of life.

Because of these assurances, we pray to the LORD. *O LORD, save the king! May he answer us when we call (v.9).* “LORD save!” is a simple but poignant prayer. David prayed it. Jesus prayed it. We do well to cry out the same thing. May He answer when we call. God will hear when we call. God will answer. Our Bible is full of the evidence. Our lives by this point should also offer much evidence that the LORD answers prayer.