

May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble;
May the name of the God of Jacob defend you;
² May He send you help from the sanctuary,
And strengthen you out of Zion;
³ May He remember all your offerings,
And accept your burnt sacrifice. *Selah*
⁴ May He grant you according to your heart's *desire*,
And fulfill all your purpose.
⁵ We will rejoice in your salvation,
And in the name of our God we will set up *our* banners!
May the LORD fulfill all your petitions.
⁶ Now I know that the LORD saves 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 remember the name of the LORD our God.
⁸ They have bowed down and fallen;
But we have risen and stand upright.
⁹ Save, LORD!
May the King answer us when we call.

Introduction

Psalm 20 and Psalm 21 go together. Psalm 20 is the prayer before the battle and Psalm 21 is the praise that is given after the victory in battle.

Many Christians cry out to God in prayer, and God always answers prayer.

He may not answer according to our timing, or even according to the purpose that we might expect.

However, if you are in a personal relationship with the God of the Bible, then He will hear and answer your cry, according to His will, which is not always our will.

When God **does answer the cry of our hearts**, we **do not always give Him the praise that is due to His name**.

Therefore, we need to see Psalm 20 and 21 as one unit which is linked.

If we are **praying much** then we should be **praising God much** as we see His will fulfilled through our prayers.

David was involved in many military battles. However, David only defended himself against military attacks from other nations and peoples.

David never went to war to gain new territory and enlarge his kingdom.

David was fighting the Lord's battles.

He was serving the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

As a Christian we will fight many battles in our lives.

These battles should **not be physical battles but spiritual battles**.

2 Corinthians Chapter 10: v. 3-6.

³ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵ casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, ⁶ and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

In these verses Paul is clear that the weapons that God gives us for fighting these spiritual battles will be successful.

If we fight spiritual battles in **our own strength, then we will fail**.

However, if we fight spiritual battles with spiritual weapons, then victory is assured.

Psalm 20 can be divided into four sections.

1. A Prayer for protection. – v. 1-5.
2. A Confession of Faith from a confident leader. – v. 6.
3. A Conclusion of Trust. – v. 7-8.
4. A Call for deliverance. – v. 9.

1. A Prayer for protection. – v. 1-5.

Before the army went out to battle, the Jewish Law of warfare required the officers and soldiers first of all to dedicate themselves to God.

Deut. 20: v. 1-9.

“When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots *and* people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God *is* with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt. ² So it shall be, when you are on the verge of battle, that the priest shall approach and speak to the people. ³ And he shall say to them, ‘Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them; ⁴ for the LORD your God *is* He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.’

⁵ “Then the officers shall speak to the people, saying: ‘What man *is there* who has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it. ⁶ Also what man *is there* who has planted a vineyard and has not eaten of it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man eat of it. ⁷ And what man *is there* who is betrothed to a woman and has not married her? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man marry her.’

⁸ “The officers shall speak further to the people, and say, ‘What man *is there who is* fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, lest the heart of his brethren faint like his heart.’ ⁹ And so it shall be, when the officers have finished speaking to the people, that they shall make captains of the armies to lead the people.

It is clear from the Jewish principles governing warfare that God did not want people fighting a physical battle, if they had any other things in their lives that might distract them.

Deuteronomy 20: v. 1-9 highlights, a new house, a new business or job, a new wife, or even being fearful or faint hearted.

To fight the physical battles in the Old Testament, God wanted His army to be 100% focused and dedicated to the task in hand.

The task was to defend God’s chosen people against attacks from the enemy.

The application for us today is not that we are fighting physical battles, but that we are **fighting spiritual battles.**

The same **focus and concentration** is needed in our **spiritual warfare**, just as much as in the physical warfare that governed the Jewish battles of the Old Testament days.

To focus on prayer for long periods of time, takes amazing dedication.

It can be done on your own, but it is much better to do it in small groups or **with two other people.**

Remember the first battle that Moses fought when he came out of Egypt with 3 million people in his charge.

Exodus 17: v. 8-16 in the N.L.T.

⁸ While the people of Israel were still at Rephidim, the warriors of Amalek attacked them. ⁹ Moses commanded Joshua, “Choose some men to go out and fight the army of Amalek for us. Tomorrow, I will stand at the top of the hill, holding the staff of God in my hand.”

¹⁰ So Joshua did what Moses had commanded and fought the army of Amalek. Meanwhile, Moses, Aaron, and Hur climbed to the top of a nearby hill. ¹¹ As long as Moses held up the staff in his hand, the Israelites had the advantage. But whenever he dropped his hand, the Amalekites gained the advantage. ¹² Moses' arms soon became so tired he could no longer hold them up. So Aaron and Hur found a stone for him to sit on. Then they stood on each side of Moses, holding up his hands. So his hands held steady until sunset. ¹³ As a result, Joshua overwhelmed the army of Amalek in battle. ¹⁴ After the victory, the LORD instructed Moses, "Write this down on a scroll as a permanent reminder, and read it aloud to Joshua: I will erase the memory of Amalek from under heaven." ¹⁵ Moses built an altar there and named it Yahweh-Nissi (which means "the LORD is my banner"). ¹⁶ He said, "They have raised their fist against the LORD's throne, so now the LORD will be at war with Amalek generation after generation."

This passage is a great example of the power of prayer involving three people.

Moses couldn't have survived a day of prayer without Aaron and Hur.

Joshua couldn't have won the battle without the prayer backing behind him.

It was no wonder that David wanted prayer for protection. He believed in the power of prayer.

When I was a Pastor in London, the leadership team and myself went away for a three-day prayer and fasting retreat.

It was very hard, just to drink water and to pray for three days.

We met specifically to consider the future ministry structure of the Church.

For us it was the prayer before the spiritual battle. We were seeking to win souls for Jesus Christ.

Over a five-year period, we did see God's grace save some people, and I rejoice in what God did over that period of time.

It was at the Faith Mission Bible College in Edinburgh Scotland from 1985-1987 that I learnt that the only way forward for everything in the Christian life was prayer.

If we soak ourselves in prayer, and somebody squeezes us, out will come the Holy Spirit.

Billy Graham, a famous evangelist for many years, was interviewed a few years before he died.

The reporter asked him this question. Billy.... "If you could go back over your very successful life as an evangelist and change anything, what would it be?"

Billy replied.... "I would pray more, I would spend more time with God in prayer.."

In v. 1-5 there are a number of things to consider concerning these praying people.

Firstly, it was a day of trouble – v. 1.

We don't need problems in order to pray, but when we have problems in life, then **we really must pray.**

Psalm 46: v. 1. (N.K.J.)

God is our refuge and strength,

A very present help in trouble.

In the original Hebrew Psalm 46: v. 1 says that "God has abundant available help."

When we pray to God for his help, we need to remember that He has abundant help available to us personally, and that help is available now.

Secondly, verse 1 puts the **confidence of the praying person upon the God of Jacob.**

The "**name**" gives us the meaning of both the **authority and presence of the person.**

The name of the God of Jacob refers to the God of Israel's past.

It refers to the God who delivered His children from Egypt.

Exodus 19: v. 3-6. In N.K.J.

³ And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: ⁴ 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *howl* bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if you will indeed

obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine. ⁶ And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These *are* the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”

In the original Hebrew, the thought here is that God would so protect his people that He would defend them like He did when they were rescued from Egypt.

Thirdly v.2 the Psalmist is asking for help from the sanctuary.

This was the **dwelling place of God.**

David was looking for assurance in his heart of answered prayer before he began the fight.

He wanted the divine presence before he went into battle.

In Ephesians chapter 6: v. 10-17 Paul lists the spiritual armour needed for spiritual warfare. The he says in v.18 that after putting on all the armour we must be **continually in prayer.**

It is through prayer that God’s presence is experienced.

It is through prayer that we get the assurance of victory.

Fourthly in verse 3 the Psalmist points first to all the offerings that David had made in the past.

Many times David had made **personal sacrifices to God** and continued to worship God in spite of all of his problems.

The second half of v. 3 talks about burnt sacrifices.

No doubt Samuel gave an example to David about being prepared before the battle through offering a burnt sacrifice to God.

1 Samuel 7: v. 8-10.

⁸ So the children of Israel said to Samuel, “Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines.”

⁹ And Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered *it as* a whole burnt offering to the LORD. Then Samuel cried out to the LORD for Israel, and the LORD answered him. ¹⁰ Now as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel. But the LORD thundered with a loud thunder upon the Philistines that day, and so confused them that they were overcome before Israel.

In a burnt sacrifice the whole offering was for God Himself. – Lev. 3: v. 9-17.

The New Testament equivalent of this is **Romans 12: v. 1-2.**

(in N.K.J.)

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

As we offer our bodies to the Lord in a **“living sacrifice”** in worship, we are transformed in order that we might do the will of God.

Only by this radical change and surrender in our lives will we be ready to do battle against Satan’s forces.

The 5th prayer request is to have our hearts desire and purpose or plan.

When our heart is in line with God’s heart, we ask for the things that God wants to give us.

David’s heart was to win the battle to defend God’s people and He wanted to know God’s plan.

This is a very important thing to pray - what is God’s plan?

When Joshua had his first battle to take over the promise land and destroy the wicked people, it didn’t seem like a good plan.

BUT, it was God’s plan. God gave the instructions, and Joshua followed them.

Joshua Chapter 6: v. 1-5.

Now Jericho was securely shut up because of the children of Israel; none went out, and none came in. ²And the LORD said to Joshua: "See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, *and* the mighty men of valor. ³You shall march around the city, all *you* men of war; you shall go all around the city once. This you shall do six days. ⁴And seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. But the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. ⁵It shall come to pass, when they make a long *blast* with the ram's horn, *and* when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat. And the people shall go up every man straight before him."

It didn't seem like a good plan, but it was God's plan and it was successful.

Q. What is God's plan for your life?

Q. What is God's plan for you this year?

Q. What is God's plan for the problem or battle that you are facing now?

If the Bible doesn't specifically answer that then you must listen to God's voice in your heart, as you read the Bible.

In v. 5 David is confident of success, he has already started to praise God and lift up his victory banner.

Elisha had this sort of confidence when he was facing a battle.

2 Kings Chapter 6; v.15-17.

¹⁵And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?"

¹⁶So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who *are* with us *are* more than those who *are* with them." ¹⁷And Elisha prayed, and said, "LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then

the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain *was* full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

God wants our prayer life to be like this.

God wants us to pray with confidence before we go into battle. He wants us to trust Him and to surrender to His will, confident that in the end, God will win.

God wants us to have the assurance to praise him before the battle, trusting that victory is assured.

2. A confession of faith from a confident leader – v. 6.

In this verse David offers a very positive confession of faith. He says "**now I know...**"

David prayed through until he got the assurance in his heart that the battle was already won!

Never go against the powers of evil until you have really prayed through and surrendered all to God, and can say with David – "**now I know...**" that God will answer this prayer, or deliver this situation and rescue me!

In v.6 it says "**Now I know that the Lord saves His anointed..**"

The Hebrew word here is "masiah" where we get our word Messiah.

It is also the word for King.

Yes, David was the King and in the battle he would gain victory.

However, the Psalmist is also pointing to the victory that the Messiah Jesus would gain as he went into battle to secure the Salvation of the lost men and women in this world.

Ephesians 1: v. 19-23. In N.K.J.

¹⁹and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power ²⁰which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead

and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, ²¹far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

²²And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, ²³which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

We need to have the confidence, especially if we are in any leadership capacity, that God Himself is in charge of all things and He can defeat the enemy, if we follow Him and surrender to His plans and purposes.

This can be very difficult if we have our own plans and purposes!

Q. Are you confident in God's power to deliver according to His word?

3. **A Conclusion of trust – v. 7-8.**

David now declares where his trust lies.

(v.7.)

⁷Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses;

But we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

We have two choices in the Christian life, we can trust in our own strength or we can trust in the strength of God.

Where is our trust today?

2 Corinthians 10: v. 3-5 in the N.K.J.

³For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. ⁴For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

In a spiritual war, only spiritual weapons work!

Therefore, we need to surrender all of our own resources, and trust in God's resources.

All of the physically powerful men and their armies will one day bow down at the feet of Jesus.

Philippians 2: v.5-11. In N.K.J.

⁵You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

⁶Though he was God,

he did not think of equality with God
as something to cling to.

⁷Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;

he took the humble position of a slave
and was born as a human being.

When he appeared in human form,

⁸ he humbled himself in obedience to God

and died a criminal's death on a cross.

⁹Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor

and gave him the name above all other names,

¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,

in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father.

4. **A Call for deliverance – v. 9.**

In verse 9 we have David's final cry as he goes into battle.

Psalm 95: v.3

³For the LORD *is* the great God,

And the great King above all gods.

Psalm 24: v.10.

¹⁰ Who is this King of glory?

The LORD of hosts,

He *is* the King of glory. *Selah*

Unless the Lord is King, there can be no victory.

David might plan his strategy, but the Lord alone can determine the outcome.

It is never easy, especially when you are young or when you are very disappointed in a situation.

However, it is a wonderful thing to trust in the sovereignty of God.

Several times in my life I have been in a very difficult situation and the first time I really felt God had somehow let me and my wife down, somebody said, well you will just have to hold on to the sovereignty of God.

At the time, I wasn't willing for this excellent advice, but the person was right.

It appeared that a man had closed the door for my return to Japan as a missionary after our first 4 year- term of service. However, I discovered that it was the sovereignty of God to prepare us for returning to Japan to be at OIC.

It took another 25 years to prepare my wife and I for re-entry into Japan.

In our lives when difficult things happen we do need to trust in God's plan and His sovereign will.

God loves us, God knows us, God cares for us, God gives the very best to those that leave the choice to Him.