**A Prayer Ceremony before Battle**

***Psalm 20:1-9***

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Introduction: Psalms 20 & 21 are considered “twin royal psalms.” Both are attributed to David, who writes on behalf of the Israelites, as their king. In the first psalm, the people speak first, then the king. In Psalm 21, the king speaks first, then the people. The first psalm is a prayer ceremony before battle while the second psalm is a praise celebration after the battle. To understand the concept of prayer (or worship) before a battle, consider Deuteronomy 20:1-4, *“When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, & seest horses, & chariots, & a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the LORD thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach & speak unto the people, And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, & do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them: For the LORD your God is He that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.”*

According to Wiersbe, this psalm gives 3 essentials for God’s people to have victory. There must be: a praying people, a confident leader, & a sovereign Lord. I want us to see here: the prayer of God’s people (:1-5), the perspective of God’s king (:6-8), & the petitions for God’s blessing (:9).

I. The **prayer** of God’s people (:1-5)

A. Their petitions (:1-4) >

1. For God to **hear**:

a. *“Hear”* implies that God will answer (cf. Psalm 3:4 & 4:1).

b. *“Day of trouble”* indicates tribulation, affliction, distress, adversity, &/or anguish.

2. For God to **help**:

a. *“The name of the God of Jacob”* refers to all that He reveals Himself to be; His name

represents Him. [“What’s in a name? It depends upon whose name it is. Nothing can

successfully oppose the Name of the Lord” (Scroggie).]

b. *“Defend”* speaks of to “make inaccessible, protect by setting on high” (RSB).

c. *“From the sanctuary”* references the holy place (Tabernacle), the earthly residence of God.

3. For God to **honor**:

a. *“Remember… accept”* – sacrifices offered by the king before battle; this psalm to be sung

while the sacrifice is offered? See I Samuel 7:9-10 & 13:9-12.

b. This prescribed worship is asked to be “remembered” by God – for Him to think upon, be

mindful of, or record. “Warfare & worship should go together (:3); he who does not

sacrifice is not likely to succeed” (Scroggie).

Illustration: “Always kneel before you fight” (Scroggie).

B. Their praise (:5) >

1. There is rejoicing – in God’s salvation (victory over the enemy).

2. There is raising – of banners, a sign of victory (anticipated). See Exodus 17:15-16.

3. There is resting – in faith, for the Lord to fulfill David’s petitions.

II. The **perspective** of God’s king (:6-8)

A. His confidence (:6, *“…saveth His anointed…”*) >

1. The Lord hears (answers) – *“from* *His holy heaven”* – God’s heavenly sanctuary.

2. The Lord helps – *“with the saving strength of His right hand.”*

B. The contrasts (:7-8) >

1. Those who trust in “human” resources (:7a, 8a).

a. *“Chariots… horses”* – see again Deuteronomy 20:1.

b. *“Brought down & fallen”* – speaks of “complete overthrow & powerlessness to do farther

harm” (Plumer).

2. Those who trust in “heavenly” resources (:7b, 8b).

a. *“We will remember”* – suggests “to acknowledge & purposefully think about” (RSB).

“This should be our watchword & our strength” (Kirkpatrick).

b. *“We are risen, & stand upright”* – past tense verbs; speaks of their certainty of victory.

III. The **petitions** for God’s blessing (:9)

A. “God save the king” – *“Save, LORD”* >

1. Prayer for God to preserve the king?

2. Prayer for God to prosper the king? Grant victory to the king.

B. “God hear the people” – *“let the king* (King?) *hear us when we call.”*

1. Compare the prayer in verse one.

2. Confident anticipation of the Lord’s blessing.

Conclusion: Review those 3 essentials given by Wiersbe for God’s people to have victory. There needs to be a praying people, a confident leader, & a Sovereign Lord. Consider that the believer is in a spiritual battle, not against flesh & blood, but *“against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”* (Ephesians 6:12). Therefore we are to put on the *“whole armor of God”* & *“praying always with all prayer & supplication in the Spirit…”* (6:13-20). We, too, can have confidence. Not in ourselves or our human resources, but in *“the power of His might”* (:10). The Reformation Study Bible points out: “It is important that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual (II Cor. 10:4). We often use human means, but they will do nothing apart from the power of God’s Spirit & the victory of Jesus Christ.”

Do we have the same confidence as did David & the people of God? Their prayer was offered in faith, believing God for the victory. Can you claim the Lord as your *“Jehovah-nissi”* – meaning, “the Lord is my banner”? How are your spiritual battles going tonight?