

Psalm 20 – Help in Time of Affliction

I. Introduction

- a. Today I am going to assume you are afflicted!
 - i. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But He will deliver them from them all.” (Psalm 34:20, Psalm 33:20 in the LXX)
 1. Those who are striving to live righteous lives will face many afflictions! That is just how it is. (And God will deliver us from our afflictions.)
 2. (There is also affliction, which is the consequence of foolishness and sin!)
 3. We are in the great arena/spiritual battle, at war with the Evil One. We are being tempted by Satan/tested by God.
 - ii. “He was a man in suffering and knew how to bear sickness. His face was turned away, and He was dishonored and not esteemed. He bears our sins and suffers for us, yet we considered Him to be in pain, suffering, and ill-treatment.” (Isaiah 53:3-4)
 - iii. “... [speaking of Jesus], who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His Godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.... (Hebrews 5:8-9)
 1. The most righteous man on earth. His life was filled with affliction. He shows us the way.
 - iv. “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps....” (1 Peter 2:21)
 1. We are being refined, purged, being made more holy through affliction. It’s just the way it is.
 2. The quicker we accept this, the better!
 3. This week marks the second anniversary of Chris Traganos’ death and passing to paradise. Chris was a tremendous friend to me and so many others. His suffering led him to the Lord and he used his suffering to care for so many others. He finished the race strong and is now in fellowship with the saints who have died in Christ before him. A tremendous example for us.

- b. Today we are going to cover **Psalm 20 (Psalm 19 in LXX)**, a psalm of David.
 - i. May this psalm helps us prepare for and face affliction.
- c. Read **Psalm 20 (19 in LXX)**, a psalm of David.
- d. Summary of the Psalm
 - i. Part 1: David begins with a prayer of blessing for the one (or those) in affliction:
 - 1. May the Lord hear you
 - 2. May the name of the God of Jacob defend you
 - 3. May God send you help from His holy place
 - ii. Part 2: David places his confidence in (and directs us to) the Lord's ultimate victory in the future
 - 1. We rejoice in "your salvation" (to come) and the glory to come
 - a. Joy awaits the afflicted ones!
 - 2. that "God saved His anointed" (David was the anointed king; speaks of knowing what will happen in the future) and
 - 3. God hears "him" (the afflicted one) from His holy hill.
 - 4. We see a contrast of fates between
 - a. "those who glory in chariots and horses" (who will stumble and fall) and
 - b. those who glory in "the name of the Lord" (and will be raised up and restored).
 - i. ("Raised up" in the LXX is the same Greek word that can mean "to stand up", "to raise up" or "to be resurrected".)
 - iii. Part 3: Concludes with a petition:
 - 1. "O Lord, save Your King, and hear us in the day we call upon You" (this day of affliction).
 - iv. It is a bit confusing to know who the "you" and "us" is referring to in this psalm.
 - 1. We will come back to this at the end of the lesson.

2. For now, we will focus on some of the key themes from the psalm, to help us in our days of affliction.

II. God hears his people

- a. Strikes me that in this short psalm, there are three references to God hearing his afflicted people:
 - i. “May the Lord hear you in the day of affliction” (vs. 1)
 - ii. “Now I know the Lord will save His anointed. He will hear him from His holy heaven....” (vs. 7)
 - iii. “... hear us in the day we call upon You.” (vs. 10)
- b. This is a theme in many of David’s psalms. The importance of knowing that God hears us. David struggles with this:
 - i. “Give ear to my prayer, O God, And do not despise my supplication; Attend to me, and hear me. I am vexed in my prayer....” (**Psalm 55:2-3/Psalm 54 in LXX**)
 - ii. “Hear my supplication, O God; Attend to my prayer. From the end of the earth I cried out to You When my heart was discouraged....” **Psalm 61: 1-3/Psalm 60:1-3 in LXX**)
 - iii. “Hear my voice, O God, in my supplication; Deliver my soul from fear of the enemy....” (**Psalm 64:1-2/Psalm 63:1-2 in LXX**)
- c. Satan is the deceiver, the liar. One of his great lies: that God does not hear the prayers of the righteous. That God has forgotten us, has abandoned us. Like David, we need to wrestle honestly with our doubts about God.
 - i. Read **Psalm 22:1-3, 15-26**
 1. “O God, my God, hear me; why have You forsaken me?
 2. O my God, I will cry out by day, but you will not hear me....”
 3. He is afflicted, shattered, pierced, humiliated. But he sees God as one who has not deserted him. And David will not desert God!
 - a. “He has not despised nor scorned the beggar’s supplication, Nor has He turned away His face from me; And when I cried out to Him, He heard me. My praise is from You in the great Church....”
- d. Manasseh: God hears the prayers of the repentant

- i. Read **2 Chronicles 33:9-13, 18-19**
 - 1. This great prayer of repentance was heard by God! This guy was so wicked. Yet God hears his prayers.
- ii. Read **2 Chronicles “37”: 1-15.**
 - 1. May Satan have no victory over us when we sin.
 - 2. May we take great comfort that as we approach God in humility and cry out to Him, we are heard and can be forgiven.
- e. A picture of the prayers of the righteous ascending to God.
 - i. “... the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and the golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints....” (**Revelation 5:8**)
 - ii. “Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel’s hand.” (**Revelation 8:2-4**)
 - iii. May we never forget that God hears the prayers of His people, which are a beautiful aroma to Him!

III. The name of the Lord

- a. In **Psalm 20**, three instances of the phrase “the name of the Lord”:
 - i. “May the name of the God of Jacob defend you.” (vs. 1)
 - 1. Why this? Why not the Creator of the Universe? The Lord Almighty? The Holy One?
 - 2. Perhaps because Jacob had lots of afflictions! (**Gen. 31:36-42**)
 - a. (Many times, this phrase seems to be used in calling out for God’s help.)
 - b. Jacob faced great affliction from Laban
 - i. His uncle Laban (switched out his chosen bride Rachel for Leah and then cheated him of his wages over a period of 20 years)
 - ii. Difficult life as a shepherd.
 - iii. His brother Esau wanted to kill him.

- iv. His struggle with the Angel of the Lord.
- c. We can relate to Jacob, take inspiration from Him, that the God of Jacob is our God as well.
- 3. When David says, “May the name of the God of Jacob defend you”, his life embodies his theology!
 - a. Read **1 Samuel 17 (1 Kingdoms 17:21-26)**
 - i. David is filled with courage and confidence because he comes “in the name of the Lord”.
 - ii. To David: game over. The outcome is obvious.
 - iii. Compare David with his terrified fellow soldiers.
 - iv. Do we see clearly the great power over our enemy when we come in “the name of the Lord”?
 - ii. “Some glory in chariots, some in horses, But in the name of the Lord our God we shall be magnified.” (**vs. 8**)
 - 1. Contrasts those who trust in chariots and horses with those who trust in the Lord. One will fall (die), the other will be raised up (resurrected) and restored – magnified!
 - a. So, not everyone is saved in the name of the Lord!
 - 2. Early Christians referenced **Psalm 20** to remind the Christians where they were to place their hope.
 - 3. Speaking of the laurel and golden crowns worn by various citizens and rulers in Rome and Athens, who trusted in gold, luxury, decorated horses and all types of pomp:
 - a. “But your orders, and your magistracies, and your very place of meeting, the church, are Christ’s. You belong to Him, for you have been enrolled in the books of life. There the blood of the Lord serves for your purple robe, and your broad stripe is His own cross...”
 - b. Never mind the state horses with their crown. Your Lord, when, according to the Scripture, He would enter Jerusalem in triumph, had not even an ass of His own. These (put their trust) in chariots, and these in horses; but we will seek our help in the name of the Lord our God. (Psalm 20)

- c. ... The rabble, too, are crowned, at one time because of some great rejoicing for the success of the emperors; at another, on account of some custom belonging to municipal festivals. For luxury strives to make her own every occasion of public gladness.
 - d. But as for you, you are a foreigner in this world, a citizen of Jerusalem, the city above. Our citizenship, the apostle says, is in heaven. You have your own registers, your own calendar; you have nothing to do with the joys of the world; nay, you are called to the very opposite, for “the world shall rejoice, but ye shall mourn.” And I think the Lord affirms, that those who mourn are happy, not those who are crowned.
 - i. Tertullian, ANF 3.100-101.
 - ii. Not even Jesus, the King over the eternal kingdom, put His trust in horses. Instead, he rode a borrowed donkey! Relying on the Lord was enough for him.
4. As we are afflicted by suffering, loss and persecution, we should not give in to fear: because greater is the Lord to protect than the devil to assault.
- a. “John, in his epistle, proves this, saying: “Greater is He who is in you than he that is in the world.” (**1 John 4:4**) Also in the 118th Psalm: “I will not fear what man can do unto me; the Lord is my helper.” And again: “These in chariots, and those in horses; but we will glory in the name of the Lord our God. They themselves are bound, and they have fallen; but we have risen up, and stand upright.” (Psalm 20)
 - i. Remember how this is going to end!
 - b. And even more strongly the Holy Spirit, teaching and showing that the army of the devil is not to be feared, and that, if the foe should declare war against us, our hope consists rather in that war itself; and that by that conflict the righteous attain to the reward of the divine abode and eternal salvation,—lays down in the twenty-sixth Psalm, and says: “Though an host should be arrayed against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise up against me, in that will I put my hope. One hope have I sought of the Lord, this will I

require; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life....”

- c. Nor does any one else promise to us security and protection, than He who also speaks by Isaiah the prophet, saying: “Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, and called you by our name: you are mine. And if you pass through the water, I am with you, and the rivers shall not overflow you. And if thou pass through the fire, you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not burn you; for I, the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, am He who makes you safe.” (**Isaiah 43:1-3**)
 - d. Wherefore in persecutions let no one think what danger the devil is bringing in, but let him indeed consider what help God affords; nor let human mischief overpower the mind, but let divine protection strengthen the faith; since every one, according to the Lord’s promises and the deservings of his faith, receives so much from God’s help as he thinks that he receives. Nor is there anything which the Almighty is not able to grant, unless the failing faith of the receiver be deficient and give way.
 - i. Cyprian of Carthage, ANF 5. 501–502.
- b. What does Jesus have to say about “the name of the Lord”?
- i. Read **John 17:1-12**
 - ii. “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me....” (vs. 6)
 - 1. This is eternal life: to know God and Jesus Christ, sent to reveal God’s name (character, nature, commandments, love, etc.)
 - iii. “Holy Father, keep through Your name those who You have given Me....” And, “I have kept them in Your name.” (all but Judas)
 - iv. Note, Judas did not remain in Christ, in God’s name.
 - 1. Jesus’ protection through the Father’s name is not a guarantee.
 - 2. But to those who remain in God’s name (follow Christ, are “in Him”), will be kept safe, protected from the Evil One.
 - 3. Compare the tragedy of Judas with the humility of Manasseh, who found God’s kindness and favor!

v. Read **Luke 11:1-2**

1. Jesus said pray these words (daily): “Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.”
2. “When we say, ‘Hallowed be Thy name,’ we pray this; that it may be hallowed in us who are in Him, as well in all others for whom the grace of God is still waiting; that we may obey this precept, too, in praying for all, even for our personal enemies.”
 - a. (Source: Tertullian, *On Prayer*, chapter 3; ANF 3.682)
3. We are praying that our lives (living as the light of the world, obeying God, living holy lives, and showing the love of God to others) can bring glory and blessings to the name of God.
4. Also, praying that God’s name would be made holy in those who are not yet followers of Christ!
5. A beautiful blessing the Lord gave to Aaron and his sons.
 - a. “This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them (My name shall be put on the children of Israel, and I the Lord shall bless them): “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be merciful to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.”
(**Numbers 6:23-26**)

vi. We are baptized “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (**Matthew 28:18-19**)

c. Just a few other (of many) references to “the name of the Lord”

- i. “Then Peter said, ‘Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.’” (**Acts 3:6**)
- ii. Read **Ephesians 3:14-19**

1. “from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named... that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

IV. Should we pray that God will remove affliction from our lives?

- a. Jesus prays multiple times: “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” (**Matthew 26:39**)
- b. Paul did as well

- i. “And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”
(2 Corinthians 12:10)

c. They did not seem to dwell on it. They accepted their cup of affliction.

V. Who was David speaking to (and about) in Psalm 20?

- a. In **Psalm 16 (15 in LXX)**, David states that “For You will not abandon my soul to Hades Nor allow Your Holy One to see corruption.”
 - i. We know from **Acts 2** that this was not referring to David, but to the Son of God, who God would raise from the dead.
- b. In **Psalm 22 (21 in the LXX)**, David writes: “O God, my God, why have you forsaken me” and describes specific details of Jesus’ crucifixion:
 - i. “They pierced my hands and feet”
 - ii. “They divided my garments among themselves”
- c. What about **Psalm 20**? Any reference to Christ here?
 - i. Who is speaking in this psalm?
 - ii. And who is the “you” in this psalm?
 1. Is David speaking to us?
 2. Is it the people saying this to David, the king?
 3. Is it David, speaking of the Christ to come, the burnt offering, the afflicted one who will suffer and bring salvation and joy to God’s people?
- d. Read **Psalm 20** again.
 - i. Consider Jesus meditating on the words of this Psalm on His day of affliction. The encouragement this would have brought to Him?
 - ii. May it encourage us as well, in our affliction, as we share in Christ’s suffering and, ultimately, share in His glory.