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A King Who Needs Saving and the King Who Saves; Psalm 20

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Psalm 20 is interesting and inspiring in a couple of ways. First, it has an interesting, inspiring historical setting. This psalm, as the heading indicates, was written by David. It was written to be sung in time of war, and we know that war followed David for most of his life. It was written by David to be sung for David. It is a prayer for and a trusting for the salvation of the King in the day of battle. This is how David wanted his army and the people of Israel to think of him and to think of the battle when they faced any foe. What makes this both interesting and inspiring is where David directs the people's attention, to the Lord and not to David. David knows the battle is the Lord's, not his, and he wants the people to know this as well. David knows he needs the Lord, he not the one to trust, and he is not the one who will bring victory. David is merely an earthly king who needs saving by the Sovereign King, who alone can save.

That is a glorious lesson for us all, kings or not. A glorious lesson of our dependency, God's sovereignty, and where our faith and hope must reside, not only in earthly matters but also and foremost in eternal matters. We rest and hope not in a man, but in the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our Redeemer, and that is the connection between Psalm 19 and 20.

Second, Psalm 20 has an interesting and inspiring theological setting as well. Whenever David speaks of the Lord's anointed, we know he is pointing ahead to the Christ, the Messiah, the anointed of God. David stands in a unique place in redemptive history. For David was given the glorious promise known as the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7. David was promised a son who would reign, who would build a house for the Lord, and the throne of his kingdom would be established forever. In fact, in 2 Sam 7:15, the Lord says to David, "my steadfast love will not depart from him." That's where David places his faith and his hope, and that's why David pens that phrase often in the psalms. Recall Psalm 18:50 where David writes, "Great salvation he brings to his king, and shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his offspring forever." David stands firm upon the covenant God made with him, and he leads all the believers in Israel to do the same. David, being anointed by God as king, is a type, a

foreshadow, of the coming anointed one, who would be not just King of Israel, but King of kings.

So theologically, this song is not only sung by the armies of Israel on behalf of their king in earthly battles but is sung by the church throughout the ages on behalf of our King who fought our greatest battle, the battle for our souls. God will save His anointed, and as a result, His anointed will save us. Let's walk through this psalm together keeping both the historical and theological setting in mind.

I. Salvation Rests in the King of kings (vv1-5)

A) In vv1-2, the prayer for help is directed to the Highest One in the Highest Place. This is no man-centered trust in man's power or man's might, no matter how powerful or in control man may appear to be. This plea goes straight past every device and ingenuity and creation of man right to the throne of the Almighty.

1. A plea for the protection of the name of the God of Jacob is a way of pleading for everything that God is for us in Christ. To call on the name is to call on all of His glorious attributes, not to single out one, as sufficient as any one of them are, but to rely and trust in everything about God and all of who He is. His name represents all of Him, all of His wonder, all of His grace, all of His might, all of His holiness, all of His glory.
2. A plea for help from the sanctuary, from Zion, is a plea for direct access to Him, no separation will do, no ceremony will do, no man-made mediation will do. We must be heard by Him, in His courts.
3. And how we rejoice and take comfort in knowing that Christ, our High Priest, ensures these blessings. He is our mediator. He hears our prayers. He intercedes on our behalf. He is all of God, in the flesh, and He is our great Advocate and Protector.

B) V3 is the condition upon which we can plead to be heard by the Most High. Remember the offerings. Remember the sacrifices. They made atonement for sin, they cleansed from sin and thereby opening the way to God. God gave us a means to be reconciled to Him and to approach Him through substitutionary sacrifice. Once sin is removed, God hears (v1), God saves, God helps (v2), God is approachable when sin is removed.

1. How our hearts rejoice because Christ is our substitutionary sacrifice. All these offerings and sacrifices pointed to His complete and final work on our behalf. Christ has reconciled us to God. Christ

has removed our sin. We can now approach God, and He will hear and He will save. And that's why when we pray, we pray with faith and hope.

2. Hebrews 4:14,16 says, "Since then we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God...Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."
 3. VV4-5 are an anticipation of being heard. An anticipation that vv1-2 will happen based upon v3. There is going to be joy. There is going to be salvation. There is going to be celebration. Listen to v5!
 4. All this joy and salvation and celebration is sandwiched between God, in grace, fulfilling plans and petitions.
- D) Now let's think about this for a moment in its theological setting. If you are in Christ, do you know Christ has plans for you and is even now petitioning God's throne on your behalf? Will God not fulfill those plans and petitions? And will you not know the joy, salvation, and celebration of it all? Hebrews 7:25 says Christ, "always lives to make intercession for them." Them, in that verse, is referring to us, believers. Salvation rests in the King of kings.

II. Faith Placed in the King of kings (vv6-8)

A) Note that in v6 this song has clearly moved from a prayer for salvation to faith in God that the prayer will be answered. Read v6.

1. God is going to save His anointed, His Son, the Christ. Of that, there is no doubt. God will hear His Son, of that, there is no doubt. God is going to display the glory of His saving might, of that, there is no doubt. The glorious implication is this: If God hears His Son, and His Son is praying for us, then God hears us! If God saves His Son, and His Son is saving us, God saves us!
2. Faith in God, in His character, His will, and His purpose for His anointed, is the foundation upon which this prayer lays and what gives rise to overflowing joy when this prayer is answered!

B) VV7-8 describe the foolishness of misplaced faith in self and man and the outcome of faith in God.

1. Now if you're going to battle and your enemy has the latest chariots and the most horses, from the human point of view, you don't stand a chance. And that precisely is the point.
2. The human point of view is not the only point of view. There is the point of view of faith. There is the point of view of God. And the truth of the matter is that if God be for us, who can be against us?

Chariots grow outdated. Horses grow old. God is and forever will be mighty to save!

3. To resort to man is to seal your doom, but to take refuge in God is to find salvation!
4. That's what v8 communicates. It may seem at first that the might of man, that the might of our Enemy, is insurmountable. They appear at first to be unstoppable. They flex their muscles and roar and rage against the people of God, and it seems as if they will win. But in the end, they simply collapse and fall, while the people of God, outnumbered and outmatched, rise and stand upright.
5. What produces such a twist in the plot? What makes such a startling turn of events? The answer lies in where we place our faith. God is on one side and not on the other. He, He makes the difference.

III. Salvation Accomplished by the King of kings (v7)

- A) Now here is where the history and the theology come together. Israel knew salvation was out of David's hand. God alone can bring salvation. And If God will hear them, and save the king, then the king will have the victory. That means they will be saved as well. A prayer for the king to be saved is a prayer to be saved.
- B) If God hears His Son and saves Him, then the King of kings will have the victory. That means that all who are with the King of kings will be saved. A prayer for Christ to win the battle is a prayer that we might be saved in Him.
- C) This psalm stands at a point of redemptive history when we were still awaiting the coming of the Anointed One. We stand today at a point of redemptive history when the Anointed One has come. And God saved His anointed, He strengthened His Son to fulfill the task of redemption and He raised His Son in glorious approval of His sacrifice and He exalted His Son as worthy of all praise. The King of kings went to battle for our souls, and God saved the King. And that means dear friends, if you are with King Jesus, you have been saved as well.