

Psalm 20 – Praying for Success

I want you to be successful! What if I said that God wants you to be successful? Everyone wants to be a success, in terms of how they define it. Christians should be looking to the Word of God for their understanding of what God considers success, and people should be trying to establish a godly life, a godly home, and godly relationships. Christians are to become a godly influence in whatever they are involved in. That is biblical success. In the midst of that framework, the Bible does give us some specific insights on how this is to be accomplished.

This Psalm, written by King David, is a prayer and a song. He teaches the people about how to pray for the victory of Israel, success for the King and his plans. It is like a ceremony, where the people speak to the King in vs.1-5, then speak about the King in vs.6-8, and finally, a declaration of dependence on God is made on behalf of the King in vs.9.

This is most specifically about an upcoming military campaign, but this framework also applies to praying for a nation and its people, or a pastor and a church, and about a leader in the home, or work, or school, or organization. This is a Psalm to remember in praying for the success of an evangelistic campaign or other discipleship endeavor or things like that.

This Psalm provides principles to pray for men who want to begin to be the kind of husband and father and family leader God wants them to be. It is useful for employers who want to establish a godly work environment. It is helpful for those entering into a personal battle or troubling situation. When we say, “I want to be successful”, this Psalm helps us to understand how we are to pray for the success of others and get them to pray for us in our endeavors.

Ultimately, this Psalm also has in view the prosperity of Christ and His Kingdom, being typified as Israel and its King. It is about the success of God’s will in the world and in our lives.

Prayer for Protection (vs.1) – “His name” means the sum of His attributes, in other words, the revealed character and Word of God.

- 1a. Answer His prayers in crisis
- 1b. Protect him from enemies

Prayer for Provision (vs.2) – “The sanctuary” refers to the place where God is especially known and present among His people.

- 2a. Send him help (His presence)
- 2b. Support him (His power / cf. Psalm 127:1)

Prayer for Practices (vs.3) – “Offerings and sacrifices” refers to the means by which the worshipper devoted himself to God.

- 3a. Bless his giving
- 3b. Anoint his worship (cf. Ephesians 5:2)

Prayer for Plans (vs.4) – Psalm 37:4-5 – You are not being selfish when you ask for success if you are truly doing it in the light of God’s Word. Of course, those whose first interest is their self will never find full satisfaction. Conversely, those who seek the Lord will find Him, and find life (cf. Matthew 6:33). When we delight in the Lord, it will result in changing our desires so that they are in harmony with God’s desires for us. The test is that if your desires are not godly then your focus, your delight is off center. Delight in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart, because if you delight in the Lord, your desires would be for the Lord and His will for your life. Delighting in the Lord leads to godly desires. You delight in God and God gives you Himself. Honor God and He will honor you (1 Samuel 2:30 / John 12:26).

Prayer for Prosperity (vs.5) – the success will cause joy and worship

- 5a. give him a victory –we should rejoice over the godly success of others

5b give us a celebration – we should thank God for the godly success of others

5c. give him satisfaction – we should hope and pray for the godly success of others

“Salvation” encompasses all the previous pleas, it recognizes that this comes from God as a gift and so it must further God’s call on us and the causes He wants us to be concerned with. In other words, this is about going after godliness, true success, and things related to that. It can certainly mean material success also, but it isn’t some blank check for greed and selfishness. David wanted to be successful because in that way Israel would be successful. If a husband and father is successful, in a godly way, then his whole family and the church benefits. So all this is predicated upon the fact that we are beginning to mature and to understand what God really wants out of us, which is to glorify Him in all we do, to live our lives as worship, to enjoy trusting and treasuring God for who He is, not just what He does. Our goal is to live for Christ, win others to Christ, and edify our brothers and sisters in Christ. Yes we all want to be successful, but we need to define that as the Bible would, and it can look different for different people in different situations and at different times. We must always realize that living a godly life and becoming Christlike IS the blessing of God (cf. Romans 8:28-30).

A personal proclamation of confidence (vs.6) –We should express confidence in the ultimate victory of Jesus Christ, and praise God for each and every victory He gives us through Jesus Christ. King Jesus still leads us in the war. The Bible tells us that He will win. The Anointed One, Messiah, Lord, and King Jesus; He IS the victory.

A corporate proclamation of confidence (vs.7-8) – We trust the Lord and His strategies.

7. Outlook – God uses means but our trust must be in Him. If the battle is going to be won, the Lord needs to make it happen (cf. Proverbs 21:31).

8. Outcome – It seems to strike sharply against the sensibilities of today’s Christian to even admit the existence of God’s wrath, much less make it an object of worship and adoration. The modern church ignores those attributes it is not comfortable with. Give them Love, give them a Comforter, give them the Prince of Peace, but don’t speak about the Holy Judge and His righteous wrath! Yet, this is precisely what we see throughout Scripture. God displays His wrath and His people praise His name (cf. Psalm 76:10 / Revelation 15:3-4). If we neglect sin and the Lord’s righteous wrath, then we haven’t understood even the basics of Scripture and God’s true character. God’s wrath isn’t just a sideline to the Bible’s plot-line. God’s wrath is a function of his holiness and the Bible wouldn’t have a plot-line at all if there were no wrath against sin.

A Declaration of Dependence (vs.9) – Lord, please make it happen. This prayer can be said for any Christian, because all Christians are kings and priests (1 Peter 2:9 / Revelation 1:6, 5:10). In other words we pray that Jesus would reign in their life, and make them successful. This is what I am praying for all of you, and what we should pray for each other, right now.

Heavenly Father, Give them protection

Give them provision

Sanctify their practice

Sanctify their plans

Give them prosperity

We will celebrate their victory

We will worship your name

We are confident in you

We trust in you

We are dependent on you

Let Jesus reign in their life, and make them successful, for your glory, and in His name, amen.