

MAY THE LORD ANSWER YOU IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE!

Psalm 20: 1-9 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Psalm 20 and 21 are Battle Songs, psalm 20 being a psalm before the battle and psalm 21, a psalm after the battle. Psalm 20 is a prayer of the nation of Israel for its king, King David just prior to a dangerous battle. Psalm 21 is a psalm of praise after the battle is over. Psalm 20 is a prayer for any leader that is over us, a prayer for our president, for an ambassador, an evangelist or a pastor. It is a prayer for a parent facing a difficult assignment with a son or daughter or it could be a prayer for a person heading out into an assignment that may take them far outside their comfort zone. It could even be a prayer for a family in Colorado Springs or Ft. Collins or anywhere that is facing the loss of their home to a raging forest fire or who have already lost their home. Name the setting of a day of potential trouble in your life, and know that this psalm fits. This is a great psalm to claim just before and during our upcoming week of VBS—July 23 to 27. I love the way the psalm begins in verses 1 and 2. I pray this psalm for any of you who are facing days ahead in which you are walking into some kind of a battle. “May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob protect you! May He send help from the sanctuary and give you support from Zion!

My wife, Jinny, is traveling this week, it appears, the Lord willing, to hot south central Kansas, where it has been 114 degrees Fahrenheit for 4 straight days—Tuesday through Friday. Amanda, our youngest daughter along with her husband Travis Ross, are expecting their first child, a son they are told, anytime in the next couple weeks. This psalm could well be also a birthing and delivery psalm. In the birthing room, whether in a hospital or at home or caught en route to the hospital, there is anxiety, profound nervousness, worry, labor, pains, tears, and what a prayer to pray to the Lord for a woman in labor—“May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble.” The delivery room experience is probably one of the most profound experiences that I’ve have ever had the blessing to be a part of—the birth of our seven children. There is the anxiety, the nervousness, the worry, the pain, the tears, and then the victory. In delivery, there may be screaming, but in that awesome experience, at the end of the ordeal of labor, there comes the first cry, the first breaths, the weighing and measurements, then in a blanket you hold your bundle of Psalm 20: 5—“Now I know that the Lord saves His anointed.” Before we come to the Table of the Lord to share in the Lord’s Supper, let’s take time to consider these pleas and these pleadings to the Lord, just before and during the battle and during the battle. I see many pleas we all need to make not only for ourselves, but the context of the psalm suggests that we ought to make these pleas

for others. Here are the nine pleas we need to pray, knowing God is all too willing and ready to answer us as we trust in His name and pray in faith. What are they?

MAY THE LORD ANSWER YOU IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE! (I.) This is the cry of the nation of Israel for their king in v. 1a. The day of trouble for Israel was an upcoming battle for the king and his soldiers. Some years ago, I had two secretaries that moved away. Harry and Kathy Wells moved to Minnesota. In fact, Harry Wells told me, “Pastor, I miss the battle here. The church here in St. Cloud, Minnesota has given up the battle some years ago. Dan and Barb Thomas moved away and at first, moved to Kalispell, Montana. Barb wrote me and said, “There is a real battle going on in Rock Springs. I can see it clearer now. I don’t see it so much here. Parents have given up fighting for their children, almost agreeing it is a lost cause. Beloved, if you sense a battle in your marriage and family, rejoice that there is still something worth battling for. What should our prayer be when we see others facing a battle? God teach us to cry, “May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble. I see in this prayer, empathy of a nation that is troubled for their king who is troubled. When we are troubled for others who are troubled, then we are in the battle with them. By the way, for those of you who are not sure about praying read prayers, put that concern away. Enter into this prayer that David wrote for his nation to pray for him, their king. David here is giving all of us a prayer to cry out to God for others. We can pour out our prayers for others in their day of trouble with this strong prayer. Beloved, I urge you to pray these prayers and pleas and pleadings out to the Lord for each of us your pastors. Secondly,

MAY THE NAME OF THE GOD OF JACOB PROTECT YOU! (II.) Remember, here in verse 1b, that David, inspired of the Holy Spirit, is penning the words of this psalm for his people to pray for him and the Israeli troops. There is no cockiness here but confidence only in the God of Jacob. There is no boast of former victories or former won battles, nor of David’s bravery and strength or his skill as a warrior. Only one name is being invoked and just the mention of this name invoked arouses courage and it pledges triumph. May the name of the God of Jacob protect you or set you on high. This name is the Person of the Lord of Hosts Himself. Beloved, do you desire for your friend or your pastor or your spouse to have a secure place to stand and fight in their time of conflict? The only secure place God has supplied is in the shelter of the Most High—in Himself and on Himself, the Rock of Ages. Are you standing and praying on the Rock of Ages? Is your friend for whom you are interceding standing securely in the cleft of the Rock of Ages? Do your prayers for your pastors include asking for us the protection of God’s name? It is so interesting to me here that David isn’t using the name of the God of Abraham or the God of Isaac, but instead, the name of the God of Jacob.

Perhaps, and I cannot prove it, David had the ability with the help of the Spirit of God to so identify with Jacob, for David once too was a cheater and a deceiver. Perhaps, we too can pray and say, “Lord, if there was help for Jacob and for David, then there is help for me and for my friend.” Thirdly,

MAY THE LORD SEND YOU HELP AND SUPPORT FROM THE SANCTUARY, FROM ZION. (III.)

Notice verse 2. “May He send you help from the sanctuary and give you support from Zion! Beloved, do you know where to go for help for your friend, your pastor. All the help that is really help indeed comes from heaven’s sanctuary. But God also uses the Israel of God, Zion, if you will, the church, your local church, God’s gathered people. God sends strength right out of the gathered assemblies of His loyal saints, even as Peter experienced deliverance when the local church in Jerusalem had an all-night prayer meeting. I love Isaiah 66: 8 where we read, “When Zion travailed, children were brought forth.” I know that in context, this refers to the rebirth of the nation of Israel. Yet, beloved, I can feel the absence of prayer and I know when Zion is travailing for me as your pastor. Never forget, brothers and sisters that your pastors each are just flesh and blood as you are. We cannot make it for God unless you pray and God sends help from His heavenly sanctuary and support from you, His Zion. Fourthly,

MAY THE LORD REMEMBER YOUR WORSHIP AND MAY YOUR SACRIFICES TO HIM BE RECEIVED WITH FAVOR. (IV.)

I read in verse 3, “May He remember all your offerings and regard with favor your burnt sacrifices!” Prayer for victory, warfare praying must dovetail with our worship. Our worship must be sincere and holy before success in battle arrives. This word offering is the word some of your translations call an oblation. It means any offering of any kind to God, but not a bloody sacrifice. Such an offering was a thank offering, an offering of thanksgiving, that carried with it a cry or prayer for God’s favor. The addition of the burnt offering as the sacrifice God desired, was an offering where the sacrificial lamb or victim was reduced to ashes. Guilt was an issue and the one praying wanted forgiveness before he knew he could hope for God to answer him. At that time, the sacrifice was a goat, a lamb, or a bull. Beloved, when we come to God in worship and sacrifice hoping to receive favor, it is only through the one great sacrifice made by our precious Redeemer on the cross for the sins of the world. I call us as a church to always worship with one eye on Calvary, with our focus always on the cross—for only at the cross do we find forgiveness, and only at the cross, can we find favor with God to claim triumph from the Lord for those for whom we pray. Notice the addition here of the pause word, Selah. This pausing here is a pause at the cross. As our Nigerian brothers and sisters, all worship and sacrifices before God should begin with a quiet “Selah”

before the cross. Without a “Selah” in our lives, a pause to reflect in our work and in our worship, we are too much in a hurry to make good use of our haste. Haste can really hinder. A word fitly spoken is almost always a word that has been prayed over so that God’s will and timing and His power will be present in it. Rest a while. A little “Selah” and a pause before the Lord, before His cross, will greatly speed our efforts. Before the battle for you or others, get your hearts right, beloved. Meditate on the cross. Meditate on Christ’s sacrifice for you there. Get your heart right. Then take the field for battle. Beloved, if we take the field of battle and do battle in the flesh, no matter how wisely we feel we have used the Word or spoken the truth, we will find we have missed the mark of true worship and true sacrifice to Jesus. We’ll find we have tried to secure the victory in our own power, in our own strength, and by our own words. It will be a failure for us. Put a pause, a “Selah” in your life before the One who became our offering for our sin. Fifthly,

MAY THE LORD GRANT YOU YOUR HEART’S DESIRE AND FULFILL ALL YOUR PLANS. (V.) Notice verse 4—“May He grant you your heart’s desire and fulfill all your plans or your counsel.” Do you want the ones you are praying for to be fulfilled as they take on the enemy and face the battle? When you and I are praying the will of God, or praying to discern the will of God, it is wonderful to find that in our prayers for others, when we pray the very words of God, what we are praying are the promises of victory in which we can rejoice. When our prayers for others are so in sympathy with them because our hearts are right with each other and with God, we cannot help but claim that God’s will which we all agree in will lead to the fulfillment of our hopes and dreams, our heart desires and plans.

What kind of desires for others can we expect God to grant to them or to us? In Psalm 40: 8, I read, “I delight to do Thy will, O my God.” Sometimes our natural desires for ourselves or others coincide with God’s will. Sometimes they don’t. When Hannah prayed for a son, her natural desires coincided with God’s desires. When Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Not My will, but Thine be done, His natural desires did not coincide with the Father’s will. His flesh cried out, “If it be Thy will, let this cup pass from Me.” Yet, when Jesus was certain His natural desires to escape the cross were not the Father’s will, He surrendered His will to the Father’s will until, Hebrews 12: 2 tells us Jesus with the joy set before Him to die for our atonement and redemption, endured the cross, despising the shame. Beloved, when your desires or mine or those you are praying for agree with God’s will, our prayers become a promise of victory, we will have our heart’s desire. When our prayers are not in agreement with God’s will, I call on us all to abandon praying until we get our hearts right with God. In verse 4, I read “May He fulfill all your plans, or your counsel.” What God places on our hearts to follow—

that is sacred ground, sacred plans or sacred counsel. What He sets upon our minds to follow, He calls for our soul to so desire for He will do it. Where God gives the vision, there is His provision. Beloved, when you pray for your church, your pastors, and we are laying our shared vision before the Lord, God will fulfill all our counsel or plans. Literally, He will fill to the brim and spill over with overflowing provision the counsel and vision He gave. Sixthly,

MAY WE SHOUT FOR JOY OVER YOUR SALVATION AND IN GOD'S NAME SET UP OUR BANNERS BECAUSE OF GOD'S ANSWERED

PRAYERS. (VI.) Notice verse 5—“May we shout for joy over your salvation, and in the name of our God set up our banners. May the Lord fulfill all your petitions.” This word for fulfill here and in verse 4 is **mawlaw**. It means to accomplish, to fill to the brim, and to fill up what God has purposed. The unfurling of victory banners comes when? The simple answer is here: When our desires are God's desires and our counsel is God's counsel, all our petitions or prayers will be answered. I am so in awe of Eli on this point. Even though he was an unfaithful priest, he knew when Hannah's desires and God's counsel coincided. That's why Eli said to Hannah, “Go in peace; and may the God of Israel grant you your petition that you have asked of Him.” Today, beloved, consider your prayers for others. Is your prayer for others something God has led you in your heart to pray? It is? Then may the God of Israel grant you your petition for His honor and for His glory. Seventhly,

MAY WE KNOW THAT GOD SAVES HIS ANOINTED, ANSWERING FROM HIS HOLY HEAVEN BY HIS RIGHT HAND. (VII.) Verse 6 is clear,

“Now I know,(with certainty) that the Lord saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven with the saving might of His right hand.” This is the assurance of the King, king David, or any person whom God has called and anointed. It is a confident assurance of success when we know our undertaking is under God's smile. The word for answer or hear from His holy heaven means to favorably answer. God will interpose with the saving might of His right hand. What does it mean to interpose? To interpose means to intervene or to cause to come to pass. And the tool God uses to interpose is His right hand. Even our prayers begin with a Divine impulse from Him. Though we are weak, in fact, even powerless, impotent, our impotence spiritually as we pray, can set Omnipotence in motion. Even a whisper can set a miracle from God in motion. Back in 1977, Mack Taunton wrote a song I have come to love and I sing often. “Even winds whisper His name.” The words are, “Though man may try to ignore Him, His presence is woven in time. The stars leave not their assignment, The seasons repeat perfect rhyme; And oceans go where He placed them, Mountains His greatness proclaim, All things speak of His greatness. Even winds whisper His name. The heavens

declare His glory, The dove toils not, yet is fed. And why have we any worry? The future is His, He has said, Just place your trust in Jesus, and grasp His promises true. Lilies are arrayed in glory, So much more He'll do for you. Chorus: Even winds whisper His name, Even winds whisper His name, Of all things He is Master, Of all things King, Even winds whisper His name." Eighthly,

MAY WE TRUST NOT IN HORSES OR CHARIOTS THAT COLLAPSE AND FALL, BUT MAY WE TRUST IN THE NAME OF THE LORD TO RISE AND STAND UPRIGHT. (VIII.)

Look with me at verses 7, 8, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright." On March 9, 1839 the sides of a coal pit called "The High Pressure," near Musselburgh, Midlothian, in Scotland—the sides fell in. The shaft was filled up instantly, imprisoning ten men and three women miners. After trying every means of exit, they retired to a narrow space that was 18 feet by 24 feet and 3 and a half feet high. There they sat down and prepared to die after 14 hours of finding no way out. They began to pray and sing Psalm 20. The fourth verse they sang was, "In Thy salvation we will joy; In our God's name we will Display our banners; and the Lord Thy prayers all fulfill." One man with knowledge of the mine told the men to follow him because water was flowing now higher and higher through the mine. He asked each man to hold on to the shirt of the next and follow him. Three men were asked to carry the three ladies. Like a badger digging and clawing their way, following the water that tried to drown them, at times it got higher than their heads, they came to safety. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but in 1839, in Scotland, in a trapped mine, John Nicholson, 36, James Reid, 35, George Campbell, 60, and his wife, Elizabeth, John Reid, 30, Peter Hay, 55, Thomas Reid, 60, James Reid, Jr. 30, and his wife, Helen, Jamieson Bennet, 27, George Pride, 19, and Janet Shaw, 30—they all trusted in the name of our God. Who do we trust in, in 2012? Ninthly, lastly, before communion,

MAY GOD SAVE OUR PRESIDENT, OUR LEADER AND MAY HE ANSWER US WHEN WE CALL. (IX.)

Notice verse 9, "O Lord, save the king! May He (our Lord) answer us when we call." Beloved, America is in a drought. Let's pray for rain. Temperatures in Kansas 114-116 for a week. Forest fires are burning down hundreds of homes from Colorado Springs to Ft. Collins, Colorado. Our own President seems bent on turning away from the Lord and the godly values that have made America great. But God, God can bring revival to America, He can end the judgment of drought and bring rain. He can turn down the heat and He can put out the awful fires. He can bring President Obama under deep conviction of sin and bring him to saving faith in Jesus. O God, do it again for us as we pray. Amen.