

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Psalms: God's Nurture Of The Inner Man In The Life Of Faith
XX. Prayer For The Leader Who Faces Great Conflict
(Psalm 20:1-9)

I. Introduction

- A. When a leader of a group faces great conflict, prayer to the Lord for His help is both necessary and desired.
- B. Psalm 20:1-9 is such a psalm as it presents the nation Israel and her king, David, petitioning the Lord for His help as the king faces war (H. C. Leupold, *Exp. of the Psalms*, 1974, p. 184-185), so we view it for our insight:

II. Prayer For The Leader Who Faces Great Conflict, Psalm 20:1-9.

- A. The introductory notes in the English Bible comprise verse one of the Hebrew text (Kittel, *Biblia Hebraica*, p. 990), so we stay with the verse numbering system of the English Bible for clarity with this lesson.
- B. We thus translate Psalm 20:1-9 as follows:
 - 1. "May Jahweh (Covenant-keeping God) answer you in the day of narrow straits, distress (*sarah*, B. D. B., *A Heb.-Eng. Lex. of the O. T.*, p. 865); may the Name of the Elohim (Creator God) of Jacob set you up inaccessibly, securely high (*shagab*, Ibid., p. 960; Piel stem = intensive)," Psalm 20:1.
 - 2. "May He send your help from difficulty (*'ezer*, Ibid., p. 740) from the sanctuary [of the tabernacle], and support, sustain, uphold (*sa'ad*, Ibid., p. 703) you from Zion," Psalm 20:2.
 - 3. "May He remember all of your sacrifices and find your burnt offerings to be fat [acceptable] (*dashen*, Ibid., p. 206; Piel = intensive)," Psalm 20:3.
 - 4. "May He give to you according to your heart [give you your heart's desires], and fulfill, accomplish (*male'*, Ibid., p. 569-570; Piel = intensive) all of your designs, purposes (*'esah*, Ibid., p. 420)," Psalm 20:4.
 - 5. "We will give a ringing cry in exultation (*ranan*, Ibid., p. 943) in your deliverance, victory (*yeshu'ah*, Ibid., p. 447), and we will lift up our banners in the Name of our Elohim. May Jahweh fulfill, accomplish (*male'*, cf. v. 4) all of your requests, petitions (*mish'alah*, Ibid., p. 982)," Psalm 20:5.
 - 6. "Right now (*'attah*, Ibid., p. 773-774) I know Jahweh saves His anointed one; He answers him from His holy heaven with the saving might (*geburah*, Ibid., p. 150) of His right hand," Psalm 20:6.
 - 7. "These (emph. pron.) [Some trust] in chariots, and those (*'allah* again; emph. pron.) [some trust] in horses, but we (emph. pron. *'anaknu*, Ibid., Kittel, p. 991) keep in remembrance (*zakar*, Ibid., B. D. B., p. 269-271; Hiphil = causative) the Name of Jahweh our Elohim," Psalm 20:7.
 - 8. "They (emph. pron.) are brought to their knees and fall, but we (emph. pron.) rise up and are restored (*'ud*, Ibid., p. 728; Hithpolel = intensive reflexive)," Psalm 20:8.
 - 9. "O Jahweh, save the king! Answer us in the day that we call!" (Psalm 20:9)
- C. In the structure of this psalm, David as Israel's king evidently voices the petition of his subjects for his success in the ensuing battle in verses 1-5 and then he addresses the Lord along with the people in verses 6-9.
- D. The effort of David and Israel (1) to recall the Lord versus relying on chariots and horses in Psalm 20:7 as did their pagan foes alludes to God's requirement of Israel's king in Deuteronomy 17:16 not to multiply to himself horses, but to trust in the Lord. Then, (2) David's coupling of the petition of his people in his behalf with his own petition recalls the Deuteronomy 17:15 call that Israel's king be from the people, and the Deuteronomy 17:20a call that he not exalt himself in pride above his subjects, but identify with them. David thus expected God to bless his effort in war in accord with the consequent divine promise of Deuteronomy 17:20b.

Lesson: *In facing the crisis of national war, Israel's king David closely identified with his subjects as evidenced in his coupling of their petition in his behalf together with his own prayer for God's help before he and his subjects affirmed their mutual reliance on the Lord versus chariots and horses. This activity aligned with God's Biblical will for a king's actions en route to his succeeding, and thus David and his subjects prayed confidently for victory.*

Application: *(1) To gain victory in great conflicts, a leader must align with God's Biblical will in every regard of his calling before God will answer his prayer for success, cf. 1 John 3:22. (2) Generally, that will involves the leader's identifying with the needs of his subjects in facing all such conflicts that he conduct himself in a way that best preserves the welfare of his subjects. (3) If the conflict involves a "civil war" opposition against the leader from subjects within the group, the godly leader should heed David's 2 Samuel 16:5-12 example and try to avoid conflict, relying on God to handle the rebellion. (4) A leader must always rely on God's might for success versus trying to manipulate circumstances in his own futile power, akin to David's not relying on horses and chariots.*