

# Psalm 20

**Introduction** – “We have before us a National Anthem, fitted to be sung at the outbreak of war, when the monarch was girding on his sword for the fight” – Spurgeon. David’s life was filled with battles and so this could have been sung on any of a number of occasions. The people of the king are gathered around him at the tabernacle as he makes his offerings and supplications before YHWH. This is the kind of prayer of faith that we need in times of wars and battles, and in the midst of the dangers of spreading the gospel throughout the world, eventually converting the kingdoms of men.

**May the Lord Answer You** (vv1-4) – The people are requesting, in the day of trouble, that YHWH would answer the king. They do this in a liturgical fashion and sing the prayer together before the Lord at His dwelling place (v1, 3). It is the very “*name of the God of Jacob*” which they request for the king’s defense (v1). The name, “*the God of Jacob*” is suggestive of the Jacob’s day of trouble where he wrestled with God until he received His blessing. The people do this and request that this be answered “*from the sanctuary*,” which corresponds to our covenant assembly on the Lord’s Day. We must come with faith, expecting God to receive us, to answer us, and to accomplish His kingdom work as a result of this gathering.

**Faithful Offerings** – When the offerings were offered in faith, God gladly received them (2 Chron 7:1). Following the pattern of our worship service, we come into the presence of God on account of the once-for-all perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Eph 5:2, Heb 10:11-14, 19-23). And so v3 presupposes faith. Another presupposition shows up in v4 and that is that David is a man after God’s own heart. He is a man who delights in the Lord (Psalm 37:4) and seeks first His kingdom (Matt 6:33). This kind of man can expect God to answer (1 John 5:14-15) for he is praying in agreement with God’s counsel and purpose.

**The King Answers** (vv5-9) – The psalm is antiphonal in that sometimes the people are praying and sometimes the king is, and it really goes back and forth throughout these verses. The king responds that he and the people will all rejoice, declaring the victory and salvation that YHWH will bring. In other words, he promises to give God all the praise and all the thanks. The banner of “*the name of our God*” will be lifted for all to know Whom we serve and Who has saved us (v5). He will be named and all will know. The king knows that he has been anointed (v6 - the Hebrew word is *messiah*, and certainly there are Messianic parallels here – i.e. Acts 4:10-11).

**Natural Temptation** – Our carnal tendency is to place our trust in what we can see. Before a battle, we want to rest our hope in weaponry, armies, strategies and the like. But these psalm-singers are turning from that even as they deploy those armies. Their trust rests in “*the name of YHWH our God*” (v7). Elsewhere, Jeremiah says explicitly, “*Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from YHWH*” (Jer 17:5). Instead, the result of trusting in the name of YHWH is that the foe is brought low and those who trust are raised to stand upright (v8, consider Jer 17:7-8). The psalm-singers end with a final shout for salvation and deliverance (v9).

**Taking God’s Name in Vain** – This psalm was written for God’s people on the verge of war. We are a nation at war, and yet we cannot sing this Psalm, for we would be taking the name of the Lord in vain. What banner have we raised? Whose name is on it? Certainly it is not the name of the God of Jacob, the triune God of Scripture, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our god seems to be nameless. We have sung “god bless America” for generations in our public schools and required that this god remain nameless or polytheistic. This is what our churches teach as well, denying any sense of national identity under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

**Taking God’s Name in Vain** – How could we call upon YHWH to bless us in a nationally organized prayer service in which we invite a Muslim cleric to pray? We try to claim that this is no religious war. Our enemies seem to know better than us, calling us the Great Satan. Any nation which openly breaks the first table of the law will, over time, break the second table of the law; and so we have become a nation of parent-haters, murderers, perverts, thieves, liars, and coveters.

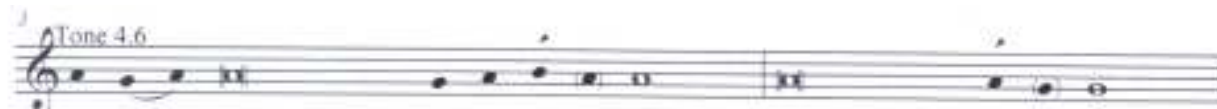
**Taking God’s Name in Vain** – How could we call upon YHWH to spare us from bloodshed when we allow the murder of thousands of children every day in our nation? Would YHWH allow His name on our banners? What happened when Israel, full of idolatry, thought she would receive blessing by taking the ark into battle against the Philistines (1 Sam 4)? If we were to openly presume that God should now bless us without us first repenting, this would be grounds for great judgment.

**Repentance** – In order for this song to become a national anthem, we must first repent of our idolatries and wicked disobedience. We are at war. We should pray for YHWH to be merciful to us, and thank Him that He has to this point. Then, we must pray as monarchists, under submission to a God who is named. The church must speak prophetically to this end, declaring that Jesus is Lord of everything.

**Kingdom Work** – At the same time, we may sing this song as the people of God, the priestly nation under the banner of Jesus, our anointed King. There are many dangers throughout the kingdom of God as the gospel makes its way through the world. Remember, even in this “spiritual” application we are still speaking of nations being blessed, nations discipled, and nations bowing the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ – all promised, and all expected in the story of redemption given us in the scriptures.



### PSALM 20 (Tone IV.6)



- 1 *May the LORD* answer you in the / day of trouble; \*  
**May the name of the God of Jacob de/fend you;**
- 2 May He send you help from the / sanctuary, \*  
**And strengthen you out of / Zion;**
- 3 May He remember / all your offerings, \*  
**And accept your burnt / sacrifice. Selah**
- 4 May He grant you according to your / heart's desire, \*  
**And fulfill all your / purpose.**
- 5 We will rejoice in / your salvation, \*  
**And in the name of our God we will set up our banners!**  
**May the LORD fulfill all your pe/titions.**
- 6 Now I know that the LORD saves / His anointed; \*  
**He will answer him from His holy heaven**  
**With the saving strength of His / right hand.**
- 7 Some trust in chariots, and / some in horses; \*  
**But we will remember the name of the / LORD our God.**
- 8 They have bowed / down and fallen; \*  
**But we have risen and stand / upright.**
- 9 Save, LORD! \*  
**May the King answer us / when we call.**

Glory be to the Father and / to the Son \*

**And to the / Holy Ghost;**

As it was in the beginning, is now and / ever shall be, \*

**World without / end. Amen.**