

This Is Our Fight Song

Psalm 20 February 2, 2025

*"It was a gray morning. Fog hid the enemy, but they were there, just across the field. The king commanded his men to kneel. The king too fell to his knees and lifted up his prayer to the Lord of hosts, the God of all battles. As he concluded, the whole army thundered back with conviction: A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing; our helper he, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing. When the hymn died away, the king of Sweden, mounted his white horse and called out to his troops. He told them to remember that they fought for God, country, and king. And with that, the Snow King of Sweden led his men onto the field to save the German Reformation."*¹

The year was 1631. At the Battle of Breitenfeld, the Swedish-Saxon protestants faced an invasion from the Holy Roman Empire. When the dust settled, after 13 years, they had won their first major victory in the Thirty Years War.²

Martin Luther wrote *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God* in the 1520's. It was known as the "battle hymn of the reformation."³ In the case of Breitenfeld, it was a *literal* battle hymn.

Psalm 20 is a battle hymn - a anthem meant to be sung before the God's people go out to fight.⁴ The main focus of this song is the king - that God would grant him victory. So, scholars will call this a *royal* Psalm. But, not only is this a royal Psalm, it's also a *Messianic* Psalm. Ultimately, it's not just talking about a king, but *the* King of kings. It's not just a song for David, but ultimately for the Son of David, Who wins *total* victory over every foe and over death itself.

But does that mean we should pass over this song as not applying to us? Sometimes songs are out of place, like if I sang *Happy Birthday* to most of you today. Or if I sang *Auld Lang Syne*. It's not the right time for those songs, they don't apply.

If *this* song is a royal, Messianic song, can it minister to me? The full and final fulfillment of the great promises in these verses *are* accomplished through Christ Jesus. *He* is the King. *He* is the anointed One referenced in verse 6. But we then remember that Christ has invited us *into* His redemptive work. If you're a Christian here this morning, then you, too, have been anointed by God. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 1:21:

2 Corinthians 1:21 - ²¹ Now it is God who strengthens us together with you in Christ, and who has anointed us.

You are not the anointed Messiah, but you *are* an anointed messenger, an anointed minister, an anointed missionary, set apart for specific purposes that God reveals as you walk with Him.

¹ <https://www.offthegridnews.com/religion/a-mighty-fortress-is-our-god-battle-hymn/>

² [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Breitenfeld_\(1631\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Breitenfeld_(1631))

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Mighty_Fortress_Is_Our_God

⁴ Herbert Lockyer *Psalms: A Devotional Commentary*

So let's take a look at this wonderful song, and allow it to be a melody of hope and confidence and triumph as we face the spiritual battles of life.

Psalm 20:Superscript-1 - For the choir director. A psalm of David. ¹ May the Lord answer you in a day of trouble; may the name of Jacob's God protect you.

Are you facing trouble today? Some sort of adversity or anguish or affliction or tightness?⁵ God's desire is to give you an answer for your trouble. But an answer follows a call, right?

Verse 1 reminds us of Who we're calling out to. It's the God of Jacob. David says, "May the *name* of Jacob's God protect you." What is His name? God is called by *many* names in the Bible, each expounding His greatness and strength and goodness and grace and love. But, most of all, it's *Yahweh*.⁶ When God explained His name to Moses in Exodus 3, He said, "I AM WHO I AM. I am the God Who has been with your ancestors from the beginning. I'm the God Who *sends* and *reveals*."

Linguists tell us that this name speaks of God's "faithful presence." Yahweh is the God Who is *there*. One source writes, "*It connotes God's nearness, His concern for man, and the revelation of His redemptive covenant.*"⁷ Yahweh is the God Who makes promises to *Jacobs* like us. Stiff-hearted, rebellious deceivers who do nothing but slow Him down. Yet, out of His love and grace, God enters into and keeps covenant with us.

Psalm 20:2 - ² May he send you help from the sanctuary and sustain you from Zion.

Not from the treasury. Not from the armory. From the *sanctuary*. *That's* where God's presence was. *That's* where help comes from. When trouble came to Israel, their first stop shouldn't be to the forge of the blacksmith, but to the altar of the Lord. To draw near to Him so they could hear from Him and be cleansed by Him and be covered by His favor.

We don't live in a theocracy, nor do we have physical temples which house the visible glory of God. If you're a Christian now *you* are the Temple of the Lord. But, this song demonstrates that in the day of trouble the Lord wants to send help from the sanctuary. How does that work in the Church age?

In the temple there were priests and Levites on duty, around the clock, to minister to the people on behalf of the Lord. Today, God has made Christians a royal priesthood. He calls us to support one another, to sustain one another, to bear one another's burdens. You and I should expect God to *send* us as help to others in their day of trouble - as member of the working Body of Christ.

Psalm 20:3 - ³ May he remember all your offerings and accept your burnt offering. *Selah*

⁵ *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible*

⁶ *Theological Wordbook Of The Old Testament*

⁷ *ibid.*

Remember: This Psalm is *first* about Christ's Kingship and victory before principles start to apply to us. And here we receive the history-changing, life-saving news that Christ's offering was *accepted*. When Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice on the cross, that offering was sufficient for *all* your sin, *all* my sin, *all* the sins of *all* the world. It was sufficient. It was effective. That is very good news!

But then on the secondary level, we see here someone who is in *covenant* with God. They offer according to His demands and expectations, and He receives it. This is what God requires.

Many people have absolutely no interest in God until the day of trouble. It's the classic scene where someone cries out, "God, if you get me through this, I promise I'll go to church every Sunday." They want the deliverance without devotion. And, God is gracious - more than we deserve. But He wants a *relationship* with you based on love and trust. He's offered you a *covenant*.

When David wrote this Psalm, God's people were under the *old* covenant, with all its rites and rituals. Today believers are brought into the *new* covenant where God gives us a new heart. A covenant where His word is written on our hearts and He is our God and we are His people and He gives us lives to lead full of faith and proclamation and a desire to obey the Lord and go His way.

How appropriate that David puts a *selah* after this moment for each of us to ask ourselves whether we're in covenant with the Lord. Are we devoted to Him? We're called to present our whole selves as living sacrifices to God Who loves us and has saved us. How is that relationship going?

Psalm 20:4 - ⁴May he give you what your heart desires and fulfill your whole purpose.

Of course, this isn't suggesting that God gives us anything we want. Remember: In the new covenant, God gives us a new heart - *His* heart. But at the same time, we shouldn't allow ourselves to think of God as withholding or that He always wants to take things from us. Sometimes we get that sort of idea about God - that whatever we *really* like in life He's going to crush. Whatever we *don't* want to do, that's what He's going to command us to do. But that's not how Yahweh is presented in this song. He is a God of kindness and incredible generosity.

But then notice the second half of that verse. What is *your* purpose? In our secular culture, a default goal we hear sometimes is, "Are you doing better than your parents' generation?" But that's really not a measure of real purpose, is it?

What is your purpose? Christ came with purpose: Not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.⁸ Part of His purpose was also to give *you* purpose. Listen to 1 Peter 2:24:

1 Peter 2:24 - ²⁴[Christ] himself bore our sins in his body on the tree; so that, having died to sins, we might live for righteousness.

⁸ Matthew 20:28

Your life was saved on purpose *for* purposes. Purposes God wants you to discover as you walk with Him and trust Him. A life of growth and fullness and value that brings praise to His glory.

Psalm 20:5 - ⁵ Let us shout for joy at your victory and lift the banner in the name of our God. May the Lord fulfill all your requests.

A banner, of course, is a symbol of who we identify with, who we've pledged our allegiance to, who our authority is. Our Kingdom and cause.

The banner reminds us we're not individualists, at least not spiritually. We're not to be detached and heading out on our own. To enjoy God's victory, we must be participants in His work.

And it is *His* victory, not ours. Our excitement, our enthusiasm, our worship should be a response to the victorious work of Christ. In fact, there's something remarkable in the language here.

Scholars point out that the Hebrew says, "Let us shout for joy at God's Yeshua."⁹ Yeshua, some of you know, is the Hebrew name of Jesus. Success isn't our victory. Earthly power or position isn't our victory. Comfort and safety are not even our victory. Christ Jesus is our victory. He is our salvation. He is the fount of our joy and rejoicing. Jesus Christ, the Gift of God, given for us, given to us, to overcome all the foes that we are too weak to resist.

Psalm 20:6 - ⁶ Now I know that the Lord gives victory to his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with mighty victories from his right hand.

There are a lot of great promises of rescue and deliverance and heavenly help in this song, but how can we know it's true? How can we know that Jesus is the answer to our trouble?

We can know it's true because Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. The tomb was empty. He was seen by more than 500 people at one time.¹⁰ The apostles who hid in fear after the crucifixion endured torture and death, never deviating from their testimony that Christ had risen. This living King continues to change countless lives and transform the world.

Through Christ we receive victory over sin and death. It's not a maybe, it's a certainty.

Scholars note that David uses the past tense here. The victory is won. The fight ahead is a formality.¹¹ That doesn't mean we won't face difficulty, but we can *know* the outcome is sure. Christ is the King of kings and His Kingdom *will* be established and He *will* reign forever and ever.

Psalm 20:7 - ⁷ Some take pride in chariots, and others in horses, but we take pride in the name of the Lord our God.

⁹ TWOT

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:6

¹¹ Phillips

David is absolutely confident *but* that doesn't mean he sits back and does nothing. He knew God would defeat Goliath, but he still got his sling and five smooth stones. At the end of this song, he goes out with sword in hand to the field of battle before him. He knows there is work to be done - a fight to fight - but his heart is at peace. Because God is with him, he has no fear of chariots.

Chariots were the pinnacle of death technology. From man's point of view, there was no better weapon.¹² But David was wise enough to not fear them. He was also wise enough to not *trust* them. Like us, he would've been tempted to stockpile what the world offers for help and defense. But God shows what can happen to chariots when His people crossed the Red Sea on dry ground.

What do we trust in? What do we boast about? Where do we look for help? David said there's no greater shield or resource than the name of the Lord our God.

Do you know what the most valuable name on earth is? Believe it or not, it's *Mark*. Bloomberg compiled a list of 500 billionaires. The most common names among them were David, John, and Mark, with Mark boasting the highest average wealth at \$41 billion each.¹³

While the world pursues fleeting fortunes, we look to the name of Jesus. That term also means that we *remember* His name. We bring it to mind. We mention it and confess it and celebrate it.¹⁴

Psalm 20:8 - ⁸They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand firm.

This is the second time David spoke of God's people being lifted up. Back in verse 1 where it says "may God protect you," the term means to set you in an elevated fortress.¹⁵ In your day of trouble, the Lord's desire is to lift you up and make you stand. To elevate your thoughts to *not* be on things of earth, but to be on the truths of heaven. When we fight spiritual battles, we don't get in the mud with our opponents. We go the high route of heaven.

There is no battlefield where God is outmatched, where His methods don't work, or where we can be separated from His love. He lifts us up. Because Christ rose from the dead, we also will rise.

Psalm 20:9 - ⁹Lord, give victory to the king! May he answer us on the day that we call.

And so we have circled back to verse 1 - us calling and trust God to answer. The song begins again because the fight is not over. There are still days of trouble ahead for God's people, but we know victory is coming. We know that Yahweh is a God Who hears prayer and answers them and Who never stops working on our behalf. If we know Him, then we know we can trust Him. And if we trust Him, then we can praise Him before the battle, in the fray, and after the victory.

¹² Derek Kidner *Psalms 1-72*

¹³ <https://nypost.com/2024/10/28/lifestyle/10-most-popular-billionaire-names-revealed-is-your-baby-destined-to-be-super-rich/>

¹⁴ *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries*

¹⁵ Robert Alter *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation With Commentary*