

Psalm 20 ▪ Seeing the God Who Hears

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Trust in times of trouble.

In times of trouble, where will you turn? Will you turn to the God who hears?

Intro: All of us like to know we are being heard. It's part of being human and goes with the gift of communication. When we are in a conversation, we want to know the other person is listening. If they are giving us little eye contact, keep interrupting, keep looking at their watch or phone, we may wonder if the person is really listening

When our lips are moving, we want to be heard.

Same idea applies in prayer.

- Ps 20 is focused on God hearing our prayer. It's an appeal for God to hear us when we pray.

Context:

It's a royal psalm. The picture is King David getting ready to lead his army into battle.

What is the most important thing to do? *Turn to God in prayer. Trust him by praying.*

- Since the battlefield was the setting, it's not a stretch for us to see here a general call to engage prayer in spiritual warfare.

Ephesians 6:18 ESV

“praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints”

- Now to really appreciate the theme, we would need to add Ps 21 to it.

—Ps 20: The King leading his people in prayer

—Ps 21: God the King responds to the prayer of his people

Q: What makes God responsive?

It's staggering to think of the millions of prayers that will go up to God today. Billions.

A very generous estimate would put global Christians at a 2.3 billion people. Even if half of that amount prayed today—God would still be very personally involved...and not overwhelmed!

I have 4 children, and one wife, and a church of a few hundred souls. If you all came to me today and had a request that needed my full attention, I would be severely overwhelmed.

How would I prioritize it all?

Q: What makes God responsive? How do we know that God hears and will answer?

Let's look to Ps 20.

For God to respond, we need to give ourselves to prayer (1-5)

- The idea of giving ourselves to prayer comes from Ps 109

Psalm 109:4 ESV

“In return for my love they accuse me,
but I give myself to prayer.”

- There are other places in the Bible that show/remind us that prayer is *not supposed to be a minimalistic endeavor*.

Luke 18:1 ESV

And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

Romans 12:12 ESV

Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

- In these 5 verses, there are 7 petitions
- All of the references to “you” are singular. Which means this is actually the people praying for King David—they are seeking God’s face, asking God to respond and intervene.

Every leader who knows their place, knows how much they depend on people who surround them with prayer.

1. Prayer in trouble (1-3)

- We don’t like troubled days—but without them will we really grow in trust?

How much less praying would we do if the days of trouble did not come?

If King David’s sword was rusty, would we have most of the palms?

Without difficulty and trials—we will really become the people who give ourselves to prayer?

Apply: The day of trouble gives opportunity to give ourselves to prayer.

2. Prayer that is specific (4-5); “plans/petitions”

- Prayer does not lead to passivity; again the idea is a battle—plans are made, and it’s good to seek the Lord’s blessings and on “plans”.
- (V4)—Not: “Whatever you want!” It’s another way of saying: “May the Lord be responsive to your prayer.”

3. Prayer that is confident (6)

- The prayer shifts from the people to the King himself
- David prays—with *confidence*

Giving ourselves to prayer is not being sheepish or shy.

Giving ourselves to prayer means we need to rid ourselves of the view that God is stingy, and reluctant to hear us.

James 1:6–8 ESV

“But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”

So the question this morning is, do you give yourselves to prayer? In the day of trouble? Specific calling on the Lord to do specific things?

Do you have confidence that he hears; that he really cares?

For God to respond, he needs to be our highest trust (7-8)

- v7 may be one of your go-to verses.
- It moves from prayer to declaration; is a statement, a resolution.

*In battle these are where you find confidence and strength....but

- Isaiah issued a similar warning:

Isaiah 31:1 ESV

“Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help
and rely on horses,
who trust in chariots because they are many
and in horsemen because they are very strong,
but do not look to the Holy One of Israel
or consult the LORD!”

Chariots and horses are culturally outdated false hopes.

There are a lot of sins I need to confess, but this one is not of them.

The question: what do we look to that causes us not to look to the Lord?

The best way to find out is what do we talk about most?

V7 could also be translated “boast”.

Our talk reveals our trust; God needs to be our highest trust.

For God to respond, we need to look to Jesus Christ (v9)

- A goal in this series is to see Christ in the Psalms; not artificially, but authentically

3 Keys to seeing Christ in the OT

1. Promise ([Gen. 3:15](#))
2. Prophecy ([Is. 53](#))
3. Pattern

The first two are fairly simple, the last is harder—but is the more common way.

- When we see David in the OT, we are seeing a pattern.
- This Psalm comes to us as a King (Messiah) who leads his people by prayer.

The best thing that David can give his people is a heart given to God; a heart that seeks God first in prayer.

His people are so close to his heart; and his heart is that his people are close to God.

- › The major roadblock to God hearing and responding—is not the fact that 2.3 billion people bring him requests....*he is never overwhelmed.*

The major roadblock is that we are sinners--

So we need a leader—who is not only a King, but also a priest...whom God hears.

Gospel:

In our age of entitlement, we don't deserve God to give us his ear at all.

We can learn a lesson of humility from King David.

We don't deserve to have God the King to hear us. *What we deserve is condemnation; a just execution.*

But Jesus steps in—dies, takes the punishment and wrath our sins deserve, so the King can answer us.

—Ps 20:3, the prayer is dependent on the right sacrifice, —"burnt offering " on Mt Zion.

Our "right" sacrifice is better, and is remembered forever:

- › Not he burnt sacrifice, but the blood sacrifice, offered up by Jesus Christ, on Mt Calvary.

Romans 8:32–34 ESV

"He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us."

Seeing the God who hears, means seeing him through Jesus.

Hebrews 7:25 ESV

"Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them."

In Jesus, we have the closest friend praying for us.

I've said before that one of the most priceless gifts is having a friend who prays. But it makes a key difference if that friend knows you well, knows your heart....and promises to never leave or forsake you.

—This also shows us that the basis for God hearing us, is not on the intensity of our prayer; it's not on how godly we've been living

- › *The basis that God hears and responds is always and only the righteousness of Jesus Christ.*
- › *It's the on the basis of the cross and resurrection.*

Conclusion

I heard pastor Alistair Begg once paraphrase the story of the dying thief who trusted Christ at the cross ([Lk 23](#)).

He would be a very interesting guy to find in heaven and hear his story.

It certainly wasn't his past performance that got him into heaven—he is justly being executed for some crime. He knows his own unworthiness.

So how could he make it into heaven?

When one of the angels asks: "How did you make it?"

His testimony: "It's because the man on the middle cross said I could come in."

Our story is the same. And there is no other way in, and no other hope than:

- › *The man on the middle cross told me I can come in*

(Gospel—if you are not a Christian, that is the only way into eternal paradise. The man on the middle cross has to invite you in.)

Brothers and Sisters--Yet we even have more to add to our story; for our entire Christian life.

The man on the middle cross prays for me.

-Why does God give us his ear?

The One who died on that middle cross prays for us.

-Why can you hope in a day of trouble?

The man on the middle cross prays for you.

-How can we be sure that nothing will separate us from God's love?

The man on the middle cross keeps praying.

-What is our hope when we have sinned and failed in massive ways; or even setback by besetting sins?

The man on the middle cross continues to pray.

-How can we be sure that we will cross the finish line one day, and be welcomed into Paradise?

The man on the middle cross keeps on praying.

We will one day see the God who Hears,

Because the man on the center cross, the Messiah—is one who prays.