

March 22, 2026

Psalm 20

May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob protect you! ² May he send you help from the sanctuary and give you support from Zion! ³ May he remember all your offerings and regard with favor your burnt sacrifices! Selah
⁴ May he grant you your heart's desire and fulfill all your plans! 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! ⁶ Now I know that the Lord saves his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand. ⁷ Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. ⁸ They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright. ⁹ O Lord, save the king! May he answer us when we call.

Scriptures for further study:
Exodus 18:10-11

Matthew 27:54

“David does not pray that God would indulge whatever desires may arise in the heart, but that He would grant those desires which are framed according to His will.”

-John Calvin

“The psalm teaches us to pray forward—from request to rejoicing—because faith expects God to act for His glory and our good.”

-Sinclair Ferguson

“Although David had already expressed confidence in God’s help, He returns again to prayer, because true faith never ceases to pray.”

-John Calvin



Prayerful Confidence Psalm 20

BIG IDEA: Those whose trust is in the name of Jesus will find their anxious concerns turn to humble confidence through persistent prayer

Or to say it more simply, Gospel-centered prayer turns anxiety into confidence.

OUTLINE

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| 1. Our Concern | Verses 1-3 |
| 2. Our Prayer | Verses 4-5 |
| 3. Our Confidence | Verses 6-8 |
| 4. Our Plea | Verse 9 |

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These “Sermon Discussion Questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. What have you experienced when you pray?
2. If your car has broken down in the middle of nowhere, you have experienced being alone and in trouble. From Psalm 20:1-2, what confidence is found for you in your day of trouble? What is your confidence on the ultimate day of trouble, Judgement Day?
3. Read verses 4–5 along with the quotations from John Calvin and Sinclair Ferguson. According to Calvin and the teaching of the psalm, why should we pray for desires that are shaped by God's will (rather than indulging every passing whim of the heart), and how does this kind of prayer naturally lead us from making requests (petition) to bursting into praise (rejoicing)?
4. From vss. 6-8, when was the moment that you knew nothing compares to God confidence that is developed in light of the Cross and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ?
5. What motivation to pray persistently do you see in vss. 6-8?
6. If David already voiced confidence that God would help him, why does he keep praying—and what does that teach us about true faith?

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Psalms 20–21 form a pair of royal psalms. Psalm 20 is a prayer that God will give success to the Davidic king, particularly in battle. Psalm 21 gives thanks to God for answering the request of Psalm 20.

Praise to Jesus – Praise the LORD who answers you in your day of trouble, who never leaves you alone. Praise Him for the help that He has sent through His Son, praise Him for granting the desires of your heart because they are His desires for you. Praise Him for His saving work in your life, and for answering you when you call!

Repent through Jesus – Lord, I confess and repent for fearing that You would abandon me in my day of trouble. For praying for my will to be done rather than Yours, forgive me for looking for help everywhere but from You. For inconsistency in my prayer life, which has led me to forget You. Father, thank You for hearing my prayers of confession and leading me in true repentance

Consecration for Jesus – Those whose trust is in the name of Jesus will find their anxious concerns turn to humble confidence through persistent prayer. May the Gospel move in your heart in such a way that prayer turns anxiety into confidence through Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

These questions are written to aid parents in leading family devotions with their children.

1. What is the overall theme of this Psalm? (This is a prayer that God will give success to the Davidic king, particularly in battle.)
2. Who is the person to whom David refers as “you” and “your” in verses 1-5? (Verses 6 and 9 make it clear that it is the Lord’s anointed, the King.)
3. What does verse 4 mean when David wrote, “May he grant you your heart’s desire and fulfill all your plans”? (He is not saying that we can make selfish requests. He is echoing other similar verses such as Psalm 21:2, Psalm 37:4, and 1 John 5:14-15. The Bible also teaches us that the greatest desire for followers of Jesus is for God and His glory. See Philippians 3:7-8.)
4. What is the meaning of Verse 7 when David compares putting our trust in chariots and horses with putting our trust in God? (Horses and chariots represented the human weapons of war in this time of history. David is not saying that God’s people cannot use man-made weapons. His point is that in our hearts we need to trust in God to bring us victory.)
5. Most commentators think that Psalm 20 is connected to Psalm 21. Read Psalm 21 and discuss the connections between these two psalms.

Scriptures for further study:

Psalm 147:10

Isaiah 31:1

Ephesians 6:10-20

FOR STUDENTS

Scriptures for further study:

Psalm 21:2

Psalm 37:4

1 John 5:14-15

Galatians 5:16-18

1. Who is the focus of verses 1-6 in this Psalm?
2. What is the “day of trouble” mentioned in verse 1?
3. What is the source of the help that David sought from verse 2?
4. What did David mean when he wrote in verse 4 that he asks God to grant him the desires of his heart?
5. What does it mean to trust in chariots and horses instead of trusting in the Lord (verse 7)?
6. What would it look like in your life to trust in the Lord and to be led by the Spirit to desire God above all things? What would change? What would stay the same?

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. Psalm 20 is clearly addressed to God's King.

Question: Why is it so tempting for us to read this Psalm as if it were addressed primarily to us?

2. How does it change the way we read this Psalm when we see it as ultimately being addressed to (and fulfilled by) King Jesus?

3. Looking at verse 5, we can see that the Psalmist is so confident in the coming victories of the king that he is already calling for God's people to "shout for joy."

Question: What victories has Christ already won for which we should give him praise? What other coming final victories (upon his return) should we be confident about and therefore already gearing up for praise?!

4. Where do you root your deepest desires? Is it in your own success, safety, and comfort, or is it in Jesus' glory, success, and victory?

5. According to verse 7, some place their trust in "horses and chariots" (i.e., the strongest possible earthly powers), and others in "the name of the Lord our God" (i.e., the supreme power of heaven and earth).

Question: If we were honest with ourselves, in what/whom are you and I currently placing our trust and confidence?

The Blessed Life: A Study of the Psalms



"The Light of the World" (1851-1853) by William Holman Hunt

Psalms Introduction

The Book of Psalms is the sacred place where the living God meets His people in the most intimate and personal of ways. He invites them to know Him not merely as an idea, but as their refuge, portion, shepherd, and King. From the opening doorway of blessedness in Psalm 1 to the climactic Hallelujahs of Psalm 150, the Psalter reveals that the truly happy life is one rooted in the person and work of Almighty God, whose steadfast love holds His people through every season of the soul. As the Psalter moves from anguish to adoration, from darkness to dawn, it becomes a mirror of the Christian life itself. It teaches us to pray honestly, to hope stubbornly, and to sing faithfully, even when night seems long. In the deepest valleys, the Psalms give voice to the church's groan; on the highest heights, they train the church's doxology. And in every line, every cry, and every hallelujah, Christ Himself comes near, revealing the light of the world in the dark night of the soul and leading His people into the blessedness that only His grace can give.

– Pastor Bill

About the artwork and artist.

The Light of the World, 1851-1853, is an iconic allegorical painting by William Holman Hunt. The painting depicts Jesus Christ as a regal figure in flowing robes, wearing a crown of thorns, holding a glowing lantern, and preparing to knock on a weed-overgrown wooden door with no external handle. This illustrates Revelation 3:20 from the Bible: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him..." The artist William Holman Hunt is showing us that Jesus is the divine door to the living God who meets His people in the most intimate and personal ways. The closed, overgrown door → representing the human soul or "obstinately shut mind" that has long ignored spiritual calling. There is no handle on the outside → the door can only be opened from within, emphasizing free will and personal invitation to faith. The lantern → Christ as the light of the world (John 8:12), illuminating darkness and offering salvation. The work marked Hunt's deepening Christian faith (from earlier agnosticism) and became one of the most reproduced and devotional images of the Victorian era, inspiring oratorios, hymns, and widespread popular piety. It's often called a visual sermon on personal salvation.