

PRAYING THE PSALMS

PRAY TOGETHER

Monday, January 15

Reading: Psalm 20

Psalm 20:7 *Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.*

The great French military conqueror Napoleon Bonaparte was asked, “Is God on the side of France?” Intoxicated with the power of his own success, he retorted, “God is on the side that has the heaviest artillery.” This boastful claim would be refuted in 1815 at the battle of Waterloo where despite having superior weaponry, Napoleon lost the battle and his kingdom. Later in exile on the barren island of St. Helena, the defeated dictator would quote the words of Thomas a Kempis - “Man proposes, but God disposes.”¹

Psalm 20 is a short psalm but reminds us of a valuable lesson. David is once again heading out to battle the enemies of the Lord. This psalm was written to be sung by the king and his people. The psalm can be divided into three sections: (1) the people’s prayer for their king (20:1-5), (2) the king’s response to the people (20:6-8), and (3) their combined prayer to the Lord (20:9).

First the people plead with God to protect their king. The emphasis on the sanctuary (Temple) and the sacrifices describes David’s relationship with God. The people understand that unless the king’s heart is right with God, he cannot have victory. They also pray that the king’s plans would succeed. The emphasis on God answering the king’s prayers suggests that David’s desires and plans are aligned with God’s will.

David’s response is to reassure the people that God is on their side. Their victory is not because of their military might (“chariots and horses”) but because of their trust in the Lord. They “rise up and stand firm” in His strength.

In the final cry of verse nine, the king and people combine their voices in prayer to God for victory. Together they will trust in God for success.

PRAYER THOUGHT: This psalm reminds me of the slogan we often say at Shiloh Community Church: “We do it better when we do it together.” While the church does not have kings, we do have pastors and leaders who need God’s direction and power. The people in the congregation should be in constant prayer for their pastors and leaders - for their growing relationship with God and their plans to be guided by God’s Spirit.

Pastors and leaders need to also be praying for those over whom the Lord has appointed them as shepherds. The congregation are the ones who “lift up our banners in the name of our God.” They are soldiers in the Lord’s work and look for examples of godly leaders to follow.

We fail when we trust in our own “chariots and horses” to do the Lord’s work - when we trust in our own thoughts, plans, and strength instead of trusting in the Lord. We all need to pray together - for God’s guidance and power as we lift up our banner in His name.

¹ Steven J. Lawson. Psalm 1-75: Holman Old Testament Commentary, Conclusion to Psalm 20