

Prayers of a Different World

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[0 : 00] Okay, so we are reading from Psalm 20, starting at verse 1, all the way through to the end of Psalm 21. To the choir master, a psalm of David.

May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble. May the name of the Lord, sorry, the name of God, of Jacob, protect you. May he send you help from the sanctuary and give you support from Zion. May he remember all your offerings and regard with favour your burnt sacrifices. May he grant you your heart's desire and fulfil all your plans.

May we shout for joy over your salvation. And in the name of our God, set up our banners. May the Lord fulfil all your petitions. 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. Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.

[1 : 04] They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright. O Lord, save the King. May he answer us when we call. To the choir master, a psalm of David.

O Lord, in your strength the King rejoices, and in your salvation how greatly he exalts. You have given him his heart's desire and have not withheld the request of his lips.

For you met him with rich blessings. You set a crown of fine gold upon his head. He asked life of you. You gave it to him, length of days, forever and ever.

His glory is great through your salvation, splendor and majesty you bestow on him. For you make him most blessed forever. You make him glad with the joy of your presence.

For the King trusts in the Lord, and through the steadfast love of the Most High, he shall not be moved. Your hand will find out all your enemies. Your right hand will find out those who hate you.

[2 : 08] You will make them as a blazing oven when you appear. The Lord will swallow them up in his wrath, and fire will consume them. You will destroy their descendants from the earth, and their offspring from among the children of men.

Though they plan evil against you, though they devise mischief, they will not succeed. For you will put them to flight. You will aim at their faces with your bows.

Be exalted, O Lord, in your strength. We sing and praise your power. Thanks, Alex.

Just try the mic first. Is that clear enough for those at the back? Good. Yep. Because two weeks ago, I didn't know that it wasn't that clear. And I thank Simon Brown for adjusting it for me.

And that's good. And good to see you all as well, and visitors too. My name is Bo, one of the elders in the church. So today we are, we have come to Psalms 20 and 21.

[3 : 21] While Psalm 20 is actually pretty, I suppose we find it a bit easier to read and maybe follow. And 21, maybe a bit harder.

But overall, I find that it's actually not that easy to pray according to those Psalms. I'm thinking of why that is the case.

I think the two reasons. One is that we don't actually pray very much in general to start with. Second is that in those Psalms, the king is the center of everything.

That is the focus. And if we don't have similar focus in our life, then we will find it hard actually to follow those two Psalms.

Well, let us pray first before we continue. Father, we thank you for your goodness to us that we can gather again this morning. As we want to ponder on Psalms 20 and 21, we ask your help that we might be teachable and also we might be lifted up to see your glory.

[4 : 38] Thank you, Lord. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. About 40 years ago, when I was a very young Christian in Melbourne, I was given this book by Christian friends in the uni.

I'm not sure whether some of us have read this book. My Upmove for His Highest by Oslo Chambers. During that time, in the Christian fellowship in the uni, we were encouraged to read

many books.

And I did read many Christian books. And this was one of those books that is different to other books. This book was first published in 1927.

So it was about 100 years ago. And it's still in print today. So it can appreciate how this book has been read by many people in different languages as well.

It's a daily devotional book with a message for every day of the year. Why is it so different to me? It's just because the author, also Chambers, the focus of his woe is the Lord Jesus Christ.

[6 : 06] And I was so stirred by this book in terms of somebody can actually give themselves up so much that in his right hand I could see that.

His focus for his focus for his woe is the Lord Jesus Christ. Oslo Chambers lived only up to 43 years of age.

He died from the complication of appendix operation. While he was a chaplain to the army in Egypt during World War I.

So he died in about 1917. He became a Christian at the age of 15. And he was gifted.

He was very gifted in music and art. And he thought that he would serve the Lord through art. But somehow the Lord called him to go to Bible school.

[7 : 09] And then he started his preaching and teaching ministries. And also thought that he would remain single. He didn't think about marriage.

But one day during his trip in a ship to the USA, he met a young girl on board.

The girl, the nickname was BD. And eventually they got married. He got married at age 36. Then he got married at age 36 and he died in 43.

So the marriage lasted for about seven years. He didn't publish any book during his lifetime. This book was published ten years after his death.

And that's very amazing. After that, there were about 40 books published under his name. How did this happen? Because BD was an excellent shorthand writer.

[8 : 13] I suppose many young people don't know what a shorthand writer is nowadays. I remember one of my older sisters was learning how to do shorthand. It took a lot of effort, as you can see, for many years.

She learned to write shorthand very quick. But nowadays we don't need that anymore because of the recording and typing. But because she was a shorthand writer, she was able to record everything that Oslo Chamber was teaching and preaching.

And then there's how all these 40 books came about after his death. And this is amazing. Both of these couples, their whole focus in life is to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

And they seem to live to a different world than many other people. But if you read his books, I think our imagination will stir to seek this, to live like them, to live for something or someone that is greater.

I hope that Psalms 20 and 21 will also help us to see the same. When we read these two Psalms, we should bear in mind that those people, their whole focus is on their king or the Psalms on the king.

[9 : 36] And Psalm 20 is more a petition for the king. And Psalm 21 is more a thanksgiving Psalm for what God has done for the king.

Now the problem I suppose we also have would be saying, would these Psalms be written by David, King David himself? So if it's written by King David, would it be sort of self-promoting writing about him?

It could be written by King David himself or it could be written by someone else for King David.

Either way, I don't think it is, even if it's written by King David, I don't think it is self-promoting.

Because King David's focus is on the office of his kingship. Not about himself, but about the king of God's people.

And we know that the Psalms ultimately fulfilled in King David's greatest son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And so whether it's written by King David or not, I don't think it's a big problem.

[10 : 46] It's a focus on the kingship and also on the greater king that is to come, that is to fulfill the Psalms.

So I will go through some part of the Psalms just so that we can help us to appreciate it. But I won't be able to cover the whole two Psalms.

So the first part is to see what people pray for the king and how there is answer in Psalm 21.

So Psalm 20 verse 1, may the Lord answer you in the day of trouble. And Psalm 21 verse 1, O Lord, in your strength the king rejoices and in your salvation how greatly he exalts. So from this prayer in Psalm 20, we know that for those people who pray for their king, is that they ask God to protect the king in the day of trouble.

[11 : 59] Do you see that they did not ask God to protect us in the day of trouble? They said protect the king. We can think why that is the case.

Because these people, their focus is on the king. They know that if the king stands, then they will stand. If the king falls, then they will fall.

And so they pray for the king to be protected. And did God protect King David? We could see from history that King David was a very successful military king.

And through him, Israel became a very strong nation, the superpower of that time. However, King David before, after he yielded to temptation, and he committed adultery and murder.

So the nation of Israel likewise fell apart a generation later. When we apply that to the Lord Jesus Christ, we know that he stood firm in the face of temptation and opposition.

[13 : 13] In fact, Jesus was led by the Spirit to be tempted in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights. And he did not yield to temptation.

But then, did God protect Jesus, the Lord Jesus, from the pain or suffering or opposition?

We read in the Garden of Testimony that he was praying God would take away the cup, this bitter cup from him. But he said that it is still like he wants to do God's will in this.

And so Jesus went through the horror of the cross. But because the Lord Jesus endured the suffering of the cross, we can now stand before God as forgiven sinners.

So, in a way, God answered the prayer of the people. The people's prayer is that the king to be protected, so that they themselves will be protected.

[14 : 23] But the king Jesus actually went through the suffering, so that we ultimately can be protected from God's wrath.

So that is the first prayer. The second one is about the king's offering be accepted.

In Psalm 20, verse 3, And Psalm 21, verse 4, He asked life of you, you gave it to him, length of days, forever and ever.

So the people of God also understood that the king represented them in offering burnt sacrifices.

They could only approach God if the king's offering for remission of sin was acceptable to God.

They did not presume that God would listen to their petitions if their sins had not been atoned for. So God's acceptance of the offering was reflected in the king's long life.

[15 : 38] King David offered up sacrifices year after year. But King Jesus offered himself as the perfect sacrifice once and for all.

King David died. King Jesus was resurrected and lived forever and ever. And so the Psalms ultimately fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because he is the only one who can offer the perfect sacrifice. The third thing they were praying for is that the king's plan be fulfilled.

Psalm 20, verse 4, May he grant you your heart's desire and fulfill all your plans. And Psalm 21, verse 2, You have given him his heart's desire and have not withheld the request of his lips.

So they pray that God might fulfill the king's plan. And this was in a way a dangerous request.

[16 : 39] As a fulfillment of the king's plan may be in conflict with their own plans. Like in a war, the king would need to get people to fight as soldiers.

And so to fulfill the king's plan, those people would need to be part of the soldiers. Or when the king wants to build something, they need to be in the labor.

And so to see that their focus is on the king, so they basically trusted the king to do the best for the nation.

Not so much necessarily according to their own will or their own desire, but they just want the king's plan to be fulfilled.

And they are ready to submit their own plans to the king's plan. While many of King David's plans were fulfilled, one thing he really wanted to achieve was to build a temple for God.

[17 : 45] But he didn't get that done because God said that it wasn't King David who would build this temple.

And his descendant is going to build this temple, and King Jesus is the only king who would perfectly build this temple. Jesus said, I mean, King David's son Solomon did build a temple.

But Jesus said, destroy this temple, and I will raise it up again in three days. So the temple that was built by King Solomon was not, it wasn't the real or the actual temple.

It was only a picture of what is to come. Because the temple is where the people can meet with God. And only the Lord Jesus Christ would be the place or the person whom we can meet God.

And so Jesus is the one who built the perfect temple. And this is the ultimate fulfillment of the king's plan. So King Jesus' plan is to be the temple, to be the meeting place between God and man.

[19 : 01] And that is the most important thing that he came to do. So the fourth thing that they pray for is that the king's faith may be vindicated.

Psalms 20, verses 7 to 8, Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright.

Psalms 21, verses 11 to 20, Though they plan evil against you, though they devise mischief, they will not succeed.

For you will put them to fight. You will aim at their faces with your bowels. So the prayer here is that God will show the world that God himself was trustworthy and in control of everything.

And also that their king's faith in God was not futile. They knew that even if they were defeated by their enemies, the defeat was only transient.

[20 : 13] God will raise them up and make them stand upright. Some nations, or most nations, could only trust in their chariots and horses.

But the people of God had God to rely on. In our this day and age, besides horses and chariots, we trust in many things else.

We trust in technologies in particular for achievement of what we want to do. We can see the world progressing, advancing in technology in many areas.

But we can also see the world regressing in many areas. In particular, in terms of relationship between people, in terms of mental health, within the people.

It's just when the world trusts in technologies, even if they achieve something, eventually they lost more than what they achieved.

[21 : 24] And people of God know that, know to rely on God. And God's timing may be slow in terms of what you want to achieve.

But God's timing is never wrong. But it doesn't mean that King David and his people did not have chariots and horses, or they did not have strategies for war.

They had all those things. But ultimately, they did not trust in their own strength. And also, it also means that they could sleep well before each battle.

Sleeping well is very difficult in our day and age. Most people have trouble sleeping. It's just because we don't, many times, because we are uncertain about our future, about tomorrow.

And people who can trust in the Lord, one thing, I mean, it's not necessary they can't necessarily sleep well, but usually they would because they have rest in their hearts.

[22 : 31] Because they, it does, they know that it doesn't matter whether tomorrow turns out well or not. For the Israelites, also for them, even if they are defeated, even if they die, that is not the end of them because they trust in God.

And so, they can see things much further than people who can only trust on horses and chariots.

When Jesus was on the cross, his enemies ridiculed him, asking him to show his power as a son of God and free himself from the nails of the cross.

Jesus did not put his trust on his own strength. To fulfill God's plan. He trusted God and he died, but then he was resurrected.

So, now all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to King Jesus. So, the first time he came, he came as a lamb to take away the sins of the world.

And then the second time he will come as a lion to trust the world that will fulfill the second part of Psalm 21 when that happens. Now, we, after mentioning the Psalms, we will consider it is actually not easy for us to pray these Psalms.

[23 : 59] There are many reasons. I will only mention two today. One is, the first reason is that we live in a different world to that of King David. In King David's world, actually, or in, to say, in our world first, in our world, we live in two different kingdoms if we are Christians.

The kingdom of God where Jesus Christ is the king, that is a spiritual kingdom. And the kingdom of the world, that is the political kingdom that ruled by prime ministers, kings, or presidents.

So, first of all, we are living in these two different kingdoms in our world in this time. But in King David's world, King David was the representative of their spiritual world because he is the spiritual king as well.

He is a political king. So, for the people of Israel, they did not have that conflict between the two kingdoms. Their kingdoms were merged into one.

And so, they can pray for this king and that this king's plan could be fulfilled by God under God's help.

[25 : 27] For us, we cannot easily pray that King Charles' plan will be fulfilled because we do not. We know that we will not trust King Charles or our prime minister or president that their plans would be a godly plan.

And that's why we can't pray as those Samis would do because we live in two different kingdoms and those two kingdoms are often in conflict.

And the kingdoms will perfectly merge again, those two kingdoms, when the Lord Jesus comes again. will be the only king that we look up to.

So in our imperfect world, we do not pray the same way for our political kings. At the same time, unlike the Israelites, we also do not need to pray for our spiritual king because we know that the Lord Jesus is perfect in every way.

And he's a son of God and he's absolutely wise and absolutely able to do anything he wants to do.

And so because of that, we do not pray like the psalms.

[26 : 51] What do we pray for? We still pray for our spiritual and political leaders. we do not pray that God will fulfill their plans, but we pray that God's plan may be fulfilled through them or in them.

And so we still can apply that in this way. Ultimately, it is God's plan that we want to be fulfilled. And so we pray, we can pray in this way.

So this is first reason is that we are living in two different kingdoms. Second reason is that our world view has changed over the last 50 years or so.

Before then, most people lived for the good of others, but now most people live for their own good.

That is the difference in the world view. I remember about 40 years ago when an older sister migrated with her family to Melbourne.

She found a job in the clothing factory. And she was happily working there. It's a boring job. Maybe they were just sewing clothes.

[28 : 08] She was happy that she could supplement the husband's income for the family. But if you have such factories nowadays, I suspect that not many people want to do such jobs.

even the food factories that we still have, the chicken factories, most of the workers inside will be from overseas. Because we want fulfillment in jobs, so we could not take up jobs that are boring and no sense that there's no enjoyment in it.

Just because our world will change, and so we are so focused on each person's own happiness, and that has become the most important thing.

And so, in our prayers, we would usually pray for our own leaders, what will make us happy, or pray for our leaders, what they do will make us happy, so we will become the focus.

Or even if we pray for other people, like people who are unwell, and we will pray that they will get better. I mean, it's not wrong to say that that's what we want, but that is all we pray for usually.

[29 : 36] But then, God usually helps us to grow through suffering, and if God's plan is that we should grow through suffering, and our prayer is that God should take away our suffering, then it might be in conflict with God's plan, if we want to pray that God's plan will fulfill in us.

And so, we need to learn to see things in a bigger perspective, in a bigger vision, and not just focus on personal happiness, or the lack of suffering, but that God will do something through the suffering to help us to grow as his people, and we don't just stop at praying that God will take away suffering, and not seeing something even bigger, as these people in Psalm 20 and 21 could see that they want the king's plan to be fulfilled, and that might involve suffering to those people as well.

So, we can just have a thing over the past 12 months, first of all, who was our king, who do we focus our life in?

Many times this is ourselves. Like, I was 40 years ago, I was reading that book. I mean, I was amazed by the book, but I was still doing my own things.

I was sort of the king. So, we can think what we have been praying for, and we will know who the king, who our king is, and I hope that through these two psalms, we can have a bigger vision and

pray for greater things in the coming year.

[31 : 45] Upon his death in 1917 in Egypt, Oslo's wife, B.D. sent a telegram to his family back in England with the message, Oslo, in his presence.

very simple, but very profound. Death is not the end at all, also in his presence.

And I hope that we all will have this hope in us that when we die, we are in his presence. And also when we, as we live, I hope that we can live in his presence as well, that we will see greater things and want to do greater things for the Lord Jesus Christ as well.

All right, let's pray. Almighty God, we thank you for fulfilling the King's plan that the Lord Jesus Christ become our Savior and our Lord, and through him we could come before you.

Father, we know that it's also the Lord's plan for us to be sanctified, to be made more like him.

[33 : 06] I pray that you might help us in the coming year to be a year that we would grow in our knowledge of you and become more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you, Lord, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.