

Standing on the Promises

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[0 : 0 0] To the choir master, Psalm of David. May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble.! May the name of the 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 favor your burnt offerings. Selah.

May he grant you your heart's desire and fulfill 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 fulfill 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. They collapse and fall, but we rise, stand upright.

[1 : 0 5] O Lord, save the King. May he answer us when we call. Amen. Well, Julie and I are 13 years into our parenting career.

And there's some things we've learned. Here's one of the big ones. Are you ready? Big lesson, parenting lesson. For all of you that maybe are a little bit behind us and those of you who are ahead of us will be able to affirm that with us.

Here's what it is. Your kids and my kids are prone to forget the things that you want them to remember.

They're professionals at remembering the things that you wish they'd forget. Right? Big lesson. I sat downstairs Friday morning.

I was doing some study in the kitchen, trying to get out of office. Sometimes I just need to be around windows where there's lots of light coming in. And it was one of those days. I was sitting down at the dining room table with all my books spread out and was thinking and writing and studying.

[2 : 1 2] And I heard upstairs, Julie had set up a baby gate at the top of the step so that Charlie could just kind of roam around. And I heard upstairs, Julie tell Harper and Ashlyn to make sure when they walk through that gate from their bedroom that they shut it so that Charlie doesn't walk through and fall down the steps.

And then I heard her say it again. And then I heard her say it again. And each time with increasing intensity again and again and again, it's just a matter of just a few minutes, something very important that she just desperately needs them to remember.

And yet they just kept forgetting, forgetting. But then it's amazing how they can remember how I vaguely mentioned I would take them to the pool on a random Tuesday at 2.37 six weeks ago.

We're inclined to remember the promises that have been made to us. We're even more inclined to remember the ones that have been broken to us.

Hope in a promise has a way of capturing our focus, doesn't it? It influences everything about our lives. When we have something that really has grabbed our hope, it's a promise.

- [3 : 31] It's something that we're hoping for that we're maybe even confident in. It grabs us. We long for it. The girls are that way. We can tell them, hey, we're thinking about going to the pool today. We're thinking about going to the pool tomorrow, whatever it is.
- And they get so excited, it builds up the hope, doesn't it, Harper? And they long for it. I just can't wait to get to the pool. And Harper will come two, three, 11 times throughout the day.
- Are we still going to the pool? Are we going to go to the pool tonight? They want to ask about it. They want to continue to pray for it if we could use that language to mom and dad. Don't forget that you promised that you would take us to the pool.
- Sometimes they'll get so excited in anticipation of going to the pool. They'll put on their swimsuits and they'll do their school. They homeschool at the moment. They'll do their school in their swimsuits in their bedroom because they're just so excited.
- They're anticipating the fulfillment of a wonderful promise that has brought them incredible hope. That being said, trusting in a promise has everything to do with whether or not you believe the promise maker to be trustworthy.
- [4 : 40] Now, I can walk into the house this afternoon and I can say, Girls, you want to go to the pool? And if it's me saying it, you know what they'll do? They'll roll their eyes and say, Stop trying to trick us, Dad.
- If it's Julie that says this, it's the complete opposite. When it comes to the pool trips, they know that Julie's promises are more trustworthy. And they'll get excited. If I say it, they don't.
- I've broken that promise a few times, they would tell you. And, of course, that leads to skepticism. Uncertainty. Now, in Psalm 20, David again assumes the role of the lead worshiper in Israel.
- And he's directing all of God's people to remember and trust God's promises. The first section of the song, David leads this prayer that is rooted in the covenant promise of God.
- Just as a promise to go swimming dominates Harper's attention, so does the recognition of God's promises dominate the focus of the faithful.
- [5 : 54] They long for it. They pray for it. They live in anticipation of it. And that was certainly true of David.
- And he led Israel to do the same. How often he must have meditated on the wonders of God's covenant. And God's covenant with David was a massive one, wasn't it?
- Coming on the heels of all the other wonderful promises that God had made to his people. We get to, what is it, 2 Samuel 7. And we see this amazing covenant that God makes with David about a future king that would come from his line.
- A savior king who would sit on the throne. And David buys in wholeheartedly. So much so that you can tell in reading through his psalms that it dominated his attention.
- Imagine how often he must have meditated on the promise of God so as to so often direct our focus to it in his psalms. That's a challenge to us, isn't it?
- [6 : 59] If we were to take the entire corpus of David's writings and just kind of lay them out and thematically try to break them down, what's the thing that's going to be at the very top? God's covenant.
- He's going to be at the very top. It's what was on his mind. It's what was on his heart. So it comes out in his words. Now what if we were to take the entire corpus of our lives, the things that we've written and the things that we've said and the conversations that we've had and we've done, just kind of lay them out and just thematically see where is our meditation?

Would we be able to say like David that really, you know what we spend a lot of time thinking about is the promise of God. And the covenant of God and his king. That was true for David and he was leading his people to do the same.

That's what Psalm 20 is about. In the second part of the Psalm, David calls on the people to trust in the name of the Lord for he always fulfills his promises.

He's not like the dad who says we'll go to the pool and then breaks the promise. No, he always does it. In studying the scriptures we find that God often doesn't deal in explanations, does he?

[8 : 08] He doesn't tell us everything that he's doing. He rarely tells us why. What does he do? He gives us promises.

He says to trust me. So it's no surprise then we get to a passage like in Hebrews 4 where the author says without faith it's impossible to please him.

You must believe him. He's a promise making God and he calls us to believe him, to trust him. This Psalm was given to the choir master to teach the people to hope in God's covenant.

Or as the old hymn put it, to stand on the promises of God. It's a prayer for God to work through his anointed king so that those who trust in him will be saved.

It mirrors Psalm 18 that we studied just a couple of weeks ago. It's a song of salvation. But we find here that the benefits of this salvation that comes through the king apply only to those who will trust in the name of the Lord our God.

[9 : 18] Just two major sections that we want to see here. First thing I want you to see is the people's prayer. The people's prayer. Let's just read the first five verses again. May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble.

May the name of the 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 favor your burnt sacrifices.

May he grant you your heart's desire and fulfill 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 fulfill all your petitions.

It's a prayer, isn't it? A prayer that David is praying. He's leading the people to pray. And we know that he wants the people to pray it because he takes his prayer and he says, Here, choir master, take it and lead the people in it.

He desires for them to pray the prayer as well. It reads like a benediction, doesn't it? Like a prayer of blessing. Every sentence in these first five verses, seven times total here, begins with this word may.

[10 : 21] May the Lord do this. It's an indirect prayer, isn't it? The audience is this person or people or whomever it is that he may be speaking to.

That's the audience that is the direct focus of the prayer. But indirectly, he's praying for God to do these things. May the Lord protect you. May the God of Jacob answer you in the day of trouble.

Now, the question is, for whom is David and the people of Israel praying this blessing? Who is it that they desire so intently for God to answer and protect and to remember?

Now, if we're being a bit careless, we may come to a passage like this and we may adopt it as if this was written for us to share with one another. As if this is a prayer of blessing that we're meant to pray on one another.

And, of course, it's not bad to do that. It wouldn't be bad to come to Ashland and say, may the Lord bless you. We find those benedictions all the time in the scriptures. But is that what's happening in Psalm 20?

[11 : 31] Is this meant to be something that we pray over one another? I don't think so. I don't think so. Another option is that David has written this in the third person so that the people of Israel might pray for him, their king.

Some have suggested that perhaps later kings even use this as a hymn that would be led right before going into battle.

Because that's just conjecture. We don't know that that actually happened. We don't actually know the setting at all. All we have is the words themselves. That's another option. While David sometimes did write Psalms from his own experience, I don't think that's what he's doing in this case.

Here, he and the people are focused on God's covenant promise to raise up a greater king, the anointed son of Psalm 2, through whom God's people will be saved.

We see all of the second person pronouns in this Psalm are singular. When he says, may the Lord answer you, he's not speaking to people in general. He's speaking to a person.

[12 : 39] There's an individual he has in mind. When he says, may the name of the God objective protect you, he's speaking to an individual. But I don't think it's him. Later, he will talk about God's anointed.

Do you remember at the very end of Psalm 18 and verse 50, great salvation he brings to his king and shows steadfast love to his anointed, to David and his offspring forever.

I think that's who David is focused on. I think that's who the people are focused on. It's not David. It's not something that they're praying over one another. It's something they're praying in relationship to God's covenant.

God's covenant with David. An offspring who will come and save his people. He's causing the people to remember God's promise so that they might learn to long for it and pray for it and live in anticipation of it.

Now, I think sometimes we forget that the people of Israel had a clear understanding and expectation for a promised Messiah.

[13 : 44] But sometimes we get the idea that when Jesus shows up that all the people are, they're just kind of surprised. Oh, there's this messianic figure. That's the first time they're really thinking about it.

And that just isn't true. They would have immediately grasped what this song was about in David's day. They didn't have all the pieces to the puzzle, but they had enough to know for certain that God would raise up a savior king to deliver them.

And that is where their hope rested. It rested on the promises of God. They knew about the promise in Genesis. They knew about Abraham's covenant. They knew about Moses' covenant.

They knew about David's covenant. It was not hidden. It was public. They were aware. And they were longing for it. And as the people are praying this and singing this in worship, they know what is to be in mind.

They know they're not praying about David. They know they're praying about a greater David. Now, I want to point out a passage to you that would probably be helpful for you to set your eyes on. Just flip over to 1 Peter 1.

[14 : 48] 1 Peter 1. 1 Peter 1. And in case you may be confused on this point that I'm trying to make, I want to show it to you here in reflection on this fact.

Peter helps us. 1 Peter 1. Look at verse 10. Concerning this salvation, this gospel, which is centered entirely on the person of Christ, right?

So Peter's got the same thing in mind that David has in mind. Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about that grace was to be yours, searched, and inquired carefully.

They were aware of the promise, and they were trying to sort out the promise, inquiring what person or what time the spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted, look at this, the sufferings of Christ, and the subsequent glories of Christ.

Now, I want you to recognize what Peter's saying. He's saying the people back here in David's day, Israel, these prophets, the people that are listening to them, they're searching and inquiring about how all of this is going to unfold, about who this Christ will be, and when he will come.

[16:12] And they're even wondering and inquiring about his sufferings and his subsequent glories. Peter continues, It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you.

In the things that have now been announced to you, through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

What is it that the people in David's day would have understood, the things that they would have known? Well, they didn't know who the person would be, and they didn't know when he would come. And they didn't know a lot of detail about how things would happen.

But here's what they knew. They knew that this Messiah would suffer. They knew that he would be saved by God's power. And they knew that they would receive salvation and an eternal kingdom through him.

They knew that. All of these truths were revealed through God's various covenants with the people. All three of them are featured in this prayer of blessing. The people are recognizing God's promise of a Messiah.

[17:27] And they're praying for the promise to be fulfilled. They're living and worshiping in anticipation of it. Now, I just want to point out two parts to this blessing.

First, notice the king's suffering. The king's suffering. We see this in verses 1 to 3. When we read the Gospels, we find that many of the people in Jesus' day were not interested in a suffering Messiah.

Their hearts, we're thinking in Jesus' day, their hearts were hardened to that. However, all of God's covenants in the Old Testament make it plain that the Christ would suffer.

Think about Genesis 3.15. We call it the Proto-Evangelium. The very first preaching pronouncement of a gospel. Genesis 3.15. As God is judging Adam and Eve and the serpent.

What does he say to Eve? That there will come an offspring, the seed of the woman. And what will he do? He will crush the head of the serpent. But then what will happen to him?

[18:33] He will be bruised in the process. The very first pronouncement of the gospel tells us that this Messiah will be victorious, but that he will suffer in the process. We've passed forward a little.

We could go so many different places, couldn't we? We could point to the type of Joseph in the Old Testament. Joseph saves so many people. God uses him to do that, but he does it through great suffering, doesn't he?

How about the Mosaic Covenant? At the center of the Mosaic Covenant is what? A lamb that is slaughtered. We get to places like in the prophets in Isaiah 53 in particular.

And what is it that Isaiah does? He explicitly describes the sufferings of the servant of the Lord. The Old Testament is full of promises and pictures and prophecies of a Messiah who would suffer.

The greatest Bible study to ever take place is found in Luke 24, when Jesus opened up all the scriptures to show how they pointed to his suffering in particular.

[19 : 38] Now, while the Jews in Jesus' day rejected that, the Israelites of David's day, the faithful ones, they would have known well that this coming king was suffering. When they sang this prayer, when they prayed this prayer, they're praying for God to save the suffering servant, to deliver the suffering king.

And the acknowledgement of that suffering is plain in the text. They asked God to answer the king in the day of trouble, verse 1. They plead for the God of Jacob, a reference to God's covenant with Israel, to protect the king in verse 1.

They asked the Lord to help him and to support him. All of this, recognizing that the king will suffer. But the most striking statement is verse 3.

Read it again. May he remember all your offerings and regard with favor your burnt sacrifices. There's echoes here of Cain and Abel, isn't there?

Remember, Cain and Abel, they both bring their offerings to the Lord. Abel's is pleasing to the Lord. It satisfies. Cain's does not. It's rejected.

[20 : 49] And the people pray. Receive the king's sacrifice. Be pleased by his offerings. The prayer seeks for God to find the offerings of the king to be favorable.

The New Testament word for this is propitiation. The full appeasement of God's wrath. What David and the Israelites wouldn't have fully comprehended was that the propitiating sacrifice that would be offered was the Messiah himself.

Jesus is the suffering king. Jesus is the suffering king who laid down his life as a sacrifice acceptable to God.

And he did so on behalf of sinners. Romans 3. We are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith.

Now David probably wouldn't have been able to put all those pieces together. He's looking at this in shadowy form, isn't he? But we can look back and we can fill in the gaps. What is this prayer really about?

[22 : 13] Lord, when he lays down his life, may it be favorable for the salvation of the king and the salvation of his people. Second, notice the king's salvation.

This is verses 4 and 5. The prayer now acknowledges that beyond the suffering of the king is his salvation, his victory. His heart's desire will be granted, his plans and petitions will be fulfilled.

Those statements form an inclusio here. They're bracketing out the things that make the prayer possible and the assurance of the prayer possible, which is the king's salvation.

Look in verse 5. This is at the heart of it. May we shout for joy over your salvation, the king's salvation. This Messiah's deliverance.

The desire, plans and petitions of the king. What are they about? What is he petitioning God to do? What is he desiring for God to do? What is he planning for God to do through him?

[23 : 23] He's not praying for health, wealth and prosperity. No, he's praying for the salvation of his people. He's praying that God's will be accomplished in his life.

We get hints here, shadowy form of a dark garden just before an arrest. As this king prays, not my will but thy will be done.

And we say, Lord, answer those petitions. When he prays for us, hear his prayer. May his plans be fulfilled.

What was Jesus' plans? He said, my bread is to do the will of the Father. To do everything that he sent me to do. What did he send me to do? To die and rise.

Victory. Salvation. Salvation. The king represents the people. And their life is bound up in his. His salvation means their salvation.

[24 : 28] When God delivers the king, those who trust in him will shout for joy and raise the banners of the name of our God. Why? Because his victory means our victory.

This is the theme of all of God's promises. Though the Savior will suffer, he will bring salvation. Though his heel will be bruised, the serpent's head will be crushed.

Though the lamb is slaughtered, the people are forgiven. After Isaiah describes with great detail the servant's atoning death, he speaks of him being raised to life.

The king's salvation is an act of resurrection. And because he lives, so will all who trust in him.

Says Peter again, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

[25 : 32] To an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for you. Who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

What is Peter saying? The salvation of the king, his resurrection, is what brings salvation for the people. An inheritance that's incorruptible and undefiled, waiting for us in the last time, all those who will believe.

Again, though they could not have comprehended everything that the Messiah would do, they recognized God's promises and prayed in accordance with those promises. They longed for God to work this salvation.

They anticipated that he would. It gripped their focus. It informed their worship. As it should ours. What greater thing could grab our attention?

What greater thing could be at the heart of our worship Sunday by Sunday? Than the promise of God fulfilled in the person of Christ. Which requires us to answer an important question.

[26 : 49] Is your life dominated by God's promise in Christ? Is it dominated by it? The way that a promise to go to the pool dominates Harper like you wouldn't believe.

Are we as God's people day by day dominated by the fact of Christ's love? Of what he has done?

That it was settled in heaven that he would do it on your behalf before you were ever created. Before anything was ever created. And that God has fulfilled that promise. Does it dominate you?

Does it dominate your mind? Does it dominate your actions? Your faith? The way you love your wife? The way you raise your kids? The way you worship on a Sunday?

The way you study your Bible day by day? The way you pray? The way you rejoice? Do you rejoice? This is a psalm of celebration. How often we seem to lack celebration.

[28 : 00] Why? Because I don't know that we're often dominated by the promise. So many other things to distract us. Second section.

The people's faith. We see their prayer in the first five verses. Quickly we see their faith in verses six to nine. Let's read the verses again. 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. Some in horses. We will trust in the name of the Lord our God.

They will collapse and fall. But we will rise. And stand upright. And there's the summary statement at the end. It kind of covers both sections of the prayer here. He says, Oh Lord save the king.

May he answer us when we call. A noticeable shift takes place in verse six, doesn't it? The focus changes from a prayer for God to fulfill his promise to a declaration of assurance that he indeed will.

[29 : 05] David leads the people not merely to acknowledge God's promise, but to believe it. To trust in him. These final verses, they reveal to whom the king's salvation is applied.

Who does he save? Those who do their best and try their hardest. No, of course not. Those who trust in the name of the Lord our God.

That's who he saves. David's confidence in the Lord is very high here, isn't it? I know that the Lord saves his anointed, he declares. I know it.

But it's important for us to note what it is that gives David such confidence. His is not a blind faith. So many people think that Christianity is just a blind faith, that it's a rational faith.

It's not. Even David's prayer here, it's reasoned. It's rational. It has a foundation. He knows that God will save his anointed one.

[30 : 11] Because as an anointed king, David has experienced God's gracious salvation over and over again. It's almost an argument from the lesser to the greater.

If God is faithful to me, David reasons, how much more can we be confident that he will be faithful to this greater king and Messiah that he's promised?

He will not leave him in the grave. How could he? He's been so faithful to me. But David's confidence is primarily based on God's character.

Verse 7. Notice it. It's the third time that David speaks of the name of the Lord. The name of the Lord. What is that all about?

The name of the covenant God, according to Christopher Ashe. It means his revealed nature. His saving presence on earth. We thought about this last week, didn't we?

[31 : 17] In Psalm 19. This term, it's underscoring what God has revealed about himself. In the discussion last week of God's glory being the display of his holiness and his perfections.

How is it that David said that God would reveal his glory? In creation. In the scriptures. In redemption. In other words, David declares his trust in God's promise because in every way possible, God has proven himself to be absolutely trustworthy.

I can walk in the house and say, hey, let's go to the pool and the girls will roll their eyes. God says, I will send a king and he will establish a throne that will never end.

And there is no reason to snicker or roll your eyes. He's absolutely trustworthy. His glory is revealed in the world he created.

The word that he wrote, the worshipers, he redeems. And it proves that he is worthy of our faith. That's David's argument. God is trustworthy. That's why I know he will fulfill the promise.

[32 : 32] And he uses this image of a battlefield in which some are putting their faith and their hopes solely in the chariots and the horses to win the battle. But David declares that only those who trust in the name of the Lord will be victorious.

Maybe he will use horses and chariots. Maybe he will not use horses and chariots. It doesn't matter. At the end of the day, the trust and hope is not in these lesser things. The hope, the trust, it's in the name of the Lord our God.

It is in his perfect character and his trustworthiness. This issue of faith and God's promises is not only at the heart of this psalm.

It's at the heart of the very Bible itself. There's two ways represented here. There's the way of death, which is followed by all who trust in their own way.

There's also the way of life. Those who rise, those who stand upright do so because they have trusted in the Lord.

[33 : 41] The world boasts great things it can't actually deliver on. God will never fail. All who trust in him and his word will rejoice in the salvation of his king.

How can you enjoy the saving benefits of God's king? The scriptures answer that through faith alone we are saved.

Through faith alone. Faith in what? Trust in what? God's promised king. That he will fulfill his promise in a person. And that he has done so in Jesus.

But to trust in him requires that you stop trusting in everything else. Is that not the contrast of verse 7? So many.

So many are just trying to trust in their own way. They're just trying to figure it out, right? Maybe they hedge their bets with some type of religious observance. Whether that's Christianity or some other thing.

[34 : 50] But at the end of the day, they're really just trusting in themselves to reason it out and to figure it out. You can't trust in Jesus. You can't trust God's promise. And it's something else all at the same time.

It doesn't work. It's either him or it's nothing. For by grace are you saved through faith. Nothing of yourself. It's a gift from God.

It's not of works. Lest any man could boast. No, it's of grace. Do you trust him? Do you trust him?

David and the Israelites, he led. They sang this song looking forward in anticipation of God's promise being fulfilled. We don't sing it quite the same way.

We don't sing it in anticipation except in the sense that we are longing for Christ's return. We sing this song looking back on the fact that in Jesus Christ it has been fulfilled.

[35 : 52] The promise has been completed. But what's common between us and the Israelites who would have sang this song in David's day is the necessity of faith in God's promised king.

That's the same for both of us. God's promise is so profound. It should dominate our lives. But God is so trustworthy that we'd be fools not to trust him and not to rest in him.

And that's the beauty of Psalm 20. David is leading us in something here. He's leading us in worship. He's leading us to stand on the promises. Because the promises are sure.

Because God is sure.