

Series: Psalms

Title: The Church's Prayer for Christ

Text: Psalm 20: 1-9

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Have you ever thought of praying for Christ? Believers pray. Prayer is the heartbeat of a believer. Prayer is faith in God, dependence upon God, glorying in God. We pray for many things. But have you ever thought of praying for Christ? Our subject is "The Church's Prayer for Christ."

The heading says, "To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David." The Holy Spirit gave this to David but it shows us the prayer that Christ our true David and King taught his church to pray. While on this earth, Christ continually prayed to the Father. Christ taught his disciple to pray and what to pray. He taught us to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name." His name is hallowed in Christ. Christ taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come." God's kingdom is established by Christ. He taught us to pray, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." God's will is accomplished by Christ. (Mt 6: 9-10) Then, in the garden of Gethsemane,

Matthew 26: 38: Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. 39: And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. 40: And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? 41: Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation:

We know what Christ prayed but what did the disciples pray as they wrestled against sleep? Psalm 20 is a prophecy of the prayer of the church for Christ in his day of trouble. The assurance a believer has that God will hear us is that God hears Christ.

THE LORD HEAR THEE

First, the church prayed for Christ to be heard, "The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble." (Ps 20: 1) All the days of Christ on this earth were days of trouble. He was the man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. But the garden of Gethsemane marked the day of trouble.

What was taking place in the garden of Gethsemane? It was in a garden that the first Adam was tested and failed, plunging his house into spiritual death—including us. It was in a garden that the last Adam began facing the ultimate test. But he succeeded, and continued to the cross, where he saved his house from spiritual death.

Also, remember the picture in the ceremony. The lamb for atonement was first observed to make sure he was without spot or blemish. Then the spotless lamb was presented to the High Priest. The whole of Christ's life was his examination: he was made of a woman, made under the law. Christ was proven to be without sin. In the garden of Gethsemane, Christ the Spotless Lamb of God willingly presented himself to God, without sin, so that he who knew no sin, could be made sin for us. So the day of trouble began in the garden. Christ is described as being heavy and sore amazed, being in an agony, his sweat was as it were drops of blood falling on the ground, his soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.

In the garden, Christ told his disciple to pray and he went a little further and prayed to the Father. We are told what Christ prayed but what did the church pray? Our text says the church prayed for God to hear Christ as he prayed. The church prayed, "The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble."

Catch this: Christ is the Advocate with God for his people. Our prayer must come to God through Christ the Mediator. So, even as the church prayed FOR Christ, the church prayed THROUGH Christ, “The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble.”

THE NAME OF THE GOD OF JACOB DEFEND THEE

The church prayed for Christ’s defense, “The name of the God of Jacob defend thee.” (Ps 20:1) Christ is God. But while on this earth our Savior took the form of a servant. As the faithful servant of God, representing all his people, Christ looked to God alone for help and strength. So the church prayed “the name of the God of Jacob defend thee.”

“The name of God” includes “the honor, authority, character of God.” His name is who God is and what God does. God’s name is Holiness, Goodness, Mercy, Truth, Power, Wisdom, Justice, Faithfulness and on and on. We can put any of those words in the place of the word “name”: “The Holiness of the God of Jacob defend thee”; “The Goodness of the God of Jacob defend thee.”; “The Mercy of the God of Jacob defend thee.”; “The Power of the God of Jacob defend thee.” But praying “the NAME of God defend thee” everything God is, is included. We are praying, “the God of Jacob defend thee.”

Why is God addressed as “the God of Jacob?” It is because by God’s own honor, his own authority, his own character, God made an everlasting covenant to Jacob, ordered in all things and sure. So for his name’s sake, God defended Jacob in all his trouble and saved him. Also, God’s whole church is represented by Jacob. We are the children of Israel, the children of Jacob. So this is a prayer for God to defend Christ for the sake of all his people whom God covenanted to save.

HELP FROM THE SANCTUARY, STRENGTH OUT OF ZION

The church prayed for God to send help from his presence in heaven, “Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion.” (Ps 20: 2)

“The sanctuary” is the holiest of holies, God’s very presence. Remember in the tabernacle, behind the second veil was the Holiest of holies—the Sanctuary of all sanctuaries. It typified God’s presence. “Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:” (Heb 9: 24) So the church prayed, God “Send [Christ] help [from your presence] from the sanctuary.”

“Zion” is the same place. We are told in Hebrews 12: 22, “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,...So the church prayed for God to “strengthen [Christ] out of Zion”

Did God hear Christ? Did God hear his church through Christ? Indeed, God heard. “And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him.” (Lu 22: 43) Believer, we need not pray for Christ’s defense. But we do pray for God to hear Christ, to glorify his name in Christ and to send his people help for Christ’s sake. And this is assurance to us, that God will hear us as we pray through Christ our Intercessor. In the garden, God heard the prayer of the church, by hearing the prayer of Christ our Intercessor. We will talk more about this assurance in a moment.

REMEMBER

Next, we something the church prayed for which is of utmost importance. The church prayed, “Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice. Selah.” (Ps 20: 3) The cross was the day, of all days, of

trouble for our Savior. Christ willingly gave himself to be made sin for us, to made a curse for us and to suffer all the fury of divine justice for all those given him of the Father.

The church prays, “Remember all thy offerings” Christ’s humiliation from heaven to the womb of a virgin was an offering. His doing good and bearing evil was his offering. Christ’s miracles and sermons was his offering. When Christ endured the rejection of men while continually depending upon his Father was Christ’s offering. All the deeds of his righteous life was an offering to God. His prayer and praise and glorifying of the Father was his offering. And the sum of all was His offering on the cross.

The cross was Christ’s “burnt sacrifice.” Under the law, every part of the sacrifice was consumed in the burnt sacrifice. Every part of Christ suffered the fire of justice on that cross. He endured the fire of shame at bearing the sins of his people. Christ endured the fire of God’s judgment in his soul. The fire of thorns burned on his brow, the fire of nails in his hands and feet, the fire of his visage marred more than any man as his body was tortured. Christ bore the fire of reproaches filling his ears, the fire of vinegar and gall on his tongue, and the fire of stench of that hill of death filled his nostrils. Finally, Christ bore the fire in his soul as he endured being forsaken of the Father he loved. Job was a type of Christ. Job’s words are prophetic of Christ,

Job 6:2: Oh that my grief were throughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! 3: For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea: therefore my words are swallowed up. 4: For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me. 5 Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass? or loweth the ox over his fodder? 6: Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg? 7: The things that my soul refused to touch are as my sorrowful meat. 8: Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! 9: Even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off!

SELAH

The word, “Selah” means “pause, meditate, amen! We are too much in a hurry. Haste hinders. It would greatly help us to pause at the cross of Christ and linger there all our days. Before any profession of faith, before any trial, before any work, before any suffering, and through all, we would do well to pause and view Christ on the cross in our hearts. It will settle our heart if our heart is settled by God’s grace on Christ and him crucified. He is the believer’s offerings and burnt sacrifice of acceptance.

GRANT THEE

The church prayed that the desire of Christ’s heart be granted, “Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel.” (Ps 20: 4) Christ suffered because the desire of his heart is his seed. His children are “the travail of his soul.” Christ’s desire was to fulfill the eternal counsel of God, to have “the pleasure of the LORD prosper in his hand.” Christ’s heart desire was to declare God just and the Justifier of his people while having all his people redeemed, called, preserved, and glorified. His desire was to fulfill everything that was agreed upon in the council and covenant of peace between him and his Father, relating to his own glory, and the salvation of his people.

THY SALVATION

Here is why the church prayed for Christ, “We will rejoice in thy salvation.” (Ps 20: 5) Why was it so important to the church that God accept Christ offerings and burnt sacrifice? Christ is the Representative Head of his people. God’s acceptance of Christ is our acceptance; God saving Christ is our salvation; Christ justifying God and God justifying Christ is our justification.

Here is our assurance that God hears our prayer through Christ our Intecessor. Indeed, God granted Christ the strength to fulfill the whole counsel of God. Instead of the fire consuming the sacrifice, Christ consumed the fire. By the finished work of our Redeemer on the cross justice is satisfied for his people. Righteousness is obtained for his people. Reconciliation is accomplished for his people. The purchase has been made. We are the redeemed possession of Christ Jesus and Christ will lose none.

OUR BANNERS

Here is why the church prayed for Christ, “In the name of our God we will set up our banners.” (Ps 20: 5) Moses called Christ, “the LORD our Banner.” When Moses held up the rod Joshua defeated Amaleke. It is a picture of the gospel of Christ declared as Christ goes forth to regenerate and defeat his enemies in his people.

The resurrection of Christ from the dead to God’s right hand and Christ’s intercession for us is the victory of our faith. Therefore, in our God we rejoice and set up our banners—serving under his flag! We go to battle putting all our trust in the Lord. Every true believer fights the fight of faith relying on his strength, not on our own. We do battle with all his and our enemies—sin, Satan, and the world—as good soldiers of Christ. We do all under the banner (the flag) of the Lord of hosts, in whose service we are enlisted, Christ being the great Captain of our salvation.

FULFILL THY PETITIONS

Since our petition for Christ is Christ’s petition for us, the church asks God to fulfill Christ’s petitions, “The LORD fulfil all thy petitions.” (Ps 20: 5) Did God do so?

Isaiah 49:8: Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time [when all was fulfilled, when justice was satisfied so that God could be just to show us mercy] have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

Believer, Christ is our Covenant! In our resurrected Redeemer we are assured that our salvation is accomplished. We are assured that all God’s promises to do us good is yes and Amen! By Christ’s resurrection, we know God hears us for he heard him.

NOW KNOW I

This is why there comes a change in voice in the sixth verse. Before the church prayed for Christ to be heard, now she sees Christ has been heard. God has raised Christ from the dead to his right hand. By the resurrection, the church prays, “Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand.” (Ps 20: 6)

Christ is the LORD’s anointed. The word “Christ” means “anointed.” This took place for our learning. By the help God gave Christ all his days, especially in the garden, and by the resurrection of our Savior from the grave, we now know that the LORD saves his anointed. And those God has regenerated are also his anointed, anointed with the oil of gladness, the Holy Spirit.

God heard Christ from his holy heaven so we know God will continue to hear Christ now that he is seated in his holy heaven. God raised Christ with the saving strength of his right hand so we know, for Christ’s sake, God will save us “with the strength of his right hand”, that is, by Christ his Strength, seated at his right hand.

By God answering the intercession of Christ, we know God hears the prayer of his people in Christ and for Christ's sake.

Psalm 102:17: He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.

Psalm 145:18: The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.

Psalm 145:19: He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.

So as we go forth preaching the gospel of Christ, as the world opposes us as it did our Master, we confidently pray to God, through Christ Jesus our Lord, asking God to hear Christ because we trust that by the intercession of Christ our Advocate, God shall grant us his promised aid.

WE WILL REMEMBER

God has made his people to have a different confidence and strength than men of this world, "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright." (Ps 20: 7-8) Brought up in Christ and standing righteous in his righteousness.

All earthly weapons and earthly strength—free-will, works of self-righteousness and fleshly self-sanctifying works, all man's vain idols, along with all or any other fleshly or worldly strength—are represented here by chariots and horses. They cannot and will not save. "They are brought down and fallen." They are not the way of life and salvation; Christ is All!

Psalm 33:17: An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength.

Proverbs 21:31: The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD.

Psalm 115:8: They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.

But we will remember the name of the LORD our God. Christ Jesus in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily is his Name. Remembering how our Savior triumphed over his enemies through the constant strength of the LORD our God: we remember the salvation we have in our Messiah for his sake. Remembering that though his troubles were many and great, God delivered him out of them all; we remember God will do the same for us for Christ's sake. Remembering that in all his trouble Christ was heard; we remember that God will hear us in all our trouble through Christ our Advocate and for his sake. Remembering Christ our Substitute was freed from the sorrows of death and hell, raised from the dead; we remember that he raised Christ to his right hand and we are risen with Christ—

Ephesians 2: 6: And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Remember that God has given our Savior all power in heaven and earth; we remember we shall be saved by him. Christ is our Salvation himself. In Christ we stand upright—righteous and holy—before our righteous and holy God. So the sum of our constant prayer and rejoicing is, "Save, LORD: let the King Jesus hear us when we call." (Ps 20: 9)

Amen!