

Don't Put Your Hope in a Land

Psalm 146

(preached Pine Grove 7/3/16; Sunday AM)

Introduction

Take your Bibles and find your way to Psalm 20...

I want to read this psalm in its entirety to start us out this morning, and then we will take a closer look at all its parts...

Psalm 20...

For the choir director. A Psalm of David.

20

May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble!

May the name of the God of Jacob set you securely on high!

2

*May He send you help from the sanctuary
And support you from Zion!*

3

*May He remember all your meal offerings
And find your burnt offering [a]acceptable! [b]Selah.*

4

*May He grant you your heart's desire
And fulfill all your [c]counsel!*

5

[d]We will sing for joy over your [e]victory,

*And in the name of our God we will 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 [f]saving strength of His right hand.*

7

*Some [g]boast in chariots and some in horses,
But we [h]will boast in the name of the Lord, our God.*

8

*They have bowed down and fallen,
But we have risen and stood upright.*

9

*[i]Save, O Lord;
May the King answer us in the day we call.*

Let us pray.

Right now in churches all over our country, July 4th celebrations and services are taking place...

And though they can be God-honoring, most will not be...

In many churches today, people will sing from the bottom of their heart expressing their love for a country, yet not one song will be sung from the bottom of their heart expressing their love of Christ...

In many churches today, people will stand, place their hand over their heart and pledge their allegiance to a flag, but never pledge their heart allegiance to the God of heaven.

In many churches today, pastors will stand and arouse the hearts of people and offer messages about national freedom, but they will ignore the God who gives the only freedom that really matters...

Somewhere along the way, churches and Christians have substituted worship of nation for the worship of God...

Now let me be very clear here...

Am I grateful for this country that God allowed me to be born into?

You bet I am.

I am grateful that I can preach the gospel clearly at least for today without threat of government persecution.

I am grateful for men and women who rose to the occasion time and time again to fight off evil in this world..

I am grateful that this country offers the freedom to train missionaries and sends them all the world with the gospel..

I am grateful for the thousands of Bible preaching pastors who had the freedom to be trained here and then went out and preached the gospel here and around the world.

The blessings of living in this nation are numerous...

However, none of that gratitude should ever lead me to worship a nation more than I worship the God who put me in it...

And none of those blessings should ever lead a Christian to love their flag more than they love their Lord...

Yet, for some strange reasons, many people will leave out of church today ready to live as better Americans....

While very few will leave ready to live as better Christians...

Let us remind ourselves this morning of this often forgotten truth....

The Bible says that believers are first and foremost citizens of heaven before they are citizens of any nation in the world..

And pastors who want to make you better American citizens have totally missed the boat on what they are called to do...

My job this morning is not to fill your hearts with love of country but with love of Christ...

Because being a US citizen is not the ticket to heaven.

The only ticket to heaven is being in Jesus Christ.

But for years, churches, pastors and Christians have confused the two...

Let me be clear, patriotism for one's country is not sinful activity...

The Bible never condemns patriotism...

But can patriotism be sinful?

Sure it can, if love of country ever surpasses or even equals love of God, it becomes sin.

God alone is to be worshipped, and churches should be in the business of worshipping God alone...

If someone walks into a church today who doesn't know the Lord, our job is lead him to repent of his sin and command him to love Christ...

Yet if that unbeliever walked into many churches today, he may think that love of country is what gets you to heaven...

And shame on any church who loses sight of who we are and what we are called to do....

Yes, we are grateful for our independence as nation, but our job is to lead people to dependence on God...

And to remind ourselves that even though we are blessed people to live where we do, we are also people who find our dependence in God as well...

On this Independence Day weekend, let us to Psalm 20 to help never forget that our independence as a nation is wonderful, but our dependence on God is much greater...

I have entitled this psalm, "Don't Put Your Hope in a Land."

Last week, we looked at Psalm 146 where were reminded to never put our hope in a man.

A helpful reminder as we think about politicians and government and the promises that they make...

This morning in Psalm 20, we will find a similar command to not trust in the strength of a nation either...

Just like men,.... countries, nations, and lands offer no lasting hope...

Hope and trust must never be in land, hope and trust must always be placed in God alone...

So, let's dive into these 9 verses this morning in 2 sections...

In verses 1-5, we will be reminded of the need to "Go to the Only Source of National Help."

And in verses 6-10, we will see the call to "Trust in the Only Source of National Security."

I. Go to the Only Source of National Help (1-5)

Psalm 20 would be the song that Israel would sing as they prepared for battle...

As we often experience, times of war can be highly patriotic times...

Israel fought in many wars as a nation, and I am sure that they were often tempted as we are today to begin to trust in their flag and their military more than they trusted in God...

But God would not allow that happen...

And so, he inspired some songs like Psalm 20 to keep Israel balanced especially in times when they were tempted to trust more in the nation than they did in Him...

Therefore, what we see in the opening 5 verses is a reminder to Israel to go to God with their prayers for their nation...

And what you see in verses 1-4 are the people's prayers for their king as he prepared himself to go into battle..

Charles Spurgeon referred to Psalm 20 as a national anthem of Israel..

And notice the focus of their national anthem was fully on their God...

Look at verse 1...

May the LORD..

Verse 1 again..

May the name of God...

Verse 2...

May He...

Verse 3...

May He...

Verse 4...

May He...

Verse 5...

In the name of our God...

Verse 5...

May the Lord.

Verse 6...

The Lord Saves

Verse 6...

He will answer

Verse 7...

The name of the Lord our God...

Verse 9...

Save O Lord...

If Israel were thinking of loving their nation more than their God, this song would bring them back to reality...

And so what you see here is Israel praying for their king in verses 1-4 who is about to go into battle...

And look at what they prayed....

Verse 1..

LORD, answer our king, he needs you...

LORD, protect our King by your name..

LORD, send help to our king...

That is the proper prayer for a nation....

God, we need you...

God, you protect us...

God, help us...

It is a shame to the name of God that people sing God Bless America, but they live lives that deserve God's wrath and not his blessing...

It is a shame to the name of God that we only seek Him when disaster strikes this country...

Churches were full on 9/11 and empty the next week...

How can God possibly be called on to bless our nation when the majority of our nation clearly rejects Him and His Word...

Why would God possibly bless a nation that has continually kicked him out of their midst...

We may sing it to the top of our lungs, but God will not bless a nation that has turned their backs on Him...

And though this may sound pessimistic, I am not expecting God to bless this nation anytime soon, unless he moves to save millions of hearts first...

So, what do I find myself doing?

I do what the people do here...

I pray for my leadership to be helped by God.

I pray for my nation to be protected by God...

Then look at verse 3 as the people of Israel continue to pray for their king...

***May He remember all your meal offerings
And find your burnt offering [a]acceptable! [b]Selah.***

This is difficult for us to understand, but the king of Israel was also a preacher of sorts.

He often offered sacrifices to God on behalf of the people...

The priests in Israel would also do that, but the king would do it as well...

So the people pray in verse 3, please remember all the sacrifices and offerings of our king...

We dont have this type of leadership in our nation today, where our political leaders are also spiritual examples...

You don't find politicians leading church services in Washington, but I do think we can apply this to our prayers as well..

Because here is a great truth...

God does put born-again Bible believing candidates into high positions in government and even in our military...

And though we should pray for all of our leaders, we should especially pray for believers in these positions...

God, please give this Christian a strong voice in our country...

Lord, help him or her to speak loudly and boldly for the name of Christ when they are asked for counsel...

Israel prayed that God would remember their king's devotion and sacrifice to Him...

And we should pray that God would honor those Christians in leadership in our nation by giving them places of prominence...

The prayer continues in verses 4 as the people first pray that God would grant their king victory over the enemy...

That He would fill their king's desire to win in verse 4, and then in verse 5, the people pledge to honor God when victory comes...

Verse 5...

5

***[d]We will sing for joy over your [e]victory,
And in the name of our God we will set up our banners.
May the Lord fulfill all your petitions.***

This is so important to remember and not confuse as we celebrate military and national holidays in our nation...

There is nothing wrong with celebrating victory that comes through our soldiers...

Notice the first part of verse 5...

Israel sang because their king led them to victory, but they set up their banners in the name of their God...

Look, honor men who fight against evil in the world and win, but never let your honor of them make you forget the God who gave the victory...

Often times, we celebrate the soldier and tack on a nice prayer to God at the end...

No soldier can ever succeed unless God gives Him the victory...

We can sing and celebrate victory, but God deserves our banner of praise...

Israel was grateful for their human king, but they never let his name come before their Lord's name...

And we must remember that unless we get caught up thinking that our country is to be praised and forget about praising our God...

National help comes from God alone...

Leaders and soldiers are blessings from God, but they are not our ultimate source of help...

God alone is, and we must go to Him as our only source of national help...

That brings us to verses 6-10...

We must Go to the Only Source of National Help (1-5), but we also must...

II. Trust in the Only Source of National Security **(6-10)**

In verses 6-10, the people move from praying to God to trusting in Him...

Verse 6....

6
*Now I know that the Lord saves His anointed;
 He will answer him from His holy heaven
 With the [f]saving strength of His right hand.*

I have seen many posts on the internet this week about America's record in World Wars...

Most people use July 4th to point to our military might...

And write things like...

Undefeated Heavyweight Champion, and then point to all the wars we have won...

Revolutionary War, World War I, World War 2, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan...

And though we are grateful that the evil was defeated, may we never think for one second that those victories came from our hands alone...

God was the source of victory in every case...

Look at what the psalmist writes in verse 6...

The LORD saves, the LORD answers, the LORD delivers with His right hand....

We may wave our flags in victory, but we better bow our hearts in thanksgiving to a God who has delivered this nation time and time again..

There is no guarantee for victory in the next war, and if you think for a moment that a strong military is a guarantee of victory over a smaller opponent....

Just ask Goliath how his battle went with David...

Yes, we are grateful when evil is defeated, but may we never forget the source of victory...

And in case you have forgotten, the psalmist says it best in verse 7...

7

***Some [g]boast in chariots and some in horses,
But we [h]will boast in the name of the Lord, our God.***

Our trust is not in a flag or a pledge or a military tank or a brave soldier, our trust should always be in God alone...

So many Christians and others have made, -ans still make, this country their source of hope in the world...

Some trust the Red White and Blue to protect them....

Some trust the Red White and Blue to provide for them...

Some trust Red White and Blue to save them....

Yet, no nation has the power to do any of those things...

Nations rise and fall, only the Lord and His promises stand forever...

Your trust must never be in something that can be here and gone tomorrow....

You are called to trust the only One who stands the test of time....

Look at verse 8....

8

***They have bowed down and fallen,
But we have risen and stood upright.***

Who is the “they” that have bowed down and fallen?

All those who trust in something or someone else that the name of God...

And this is even true of our country...

For as great and blessed as this country is, you will not find the United States in all the Bible...

It is not in the beginning at the tower of Babel in the book of Genesis..

It is not in the end in the book of Revelation...

So, what are we left to conclude?

The United States, as wonderful as it is, will go away eventually...

I don't know God's timing, but I do know this...

Putting your trust in a land or a nation is fool's gold....

It may look like the thing to do, but it will disappoint in the end...

Your trust and my trust must never be in the strength of a nation or the heritage of a nation or in the people leading a nation....

Our trust must be in the name of the Lord our God...

The psalmist then ends the psalm with a simply summary of what all people of any nation should always pray in verse 9...

Save us, O Lord.

Conclusion

Let's end with some thoughts that we can take with us from Psalm 20....

#1 - Pray more for your country than you complain about it.

Everyone who any knowledge of the Scriptures knows that our country is far from God, and getting farther away every day..

Sins that were once avoided in our country are now celebrated...

Biblical morality that everyone used to share even if they weren't a Christian is now replaced with a morality that says, "I can do whatever I want."

The lust for power and greed are the overwhelming characteristics of our leaders...

Look, things are broken everywhere we look in our nation...

Injustice is everywhere...

Sin is everywhere.

This isn't news, although the news networks fill your mind with it everyday...

As believers, we know it is broken...

So, instead of complaining about it and accomplishing nothing...

Spend your time going to the Lord with prayers for your leaders and for your country...

If we prayed as often as we complained, maybe God would answer our prayers and save souls in our country...

#2 - Look beyond your borders.

If there is one thing that the American church is blind to, it is this...

There are people in this world who are not American but who need Jesus Christ just the same...

So many times, we let our patriotism blind our eyes to the rest of the world...

Jesus tells us to go into "All the World and preach the gospel to every creature."

So often, we get so focused on our nation that we forget that there is a world that desperately needs to hear the gospel...

Yes, there are people who live in the US who have never heard of Jesus Christ....

But there are far fewer here than other places....

The majority of Americans have rejected the gospel....

Many see Jesus as a bad name to be avoided at all costs because they love their sin.

Therefore, let us take Jesus to people where he will truly be good news for their sins....

And that leads to the final truth this morning...

#3 - National freedom is a blessing, but freedom from sin is far more valuable.

This is a repeat from last week, but let me remind us all...

We may love our the freedom of the country in which we live, but we should shoot more fireworks and sing more songs about the freedom we have in Christ...

Patriotism is fine, but it must never be put about our love of Christ...

America can guarantee your freedom to live, but only Jesus can guarantee your freedom from sin...

And the message of July 4th is this...

Be thankful for what God has done for you by allowing you to live and die in this country....

But be more thankful for what God has done for you in sending His son to live and die in your place....

The Red White and Blue is fine, but the blood of the Lamb is way better....

And this morning, we are going to focus on hearts on Christ and his work by going to the Lord's Table to end our time together....

I can think of no better way to keep us balanced on this holiday weekend than to spend some time at the Lord's Table...

IF you are visiting today or don't understand the Lord's Supper...

It is simply a Bible commanded event that the church is to participate in regularly as a way to remember what Jesus Christ has done to purchase our freedom...

The deacons will come forward in a moment to pass out a wafer and some juice....

And neither one of them are special in themselves...

They are simply symbols of Jesus' body in the wafer, and his blood in the juice...

And by remembering his body and blood, we remember the high price of sin that he paid...

Since we are sinners who break God's law, and because God is perfectly fair judge...

Someone has to pay the price for breaking the law....

There are just two options of payment...

The first option is to pay for your sin in your own blood...

And many choose to do that by holding onto their sin their entire life...

And so they die, and God takes their life as payment for their sin and sends them to hell where they will pay eternally...

The second option for the sinner is to find Someone to pay the penalty for them...

Not wanting to give their own life as payment, they turn to Jesus Christ and ask if HE could be their substitute payment...

And the good news for the sinner is this...

Jesus will be the Substitute to stand in the place of the guilty sinner....

If the sinner will repent and have faith in Jesus alone, God will save them...

For many in this room, we have repented and trusted in Christ...

He has become our Substitute for our sin....

And we gather each week to learn more Him and how to obey Him better...

And every so often, we gather at the Lord's table to celebrate his death as our Substitute...

Though we are thankful every day for his death in our place, it is simply a special time to be thankful together as a church...

And today is one of those times...

There are a few things you need to know about this event...

Number 1, it is only open to those who have repented and trusted Christ...

If you have rejected Christ and are an unbeliever, please do not take part in this Supper...

God says that you are eating and drinking more judgment on your head if you do...

Number 2, it is only open to those believers who are not living in unrepentant sin....

Now what that means is this...

Even Christians sin, but there are some Christians who continue in sin even though they know it is wrong...

They refuse to repent and therefore they continue in their sin...

In that is you, please do not take part in this Supper.

In the Bible, some believers in unrepentant sin who took part the Lord's Supper died and some got very sick...

Now, the good news for both of those groups of people who are not to participate in the church event...

-the unbeliever and the unrepentant.—

The good news is this...

Now is the time to repent...

Now it the time to turn from your sin and commit to obeying Christ...

For the unbeliever, repent of your sin and trust in Christ right now, and you are welcome at His table...

For the unrepentant Christian, repent of your sin right now, and the Lord will welcome you back to His table...

Today is the day of repentance...

Today is the day of salvation....

Let us pray...