

REMEMBER THE NAME OF THE LORD! – Psalm 20:1-9

(message preached on 1 July 2012, celebrating CPBPC's 33rd anniversary)

Introduction – We are a forgetful people. Forgetting something unsavoury in the past is one thing but to forget the goodness and benefits gleaned from the goodwill of others is ingratitude. This is a sin and leads to other sins such as pride. Children need to remember their parents when they are grown up. Students need to remember their teachers when they graduate. Citizens need to remember their leaders when they enjoy the peace and prosperity in the land. These are a few earthly examples of the importance of remembrance.

Remembrance will bring out the best in us. We become thankful and helpful. Helpfulness brings about consideration and genuine compassion that are based upon gratitude, which is acknowledging that if not for those who have helped us in the past, we would not be where we are right now. Many have done great deeds of philanthropy for the poor, the orphans and the sick because they remember with gratitude. Some have even given their lives for a cause they believed in because they remember those who have given much to them.

Forgetting brings about great pride and selfishness. This is the bane of our society today. Graduating students easily forget their teachers, and some sincerely believe that they graduated at the top of the school because because of their own efforts for the past six to ten years of their lives! Do they think that they were born with the knowledge of the world of science, arts and maths when they came out of their mother's womb? There are children who forget their parents and cast them aside after they have their own lives. Their parents poured out their life's blood for them and in the end, their children take them for granted and treat them as an unwanted burden. What a tragedy!

If it is a tragedy in the physical realm, it is even more tragic in the spiritual realm, because every believer has much more for which to remember God than he could ever imagine. Perhaps the lethargy in our walk with God is due to our failure to remember the manifold blessings that we have already received from God. Our failure to pray and give thanks without ceasing are symptoms of a deeper malady called ingratitude. Dragging our feet to church Sunday after Sunday and giving to God only our barest minimum are other signs of ingratitude. Stealing from God by not giving our tithes and offerings is another sin that exposes our hardened hearts of ingratitude because we have forgotten what God has done and who He is!

Psalm 20 will help us to remember Him!

I. In View of His Protection – 20:1-3 – The LORD has made a covenant with His people. Using the second persona pronoun in verse 1, the psalmist calls every true believer to his side and to acknowledge with him his heartfelt cries of joy in remembering the LORD.

The LORD has answered their many prayers throughout the ages. The word "hear" is not the usual "shama" in Hebrew but "anah" which is often translated in the KJV as "answer." The LORD has answered on the day of trouble, i.e. distress. All over the world people face distress, but the LORD only answers the cries of His people with whom He has a covenant with. This alone is sufficient reason for God's people to remember the LORD but this is only the beginning of God's great blessing upon His people. It is always in times of distress that God's people cry to Him. He is always there for them. He will never forsake them. Using synthetic parallelism, the psalmist drives home the importance of the LORD's protection. The Name of the God of Jacob defends Israel!

Why did the psalmist use the word "Name" rather than "God"? He introduced His Name when He called Moses to deliver His people out of Egypt. He was not just any nameless God! God has a Name and that Name is above every Name on earth and in heaven! The Name of God is great and powerful and even Satan fears the Name of God when it is uttered by God's people! Was it not in the Name of Christ that the disciples healed and cast out demons? God's Name is emphasized so that there is no doubt that it is the God of Israel who helped Israel. This Name is qualified further by the phrase "of the God of Jacob". This is most interesting as it was Israel's old name that the psalmist deliberately emphasized. The mention of "Jacob" points the reader all the way back to the time when Israel was not a nation but a person. Jacob was an unbeliever then; it was only after conversion that God changed his name from Jacob (usurper) to Israel (prince of God). The significance, therefore, of this mention here is that the LORD watched over Israel even before Israel knew of God's existence! The LORD had always been there for His people even before they became God's people!

Verse 2 – Help was sent by the LORD from His sanctuary (holy place). This sanctuary has to mean the sanctuary that was on earth, i.e. the Tabernacle, where the presence of the LORD was seen via the mercy seat on top of the Ark placed inside the Most Holy Place. Whenever the people of God met the LORD via the Levitical sacrificial system, the LORD heard them and sent help when they came in faith through their offerings. The entire Levitical sacrificial system was a type of Christ; the blood of bulls and goats can never take away sin and they represented Christ through the forbearance of God. God looked upon those sacrifices and accepted them because of the definite work of Christ and His sacrifice as the perfect lamb of God on the cross of Calvary. Using synonymous parallelism in verse 2, the LORD drives home the point that His help strengthens the people of God. Zion is mentioned here because in the days of King David and before the building of the Temple in Solomon's time, David brought the Ark of the Covenant with the mercy seat into the capital city, Jerusalem (also known as Zion). The help of God gives strength to His people to endure all trials and distress. They will persevere all the way and be victorious.

Verse 3 – The LORD remembers and accepted all the offerings of Israel from the general offerings (non blood) to the burnt offerings (blood offerings). He uses synonymous parallelism to emphasize the importance of the offerings of God's people. They had to approach Him on His terms, i.e. through Christ. When the offerings were brought according to the revealed Word of God and with a sincere heart mixed with faith, the LORD heard and strengthened His people in times of distress.

II. In View of His Holy Will – 20:4-5 – As in the Lord's Prayer, verse 4 describes the cry of a believer who longs for God's will to be done in his life. He prays to God to grant or give to him continuously what is in God's heart and that all of God's counsel might be fulfilled in his life all his days (synthetic parallelism). What a wonderful description of the heart and mind of a child of God. He does not ask for God's will to be changed to fit his own; he seeks not his own will but only God's will to be accomplished in his life. This reveals a heart and a life that is surrendered to the LORD. This is a rare attribute today as believers are inclined to follow the world and seek their own wills, including every aspect of their private and public lives. What is saddest is the fact that these believers, who are going their wilful ways, sincerely believe that they are doing God's will. Their lives are a waste. The lives of the people they care for and look after are hurt in the process, because they are being pointed in the direction of the world rather than God. The loss of lives is a very heavy price to pay. All that these believers need to do is to cry out to God, like the palmist, and earnestly ask for God's will to be done in their lives and God will surely do it!

Verse 5 (synthetic parallelism) – The natural response of one who has experienced God's holy will in his life is one of genuine praise and great rejoicing. The LORD's salvation in all areas of the believer's life is a very good and God-honouring way to thank the LORD. Salvation from sin is one of the best reasons to thank the LORD from the bottom of one's heart. Deliverance from daily trials and the many vicissitudes of life is also another great cause for the psalmist to rejoice! When the believer is doing God's will, there is no adversity or trial that deters him from rejoicing. His rejoicing is not based upon external circumstances but a heart that is right with God and a life that is walked in accordance with God's will. This means that even if he were to lose everything in the cause of obeying God's will, he rejoices! This was also the Apostle Paul's testimony (read the book of Philippians).

As in the first three verses, it was the name of the LORD that the psalmist rejoiced in. It was not to an unknown God but to a very personal God who was known to the psalmist and who also knows the psalmist. The psalmist declared that he would set up his banners like the soldiers in the battle field before their enemies. The psalmist changed from second person pronoun to first person plural pronoun to include the reader of the psalm as well. The psalmist wanted the world to know who this God is who has helped him out of his distress and he wanted every believer to join him. The LORD will surely fulfil all the believer's desires. The psalmist switched back to second person again to challenge the reader to

follow suit and not give up or be ashamed of the LORD who has been so good to save us so many times.

III. In View of the Believer's Experiences – 20:6-9 – The psalmist declared that he knew that the LORD saves His anointed. The word “anointed” here is used to include every true believer. The manner in which the LORD saves must be explained clearly or else some might think that it means invincibility and being impervious to knives and bullets like “superman”! This is definitely not the case. “The LORD saves” means the LORD enables His children to hold on to their faith to the very end of their lives on earth as they accomplish God's will. This is true of Christ when He died on the cross for the sins of the world. This is also true of the Apostle Paul when he was martyred for the faith. This is true of millions of believers throughout the ages who held on to their faith regardless of the persecution they faced. The prayers of His anointed are always heard by God when they approach Him with clean hands and pure hearts washed by the blood of Christ. He will surely deliver and all His children will victoriously persevere to the very end of their days. The saving strength of God's right hand (position of power and might) will deliver His children.

Verse 7 (antithetical parallelism) – Some trusted in chariots, which were the most powerful weapons of war at that time, and others in horses which were the fastest at that time, but we (the psalmist and every true believer) will remember the Name of the LORD our God! What a tremendous declaration of his faith and trust in the LORD. The believer will not allow his difficult external circumstances to cause him to lose sight of his LORD. He will always remember the LORD even in the most difficult and darkest moments of his life on this earth! The contrast is clear. The ones who lean on the arm of the flesh are contrasted with the ones who lean on the LORD. They cannot co-exist together. It is not possible for anyone who calls himself a believer to not lean on Christ. He sins against God by his faithlessness and forgetting the LORD. To remember the Name of the LORD is very specific and personal. It describes a very intimate relationship that the believer has with his LORD.

Verse 8 (antithetical parallelism) – The ones who trust in the arm of the flesh (no matter how powerful in the eyes of the world) will fall. The psalmist says that they will be brought down, i.e. forced to kneel down, before their conquerors. But the ones who remember the LORD will rise up and stand upright. These are pictures of defeat and victory! It is always the end that matters in any war. Satan thought he had won the battle against Christ when he crucified Him but Christ rose from the dead victorious! The apparent defeat and deaths of the saints will result in their glorious resurrection one day. They will all stand upright clothed in the righteousness of Christ before the LORD.

Verse 9 (synthetic parallelism) -- The final cry of the psalmist was to the LORD to "save". The salvation is from sin and all evil that believers still face on this earth today as they serve Christ. The citizenship of the believer is captured by the psalmist when he deliberately addressed the LORD as “king”. The people of God need not fear all other kings on this earth;

their LORD is the true King of kings. The enemies of Christ will persecute God's children but Christ their King will prevail in the end. Continue to cry to the King, for He will always hear His very own!

Conclusion – Let every believer remember the name of the LORD in view of the LORD's protection, His holy will in his life and his personal experiences of the LORD's goodness and protection. The name of the LORD is none other than Jesus Christ. This is the name that every knee will bow to one day and confess Him as LORD! Never forget the LORD in all you do. Remember Him, and He will direct your path and guide you into the paths of righteousness all the days of your life of service on this earth. Amen.