

## Prayers

### Opening prayer

Jesus my Lord, you knew me when I was a child and You watched me grow into the person I am today. Now, You see me as one of Your disciples, a person of faith who seeks to serve You better. Tell me what You think about me and how I the life You have given me, and grant me the humility to listen to what You say to me. Strengthen my resolve to love and serve other people, and ignite my desire to worship You in every circumstance of my life. I ask this in Your name, Lord Jesus, AMEN

### Prayer Suggestions

**Prayer ideas**\_(Alternatives that can broaden the experience of prayer)

*Look back over the last few days, and if you have been hurt by someone, or by some event, then bring your feelings about this to the Lord. Let the Lord be the judge of your feelings, and seek to forgive any who have wronged is you.*

#### **On-going prayers**

- **Pray for countries in turmoil.** *Pray for countries throughout the world where people are enslaved by dictators and where as a result of this, many people suffer. Pray for those who seek to change the political situation in each country and have to struggle with whether or not to use violence*
- *Pray for those who obtain our news; reporters and journalists, whose personal views can tinge their reporting and who have immense power to influence public opinion.*
- *Give thanks to God for the forces of law and order on which we rely for peace and security. Pray that they will be employed wisely in each area of work they are required*

### Meditation

Saying one word is never enough  
to describe the pain of those who starve.

Giving one donation is never enough  
to fill the financial black hole of Aid.

Praying one prayer is never enough  
to bring salvation to the poor of the world.

Just one passing thought is never enough  
to let important news drive home.

Now God is sovereign, and can act alone,  
but we cannot, we need each other, so Jesus said;

'Where two or three are gathered in my name  
There am I in their midst.'

So please, let us get together to do God's will.

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## Bible Study

### Bible passage – Psalm 21: 1-6

For the worship leader. A psalm of David.

<sup>1</sup> O LORD, the king rejoices in your strength.

How great is his joy in the deliverance you give!  
2 You have given him the desire of his heart  
and have not denied him his prayers.

Selah

3 You greet him with rich blessings  
and put a crown of fine gold on his head.  
4 He asked you for life, and you gave it to him –  
length of days, forever and ever.  
5 His glory is great because of your deliverance;  
you have conferred on him splendour and majesty.  
6 You have granted him blessings forever,  
and made him glad with the joy of your presence.

## Review

The tone of Psalm 21 is different from many of the Psalms immediately before it. It sounds joyous and happy; it paints a picture of David rejoicing in the blessings of God! There are many occasions in David's life at which he might have said such a prayer of thanks, but it is most likely to reflect the time he secured the entire kingdom of Israel and Judah under his own authority as king (2 Samuel 5,6). We forget that it took many years for David to achieve this (2 Samuel 1-5)

Psalm 21 begins with the king rejoicing in God's strength (21:1) and giving thanks for his deliverance. Whatever the evils David faced and whatever battles he fought, he was eventually able to give thanks to God for victory. His enemies were overcome and he was able to rest in security. In victory, God has '*given him the desire of his heart*', and had answered his prayers (21:2).

As we continue to read the Psalm, we gained the impression that we are joining with the people of Israel, giving thanks to God for David. Alternatively, we can imagine that we are Israelites of later years, saying the same things about one of David's descendants, one of the later Kings of Judah who ruled in Jerusalem. Psalm 21 is a psalm that praises God that we live in a land that is at peace; God has blessed our king with '*rich blessings*'; and he possesses worldly wealth, which make him stand out among the kings of other nations. We believe that God has given him authority and placed '*a crown of fine gold on his head*' (21:3). The King's life is valuable, as one who has been anointed by God (21:4), and we believe that his dynasty, that is, David's dynasty, will last '*for ever and ever*' (21:4,6). We have confidence in our King because he has proved that he can keep the nation safe; he has been successful in battle and has won many victories in campaigns to keep the boundaries of the nation secure. We also know that these blessings come to us not just because we have a King, it is because God is at work protecting his people. God Himself is faithful to His covenant with Israel for ever, and having saved his people, He gives both them and their King great glory (21:5).

All of this can sound a little false, however, because most Christians are not Israelites and cannot therefore identify directly with what the Psalm says. It is also something of a stale exercise to read the Psalm in order to understand ancient times from the point of view of the ancient Israelites. How therefore can we read this Psalm, and what does it mean for Christians today? One thing is certain, we cannot simply read it as if it has a literal meaning for us now. So we must look carefully at the Psalm, at the pictures it paints and at the phrases it uses. As we do, we will find out how God can use it in the hearts of Christian men and women today.

From the earliest days in the first century A.D., Christians began to realise that Scriptures like this were about Jesus. Of course, He was and is the supreme leader of God's people, and one of the earliest of titles given to Jesus was 'Son of David', relating him directly to the Kings of Judah and David himself. Matthew uses this title frequently in his Gospel (Matthew 8:20,9:6,10:23 etc). All of this suggests that Psalm 21 is for us today a song of praise to God Almighty, giving thanks for everything He has done for us through Jesus.

The first two verses give thanks to God for the strength given to Jesus, which enabled him to endure His demanding life. Of course, we know that Jesus suffered much on our behalf and struggled against very great physical and spiritual odds before he was finally able to achieve the ultimate goal of His ministry; the triumph of resurrection after death, defeating Satan and making love victorious. The Gospels record Jesus' close relationship with God the Father, in which he prayed for God's will to be done (Matthew 6:10, John 4:34 etc.); evidently, God gave him '*the desire of his heart*' and He did not '*deny Him his prayers*' (21:2).

As soon as we begin to spot connections between Psalm 21 and the life of Jesus, the more we realise that it is like a prophecy of the work of Jesus Christ as Saviour. Verse three is a typical example of this; it says this, '*you greet him with rich blessings and put a crown of fine gold on his head*' (21:3), which anticipates the

ascended glory of Jesus Christ. More than this, when the Psalm speaks in verse 4 about David being given a long life, the language is overflowing, and suggests something far more than earthly life; it anticipates the eternal life that has been won for us by Jesus Christ. As Paul says in a number of his letters, because Jesus defeated all the powers of evil with His victorious love, He has been given all honour and glory, as prophesied here in this psalm (21:5,6, Ephesians 4:8-10, Philippians 2:5-11 etc.).

Now, we have established a way of reading Psalm 21 that makes sense. In the same way that the ancient Israelites could give thanks to God for their King, we can now give thanks to God for everything that He has done through Jesus, our King. Psalm 21 is for us a valuable Psalm of praise, and the more we read it, the more it reminds us of all that Jesus has done for us. He is truly to be praised.

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## Discipleship

### Questions for groups

1. how do we praise God for the work of Jesus Christ? In your group, share with each other those hymns you know that quite specifically give thanks to God for everything Jesus has done.
2. Verse two says that God answered Jesus' prayers. What prayers of Jesus may be said to have been answered? Make a list of gospel passages that refer to Jesus' prayers have been answered.
3. Does verse four prophesy eternal life? Read the verse carefully, and share in your group what this verse means.

### Discipleship challenges

- *When you go to church on Sunday, pay attention to what actually happens during the worship. Make a note of any part of the worship in which Jesus is praise specifically for bringing salvation. You will find that many hymns and songs do just this, but see whether any other parts of your worship do just this. What does it say about Christian worship if we do not praise Jesus as our Lord and saviour?*
  - *Search through Scripture using the concordance, or any other Bible tools you can find on the Internet, to see whether there are any other passages of the old Testament that quite specifically prophesy eternal life.*
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## Final Prayer

Holy Spirit, stay close to me at all times, particularly so that trouble and distress do not overwhelm me unnecessarily. Fill my heart with praise, so that I may be an effective witness to the Gospel, and live my life in worship and praise of Jesus Christ, who has saved me. Lord God Almighty, I give you all glory and thanks for the great blessings you have given me throughout my life. AMEN

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