

Praying for Our Leaders
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How do we pray for our leaders today?
Many of us would agree that prayer is essential:
Prayer for our personal lives and its attendant problems;
Prayer for our family and friends for God to protect and provide;
Prayer for our church and its work for God's blessing;
Prayer for our nation and its leaders – from the president on down.

Yet, what is the content of our prayers?
How do we pray and is what we pray scripturally sound?
The Psalms include “Enthronement” Hymns –
Celebrating the work of God through human instruments –
Honoring the King, celebrating the God who stands behind the king
Praying for very specific things for the leader of the people.

In Psalm 20, the people pray for their king
They lift up their leader and invoke the blessing of God
They pray specifically for God's intervention
And their prayer serves as a pattern for us.
It presents for us a way to pray for our leaders
To lift up our political and national officials,
To honor and remember our congregational pastors

So how do we pray for our pastor?
How do we lift up our leaders?
What is the content of our petitions?
I believe a shift has occurred in our seeking God on their behalf –
The shift has changed not only the content of the prayer
But also has transformed the effectiveness of the praying.

What is the contrast – Where has the shift taken place?
Observe what they pray – and how those prayers are often voiced today:

May God answer our leader in the moment of trouble (Psalm 20:1)
Is the prayer voiced by the Israelites for their king
And now the prayer among many is different.
Our trouble is because the error of our leaders
Cause our leaders to repent so that we can be spared our difficulty.
Instead of seeking to lift our leaders up in moments of trouble
We long to blame them for the trouble we find ourselves, our nation, our church is in.

May God protect our leader (Psalm 20:1)

God's people in the past longed for their leader to experience protection.
Protection spiritually, physically, emotionally, spiritually.
And yet the modern version prays for personal protection
Often seeking protection from the very leaders appointed to lead us
Mistrusting and doubting the leaders, we pray for protection from them
Rather than God's protection over them.

May God sent help from God's people (Psalm 20:2).

The people prayed that God would raise up individuals who would aid and help
As Moses needed the Aaron and Hur of his day to strengthen him in the task
So the Israelites knew that their king would need the aid of God's people.
And in their praying were ready to respond to the call.
And modern praying has shifted – from helping to being helped.
We often look for God to help us (through the hands of our leaders)
Rather than looking for God to empower us to help them.

May God send supporters from God's people (Psalm 20:2).

Presidents, political, military and social leaders of our culture would value
The support, encouragement and strength of our faith communities.
Yet, if the leader does not “tow the line”, they are met not with support
But with derision, condemnation and active opposition.
This attitude has bled into our churches, our pulpits, our pastors
And they are often left on their own without defenders or supporters.

May God remember your gifts and your service (Psalm 20:3).

The people of old sought to honor their leader for his service to God's people;
They extolled his service, his gifts, his talents, his activity on behalf of others.
And now how is the prayer offered?
Instead of gratefulness for the giftedness and service
There is questions, doubts, accusation –
Believing the leader is no longer serving but seeking his own selfish interests.
People stop honoring and being accusing, even in their prayers.

May God remember your sacrifice (Psalm 20:3)

Though, even in Israel's day, there were great trappings associated with being King
Many would view it even as advantageous and beneficial.
But those that served in that position made great sacrifice
Especially if they were godly in their approach and beneficent in their interaction.
And now it is often believed that those who lead are only in it for themselves;
They are not looking to serve but to be served;
They are not wanting to care but be cared for;
They are not seeking to provide for others but be provided for.

And we have often stopped remembering their gentle hearts, compassionate spirits and sacrificial lives.

May God grant your desires and fulfill your plans (Psalm 20:4).

The Israelites of old prayed that God would prosper the plans of their king.

Did they always agree with their king? Would they always like what their king was doing?

Perhaps....perhaps not...yet they prayed for God to prosper their plans and their way.

And today, how do we pray? Do we give voice to this thought...

Or do we long for God to change the leaders plans to fit our own?

Whether we are talking a national political agenda or even just a local congregational plan

Is it possible we stopped praying for our leaders success unless they agree with us?

May God give US joy through blessing YOU (Psalm 20:5).

God's people in their prayers wanted God to bless the leader.

They knew that God's bestowal of blessing upon the leader was ultimately a joy for the nation.

And it still is. Blessing upon the leader blesses the people whom they lead.

God's people praying today for leaders often find themselves praying the reverse.

God give our leaders joy as you bless us – Pour out your blessings upon the nation (or upon the church)

And then the leaders can experience some side benefits of joy from those blessings.

May God answer your prayers (Psalm 20:5).

The nation wanted God to respond to the prayers of their king.

They believed that the king wanted what was good for the people and

As a result longed for God to respond positively to the petition the king would offer.

And the heart of the majority of leaders remains the same,

Presidents and pastors want what's best for their people –

They develop plans and ministries to try to accomplish the best as they can understand it.

And yet the prayers offered today are no longer for God to answer their petition –

Unless those petitions agree with our political philosophy or our congregational desires.

A read the Psalm I am convicted in my own approach

Of praying for my President and my national leaders.

Do I always like what I see? Do I always agree with their approach, their plans?

No...and I have prayed that God would change them, conform them, convict them

Bring them in line with the right thinking.

And I suspect that I have been praying more for myself and my will

Than for our nation and our President.

I suspect that is also true of the way

I have prayed for the church, its pastors and its leaders.

Perhaps instead of praying for God's blessings on my Pastor

I have been wanting God to make my Pastor agree with me
And in so doing I have missed the blessing that God wants to bestow
Both upon the leader and upon his people.

So for today...

Instead of praying for my will to be accomplished...

Rather than longing for leaders to conform to my idea of the "right" ...

Instead of praying for God's blessing and prospering my (and my agenda)

Rather than wanting my leaders (and my pastor) to do things my way

I will pray for God's blessing upon them.

I will entreat God to honor their requests.

I will beseech the Master to protect their hearts and lives.

I will request that the Savior will bring joy to the land through blessing them.

I will pray for God to preserve and protect our leader

Both in our nation and in our churches!