

Graham Moore:

So our text this morning is Psalm 20, a Psalm of David. Allison, read it for us earlier. And you can follow along in your Bible if you wish.

It isn't uncommon to think of David in the Bible as a spunky little guy. We're first introduced to him as the younger brother. He's the little guy who stays home looking after his father's sheep while his bigger, stronger older brothers are away fighting battles with King Saul. When my children were young, they used to watch VeggieTales perhaps some of you remember those videos. In the VeggieTales retelling of the story of David and Goliath, the character Dave sings a song about how little guys can do big things too. That's often the image that comes to mind when we think of David in the Bible, the little guy who punches above its weight. But that's not the David that we meet in Psalm 20.

In first, Samuel 16:18, one of Saul's servants described David as "A mighty man, a man of war." He was a brave man, a warrior, the kind of guy you wanted beside you when you went to battle. For our purposes today, perhaps we can imagine David to be like the character Aragorn in the Lord of the Rings. Aragorn is portrayed as a great leader, especially in battle. He's not the kind of guy to stand back and watch others do the dirty work. No, he's right there in the thick of it, shoulder to shoulder with his mates. He's tough. He's gutsy. And he remained stoic and extremely tense situation. Perhaps that is more like the David we should visualize as we consider Psalm 20.

So then the curtain rises on Psalm 20 to show King David, the gutsy warrior, in the tabernacle preparing to lead his troops into battle. It really doesn't matter what battle because we know that David fought many of them, but we do know that there will be swords and there will be shields and there will be chariots and there will be death. It would have been tense, literally a life and death situation. We also know that David is not alone. There are other people with him. In fact, the first half of Psalm 20 is a collective prayer offered by the people for their leader, King David, as he prepared to take them into battle. You can think of it as the congregation praying for their leader or in our Salvation Army context it's the soldiers, it's the adherence and friends and other members of congregations praying for their core officers. It's all of us lifting up our divisional leaders, our territorial leaders and our general in prayer. And in the prayer in Psalm 20 you can't help but get the feeling that people are 100% behind their leader. They want the absolute best for him. They probably know that their success is wrapped up in him. If he succeeded, they succeeded. If he faltered, they faltered. So what did they do? They prayed.

So as David was in the tabernacle soon to head off to battle this is what his people prayed for, verses one and two. They prayed that the Lord would answer their leader, David, in this day of trouble. That the Lord would defend him, send him help, strengthen him. In verse three, they prayed that the Lord would remember and accept David's offerings. We know that David came to this situation with a long history of worship to God. He had built a relationship, a strong relationship with God. And the people asked that God remember his faithful servant as he headed into a difficult situation. It's a good reminder to all of us of the need to build our relationship with God always not just when the battle is in front of us and a promise that God will remember.

In verse four, they pray that the Lord would fulfill all his purposes and make all his plans succeed. What a powerful prayer. They weren't just asking that God would make David happy. They wanted him to be fulfilled. And in verse five, they prayed that the Lord would give David victory and lift him up.

So Psalm 20, it's a wonderful picture of people praying for their leader, that God would defend him, strengthen him, remember him, fulfill all his purposes and give him victory. And this can be our prayer for our leaders too. It is also a reminder and a brilliant reminder to our leaders. It's good to stop before heading into battle. In verse three you find an unusual word, *selah*. The word occurs 74 times in

the old Testament. No one's certain as to what the meaning of the word *selah* is, but most scholars think it speaks of a reflective pause to step back and meditate on the words just spoken. It may also reference a musical interlude. Regardless it's a reminder to stop, pause, meditate. Too often we rush ahead into life's battles without thinking *selah*. Step out of the moment, like the warrior King David did, stop. Enter the tabernacle. Reflect and remember that it's God's battle. God is in control.

The last half of Psalm 20 turns the tables. Now it is David speaking rather than the people. And he says in verse seven, "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord, our God." It would have been a huge advantage in any battle during David's time to have chariots and horses. They were a superior weapon. McLaren wrote that "chariots and horses were very terrible, especially to raw soldiers unaccustomed to their whirling onseep." David rightly understood that he needed much more than these superior weapons. This gutsy warrior knew he needed God on his side.

And the same is true in spiritual warfare. Horne wrote "in the spiritual war in which we are all engaged the first and necessary step to victory is to renounce all confidence in the wisdom and strength of nature and the world. And to remember that we can do nothing but in the name, by the merits, through the power and for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God." David put his trust in the name of the Lord. In verse seven, David said, "We trust in the name of the Lord." The name speaks of the character of God. It's God's expression of his faithfulness to his covenant with Israel. And Proverbs 18:10 says "the name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous run into it and are safe."

The Name of the Lord prophetically points to one even greater than David, to Jesus who fought the greatest battle of all time on the cross where he fought sin, death and Satan's power. To him, Jesus, belongs the victory, which was won for each one of us.

As we continue to be effected by this worldwide pandemic, we like David, need to stop. *Selah*. And to remember that God is on our side. We are nothing without him. And we need to pray. We can pray for essential workers, for health professionals, for all those who are worried about the future or who may be mourning the loss of loved ones. And let's pray for our leaders. We can be a formidable force interceding on behalf of others. We can trust God in prayer, in and through the powerful name of Jesus.