

Coach House Church BEACONS

TRUSTING NOT DRIFTING

7TH AUGUST 2020

It's hard to wade into a river and keep your feet planted in the ground once you gain any depth. Eventually, you'll swim or get swept along and there'll be little point resisting it. While you're on the border, the choice is still within your power, your feet aren't sinking into the mud too deeply and you're exercising your body to resist the current. It is a moment in tension. Do you stay or go? Your position is awkward. Depending on the context, two feet on dry land or your whole body in the water are easier options.

Psalm 16 encourages us to place our faith in our good, faithful and powerful God when there is temptation to drift. We can feel like sin is the powerful river pulling us away from God, but in reality, it is the crumbling shoreline – and God has every power in the universe at his disposal to keep us safe and close to him.

We don't have time to cover the whole Psalm, but we'll look at the first 3 verses.

***1 Keep me safe, my God,
for in you I take refuge.***

***2 I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord;
apart from you I have no good thing."***

***3 I say of the holy people who are in the land,
"They are the noble ones in whom is all my delight."***

David first of all chooses to rely on God – 'Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge.'

We can't find refuge from our human thoughts in our own thoughts. David acknowledges this, and asks God for protection. Throughout the rest of this Psalm,

David relies upon God to help him take a stand and acknowledge that God's ways are truly right and good. He is not capable of accomplishing this by himself.

God wants us to do the same. Our responsibility is not to forcibly change our attitudes, but instead to come to God so that he can change us. The first step illustrated to us in this Psalm is that of taking a stand with God, who acts as a refuge from temptation, trouble and the peer pressure we face around us. He is powerful to protect us.

David confesses that God is the source of goodness - 'I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing."'

It is critically important that David focuses on the goodness of God. When people seem to be living happy lives apart from God, we can be tempted to think that God is not good to us or is just one amongst many options. Again, David takes a stand and acknowledges that he has no good thing apart from God.

He will help us to come to him and see him for who he is. We may not begin by thinking that he is very good, but over time, as we expose ourselves to him through meeting with other Christians, worship, prayer and Bible reading – he will reveal his goodness to us.

If we truly believe that God is good and loves us, it gives us great confidence to stand with him when circumstances or people are against us. This is an act of faith and this faith will grow over time with God's help.

On the other hand, if we do not believe that he is good then it is very hard to live for him! Our service to God will be grudging and difficult, and because our opinion of God is faulty it will be very easy to abandon our beliefs when we face trouble or pressure.

Finally, verbally confessing this to God is helpful because it makes us conscious of our beliefs and begins a conversation with God. For example, it helps you to consider 'do I really believe that I have no good thing apart from God?'

David confesses his appreciation for holy people – 'I say of the holy people who are in the land, "They are the noble ones in whom is all my delight."'

Much like his confession that God is good, he also confesses his delight in those who follow God. As the king of Israel, it would have been tempting for David to

compromise his beliefs as a political move to appease people who did not worship God. Nevertheless he expresses to God that those who are 'holy' are the ones that he actually appreciates – he will not bow to the crowd around him and neither should we.

These first few verses of Psalm 16 gives us an example to follow: when we feel that we are drifting from God, the solution is to trust in God to help us and confess that he is good along with those who follow him. This keeps us safe. Confessing the truth about God helps us confront our true feelings and is a foundation for deepening our relationship with God.

However, I want to shift gears and also shift my initial metaphor to make it more realistic. It is easy for us to feel like God's presence in our lives is the crumbling shore which we're struggling to stand on as the powerful current of this world pulls us out to drift. This could not be further from the truth. Yes, the world, our hearts and Satan are all powerful forces – but these are not over and above God. In reality God is the powerful river who wants to sweep us along by his spirit into following him and experiencing all of his goodness. Overestimating the power of sin can cause us to think God is small – but Jesus says this to us in John 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

At this point, he has just told the disciples a full set of hard hitting truths, most of all that he will be physically leaving the world. More specifically, he would die for the sins of the world on the cross and would lie dead for three days – which would look very much like defeat and weakness. But we know, as the disciples quickly found out, that Jesus beat death, forgave our sins and fixed our relationship with God. By him, we now have access to God who created the universe and has power over everything in it. He loves us and has the power to change us, so let's come to him and give him the opportunity to do just that.



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