

Sermon 27th September 2020

Last week's thought, although encouraging painted perhaps a one side picture of the Believers life. It painted a picture of struggle and conflict made bearable because of the prize at the end, a kind of "pie in the sky when I die". Indeed, at times there can appear to be little daily satisfaction in the Believers life. However, if you look at the life of David which was a constant daily struggle, you will find there is a deep and abiding satisfaction in God. We are going to look at Psalm 16 written by David in a time of great struggle and see what it can teach us about finding satisfaction in our day to day Believers life.

Rock stars rarely age well. The Rolling Stones are a case in point. Often called The Strolling Bones, and not without cause, this once energetic and controversial sixties group have become so mainstream, they were actually invited to perform during the Super Bowl halftime show only a few years ago.

Of all their many hits, the one that lingers most in my memory is the grammatically incorrect, "I Can't Get No Satisfaction"! As I type it, Microsoft Word faithfully reminds me of the grammatical error with that annoying red squiggly line beneath the word "No".

What possible reason could I have for mentioning this grammatically torturous attempt at musical entertainment? It came to mind as I read Psalm 16! Although the man who wrote this psalm, David was himself an accomplished musician and played skilfully the ancient equivalent of the modern guitar, he would never, ever have said that he couldn't get no satisfaction! In spite of numerous setbacks and disappointments and recurring depression and political defeats, David was a satisfied man.

That God was the source of Davis's soul's satisfaction is evident from a quick perusal of several statements in his psalm:

"in you [God] I take refuge" (v. 1).

"I say to the Lord, . . . I have no good apart from you" (v. 2).

"The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup" (v. 5).

"I bless the Lord who gives me counsel" (v. 7).

"I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken" (v. 8).

"in your presence there is fullness of joy and at your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (v. 11).

David was unashamed of his longing for the Lord and unafraid to declare his utter dependence on God and God alone for the satisfaction his soul so passionately desired.

Psalm 16:11 *"You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."* This is an important life verse because it encapsulates and expresses the glorious gospel of Christian satisfaction in a way that few other texts do. When I was younger my family would watch a sketch show on BBC Scotland. One of our favourite characters was the Rev I. AM Jolly. The Rev Jolly was a dour, boring Church of Scotland Minister who delivered his sermon, full of bleak hopelessness in a slow monosyllabic drawl. Strangely he made us roar in laughter, why because we recognised the truth of the charcutier of the joyless and boring experience of life in the Church of Scotland. In Church of Scotland it was considered a sin was to have joy or fun in your life and there was an unspoken belief that God had only made us to suffer. David in verse eleven destroys this and show that a Believers life can be one of joy, pleasure and satisfaction.

I want to focus here on two other verses in this remarkable psalm. So, let's look at v. 2 and v. 8.

Psalm 16:2 *"I say to the Lord, 'You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.'"* Asaph declares a similar dependence on God goodness in **Psalm 73:25** *"Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you."* Both

these men recognised the worthlessness of looking anywhere else for satisfaction apart from God, for both these men knew lasting satisfaction could only be found in knowing God. Verse 2 challenges us to examine ourselves and ask ourselves where are we searching for our satisfaction; are we truly seeking our satisfaction in God or in other things?

Psalm 16:8 *"I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken"*

I have been doing a course on Soul Care by eminent Christian Counsellor and Psychologist Dr Larry Crabb. I admire Larry's honesty which is both disarming and challenging. He's not afraid to admit what the rest of us skilfully hide from ourselves and others.

Several years ago, Larry's brother was killed in a tragic airplane crash. In one particularly candid moment, as he wrestled with God in his effort to make sense of what seemed utterly senseless, Larry cried out to God: "I know you are all I have, but I don't know you well enough for you to be all that I need." As Believers we all profess that God is our all in all but, how many of us can truly say God is all we need? The truth of our profession that God is our all in all can be gauged by the degree to which we can both trust and rejoice when all we have left is God.

Neither Larry nor the David are denying that other things are good or satisfying or capable of evoking pleasure. But they are to be embraced only when acknowledged and enjoyed as gifts of God without whom all else is ultimately meaningless. Or as C. S. Lewis put it, "he who has God and everything else has no more than he who has God only."

This is why David was so diligent to avert his eyes from all lesser beauty. Just look what happened when David stopped looking to God for satisfaction and looked to another man's wife. His resolve was to set the Lord before him, to concentrate his attention and the energies of his soul on the majesty and power of the One who alone would sustain him when all else is shaken.

This was not an infrequent or occasional choice or one to which he reverted only in times of crisis, but an orientation of life to which he was "always" committed. We would do well to follow his example.

Before closing, we should take note of two images in this psalm that reinforce David's point, both of which are rooted in vivid OT truths.

First, David prays that God would "preserve" him, for "in you," he declares, "I take refuge". It's possible that the background for this language is in the familiar "cities of refuge", those designated places to which a person might flee after accidentally killing another. They were designed to provide safe haven and protection from a family member of the deceased who might seek revenge.

God is our city of refuge! He is our safe, soul-satisfying haven of rest. Like a frightened child running to their father, hiding from danger behind the imposing presence of one committed to protect them, David sought safety in God. God is our refuge, because He loves us, God will never refuse His child the right to come to Him as Abba our heavenly father. God is our refuge because He is well able to look after us, He is after all the author and sustainer of the universe.

Second, the language of vv. 5-6 is clearly based on God's apportioning of the land to and among the twelve tribes upon their entrance into Canaan. The boundaries or border lines were set to determine the inheritance of each tribe. However, God gave no land or inheritance to the Levites (the priests). **Numbers 18:20** *"And the Lord said to Aaron, 'You shall have no inheritance in their land, neither shall you have any portion among them. I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel.'"*

Likewise, David happily embraces God alone as his "chosen portion" and his "cup" (v. 5a). You alone, O God, "hold my lot" (v. 5b). The "lines" (v. 6a) or measuring cords used to mark off the land allotted to each "have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance" (v. 6b).

Simply put: "You, O God, are the portion allotted to me! You, O God, supremely beautiful, are my inheritance! You, O God, are the only land I need or want!"

These are the words of a profoundly satisfied man. Why is this important? Because, as you've no doubt heard many times before, God is most glorified in you when you are most satisfied in Him. When we find all our wants, desires, passions, hopes and dreams made real in God we become God's light in this dark world revealing God to all those around us.

C. S. Lewis wrote, "We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased." We so often run after satisfaction outside God and so miss the satisfaction of finding our sufficiency in God.

The Believers life is both a life of struggle and satisfaction. Many Believers can testify to the fact that the deepest satisfaction was found in the darkest of struggles. Why, because when the struggle had stripped them of all else that they sought to satisfy their life with, all that was left was God and the great satisfaction found in knowing Him.

To find satisfaction in God make God your sufficiency.