

BACKGROUND – have a read at last week’s notes (15th April) which will tell you more about the Psalms. See <https://theunitedparish.org.uk/15th-april-2020-zoom-bible-study/>

Question - When do people find sin attractive? What are some of the sinful things people might want to do because they seem pleasurable? Are there ever times when sin feels strangely justified e.g. getting revenge on someone who has attacked you?

Sin may bring a short term pleasure, especially if you feel you have got your revenge on someone, but it always brings long term pain. Long lasting joy and contentment can only be found by submitting to God. But how easy is it for us to learn this?

John Piper has taken the familiar Westminster Shorter Catechism which says that ‘man’s chief aim is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever’ and has developed it further to ‘glorifying God by enjoying him forever’. John explains that ‘God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him’.

In the Psalms we are invited to enjoy living in the will of God – Psalm 34:8 “O taste and see that the Lord is good”. So why is it that at times the lure of sin seems to come before all that God is able to offer?

The overall message of tonight’s Psalm, Psalm 16, is ‘when we make the Lord our supreme treasure, we will be satisfied with pleasures now and forever in Him’. But let’s consider that David as the writer had not always placed the Lord as his supreme treasure – he had committed adultery, he had led a man towards his death. But then who are we to criticise? As we begin to read this Psalm let’s acknowledge that none of us have made the Lord our supreme treasure.

As we said last week some of the psalms can be connected to other passages of scripture, and Psalm 16 connects with 1 Samuel 26.

Summary of 1 Samuel 26

There are 2 examples where David is fleeing from Saul. Chapter 24 and now Chapter 26. They are different events, even though they seem very similar – one has Saul in a cave and the other has Saul lying outside surrounded by his soldiers. In chapter 26 David waits until Saul and his army are resting. God puts them into a deep sleep, and David with Abishai goes into the camp. They literally are right beside Saul who has his spear beside him. Abishai sees this as an opportunity for David to slay Saul but David resists, saying that Saul is the Lord’s anointed. So David takes the spear and a water jug and flees. When David returns back to the other side he calls out on Saul’s army to let them know what he has done. David asks Saul why is he pursuing him. It’s unclear about Saul’s next actions but he says that he has sinned, and says he will not harm David again. So David goes his way and Saul returns home. The key verse is 1 Samuel 26:19b – let’s read it. David says to Saul, “They have driven me today from my share in the LORD’s inheritance and have said, ‘Go, serve other gods.’” So

Question – So in thinking about the temptation to sin in 1 Samuel 26, what temptations would have been going through David's mind?

Answer – Taking revenge
Serving other Gods
Giving up on God's people
Despair / giving up

So let's now read Psalm 16 – read through once, and then repeat to allow the words to soak in to our minds.

What's a 'Miktam' here in the title? We're not sure. It seems to resemble another Hebrew word which means 'to cover'. It occurs in Psalms 56-60 which are all about being under attack. So one of the views is that these are psalms of refuge.

Verse 1 & 2

The psalm begins with the words "keep me safe" or "preserve me".

Question – In today's world of Health & Safety discuss some examples of how we keep ourselves protected from harm.

Answers – seat belts in cars, air bags, we eat healthy food, we grit the roads when it's icy, we have insurance.

David understand the threat of physical danger but he also understand the danger that sin can do. Hebrews 12:1 states 'Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us'. Nettles can so easily entangle a plant and take over. They are very hard to remove once they get their roots deep into the soil because they keep coming back up. We learnt last week that David was being challenged to recall his past, but in this psalm we are seeing his resolve to not allow these to take away his new focus.

Question – so in verse 1 & 2 how does David respond to the dangers he is facing?

Answer – He calls on God to preserve and keep him safe
He takes refuge in God's presence
He has a longer term view (v2) that acknowledges God is all he needs.
'Apart from you I have no good thing'

CS Lewis said, "he who has God and everything else has no more than he who has God only"
– *The weight of glory*, 1996.

SELAH moment – pause – In you own lives can we truly affirm, 'Lord, I have no other good besides you' ?

Being a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, means that the Spirit of God has opened us to realise Jesus as the most valuable treasure in the world. Let's read Philippians 3:7-8, *'But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ'*

When we feel the temptation to give up, there are things in this psalm that remind us to keep focused on God. The first relates to the community of other Christians (v3-4)

Verse 3-4

David's joy and hope in tough times is helped because he delights in the company of God's people. He refers here to Saints, Glorious ones, Excellent ones. Never get trapped into thinking of 'saints' as the super-spiritual people, it is anyone who is a follower of God. We might be inspired by great Christians from the past, but we can be so encouraged by brothers & sisters around us today. Can you think of any?

It also reminds David of those followers who turn their backs on God and pursue idols. 'Libations' in some translations is another word for offerings.

Question – What does David say he will not do with these people?

Answer – we won't join in their activities. David will not succumb to sin.

So while we should maintain relationships with people who are not believers in order to point them to Jesus, we must be careful that it doesn't drag us to join in their behaviour. Read 1 Corinthians 15:33

Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."

Today I had to lift pallets from the front of the church. They were painted blue and I didn't realise until later that even though I had been extremely careful, the colour had passed onto my clothes. Same can be said about keeping company with sin.

Question – in light of the spiritual benefit of being around God's people, who set Godly examples, do you think you have a community around you that can hold you accountable? Would you take offence if someone spoke to you about the way you are living? Do you have people you can be totally open with?

Verse 5&6

The idea of assigning a portion originates from apportioning the land to the twelve tribes, but as David reflects, he considers God as his portion. God is far more sufficient than a piece of land if we refer back to 1 Samuel 26:19b *'They have driven me today from my share in the Lord's inheritance and have said, 'Go, serve other gods.'*

Question – what does David say in the Psalm about his inheritance?

Answer – God is his inheritance. He finds delight in the Lord. So he won't serve other gods.

So now we move on to the next section of the Psalm, and what we experience when God is our treasure and inheritance

V7 – we enjoy his counsel and instruction

V8 – we experience his stability in trials

V9-11 – we experience gladness and joy in his security

V7 – we are guided and instructed

The 2nd half of that verse is written either heart or mind instructing me at night. The Hebrew word here was actually the kidneys. These organs were considered at the time the centre of a person's life. It affected everything else so the view was that all aspects of David's life were guided by God.

The word 'night' here was actually plural 'nights' suggesting that night after night the Lord was instructing him. Have you ever spent time at a monastery – I would recommend taking an overnight at Rosstrevor to be with the brothers as they do the night watches. This would not have been uncommon practice back in David's time. Keeping watch through the night in prayer – almost like keeping guard over a city, but in this way keeping a guard over our thoughts.

V8 – we experience his stability in trials

Last week as we looked at the issues of anxiety and worry and staying awake at night, we talked about sometimes we find ways of blocking it out, or we hide it in a box. Here David is saying that he intently fixed his mind on the providence of God. He was persuaded that whenever difficulty or distress would come, God would always assist him.

When we face trials, we may take actions that actually cause us to sin in order to find an answer. Bring it to God first.

V9 – declaring gladness and joy

And so in that place of security, we are able to declare for our tongues, praise and glory.

[SELAH – pause - I wonder if you were to consider right now or actually at times when you are tempted to say something with your words that are not so praise-worthy or edifying, if you were to reflect on the security that God brings, it is bound to affect what then comes from our mouths.](#)

V9-11

So let's look at these last verses in the context of the New Testament. Let's read Acts 2:22-32 – this is Peter speaking to the crowd at Pentecost and he refers to Psalm 16

“Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³ This man was handed over to you by God’s deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. ²⁵ David said about him:

“I saw the Lord always before me.

Because he is at my right hand,

I will not be shaken.

²⁶ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;

my body also will rest in hope,

²⁷ because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,

you will not let your holy one see decay.

²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life;

you will fill me with joy in your presence.’

²⁹ “Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰ But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. ³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it.

Question – How does Peter say that Psalm 16 is fulfilled?

Answer – David was a pointer to Jesus. Peter states that God raised Jesus from the dead, that as David said he was not abandoned to the grave. David is writing prophetically of the Son of David. I read an American pastor’s comments on this where he says, ‘If Jesus’ body was in the tomb and underwent decay, then we are not forgiven’. God didn’t leave Jesus in the tomb. He is risen.

So when we consider sin, it must be considered temporary. We will not be defeated by it, unless we don’t trust in Jesus. Sin cannot overcome those who fully trust in Jesus.

So from these verses, realising the context of David’s temptation to strike Saul dead, to have no hope, we’ve seen the following –

- How God satisfies everything in life – we don’t need anything other than him
- How God can overcome temptation (v8)
- There is victory through the death and resurrection of Jesus

Conclusion

Psalm 16 isn’t about David giving advice on how to cope with Temptation. He is reminding himself of God’s goodness and help. He keeps his eyes focused on the Lord.

Question - So to finish, what ways can we keep the Lord in our sights when sin seems to be in our view.

- A good friend of mine, who sadly passed away, told me to always keep a seat beside your computer, where Jesus sits
- Another friend from Coleraine, recommended that when speaking, consider whether your response to someone who is annoying can end with the words 'in Jesus' name'.
- A monk suggested that we should refrain from speaking unless it is uplifting and edifying
- Have Bible verses around your home
- Memorise Bible verses

Homework – consider memorising a Bible verse from tonight, maybe verse 2, 5&6, 7, 8 or 11

Next week – Psalm 23