

**Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
27th April 2020**

READINGS

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their ancestors to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.

Deuteronomy 31:6-8

As for other matters, brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honoured, just as it was with you. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people, for not everyone has faith. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.

2nd Thessalonians 3:1-5



REFLECTION

I like to watch movies. And the other week I had the chance to watch an old movie that I remember from my student days, a Tom Cruise classic called Top Gun, about the people supposed to be the best pilots in the American armed forces.

One scene sticks with me from the very end of the film. Two pilots are attacked by hordes of enemy planes, the lead fighter is trying to shoot down one of the enemy, and the second plane is flying alongside to protect him from attack from behind. In protecting the first plane in this way the second fighter puts himself in great danger. But despite the pleas of his navigator, the pilot will not leave the other plane unprotected, he shouts "I have got to protect his back!".

The words of our New Testament reading this week are from Paul writing to the Church in Thessalonica. Paul writes these words at a time when he was experiencing great difficulty in his own ministry. He was in Corinth and things were not going well. The people in the city had risen up against him. Meanwhile the church there was in a mess. At the same time Paul was writing, the Church at Thessalonica was also having a hard time. They were going through a period when just to be a Christian was to take your life in your hands.

What does Paul do?

Does he moan? Does he talk about how hard it is to follow God?

No! Instead, he speaks about God's faithfulness. He speaks about how even in the most difficult of situations God is faithful. And Paul declares that God can be trusted.

In other words, Paul says to the church at Thessalonica, to himself and to us today that, no matter how tough things are, God's on your side; God is faithful; God will not let you down; God's got your back.

I sometimes wonder why God bothers with me at all. There are times in my life when I have been so faithless; when I am so busy doing Church stuff that I have no time for God, There have been times when I get so angry with God, usually because something I have done has gone wrong. There have been times when I have acted with such a lack of faith or such a lack of devotion and discipleship.

That's maybe the case for all of you too. Why does God bother with us?

Max Lucado, one of my favourite writers, has this to say,

"... one of the sweetest reasons God saved you is because he is fond of you. He likes having you around. He thinks you are the best thing to come down the pike in quite awhile. "As a man rejoices over his new wife, so your God will rejoice over you" (Isa. 62:5). If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it. If he had a wallet, your photo would be in it. He sends you flowers every spring and a sunrise every morning. Whenever you want to talk, he'll listen. He can live anywhere in the universe, and he chose your heart. And the Christmas gift he sent you in Bethlehem? Face it, friend. He's crazy about you."

Max Lucado, Gentle Thunder, p.122

There were those in the churches at Corinth and at Thessalonica, who turned away from God. It had just become too risky to be a Christian, it just become too much for them.

But Paul says they have not found peace when they walked away from the difficulties caused in their lives by their faith. In fact, they have actually walked away from the one and only source of peace that makes any difference in life – that is Jesus.

The proper response to the God whose got our back is to trust God! To put our faith in him, no matter the consequences, and to follow him. God's got your back! There is no limit to the lengths God will go to in order to show you his love, to show you his care for you. It was for relationship with you that Jesus endured the cross. It is because he wants to spend eternity with you that Jesus went through torment and hell.

To God, you matter that much.

PRAYER

Ever-present, ever-loving God
Always we are in your sight,
Always we are under the care of your love.
Even we turn away from you,
Even when our faith feels dull and jaded,
You remain faithful,
You continue to reach out for us.

When we feel in danger may we be reassured by knowing your love
When we feel lost may we find safety in the promise of your care,
When we feel worn out may we find rest in the power of your presence.

Teach us Loving God,
To trust in your care,
To rely on your promises
To hold to your call to live faithfully in all circumstances.

In Jesus name we offer our prayers,
Amen

