

CONFIDENCE IN THE GOODNESS OF GOD

“I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.” Psalm 27:13-14 (NIV)

Whilst on holiday recently and spending time with God looking at Psalm 27, a little 5 year old boy that I used to teach mysteriously popped into my thoughts. Now, I have to admit, initially I found this particular boy (we'll call him Tommy) a real handful. His enthusiasm and zeal for life seemed to spill over constantly as he would leap up and show me the latest skill he had acquired or share the burning piece of news he had about his hamster at the most inopportune moments! However, overtime my attitude towards him began to change as I began to view his exuberance differently. I recalled the way that each time he came to read with me, he came so enthusiastically despite finding reading so hard. As he studied the sentences on the page of the open book, he'd scrunch his eyebrows in earnest effort. *“Do you know what this says?”* I'd ask as I pointed to the bold printed words that told a simple story. He'd do his best to sound out the letters, but eventually, he'd admit his confusion! *“I don't know what that says. But I do know how to jump on one foot! Wanna watch me?”* With a giddy grin, he'd leap out of his chair and hop up and down! When a new set of words stumped him, his answer was much the same *“I don't know what that says, but I do know how to tie my shoe lace! Wanna see?”*

Reading didn't come easily for Tommy, but he refused to give up. This exuberant little boy didn't relinquish his confidence in the middle of the struggle. He persevered when the words on the page didn't make sense and the process of learning felt difficult. Week after week when I listened to him read he came with the *humility to name what he didn't know and the boldness to declare what he did*. And as he did that slowly but surely, his reading improved and I began to view Tommy with admiration and affection rather than frustration and I also started to see what a valuable lesson I could learn from him.

It's been years since I was last in a classroom but when I read King David's words in Psalm 27, I remembered Tommy and I got to wondering. Do I approach God like David did and like this 5 year old boy? In this time of struggle, when life has changed so much and many of the things we took for granted are no longer givens, do I have the humility to be real with myself and with God about the things I don't know and that I struggle with, whilst boldly declaring the things I do know? Namely, that whatever the circumstances of my life might be; God is infinitely good, God is enduringly faithful and God is unswervingly for me and with me.

Of course, David wasn't sitting in a classroom when he penned this sacred sliver of Scripture but like us, he was standing in a season of struggle. In fact, the list of difficulties David mentions are considerable and persistent — trouble from enemies, advances from adversaries and attacks from violent men (vv. 2-3, 11-12). If I were David, I might have let the struggle that surrounded me steal the confidence that had grounded me. After all, David's circumstances don't seem to match up one bit with the promises God has given him. God had handpicked David as king and promised him an enduring legacy and yet enemies still rivalled his rule, and discord still taunted his peace. That's where faith gets hard, doesn't it? Right in the middle of the struggle. And friends, whatever personal struggles we may be facing, we are all in the middle of an ongoing struggle as life as we know it continues to be radically affected by this virus. That's where our hope can be sabotaged by what we don't know, and our conviction shaken by what we don't understand. The middle of the struggle is where I'm most prone to quit, I can easily run out of steam as it all feels so relentlessly challenging. It's where I'm tempted to give up on God's promises and question His faithfulness. Maybe you are too?

But David chose differently and we can too! The declarations that flank Psalm 27 focus his attention on who God is rather than the circumstances that threaten to discourage and cause him to quit the battle.

“The LORD is my light and my salvation — so why should I be afraid? The LORD is the stronghold of my life – whom shall I fear?For in the day of trouble He will keep me safe in His dwelling; He will hide me in the shelter of His tabernacle and set me upon a high rock. (Psalm 27:1 and 5 NIV)

David might be confused by the hardship he’s facing. But he refuses to let what he doesn’t know steal the surety of what he does.

I want to trust God with that kind of confidence, don’t you? So, as we go on through this time of struggle and uncertainty, let’s keep showing up and looking up like David did and let’s be Tommys who honestly and unashamedly admit what *we don’t yet know whilst boldly proclaiming what we do.*

I don’t know that, but I do know this!..... “ I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living” (v. 13). Amen

Debbie Hubbard