

THOUGHTS FROM CHAPLAIN RICHARD

We've spoken before about 2 Cor 13:5 *'Examine yourself to see whether you are in the faith'*. (trusting and living by faith in the Living God) Let's look at that from another perspective. Who are we serving? How can we find out? We can ask a few questions.

How do we define 'success'. Most people define success in terms of money, love, and (let's be honest) power. Tim Keller's book 'Counterfeit Gods' has the subtitle 'when the empty promises of love, money and power let you down' - because they will always let us down - they are empty and worthless substitutes for the living God.

People with addictions to not just alcohol, drugs, gambling or sex, but also fitness, self-worth, affirmation, sense of usefulness and many others (John Calvin said that our hearts are 'idol factories') have something else they run to - refuge. This idol is pleasure. When things get hard and we don't want to face something, we block it out with some temporary pleasure. We are trying to escape. We run for somewhere to hide, where we don't have to deal with the truth. It may be storming out of an argument, even going for a ride!

When we stick our heads in the sand and start to use avoidance tactics, we are like the people in Isaiah 28:15 *'When an overwhelming scourge sweeps by, it can't touch us, for we have made a lie our refuge and falsehood our hiding place'*. This is so profound it is worth a serious sit down and reflection. How do we respond to difficult relationships? unfair boss? being cheated? feeling powerless? being sinners? Do we run to diversions? (TV, computer games, drink, mates, sex) to prop us up...to be our refuge? Are we telling ourselves lies to avoid some ugly truth?

The very next verse in Isaiah provides God's solution to our problem.

'So this is what the Sovereign Lord says:

See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; (speaking about Jesus) the one who trusts will never be dismayed'.

Do you long for a firm foundation? One who will never disappoint? Run for refuge to Jesus, our Rock, fortress, and deliverer! *'Come to me, you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest...you will find rest for your souls'* Matt 11:28 *'No-one who puts their trust in him will ever be put to shame'* Rom 10:11

How do we do this?

Tell the truth to yourself and others about yourself and your fears, insecurities, weaknesses and sin. James 5:16 Trust only God to meet your needs, whatever they may be. Trust his love and provision for you. Seek him every day in prayer and his word. He came to destroy the work of the devil, that we may have true, abundant life. He won - he always wins - he is the King of kings!

Seek *Him*, find *Him*. Run to **Him** for refuge.

Bless you all,
Your friend
Richard