

Psalm 16 - The Joy of God's Presence

A Miktam of David.

Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you." As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight. The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply; their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names on my lips. The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance. I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Exordium

Psalm 16 is a Psalm of confidence, assurance, and trust. We know that David is the author and that he wrote this Psalm relating to a crisis. We do not know if he wrote this Psalm seeing a crisis coming, or if he was in the midst of a crisis, or if he was looking back on a crisis he had recently faced. I believe the Lord was incredibly intentional in not revealing the details of the situation David faced as he penned this hymn. We can read, sing, or meditate on Psalm 16 when we know a crisis is coming, or when we find ourselves amid a crisis, or we've just come through a crisis.

I think we can all attest that we quite often find ourselves in dire situations in life. We find ourselves, like David in Psalm 16, crying out for help, pleading for Him to preserve, shelter, and protect us. Since this is a Psalm of confidence, we have the hope that God will preserve us. Now, sometimes, that protection is not what we pray for or hope for, but He always does. Furthermore, as we will see this morning, Jesus prayed specifically for God to keep or preserve those who

belong to Him.

My thesis for these verses is that because of the work of Christ, those who are redeemed can enjoy the presence of God now and forevermore.

Psalm 16:1-4 - A Great Love For God and His Saints

The Psalm begins with David passionately pleading for God to preserve him. The word for “preserve” is an imperative. There is a deep cry from David’s heart, intensely pleading for the God of the universe to shelter him during this situation. David then gives the reason why He is looking to God for help, “for in you I take refuge.” In the midst of a crisis, David finds shelter, protection, comfort, and solace in God.

The question for us to answer today is, where do we take refuge when we face crises? Think of the scope of a human life. A toddler or child takes refuge and finds comfort in their parents. When another child wrongs them, they look to their parent for comfort. They come with tears in their eyes, mouths screaming, and though they might not be able to voice the words, they are saying, “Dad, Mom, help me!” Then a good parent provides the necessary shelter for their child.

Similarly, we as God’s children cry out to Him in times of distress. When life is overwhelming for whatever reason, our aim should be to run to Him to find shelter. However, how often do we turn to someone or something else to find shelter or comfort? Aren’t we tempted to fun, leisure, television, social media, food, or friendships, to name a few, in times of crisis instead of finding our refuge in Christ? This should cause our souls trouble because instead of finding our foundation in the rock that is Christ, we find our foundation is as stable as sand. We are faced with a choice which we find in Matthew 7:24-27:

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds

blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.

Where is our foundation in crisis? Are we like the wise man who built his house on the rock, or are we like the foolish man who built his house on the sand?

Furthermore, running to the sand grieves the heart of Christ. Did you know that Jesus prayed for you to persevere in John 17:11, 15? This is not a hopeful prayer, but a prayer grounded in trust and assurance. Jesus knows that the Father will keep all who belong to Him. Also, what we put our trust in determines who we become. If we run to the world to satisfy our souls, which it never will, in distress, we will be formed into the world's image. If we run to Christ in times of crisis, our souls will be satisfied by Him, and we will be continually formed in His image.

Yet, aren't there times when we plead to God to protect us, or someone, and it appears as though Christ is silent? There is no answer, and calamity still occurs? How many families have prayed for their spouses to be saved from the death penalty for spreading the Gospel in hostile nations, only to have their loved one still die? Is God silent? Is God not strong enough to save?

In light of this, I would propose that God does all things for His glory, which means that sometimes He does pull children out of their calamities as we would desire, and other times He does not. In these times and seasons, we remember Romans 8:18:

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

The calamities, trials, crises, and sufferings that we face on earth cannot compare to the glory that awaits us soon. These sufferings point us to the hope that is yet to come: the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8:25).

Consider Acts 12, James, the brother of John, was arrested by King Herod. King Herod then killed James by the sword. The Jews were ecstatic. Herod, seeing that this pleased the Jews, proceeded to arrest Peter. The church made earnest prayer to God for Peter. While in prison, Peter's chains fall off, and an angel leads him out of prison. So, it is good then, as Psalm 16 also attests, to run

to God who is our refuge.

Thankfully, our cries for shelter can be made at any time and from any place. Hear what David writes in Psalm 139:7-10:

Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

David knew that wherever He went, the Lord was with him. This is true of us as well. Wherever we go, the Holy Spirit indwells us. We are never left alone. In the times when we are woken up in the middle of the night due to crippling anxiety, we know that God is with us and He will hear our prayers for shelter.

One of the greatest lessons we can learn from this is that our gaze for shelter should be more heavenly than earthly. Our ultimate cry to God to preserve us is not from the calamities of this world, but from the power of sin that once enslaved us. The great cry of protection is, "Christ, save me, a wretched sinner who needs grace."

Why is this ultimately our prayer? As David emphatically confesses in Psalm 16:2, "You are my Lord (Adonai - You are my master); I have no good apart from you." This sentence hits us with a boulder. This week, I was listening to a podcast where two people were discussing the political landscape in America. Both had differing views, but they started with an agreed-upon premise: "Americans are good people." At this moment, Psalm 16:2 came shooting out of my mouth, "No, we are not good people in and of ourselves! There is no good in me apart from Christ!"

Now, some might say, "Well, David is overwhelmed here. He's speaking in hyperbole because he's distressed, and he's pleading for God to look upon him with favor." Paul, quoting Psalm 14:1-3 writes this in Romans 3:10-12:

as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

Scripture testifies over and over again about the depravity of humanity.

Without Christ, not a single person is righteous. None seeks God. The human condition, without the Spirit's regenerating work, is bleak. It is not good. It is depraved. Sinner, guilty before a holy God.

Yet, you can hear the salvific language in Psalm 16:2, "there is no good, EXCEPT YOU GOD!" This is the joyous praise of one who knows the depths of their sin and knows the riches of Christ's mercy. Do you believe that this is you, or has your flesh caused you to think there is something good in you apart from Christ? Have you bought into the modern lie, fueled by Satan and the fires of hell, that we are good people apart from Christ? For those of us in Christ, this is why we love redemption so much. This is why we find Christ so glorious and beautiful, not just abstractly, but in the rhythms of our daily lives. We know that apart from double imputation, that is Christ imputing His righteousness to us and our sin being imputed to him, we have no hope of God's joyous presence and wonderful shelter. One day, the glories of eternity will be real to us, not because we are good, but because Christ is so unbelievably good to us.

David's focus shifts from the God of heaven to his fellow saints and also the idolaters in Psalm 16:3-4. Look at what David writes about those who are saints of the most high, "they are excellent and he delights in them." The love that He has received from the Lord has created a love for those who also belong to God.

Christ said that the world would know that we are His disciples if we have love for one another (John 13:35). Does the love that God has poured into your heart flow outward towards your fellow brothers and sisters? This is something that David understood and lived. In an ironic divine twist, the world does not consider saints worthy, but the world was not worthy of them (Hebrews 11:38). David loved those who lived in the land who belonged to God.

Yet, the land was not just full of followers of God. There were also idolaters living in the land, as noted in verse 4. And, their sorrow did multiply. We know from Psalm 106:36-38 that those who followed other gods served idols, and they sacrificed their children to demons who were the idols of Canaan. David is clear in his response to them; he will not say the names of their gods on his very lips. He will not be associated with these idolaters and the idols they worship. To David, the pursuit of God alone is crucial, which is also true of us. We should be

diligent to pursue Christ alone. We should be diligent in not pursuing other gods or any form of the plethora of idols the world has to offer us, for following them only increases our sorrows.

Psalm 16:5-11 - God's Presence is Greater than All Things

The wording in Psalm 16:5-6 points us back to two previous Old Testament passages. First, Joshua 13-18. In these chapters, the people of Israel divide up the promised land. The words "lot," "lines," "places," and "inheritance" are used often in those chapters. The second place is 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.

The question for us to reflect on here is, why are these chapters in Joshua and Numbers 18:20 woven together in Psalm 16:4-5, where David is celebrating God's presence? To understand that question, we must know the importance of land during this time. Owning land meant a man provided a life, protection, and provision for his entire family. Land was significantly important.

However, notice that David does not write that the land is his portion and his cup. The Lord is his portion and his cup. God is David's all in all. Recall what Jesus says to the crowd in Mark 8:34-37:

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul?"

Where is your portion and inheritance this morning? Is it Jesus or something else in this world? 1 John 2:15 commands us not to love the world or the things of the world. Are our hearts given to the pleasures and riches that this world has to offer us? To gain the whole world, but to forfeit your soul, is a great, eternal tragedy.

The Lord is also our inheritance. There is no inheritance as beautiful as the Lord. No trust fund compares to the riches of Christ. Furthermore, what ideas of inheritance have we passed down to children and grandchildren? Have we consciously or subconsciously taught them that their greatest possession is a well-paying, respectable career, or that Jesus is the greatest inheritance their soul will ever know?

The Puritans often wrote about the affections. Now, we hear this today and may equate this with the word “emotions/feelings,” and that’s not an appropriate correlation. To them, the affections were the seat of the soul. You can think of the cockpit of a plane or the helm of a ship. The affections were, to them, the steering mechanism for the soul, the mind, the heart, and ultimately the entire person. They firmly believed that if the affections, or that steering mechanism of the soul, could be captured by the glory of Christ, the steadfast love of Christ, His graces, His mercies, His compassion, His tender care, and if the affections could be set ablaze for Christ Himself, then the soul, the mind, the heart, and the strength of a person would follow. Are the affections of your soul primarily filled and guided with love for the world, or Christ your inheritance?

In Psalm 16:7, we notice that David gives his heart to blessing the Lord because God has given him counsel. He has shown David how to live a covenantal life through the Torah, which David constantly meditated upon. The result of this constant meditation meant that the Word of God ruminated in his heart. As the Spirit brought the Word into his soul, his heart instructed him in the night. By the Spirit’s power, David’s heart became saturated with the living Word of God.

As we come to Psalm 16:8-11, I want to re-read these verses for us. Psalm 16:8-11:

I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Now, it might be easy to look at these verses and think, “Yes. This describes

David's life. He gave himself to worshipping God. He enjoyed God's presence, and obviously, he will rise again at the resurrection." However, these verses have nothing to do with David. They have nothing to do with Solomon, or any of David's immediate descendants. These verses specifically are about Jesus Christ, and David is speaking as a prophet.

We know this to be true because of Peter's sermon at Pentecost in Acts 2. Peter stands before the crowd with the eleven other disciples and begins to preach to all those around. Listen to a portion of his sermon from Acts 2:22-32:

"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. For David says concerning him, " 'I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.' "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.'"

What does Peter's sermon reveal to us? David, as a prophet, spoke prophetically about the Messiah who was to come in Psalm 16:8-11. Christ is the key to Scripture. He is the central theme of the Word. From Genesis to Revelation, you can see Christ clearly.

In the goodness of the Father, He ensured that Jesus was not shaken. Jesus' heart was filled with joy, and He rejoiced in the Father. Jesus was not left to the

abode of the wicked, nor did His body see corruption. And now, He sits at the right hand of the Father, where there is fullness of joy.

Do you know what is so great about our Lord and Savior, Jesus? He did not simply receive this from the Father and then keep it for Himself. Due to Christ and His work, we will be raised on the last Day. We will be glorified. We will see Him face to face. We will enjoy the perfect presence of God forevermore, which is a place full of joy. And we will enjoy the glorious riches of God in eternity. Christ is good to those whom He has redeemed.

We certainly long for this to become a reality by sight, not by faith. However, we can, right now, enjoy the presence of God in our lives because of the Great High Priest Jesus. Throughout our days, we can worship God by faith. Joy can be our's because Christ has saved us. Do you have this type of joy throughout your day? Do you enjoy the presence of God as you walk through trials, tribulations, and calamities?

Closing

Calamities and crises will fall upon us in this world. Just because we belong to Christ does not mean our lives will be free of difficulties, which David also experienced. In these times, we wrestle with the question of whom we will turn to: will it be the world or will it be Christ?

I think Romans 8:26-30 perfectly summarizes this reality:

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

There is great comfort for us in these verses. We often have weakness in

seasons of distress, and there is the promise that the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness and intercedes for us on our behalf. Further, God uses these seasons for good; they are never wasted. Finally, we know that we will be glorified one day.

Perhaps you're sitting here this morning in the midst of a great storm, but you do not have Christ. You know that He is not yours and you are not His. Would you consider Christ as you sit here? Would you consider His glory, His love, His compassion, and His worth? Would you recognize that you are a sinner in great need of grace, and you can only receive this in Jesus? Would you cry out to Him? Your circumstances may not change, but the Mighty High King of heaven will walk with you in your storm.

When storms come, our minds cannot be fixed on earthly things. To only find security and stability in the world, which is a false security, is to be earthly-minded, which Paul says makes one an enemy of Christ and the cross in Philippians 3:18-19. Our gaze is brought to the risen, resurrected, and glorified Christ. When our eyes are lifted heavenward in crisis, our focus is on the One who saved our souls. We can then enjoy the presence of God despite the difficulties of life. Is this not of great encouragement to us? Is there no greater aim than to glory and enjoy God forever, which would also mean in this life?