

Truth for Today

The Bible Explained

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Messianic Psalms

Psalm 16

*[Please note: sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.
The King James Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

Introduction

The Sixteenth Psalm is Messianic about The Life of The Perfect Man. Not so much that of David the accredited writer, even if it was his privilege by God to formulate the words. The real reference is to the One Perfect Man. This is perhaps looked forward anticipatively by David, but, in reality, none can compete with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, in Manhood.

The Psalm gives a prophetic description of the Lord Jesus in His lowly path through this world. He is viewed, not in His personal, divine equality with God, though that is always true, but in His place of perfect, consistent, dependent Manhood as God's Servant, and Israel's Messiah. It presents much of His inward life of faith before God, rather than being limited to the outwardly visible life seen by mankind. It is a life that has God for its object, so that it is a life lived to God, as well as before God.

As a follow up to that, Christ then identified Himself with the godly in the nation of Israel, whilst expressing His life of faith before God.

The Psalm is clearly fulfilled in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, and was fully demonstrated by Him in His life here upon earth. Secondly, it will be demonstrated nationally in the world to come by the nation of Israel, although clearly not so well, or consistently, as by their Messiah Himself. At the present time, the capacity to fulfil features well pleasing to God can be achieved and demonstrated at any moment, in any incident, by any Christian who is willing and anxious to be faithful to His Lord and Master, and guided by the Holy Spirit. As ever, it would be unwise for any of us to assume that we have achieved such a level of spiritual and moral progress that we can rely upon ourselves to live and act in line with this Psalm in all things and at all times.

I am sure that we would be disappointed if, having heard details about our beloved Lord, we were not challenged as to our response to Him. To keep things in balance, I will add a few words about our response in corollaries, immediately after we have concentrated on the details of each verse.

That is, the contemplation of our beloved Lord and Saviour quite properly leads us to a proper and immediate response as and after we contemplate Him!

Let us, then, go through the verses, one by one, rejoicing in their fulfilment in our Lord and Saviour, and giving us wonderful examples for us to follow as stated in the corollaries.

Verse 1. 'Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.'

The Psalm begins with a prayer. "Preserve me, O God." Man's experience with God should certainly include prayer, and his understanding based on God's answer to his prayers, if he is to enjoy his life to capacity, and serve his God as he should.

It is clear from the start that not only is the subject of verse 1 that of the prayer of the dependent Man, but that His dependence is on His God, not on himself, his fellow men, on anyone or anything else. No other person has been as dependent upon God, and trusting in God, as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, when here as a Man, upon earth. In His life upon earth, He conducted Himself in completeness and fullness of dependence. The record of the Gospels affirms clearly that His Life was lived in total dependence upon the power of God, and, confidence in the love of God. In coming into this world, Christ took His place as Man, The Dependent Man, and expressed His perfect dependence upon, and confidence in, God. "Preserve me, O God" is the language of dependence. "In Thee do I put my trust" is His expression of confidence in the One on Whom He does depend.

The provision of care, and the opportunity to respond to that care by enjoying trusting in that care, ensures a true balance between the provision of the care and the enjoyment of it.

Corollary to verse 1

It is inevitable, and we shall be well advised to keep in mind, that even if we accept that none but the Lord Jesus Himself could answer completely, fully and blessedly, to every detail of the wording of the Psalm, we shall do well to accept every point made as setting us good, indeed, perfect examples to follow, until the Lord Jesus comes again to take us to be with Himself.

We Christian believers have the opportunity of entering, in measure, into that which our Saviour enjoys in fullness and perfection. We have the assurance of eternal salvation, which our Saviour never needed, but which He has secured for those of us who are willing to confess our sins and trust Him as our Saviour. We are certainly in the position where we have confidence in that which the Christ of God has brought about. That is, the eternal salvation of our souls and the awareness of the need to be dependent to a degree He never needed, but which He manifested to perfection throughout His time here upon earth.

Our own personal dependence is to be expressed in prayer, in the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This secures for us access into the very presence of God. We are happy indeed if that is the pattern of our relationship with our Saviour, and the Father of that Saviour, all enjoyed in the power of the Holy Spirit of God bestowed upon us, not because we deserve it, but because it is the desire of God that we exercise our relationship with Him in such a way.

Psalm 16 clearly shows that life is intended to be enjoyed by the Christian believer. God's judgment on our previous activities encourages our further trust in Him, and the value of us continuing dependent prayer. Indeed, as we have read, the Psalm itself begins with prayer by the Man Christ Jesus, to the One with Whom that prayer had a deeply based and deeply enjoyed relationship already.

Verse 2. 'O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my LORD: my goodness extendeth not to thee.'

Christ, The Lowly Man, did not only take the place of Man, but He took the position of Servant, intelligently and devotedly towards God; "Thou art my LORD". His goodness, and His perfect obedience as The Perfect Man, were not in order to earn Him a special place before God, or to secure benefits for Himself, but for the benefit of blessings for the saints of God (verse 3). As the Man of true lowliness, His life was lived in total subjection to the will of God.

Verse 2 shows us that the psalmist had a personal faith in and relationship with the living God. The cry, "Thou art my LORD", rings out with great devotion and assurance.

Corollary to verse 2

What was true for the psalmist himself must be true for us if we want to experience the same glad confidence. There must be a living link between God and us; an acceptance of a relationship in which we acknowledge God as our Lord and Master. This is a miracle of grace. Verse 2 says that, in ourselves, we have nothing which would merit such a relationship. It is bonded in the greatness of the love of God.

Verse 3. 'But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.'

Christ, the true servant of God, was happy indeed in His lowliness in the days of His flesh, to be identified with those who were classified as acceptable to God, indeed sanctified before God, on the basis of the value to that God of the value of His work on their behalf. He not only took the place of Servant, but, in grace, He became the associate of the godly remnant, the excellent of the earth, in whom He found His personal delight.

Corollary to verse 3

To summarise our conclusions from the first 3 verses, we notice that the believer has a relationship with God, Who is the sole object of faith.

He, the believer, takes pleasure in the company of God's people, as we are about to see in verse 4, where he keeps clear of false gods and idolatrous practices.

Verse 4. 'Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.'

Christ, The Separate Man, though in grace the companion of the godly, was absolutely faithful to God. He would not hear of any god other than the true God. In perfect faithfulness to the only God, He refused any that could be called 'another god'. He was The Separate Man, and, in particular, separated from evil, and all who practised it. All that is with a view to being completely devoted to the God in Whom He trusted, and Whom He served.

Mention here of other gods does not demonstrate the validity of such so-called deities. To the writer of Psalm 16 these were false gods, lifeless idols that required idolatrous worship.

Corollary to verse 4

There are many man made idols around us today. We need to follow the example of the psalmist in his desire to be true to the living God and to separate from all evil and false worship. The Christian need not be distressed at the thought of 'another' so called god deflecting sincere hearts away from the true God.

If we are believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, we are ready for heaven while living on earth. Following on from that, if we desire to be true to our God and our Saviour and Lord, in practice as well as in word, we must not be ashamed to be separated from evil and in a very positive way, be separated to the God of our salvation, and the Saviour Who loved us and gave Himself for us.

At this stage in Psalm 16, we move on to the recognition of a Future Portion (with assured entitlement) and a Present Cup (with present possession).

Verse 5. 'The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.'

Christ, The Satisfied Man, in His pathway through this world, was not only separate from all that can come between God and man, but in a very positive way, His heart was satisfied in the conscious presence of God. The LORD was His portion, and while passing on to the earthly inheritance that God had purposed for Him, He tasted the joy of that inheritance along the way. In the sense of the favour of the LORD, He could say, "The lines are fallen unto Me in pleasant

places" (verse 6). Notice that in verse 5 it is not only the blessings of the LORD which gladden the heart of the psalmist, but rather it is the LORD Himself, in Person, as the psalmist states, "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup."

Corollary to verse 5

The LORD's presence is the greatest blessing that man can ever know. The psalmist is quite evidently in the good of that. The question is, "Am I following in the same way in my day?"

Verse 6. 'The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.'

In the light of His understanding that His God has guided and provided that which is entirely in the will of God, the psalmist is happy to fulfil it and rejoice in both the origin of it and the detailed content of it. He is therefore 'The Satisfied Man', as in verse 5.

Corollary to verse 6

The Christian has The Word of God in his hands (literally), and (hopefully) in his heart and mind, and (practically) in his feet, which are also governed by them. He has, then, The Holy Spirit guiding him into all truth, and his beloved Lord in His heart. A very pleasant and elevated position to occupy! Little wonder that he can be content. What more is there to say? Perhaps this? "Am I personally in the enjoyment of what I know to be true and constantly available?"

Verse 7. 'I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.'

Now Whom have we here? The Contented Man, Who is here making an offering to celebrate that a suitable and appropriate gift has been offered to God. To achieve that, God's counsel has helped the psalmist in the decision-making.

Christ, in the path that leads to His inheritance, could bless God for His guidance. Therefore, Christ's own inmost thoughts gave Him light and instruction. Being made aware of what is appropriate, He rejoices that He is in a position to make due offerings to His God.

Corollary to verse 7

In His goodness and grace, the blessed God has seen fit to cause our generation of mankind to be born and grow up at a time when the human race has been allowed to discover increasingly more about the creation of God, not only the earth on which we live, but much about specimens of global, created life.

We have discovered amazing things about the human body, which enable us to provide a quality of medical and nursing care unimaginable to previous generations. Do I appreciate these great blessings and give thanks for them? If so, like the psalmist I shall not hesitate to give thanks for the wonderful blessings received and for the degree to which mankind has been led to minimise the effect of illnesses and accidents for which man is at least largely responsible.

The personal entry of the psalmist, and particularly the Lord Jesus Himself, into the goodness of God, is something we can well understand, knowing Who God is. That we can, in our measure, enjoy such an experience is another matter. Indeed, it is open for us to enjoy in measure, but we must remain aware of the danger of taking it for granted.

Verse 8. 'I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.'

Guided by the counsel of God, and with God always before Him, the Lord Jesus ever found in God His support. It must have been a great encouragement to know that God would never depart or refrain from helping Him. He was always present, not in a casual way, but there at His right hand of strength and support.

Corollary to verse 8

It is always a great encouragement to be aware of the presence and support of the strength of the God Who has saved you. With the guidance of scripture before us, we have every opportunity to follow the example set by the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh. The Lord is totally worthy as the Object for appreciation, Who is always ever present to support.

Verse 9. 'Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.'

There is no wonder that we can now take account of the psalmist as The Confident Man (but not in himself, by himself or for himself). Thus supported, Christ could rejoice even in view of death, and pass through that dark valley with unclouded hope, knowing that His soul would not be left in hades, nor his body suffered to see corruption (Acts 2: 25 – 28).

Corollary to verse 9

It is good for us to know, and enjoy, that the blessing is all dependent on our Lord and Saviour, rather than ourselves.

Verse 10. 'For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption (*in the body*).'

It was a solemn matter indeed that the Christ of God must face up to the thought of the barrier and the distaste of dealing with hell for the soul and corruption for the body.

Corollary to verse 10

We do well to rejoice in the understanding that there was no danger, at all, of our beloved Lord being in such peril.

Verse 11. 'Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.'

The Lord Jesus Christ saw, and experienced for Himself, the path of life through and beyond death, into resurrection, that led Him to the right hand of God in heaven, where there are the fullness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.

Corollary to verse 11

To experience that which is beyond the material, in order for us to live in the spiritual realm, we need the personal knowledge of God in our lives. Psalm 16 has outlined the way to enjoy the richness and depth of that knowledge.

For the believer, there remains the loving presence of the indwelling Christ, the One of Whom David, the Psalmist, wrote of as overcoming death. May God grant that each of us walks with the Lord Jesus along the path to life. When we do so, we will experience a quality of life with which no other can compete.

As we close, let us never forget, or cease to appreciate, that among many other scriptures, Psalm 16 enlightens us as to how our Lord Jesus acted, thought and felt as He fulfilled the role of Meal Offering depicted in other scriptures, and particularly Leviticus chapter two. For this reason, Psalm 16 is very often happily termed The Psalm of the Meal Offering.

For the moment, let me say, "Thank you very much indeed for your patience and interest in listening to this Truth for Today talk number T1228, entitled 'Psalm 16'".

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