

Refuge In The Lord

Introduction. Psalm 16 is identified in its heading as a Michtam of David. The term always stands in the superscription of Davidic psalms occasioned by great danger. A Michtam is translated as a golden psalm or tablet. For this reason, the psalm is referred to as the "golden psalm," and such a title is certainly appropriate, for the subject is as fine as gold. Ainsworth calls it "David's jewel." The confession of confidence in God exemplifies a deep trust in the Lord in both life and death. The setting of this psalm in the life of David is difficult to determine.

I. ***A Portion In Life (Psalm 16:1-8)***

A. Verse 1.

1. This psalm opens with words of trust in God, who alone is able to give shelter (7:1; 11:1; 17:7; Job 7:20). We know that we can turn to God in all hours of trouble with the confidence because He who heard the tears of our faithful High Priest, is both able and willing to help us (Hebrews 5:7).
2. David did not seek deliverance from any special trouble, but prayed that the Lord would continue His mercy towards him. Some trust in friends, rely on pleasure, and put their confidence in money. David prays to God to save him and he knew that God would save him.

B. Verse 2.

1. He further describes his relationship to God as the source of all his blessings. God is "my goodness," i.e., the reason for his existence and joy (73:25). May this be our sentiment during our earthly pilgrimage. David acknowledged the Lord, but he did not see Him as being afar off, but drawing near to Him.
2. It is a greater glory to us that we are allowed to serve God than it is to Him that we offer Him that service. He can do without earthly servants, but we cannot do without a heavenly Father.

C. Verse 3.

1. Delight in God also finds expression in a joyful acceptance of "the saints." The "saints who are in the land" are those consecrated to the Lord (Exodus 19:6). The "saints" are also known as "the excellent ones," as the Lord Himself bestows glory and majesty on His own.
2. When a man places his trust for preservation in the hands of Jesus, he should and will find courage in association with those of like precious faith (2 Peter 1:1). This is fellowship, one of the most beautiful and smeared words in our language -- it is a sharing of a spiritual sense of fraternity.

D. Verse 4.

1. The psalmist strongly states his hatred of idolatry (cf. Hebrews 1:9). Paganism is inconsistent with trust in God. The psalmist makes no mention of their idols in keeping with his declaration that he will not "take up their names" (Hosea 2:17).
2. The same loving heart which opens toward His chosen people is closed against those who rebel against Him. Christians are often slow towards the true Lord, but sinners "hasten after another god." Let their zeal rebuke our tardiness.

E. Verse 5.

1. Having demonstrated his abhorrence of idolatry, and using language reminiscent of the conquest of Canaan, David now recognizes how good the Lord is to His own (Numbers 18:20; Deuteronomy 10:9; 18:1).
2. The greatness of God is evident in the nature of the gift. God gives abundantly to His creation. But He would not give His Son except in an abundance of love (John 3:16).

F. Verse 6.

1. The nature of God's benefits are described as "pleasant" and "delightful." Even as God gave His people a pleasant land as an inheritance, so David rejoices in the generosity of God's goodness to him.
2. Despite all His sorrows, Jesus exclaimed a desire to be obedient (Hebrews 10:7). While no other man was ever so thoroughly acquainted with grief, no other man ever experienced so much joy and delight in service, for no other served so faithfully and with such great results (Hebrews 12:1-2).

G. Verse 7.

1. By day he can say that the Lord gives him counsel, which aids him to live wisely (Psalm 73:24).
2. At night God "instructs" him through the meditation with his inner self, enabling him to grow in understanding (Psalm 77:6).
 - a) "Reins" or "kidneys" represent the deepest, most secret workings and affections of the heart.
 - b) The kidneys and their fat were always to be burnt in sacrifice to indicate that the most secret purposes and affections of the soul are to be devoted to God.

H. Verse 8.

1. The right hand is a place of dignity and honor. In ancient courts of justice, advocates stood at the right hands of their clients (Psalm 109:31).
2. Because of this place of dignity, David was not affected by evil or calamity (cf. Psalm 62:2, 6; 112:6).

II. ***A Preservation In Death (Psalm 16:9-11)***

A. Verse 9.

1. David knew that the visit of his soul to Sheol, or the invisible world of disembodied spirits, would be a very short one, and that his body in a very brief time would leave the grave; this provided him gladness and hope.
2. Wicked men rejoice in appearance, not in heart (2 Corinthians 5:12); their joy is skin deep. This wets the mouth, but it does not warm the heart. Hope is the saint's covering, and that hope is grounded on the word (Psalm 119:81; Hebrews 6:13).

B. Verse 10.

1. David may go into "the grave," but the Lord will not permit his beloved ("Holy One") to suffer eternal alienation. People fear death because they can neither control nor understand it. God will not forget us when we die. Die we must, but rise we shall!
2. In apostolic preaching this verse had a particular significance, as both Peter (Acts 2:25-28, 31) and Paul (Acts 13:35-37) quoted vs. 10 as proof of the resurrection of our Lord. The resurrection of Christ is the basis for confidence of all Christians since they too will not suffer corruption (1 Corinthians 15:42-50).

C. Verse 11.

1. Our goal is to be at God's "right hand." It produces joy and eternal pleasures. "The path of life" signifies the way that leads to life (Proverbs 5:6; 6:23; 10:17; 15:24; John 14:6).
2. Jesus is the first begotten from the dead, the firstborn of every creature (Revelation 1:5; Colossians 1:15). He opened up the way through His own flesh, and then traveled it as the forerunner of the redeemed (Hebrews 10:20; 6:20). Christ, being raised from the dead, ascended into glory to sit at the right hand God, where joy finds its fulness (Hebrews 1:3).

Conclusion. The confession of confidence in God exemplifies a deep trust in the Lord in both life and death. Now you have a little more appreciation as to why it is considered a "golden psalm." For some of us, the time of labor is drawing to a close, and the time of rest is coming. Be glad that you have chosen your refuge in God! If you have not chosen that refuge, it is not impossible for you to change and do the will of God.