

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	Psalms		Pastor/Teacher
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THE FAITHFUL ONE WHO IS AND IS TO COME

Introduction

“It is essential for believers to keep uppermost in their minds the goodness of God, not only as it pertains to this life, but to the next as well. This is [so] important because there are difficult times when believers otherwise might question the Lord’s integrity and doubt his goodness, and consequently lose confidence in his word. Without a firm conviction of the goodness of God, guilty fear takes over, insecurities run away with people, prayer becomes hoping against hope, and praise, if it exists at all, has a hollow ring to it. What is needed is a constant awareness of the goodness and grace of God—he is not capricious; he is not going to give up on his people because they are struggling to do his will; and neither is he going to guide his people through this life only to abandon them when they die. No, he loves the saints with an everlasting love, and it pleases him to do things for them.”¹

Psalm 16 is a reminder that God will not leave you without a hope. The Lord God (YHWH) is the protector, refuge, delight, goodness, sovereign king, and counselor (as we will see) for his people. This Psalm sets before us these wonderful truths that God is for us to such a point that not even death will be able to have victory over us. To that end, this Psalm shows us two things: 1) the faithful servant, and 2) the faithful Lord.

Faithful Servant (Psalm 16:1–9)

This Psalm begins with a request of David. “Preserve me” (v. 1), he petitions God. At this point in the Psalm, David does not make it clear what he wants to be preserved from, but later in the Psalm he makes it clear. But at this point in the Psalm, David asks God to be his “refuge” (v. 1)—a place to hide in safety. In verse 2, David declares that YHWH (“LORD”) is his “Lord” or king and, apart from his God, David has nothing of worth, value, or “good” (v. 2). Because David finds all his joy and goodness in God, he delights in being with God’s people (“saints” and “excellent ones,” v. 3). Further, because God is the delight of David, he will not make an offering to false gods or even put their names on his lips (v. 4). Again, verse 5, David declares that God is all he needs and that YHWH is his “portion” and “cup.” Then, David announces that YHWH is the king who sovereignly upholds all things, even the “lot” and his boundary lines of existence (v. 5–6). In verse 7, David blesses YHWH for being his counselor and guiding him with instruction. As with verse 2 (God being his only good), David again praises God for always being with him (v. 8). In verse 8, what started as a prayer for protection in verse 1, turns into a declaration that he “shall not be shaken.” In other words, what began as a request for preservation turns into a confident statement that he will not be moved. This declaration (v. 8) is the foundation for the glad heart and rejoicing David experiences in verse 9.

Faithful Lord (Psalm 16:10–11)

David moves from rejoicing and gladness in verse 9, to a confidence that the grave (“sheol”) will not hold him. Back in verse 1, David asked to be preserved, but he did not state what it was that he wanted to be preserved from. Here in verse 10, David indicated that he wants to be preserved from

the grave. In other words, since God is his joy and gladness, David does not want to die, but rather, he wants to be preserved from death to enjoy an everlasting life with God forever. This is why he has “fullness of joy” and wants to have “pleasures forevermore” (v. 11) with God in life eternal.

“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” (v. 9–10). Here some see the Psalmist predict the resurrection, while others do not. For example, in his commentary on the Psalms, Anthony Ash states, “In Acts 2, Peter, quoting from the LXX, applies this verse to Jesus’ resurrection. ‘Pit’ has the same consonants as the word for ‘corruption’ (the LXX translation), which lends itself to Peter’s argument (see also Acts 13:35). However Peter may have been guided by God in applying this text, *the psalmist is not teaching resurrection here.*”² In other words, Ash claims that, as we will see, the New Testament claims that the resurrection is in view in Psalm 16, although the author of the Psalm was not intending resurrection here. In response to Ash, it needs to be noted that he is right when he asserts that Peter in Acts 2 quotes this Psalm as biblical (Old Testament) support for the resurrection. “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” (Acts 2:25–31). Thus, at the very least, it is clear that New Testament authors see resurrection language in Psalm 16, even language predicting the resurrection of the “Holy One”—the Messiah, which is Christ Jesus. Peter’s reasoning goes something like this. If God will not let his holy one (king David) see corruption in the grave (i.e., resurrect him), how much more will God not allow his only son (Jesus) to see corruption in the grave and rise him from the dead.

Conclusion

Psalm 16 is a psalm of hope and joy. In this Psalm, David demonstrates that a prayer for preservation can lead to confidence in an unshakableness and confidence in the resurrection of the body from the grave. “The theme of having one’s affections centered on God gives this psalm its unity and ardour.”³ “As the human race ascended the lofty cliffs of life, the first Adam lost his footing and tumbled headlong over the abyss. He pulled the next Adam after him, and the next, and the next, until the whole human race hung in peril. But the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, kept his footing. He stood fast. Thus, all who are united to him by a living faith are secure and can regain the path.”⁴ Just as David trusted in YHWH to preserve him and set his path to life (v. 11), so too we can look to the Son of David as the one who walked the path of life for us and by faith in him, we are able to follow where he leads, even (and especially) past the grave.

ENDNOTES

¹ Ross, Allen P., *A Commentary on the Psalms: Kregel Exegetical Library, vol. 1* (Kregel Academic, 2011), 399.

² Ash, Anthony Lee, *Psalms: The Living Word Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 10* (Sweet Publishing Company, 1980), 75.

³ Kidner, Derek, *Psalm 1-72: Kidner Classic Commentaries* (IVP Academic, 1973), 100.

⁴ Boice, James Montgomery, *Psalms, Volume 1 (1-41)* (Baker, 1994), 135.