

Psalm 16 “The LORD, My Refuge and My Inheritance”
Psalm 16
Acts 2

February 12, 2023

We have seen how the Psalter opens by exploring the theme of refuge.

Psalm 1 sets forth the picture of the blessed man

as the one who delights in the law of the lord.

Psalm 2 shows how the Davidic king is the Son of God

–the one who reigns over the nations with a rod of iron.

–and declares that those who take refuge in the Anointed King are blessed.

Psalms 3-7 then explore different aspects of refuge:

the Psalmists call upon God for deliverance (salvation) from their enemies,
and justice against those who seek to destroy them.

In Psalm 8, David returned to the theme of the Son of God,

or in this case, the son of man – which refers to the Davidic king,

who rules over all things as the Second Adam,

and as a picture of the Messiah to come.

Psalms 9-18 continue to explore the theme of refuge.

Psalm 9 speaks of Yahweh as a “stronghold for the oppressed,”

who “does not forget the cry of the afflicted,”

and calls on the Lord to judge the nations and remember the needy.

Psalm 10 asks God why he delays judgment.

“Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?”

There are times when it doesn’t look like God is going to deliver us.

There are times when the wicked oppress the poor and crush them.

Psalm 11 then rejoices that because God is in his holy temple, in the heavens,

he will see and he will vindicate the righteous.

Psalm 12 warns against the wicked who speak lies–

and calls on Yahweh to “cut off all flattering lips.”

David turns from the evil speech of the wicked,

and remembers that “the words of the Lord are pure words.”

What he has promised, he will do.

Psalm 13, like Psalm 10, asks “How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?”

My enemies are winning, and my foes are rejoicing over me!

And yet in the midst of doubt and confusion,

David does not despair.

He concludes “But I have trusted in your steadfast love;

my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.”

There are times when you cannot see how God will deliver you.

But in the midst of doubt and fear,

I trust in the steadfast love of the Lord,

the covenant faithfulness of Yahweh.

Psalm 14 speaks of the fool who has said in his heart, “there is no God!”

But while bemoaning the fact that the children of man have turned aside

and become corrupt
David still believes God's promises,
remembering that "God is with the generation of the righteous."
And Yahweh is indeed the refuge of the poor.
And having shown that all the children of men have turned aside and become corrupt,
Psalm 15 then asks, "O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent?
"Who shall dwell on your holy hill?"
David answers: (v2-5)
This is to describe all of us.
But it is especially to describe the king.
And as such, it is to describe the Anointed One—the Messiah.

Psalms 14-16 belong together.

Psalm 14 declares that "there is none who does good."

Psalm 15 declares, though, that some may still dwell in God's presence.

And Psalm 16 shows how.

So let's sing Psalm 16

Read Acts 2

Christ is the center of Psalm 16.

Peter, in Acts 2, says that David was a prophet—speaking about the coming of Messiah.

Did the prophets always understand the implications of what they said?

Did they always even know that they were speaking of the future?

The same apostle Peter later tells us in 2 Peter 1:21 that

"no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man,

but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

Did David realize that he was speaking of Jesus?

Maybe. Maybe not.

But whether he realized it or not, he was indeed prophesying about the one to come.

Psalm 16 describes the Son of God in his reliance upon his heavenly Father.

This was to be Israel's attitude toward God.

It was especially to be the Davidic king's attitude.

And it was most emphatically the attitude of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so it is to be the attitude of *us* who are in Christ!

We keep seeing this theme of *refuge* in Book One of the Psalms.

And here it's David's first point!

1. The LORD My Refuge (v1-2)

A Miktam^[a] of David.

*16 Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
2 I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you."*

The only way to avoid Psalm 14—the fool who says there is no God,
is through trusting in the LORD.
The only way to become the blameless man of Psalm 15,
is through trusting in the Lord.

I have no good apart from you.
Seriously?
Do you believe that?
When you learn to take refuge in the LORD –
you are learning to love the LORD your God with all your heart,
and with all your soul, and with all your strength!

And so *of course* I have no good apart from you!
Anything that gets in the way of our communion with God
is a problem!

And because I take refuge in you, I also delight in your people.

2. So I Delight in the Holy Ones vs. Idolaters (v3-4)

*3 As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones,
in whom is all my delight.*

The excellent ones...
In whom is all my delight.

Psalm 1 says that the blessed man does not walk in the counsel of the wicked –
but *delights* in the law of the LORD.

We heard from Psalm 15 last week that the man who will dwell in God's tent
is the one who despises a vile person, but who honors those who fear the LORD.

Now Psalm 16 fleshes this out.

I do not delight in the counsel of the ungodly.
I do not sit in the seat of the scornful.
I delight to share in the communion of saints – the fellowship of God's people.

Taking refuge in the Lord also means delighting in the fellowship of his church.
Worship and fellowship are intimately bound up together.
They cannot exist in isolation.

We were created as worshipers, designed to worship in fellowship with one another.

We will either worship the true God, or we will worship false gods.
We will either walk in the fellowship of the saints, or in fellowship with idolaters.
You will either run after the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
or you will run after another god.

The gods of the nations promise all sorts of blessings,
but their promised blessings prove to be only curses in the end.
Think about how organized sports have taken on a religious aspect.
I have to be careful.
Pitchers and catchers report to spring training tomorrow!
You all know people whose mood will swing all summer long
by how their favorite team is doing.

But it's not just sports.
Shopping can provide a similar sort of worship and fellowship—
finding one's identity, power, pleasure or peace in the worship of "having stuff."

Why do you sin?
I'm not looking for the textbook answer.
I'm looking for the practical answer.
Why do YOU sin?
What temptations are you most susceptible to?
And why do you give in to those temptations?
Isn't it because you expect some blessing? (happiness, power, fulfillment, pleasure...)
For some reason, you are convinced that if you do this,
or if you say that, or if you see this – then you will be satisfied.

But it doesn't work.
The Psalmist speaks the truth: (v4)

*⁴ The sorrows of those who run after^[c] another god shall multiply;
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out
or take their names on my lips.*

"The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply."
Does it ever turn out the way you planned?
Does lust increase your happiness?
Does anger give you greater power?
Oh, there may be an illusion of happiness or power,
but the supposed "blessings" that we sought from other gods,
prove to be nothing but the source of misery and sorrow.
In the moment of temptation,
when sin rears its ugly head,
ask yourself – quickly! – "what lie am I believing?"
Because in order for temptation to be attractive, you MUST believe a lie!

The solution, according to David, is to remember your inheritance.

Remember who you are.

The false gods promise all sorts of blessings and benefits.

So remember instead the benefits of belonging to Christ.

3. The LORD My Inheritance (v5-6)

⁵ *The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.*

⁶ *The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.*

“The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup. You hold my lot.”

The drink offerings of the other gods in Psalm 16:4
are contrasted with Yahweh being declared as “my cup.”

What does it mean to say that the LORD is my cup?

The two other uses of the “cup” in the first book of the Psalter refer to one’s lot in life:

Psalm 11:6 “Let him rain coals on the wicked; fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup”

Psalm 23:5 “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows”

The cup has to do with my situation in life.

But the image of the cup is always connected with the language of judgment.

Perhaps Jeremiah 25 is the most potent usage of the imagery of the cup (Jer. 25:15-29).

¹⁵ *Thus the LORD, the God of Israel, said to me: “Take from my hand this cup of the wine of wrath, and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. ¹⁶ They shall drink and stagger and be crazed because of the sword that I am sending among them.”*

And so Jeremiah takes the cup to the nations (starting with Jerusalem, then Egypt, the Philistines, Tyre, and all the way to Babylon).

And then God says to him:

²⁸ *“And if they refuse to accept the cup from your hand to drink, then you shall say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: You must drink!’ ²⁹ For behold, I begin to work disaster at the city that is called by my name, and shall you go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished, for I am summoning a sword against all the inhabitants of the earth, declares the LORD of hosts.’*

To say that Yahweh is my cup is at once a terrifying statement,
and a comfort beyond all words.

Yahweh is my cup!

The God who gives the cup of his wrath to the nations—
they drink, and fall, and are destroyed—
this God is my cup,
and I will drink of his judgment.

But this is what Jesus said.

I have a cup to drink of.

And then he told his disciples that they also would drink of the same cup!

Terrifying? Yes!

But if I do not drink of him, then I cannot stand in the judgment.

And since our Savior has drunk the cup of God's wrath,
bearing our sin and guilt,
therefore we may declare, "the Lord is my cup!"

He is my portion.

This is the language used of the portion of the priests
(in Nehemiah & Chronicles)

The priests and Levites did not share in the inheritance of Israel,
but God declared that *he* was their inheritance—he was their portion.

With God as his portion, David delights in the beautiful inheritance that is his.

Yes, trials and temptations may surround us,
but we must never forget the glory that is set before us.

Because the Lord is his portion,
the Psalmist declares,

4. So I Am Unshaken in the Night (v7-8)

*⁷ I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.^[d]*

I want you to see how the whole person is involved in this.

Notice the parts of the human person here:

v7 – my kidneys

v8 – my right hand

v9 – my heart – my *glory* – my flesh

v10 – my soul

This isn't the way that we are used to saying it.

We might talk about body and soul –
or mind, and will, and emotion.

So it might be useful for us to think about how David is saying it here!

I bless the LORD who gives me counsel.
The nearness of God brings counsel and instruction.

In the night also my heart instructs me –
or, to put it more literally, my kidneys discipline me.

The kidneys, in Hebrew, are the center of our emotions.
Deep feelings come from our bowels!
(Even in English we talk about “gut feelings”!)

We’ve already encountered the kidneys – in Psalm 7 –
where God tests the hearts and minds (the kidneys and hearts).

But it is probably too cheerful to say “my kidneys instruct me” –
the verb means to discipline or to chasten.
Yes, my kidneys are “instructing” me –
but it is a rather “gut-wrenching” sort of teaching!

(If you look at Psalm 6, verse 1 – you will see the same verb,
O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger,
nor *discipline* me in your wrath.”)

So yes, in the night, my kidneys discipline me –
When the LORD is near, he disciplines those he loves!
When I am centered on him, my gut – my deepest emotions –
discipline me in the night.

There are two kinds of sleepless nights.
One is where you lie awake wracked with pain, with guilt, with anger –
your mind flailing and troubled.
The other is where you lie awake, drawing near to God,
your inward parts meditating on God’s word –
reflecting on all the same things –
but now instructing you in the way of Christ.

There is no such thing as a fun sleepless night!
But there is refreshment when your gut chastens you/your heart instructs you.

⁸ *I have set the LORD always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.*

Verse 8 then focuses on the daytime.
I have set the LORD always before me.
This has to do with your eyes.
Not your literal eyes – obviously – since we cannot *see* God –

but the phrase “before me”
has to do with that which is obviously *right there* in front of me.

It’s the same phrase used in Psalm 10 to refer to what the “practical atheist” cannot see!
I have chosen – by faith – to see what they cannot see.
I have set the LORD always before me.

And as a result – because he *is* at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

Notice that it’s *not* just that I *believe* he is there.

No – he really is there!

Because he *is* at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

The right hand refers to strength.

And to be at the right hand is to be in the position of strength.

This is the first usage of “right hand” in the Psalter –

but the theme has already been introduced:

Psalm 2 had said that the Son of David was the only-begotten Son of God.

Psalm 8 said that the Son of David was given dominion over all things.

But Psalm 16 connects this with the right hand.

Jesus is sitting at the right hand of the Father –

because he is sitting in the position of strength and power.

And in my life, the LORD himself is at my right hand –
when he sits in the position of strength and power – in my life.

The reason why I cannot be shaken is because I am found *in him*.

So think about the parts of the person that we have seen so far:

my kidneys – my feelings/my emotions – discipline me in the night;

my eyes see by faith;

my right hand is fortified – strengthened – by his presence.

Verse 9 has three more parts:

5. The Holy One’s Joy and Pleasure at God’s Right Hand (v9-11)

⁹ *Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being^[e] rejoices;*

my flesh also dwells secure.

My heart is glad.

The heart – in Hebrew – is the center of our thinking and willing.

The word has already been used a dozen times in the first 15 Psalms!

My heart is glad when I meditate on my inheritance in God –

because I know that I belong to him – and he is faithful.

And my whole being rejoices.
literally, “my glory rejoices.”
What *on earth* is “my glory”?

The word *cavod* has to do with *weightiness*.
Glory has weight.
So what does it mean for my “weightiness” to rejoice?!

Actually the answer comes from the Psalms that we have already covered.
We have heard this phrase four times already in the last few weeks!

Psalm 3, verse 3 – “But you, O LORD, are a shield around me;
my glory, and the lifter of my head.”

You, O LORD, are my glory.
My glory – my honor – my weightiness – my reputation – is *you, O LORD*.

Psalm 4, verse 2 – “How long, O men, shall my glory be turned into shame?”
When I am in distress – when I am under attack –
my glory is turned upside down...
(that’s also the point of Psalm 7, verse 5 – when David says, if I am guilty,
then let my enemy “lay my glory in the dust.”)

And in Psalm 8, verse 5, David says that God has made the Son of Man
“a little lower than God, crowned with glory and honor.”

So “my glory rejoices” – my reputation – my honor – my weightiness –
rejoices because I know that my inheritance is God himself!

And therefore my flesh also dwells secure.
This may be the first usage of the word “flesh” in the Psalms –
but it’s perhaps the easiest of all of them –
since it means exactly what it sound like!
My flesh – my “meat” – my body dwells secure.

Why? (v10)

¹⁰ *For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let your holy one see corruption.*

The final “part” of me is my soul.
The soul refers to the deepest innermost part of me.
When God created Adam from the dust of the ground,
he breathed the breath of life into him,

and Adam became a “living soul.”

And because we were made in the image of God,
we were made for fellowship with him.

When our souls are centered on God himself,
when we take refuge in the LORD then our whole person – every part of us –
is rightly ordered towards God, and thus to our neighbors.

And notice what that does to us:

For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol or let your holy one see corruption.

Notice what has happened to “my soul” –
my soul is now referred to as “your holy one” –
the word is “Hasid” – the one who is characterized by *hesed*.
Who shall sojourn in your tent?
Who shall dwell on your holy hill?

A couple weeks ago, we saw that God created us to ask questions.

Notice how verse 11 says it:

*¹¹ You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

Verse 11 does not say:

You make known to me all the answers to life’s questions.
No.

You make known to me the *path* of life.
People sometimes say, “when we get to heaven, we’ll have all the answers!”
Why would we think that?
We are finite creatures.
God is an infinite God.

When will a finite creature come to exhaust all that there is know about an infinite God?
There will always be more to know!
There will always be questions to ask!

The difference between our present experience and our experience of glory is that
“in your presence there is fullness of joy” (now we have but glimpses of joy!)
“at your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (now we have but a taste of that pleasure!)

Psalm 16 may have been written for Israel,
and especially for the King,

but it is distinctively eschatological—
it most emphatically called Israel toward the future.

Why is the Psalmist glad?
Why does his “whole being” (or glory, in the Hebrew) rejoice?
Why does his flesh dwell secure?
Because “you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let your holy one see corruption.”
God had not yet revealed the details of the resurrection.
But he gave to David a glimpse of the joy of eternal life.

And Psalm 16 shows us that the road to eternal life leads through death.
Israel had to understand that the route to glory led through suffering.
David sees that Sheol (the grave) is in his future.
He knows that one day he will die.
But he prophesies that God will not abandon his soul to Sheol,
nor will He allow his holy one to see corruption.

Peter understood what this meant.
Once Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father,
Peter realized that this is what David was talking about.
On the Day of Pentecost (the feast of firstfruits—
as all Israel is bringing the *portion* for the priests and Levites)
The Holy Spirit is poured out upon the church.
The firstfruits of the Kingdom of God comes upon the people of God.
And Peter realized that this meant that Psalm 16 was about Jesus!
This Son of David literally *did not see corruption!*

“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 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.”

And as Jesus has walked the path of life,
as he has been made full of gladness in the presence of his Father,
so now you and I may share in his life and in his joy.
Jesus has entered his inheritance.
And in Jesus, the whole of the new humanity comes into the inheritance of the new creation.

Israel was called to sing this eschatologically.
They were called to sing of this future glory in the present.
And so are we.

We, who live in the last days,
 who have beheld the beginning of the age to come
 in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ,
we must keep our hearts and minds fixed on the glory that will be revealed
 in the revelation of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

As you meditate upon the death of Christ—in his suffering for us,
 and as you meditate upon his resurrection and glory
 at the right hand of the Father,
you need to see that his death and resurrection were the accomplishment
 of the last-days redemption promised through the prophets.

And as you meditate upon the glory that is ours in Christ Jesus,
 do not forget that the Holy Spirit is the downpayment of that inheritance.
You already have a foretaste of heaven in the presence of Christ by his Spirit.