

Our Refuge in Life and Death

Psalms Series

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Bible Text: Psalm 16

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Well, to come back to the book of Psalms for me is like going to a family reunion. It's so good to be back and to see familiar faces spiritually speaking, and what we studied in the times gone by from the Psalms. I know that some of you were not able to be with us when we first started teaching on the Psalms and so let me just hit a very quick reset button. I invite you to turn to Psalm 1 as we open up because the entire book of Psalms, in some ways, it's a bit of an overstatement, the entire book of the Psalms is an exposition of Psalm 1. Psalm 1 lays out very basic fundamentals about spiritual life and the nature of God and walking with him and then the rest of the Psalms in one way or another is just really kind of expanding on what is said in seed form in the beginning of the very Psalter in Psalm 1. I wanted to bring this one thought to your mind from Psalm 1:6 that we focused on many times as we were going through the first 15 Psalms a few months ago. The Psalm says, "The LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish." There is a complete worldview wrapped up in that simple Psalm. There are the people who know the Lord and there are the wicked. The Lord knows who the righteous are, he knows those who love him. He knows those who oppose him. And whatever else happens in the interim time, when the final accounts of heaven are written, when all of world history plays itself out, it will be shown and displayed that the Lord knew and protected the way of the righteous and that the way of the wicked perished even if they prospered for a time here on earth.

There is so much bound up in that. The Lord knows the way of the righteous speaks of his omniscience. The fact that he is able to guarantee an outcome for the righteous and the wicked alike is a statement of his omnipotence, of his sovereignty. The fact that he knows them all means that he must be omnipresent, present in the universe that he governs. And so we see in that one verse, a statement that goes everywhere in the way that we should understand the world and our walks with God and how everything is going to come out. And for us as Christians here today in the New Testament era, there should be a fundamental cornerstone just as we just sang about, that in a profound, definitive, uncompromised sense, it is well with our soul because the Lord knows the way of the righteous, because Christ has fully redeemed us from our sins and therefore the only way that it can turn out for us is good in the end. Anything else would contradict the goodness and the sovereignty of God.

So we know the outcome already as we sit here tonight for those of us who know Christ, it's enough for us to know that the Lord knows our way, that he is good, that he is faithful and therefore we know the outcome before it even occurs. We will not be disappointed in the end. That's just the way that it is. By contrast, for those who don't know Christ, any prosperity here is temporary. Their way is doomed; it is doomed to destruction. And even if they seem to have the upper hand, we talked about that from one of the Psalms when sinners have the upper hand, even when they have the upper hand for a time in politics or in the media or whatever, we can look at that and, in a sense, almost laugh at it recognizing that it is temporary because the Lord not only knows our way but he knows their way and their way is destined to perish in the end.

So from those simple truths which most if not all of you would affirm as you sit here tonight, there is something that we need to see and to understand. The Psalms intend for us to take that knowledge, to take those basic principles and the Psalms help us flesh that out in every area of life. You see, those are not meant to be abstract truths to us that are compartmentalized in our lives and that when we think in church or on Sundays or when we are praying or reading our Bibles these things are good and helpful but when we get into the real world then there is another set of presuppositions that we have to operate from. No, what we're seeing in the Psalms is meant to be a comprehensive worldview that takes in the biggest picture possible for us but also descends into the details of life. It's not simply something that we affirm abstractly. This takes hold of our hearts. This takes deep root in our hearts and affects everything that we think about everything in life even to the greatest issues of life and death.

With that in mind, turn back to Psalm 16 with me, if you will. Generally speaking in way of an overview, the theme of Psalm 16, it's a reflection on the joy and the blessing that come from having a single-minded affection for the God of the Bible. Psalm 16 is a Psalm that is not wrapped up in immediate trials and pressures that are on David as he is writing. He's looking at the totality of life and death from a big picture view and what he gives us here is he works out the implications of Psalm 1:6 and he gives us clarity to shape our trust in God for life and for death. As he lays this out, what I want you to understand is: he's not addressing a particular problem in life.

Let me stop here for a moment. We tend to approach Psalms in that way. We come to the Psalms when we have a particular trouble and we're looking for a passage of Scripture that will encourage us and comfort us and that's fine, that's part of the reason why we have the Psalms but what I want you to see tonight and the way I want us to approach Psalms 16 is to recognize that some of the Psalms do much more than that and Psalm 16 is a Psalm that encourages us to step back and take the whole big picture view of life into account, to have a comprehensive worldview, if you will, about the nature of what it means to be a follower of the God of the Bible and what the implications of that are for your life and what the implications are, are this: is that given who God is, given the fullness of what we were just describing moments ago, that that calls for a response from us of a commitment to complete faithfulness to him and that there is settled in our minds a fundamental premise, a fundamental presupposition that shapes all of life that there is a nonnegotiable commitment in the core of our being that says, "I will be faithful to this

God no matter what," and that we gladly abandon the back door, if you will. We close the back door behind us and lock it, that we're not going to exit the back door and stray into unfaithfulness, that we're not going to now give ourselves over to a life of sin or a life of unfaithfulness or forgetting this God that we have come to know. We consciously close that door, we lock it, we bolt it shut and we say, "I am only going forward. I would not go any other direction. There will be nothing to mark my life but faithfulness to God," is the core conviction of the heart.

Now, we know from other Scriptures that there will be times when we struggle and sometimes we're tempted and sometimes we fall short and fail, but that is not the focus of Psalm 16. We're not making allowances for those failures here in Psalm 16, instead David is purifying the commitment so that it has a guiding force. There is a fundamental power in his heart that is responding that says, "The premise of my life will be shaped by faithfulness to my God." We're going to see that in the first half of the Psalm. Then along with that, ah, this is so magnificent, along with that in the second half of the Psalm is that he is expressing a confidence that God will bless him as a result of his faithfulness and even more so, deriving from God's goodness and his faithfulness to his people, David is absolutely confident in the blessing of God on his life so that he settles in his mind that God will bless him because God is good. Because he belongs to this God, it is certain that God will always bless him and that nothing could ever contradict the final goodness of God in his life. So there is this commitment to faithfulness in response to the character of God and in recognizing his goodness, there is an utter, absolute confidence in his blessing upon his life in the end.

Now, those are fundamental principles simply stated. What you see is what you're going to see as we go through Psalm 16 is the way that that works itself out in life. This commitment to faithfulness has very practical consequences. This confidence in God's blessing is one of eternal certainty that David wrote about even 3,000 years ago. So that's the overview. That's where we're going. We're going to see these 2 convictions that shape our relationship to God, that shape our affections and utterly shape the way that we think. I say this often, I think, I know that I think it often: what I want you to see and I'm just so grateful that you in this room are faithful to be here when we gather together and we open God's word together, it's so important for you, it's so valuable over time what consistent exposure to the teaching of God's word does because what we're going to see here in Psalm 16 is an entire way to think. It's more than just individual issues, that we are seeing that which should shape the entire way that we think. Our minds are being formed by what David is instructing us here. This isn't a little spiritual bump to get you through until Sunday, this is laying out a whole life view that is defined in relationship to the God of the Bible.

Well, with that in mind, let's dive into it and enjoy this together, shall we? Point 1 here tonight is you see in Psalm 16 David making a commitment of faithfulness. He's making a commitment to faithfulness. He opens Psalm 16 with a prayer of pure, undivided devotion to God. Look at it here in verse 1 where he says,

1 Preserve me, O God, for I take refuge in You.

He's appealing to the mighty God. If you weren't here last week, we looked at the 3 names of God that are discussed here that David addresses God with in the first 2 verses and I'm not going to repeat all of that material here tonight. But he's addressing God in his capacity as the mighty sovereign of the universe as we open up here in verse 1, "Preserve me, O God. Preserve me, O mighty One." He appeals to the power and the omnipotence of God to keep him secure as he goes through life. It's an opening appeal for protection and he's expressing submission to God in the process. He says, "I said to the LORD," in verse 2,

2 I said to the LORD, "You are my Lord; I have no good besides You."

So in this prayer, he appeals to God as the mighty one of the universe and he's saying, "Lord, I am coming under your wings for protection. I am confident in your power and I submit to your role as my Master, as my Lord. I submit to you and I," watch this, "I lock all of my affections up into your very person. You are my Lord. I have no good beside you. There is nothing that I desire, Lord, more than you. I don't desire sin in light of your presence. There is not a human relationship that has a higher claim on my affections than you because, Lord, you are my good. You alone are the owner of the central throne room of my heart. I bow before you. I love you immensely. I love you with all of my power. I come into your presence and I bow down in worship in commitment to you." That's what he's saying so we see right from the very start, beloved, we see right in the very way that this Psalm opens up that David is putting all of his affections into and under the watchful care of his God and he says, "I exclude any competing affections. There is you, God, in first place, in second place, third place, tenth place. There is no one that comes close. There is nothing that comes close. There is no prosperity, there is no other human love. There is nothing that will compete for my affection for you. I have no good beside you." He locks himself up into the care and concern of Yahweh and he leaves himself there and he leaves himself no alternative, no second way.

That's very challenging, isn't it, to think that way. You know, as you examine your heart and your affections for God, for the God of the Bible, for your Lord Jesus Christ. Here's the question for you, beloved: is it that clear in your mind as you think about your relationship with Christ, as you think about the one who suffered and bled to purchase your redemption from sin? Is it that clear in your mind that the whole world could pass away, that you could lose it all and that you would still be secure and content in God? That there would be nothing that would compete with your affections for him? Do you really say and as we sung earlier when you sing, "It is well with my soul," is that really the fundamental conviction of your heart? And has that worked its way out in your affections in a way that is clear and there is no contest over your heart in that way? That's what David is expressing, that kind of exclusive affection. That supreme love for the God to whom he prays.

What's he praying here? He says, "Preserve me." He's asking God to keep him safe and some commentators, many commentators have speculated on maybe there is a particular trial that David was having and they tried to posit different biblical examples that would

have given rise to this Psalm. I think that misses the point. When you read the rest of Psalm 16 and just keep this in mind as we go through the rest of it here, as you read the rest of Psalm 16, he is not complaining about any circumstances. He is not expressing fear from foes who are after his life. He's not expressing a complaint about physical debilitation that he's feeling. Rather he's expressing this confidence of which we talked. He's speaking in terms of commitment and confidence and I believe that what he is saying here when he says, "Preserve me, O God, for I take refuge in You," the question is, preserve you in what? Keep you in what? Well, what does he say in the rest of the Psalm? I believe what he is saying is, "Lord, I am conscious right now of the supremacy of your being in my life, of this heart commitment that I have and this confidence in your blessing. I'm asking you to keep me in this realm of spiritual growth and maturity and confidence and faith. Keep me here because this is a joyous place of confidence for my soul and I don't want to leave from where I'm at. Preserve me in the confidence and commitment that I am about to express in what follows in the rest of this Psalm."

So beloved, if you're here tonight and you are confident in Christ and you're conscious of relying on him and you're conscious of his goodness and that's in the realm of your awareness here tonight and you rest in that and the roots of your soul are finding moisture to draw sustenance from in that, then ask God to keep you there. "God, I'm conscious of your blessing. I'm conscious of gratitude. Keep me here." You know, sometimes and I did this myself once many years ago, sometimes people think that there is a maturity and there is a spiritual aspiration and they will pray for trials to come into their life. I've talked about this before, maybe not from this pulpit, but people say, "I want to grow and so I want God to..." and they start to pray, "God, bring trials into my life so that I might grow." I don't think that's wise. I think that's actually unbiblical. I think, you know, it's a misguided thought about what it means to walk with God. When people pray that way and I'm guilty of this so I'm condemning what I used to be, what I have done in the past, when people pray that way, they are far too over confident of their spiritual ability to respond to trials in their lives. It is a boastful prayer that says, "God, give it to me because I can take it." Why would you pray that way? Why would you invite trial and sorrow into your life in prayer before God? If you're conscious of God's blessing, thank him for it and say, "Lord, keep me right here." You know, look, I prayed that way one time and I immediately entered into trials of such an awful nature that I never want to go back to that again. I'm like the little girl that reached up to get a sandwich off of the stove and the stove was hot and it burned her hand and she pulled back, "Ow!" and you didn't have to teach her not to do that again.

Beloved, what I want you to see is that we should so treasure the goodness of God, so treasure the realm of his blessing, that we ask him to keep us and to strengthen us in that realm of faith that we are conscious of. If trials come as they inevitably will, deal with those when they come up but we don't actively court them as though our present sense of joy and contentment in God was something to be lightly discarded for the sake of a false view of spiritual growth and maturity. If you are conscious of the blessing of God, if you're conscious that, "My heart commitment is pure as well as it can be. I'm confident in the goodness of God." Then pray, "God, keep me here and I take refuge in you and preserve me in this spiritual confidence that I'm mindful of."

That's how David prays as he opens up. God is the source of his blessing, his first affection and as David has clarified that in his mind, expressed his commitment to faithfulness, as you move on in the Psalm you see that it has great implications for his personal relationships and the people that he wants to associate with. Look at verses 3 and 4 with me. Again, this is all under the first point of a commitment to faithfulness. Your commitment to faithfulness, beloved, has an immediate, direct impact on the kinds of human relationships that you seek out and have in life. David says in verse 3

3 As for the saints who are in the earth, They are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight. 4 The sorrows of those who have bartered for another god will be multiplied; I shall not pour out their drink offerings of blood, Nor will I take their names upon my lips.

What David is doing here is he is expressing and he is working out the implications of his fidelity to God. He said, "God, I am committed to you. You are the owner of my affections and therefore as a result of that fundamental conviction, that's going to determine who I associate with in this life." He says, "God, as I think and reflect upon my commitment to be faithful to you, I want you to know that your people, the saints who are in the earth, the majestic ones, they are the ones in whom I delight. God, I identify with your people. I identify with your godly ones. Their welfare is my desire. Their love and fellowship is where I find my human delight. I am delighted to be with your people." These verses express David's view of the people of God. It's their welfare, their love, their affections that he shares in. Stated differently: he cast his lot in with the people of God and he says, "That's where I want to be." And when I look out on you and I see most of you twice a week here, you know, I'm mindful of the fact that that's what you're doing. When you're here week after week, Sunday, Tuesday, and you are together with each other throughout the week in other times, you're expressing the kind of commitment that David is expressing. You delight in the fellowship of the people of God. You delight in the teaching of God's word. That's why you're here. It's a mark of a true believer.

By contrast, David as he goes on, he consciously separates himself from idolaters. Look at verse 4 again. He says, "The sorrows of those who have bartered for another god will be multiplied." He said, "Those who do not honor you, God, those who follow a false God, they are going to suffer immense sorrows and it will be multiplied and their sorrow will eventually overwhelm them. I realize the outcome of their unfaithfulness and their disbelief, God, and it does not come out well with them." Do you see how this just applies Psalm 1:6, "the way of the wicked will perish"? He's just articulating that principle in another way here and so he separates himself. He says, "I won't be identified with their false worship. I won't take the names of their gods on my lips."

So his faithfulness to God, watch this, his faithfulness to God determined the nature of his relationships with men. He was going to pour his energies and loves in with the people of God. He was going to separate himself from sinners who did not want anything to do with his God. We're not talking about reaching out to people with evangelism here, we're talking about who do we cast our lot in with? We're not talking about reaching out

to people who are lost but who do we associate with? Who do we share affections with? Who do we enjoy our time with? Where do we find common interest? Common love? Common desires? Well, that becomes really searching, doesn't it? And sometimes as new Christians, people have to kind of sort through this and sort through their relationships and realize that the friends that they had as unbelievers are no longer fit companions because these companions are still committed to their sinful ways, their false gods, and you just come to see, "You know what? I have to separate from that. I have nothing in common with that mindset, with that worldview."

That's what David is expressing here and it's good for us to think about that. Watch this, beloved, this is so very important: as Christians, speaking to you as Christians, God has blessed us, hasn't he? He has been good to us. He has showered us with mercy and goodness and it only gets better as we go forward into eternity. Well look, as a principle of the fundamental loyalties of your heart, the goodness of God and the way that he has showed goodness to you means that he has a claim on your fidelity, on your affections, on your loyalties and that expresses itself in the people that you choose to relate with on earth. It affects our human associations. Beloved, if we're thinking clearly, if we're thinking clearly, it should be clear in your mind, there should be no contest, it should be a matter of firm conviction that your hands start to get animated as if you were Italian, nothing against Italians if there are Italians here. But if you talk with your hands, your hands start to move and say, "God has blessed me and I will be faithful to him in return."

Look over at 2 Corinthians 6 where you see a New Testament expression of this principle. 2 Corinthians 6:14. Ah, this just affects things. This drives the way that we approach life. 2 Corinthians 6:14 says, "Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols?" You see, we're meant to think through these things and say, "You know, if their heart is committed and convinced and is unmoving from their idolatrous sinful ways, we have nothing in common. How could we? How could he who is committed to rebellion against God have fellowship with me who is in submission to him and I have no good beside him?" How could that be?

Verse 16, we're the temple of the living God. "Just as God has said, 'I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God and they shall be My people. Therefore, Come out from their midst and be separate,' says the Lord. 'And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,' Says the Lord Almighty." Somewhere in our lives there is this principle of separation that comes into place and I know that some of you have given up earthly friendships that once were dear to you because you realized as a growing Christian that there was simply an inconsistency in maintaining that close relationship with the person who is committed to sin. Good on you. That is a proper expression of spiritual growth and I'm confident of the blessing of God in your life as you pursue that and as you approach life in that way. You see, the whole thought of spiritual adultery, of being unfaithful to God should just be absolutely abhorrent to us and we should not be

reluctant to say, "The core commitment of my heart is faithfulness to God and God helping me, I will not be unfaithful to him. I will not associate with those who love rebellion against him. By contrast, I find that my natural love, my natural environment is with the most humble people of God." It's huge and all of a sudden the things of this world grow strangely dim and the allure of those who build popularity on their sinful lifestyles is not even appealing to us anymore. They can have their popularity. They can have the wealth that comes from prostituting themselves before men. They can have it. I want no part of it because," you say to yourself, "because my heart is with my God and I know that he condemns that."

Martyn Lloyd Jones, the great Bible teacher, rose to prominence as a medical doctor in London before he left his practice to enter full-time Christian ministry. His decision to leave medicine was not made lightly. He said, in fact, later on in his life, that it was a very great struggle for him. There was a degree of attachment that he had to a doctor's lifestyle that he first had to lay aside before he could move with full conviction into Christian ministry. In the midst of his struggle, Lloyd Jones went to a theater performance with some friends. "The glamour of the play, the theater and the surrounding city sights left many enchanted with the evening." You can picture that in your mind. But there was a different kind of attraction that captivated Martyn Lloyd Jones' attention when he left the theater after the conclusion of the performance. In his own words he said, and I quote, "A Salvation Army band came along playing some hymn tunes and I knew that these were my people. I suppose I had enjoyed the play but when I heard this band and the hymns, I said, "These are my people. These are the people I belong to and I'm going to belong to them." That's an expression of what David is talking about here. Yes, there was the allure of the world but given the choice when it was side-by-side with him, the humble people of God were the ones that he cast his lot into and he went to a remote church and preached for 10 years to blue-collar, simple people before he entered into his prime ministry in his pulpit in London. The point here, beloved, is that the person who separates from ungodly influences is showing the mark of true salvation. Who you cast your affections with, who you spend your most time with, where it is that you are drawing upon in your relationships, is a thermometer that placed into your soul indicates the warmth of your devotion to God.

Now, David goes on, going back to Psalm 16, if you would. Here in this closing portion of the opening section, he expresses the exclusivity of his affection to God. Look at Psalm 16:5. He says,

5 The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You support my lot. 6 The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me.

He's expressing here the purity of his satisfaction in the person of God and he says, "Lord, you are what I will receive in life and that is enough to me. That is beautiful to me. Your person is my reward. Who you are is the gift to me. That is the outcome of my life and I find that beautiful and pleasing to me," is what he says. He says, "The LORD is the portion of my inheritance." If you remember back when we surveyed Joshua a few

weeks ago, God distributed in the Old Testament the land of Canaan to the different tribes of Israel and the section of the Promise Land that each tribe received was their inheritance from the Lord. It was the place where they would physically live and receive their blessing. What David is saying here is that he sees the Lord himself as his inheritance. It is the Lord himself that is his blessing. By knowing God, by being in submission to him, by being in a relationship with him, he has the blessing, he has the reward, he has everything that he could possibly want.

What David is expressing in these 2 verses is the complete nature of his devotion. He is expressing his final satisfaction in God alone and he's just expressing this love and this commitment and this devotion and this faithfulness to God in prayer, declaring it before men saying, "I want you to know that my lot is with the Lord and I'm content there." And his satisfaction, one man has said that God is most glorified when we are most satisfied in him. David is saying, "I find my complete satisfaction in Yahweh and in that, I am expressing the fullness of my commitment to him. It's not that I need Yahweh and something else to make my heart satisfied, I have Yahweh and Yahweh alone is enough." Here in the New Testament era, there should be this sense, this realization, this aspiration of our heart that says, "I have Christ and that is enough to satisfy my soul. I have the one who laid down his love in love for my soul. This one who gave himself for me. Who loved him and gave himself up for me. I would boast in nothing, I would glory in nothing but the cross of Christ because in Christ, I find the one who loved me to that extent and in response to his love, I give him all of my love and all of my affection without distraction. If I have Christ, I have it all."

So those of us with Christ would look at Psalm 16:6 and in an even greater way than David said, "The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places. The boundary marks of my life, the boundary lines of my life are found centered on the Lord Jesus Christ. I have it good. This is pleasant to me. This is pleasing to me. I'm with Christ. My earthly circumstances fade in importance by comparison. Indeed, my heritage, what belongs to me, my heritage in Christ is beautiful to me." And it's instructive for us men to realize that David doesn't hesitate to use words like "pleasant" and "beautiful" to describe his appreciation for the gift of God in his salvation. Do you see how he is just expressing this fullness of commitment? This commitment to faithfulness?

Well, that's the first 6 verses. As you proceed in the rest of Psalm 16, it only gets better. He's expressing because he's expressing more than just a commitment to faithfulness here. It's more than David lifting his heart up, as it were, and offering it to God in an act of pure devotion and worship. It's more than that. He's expressing as you go through the rest of the Psalm, a confidence that God is going to bless him. He's expressing a confidence in blessing so point 1, he was expressing a commitment to faithfulness but now he's expressing here in the rest of the Psalm, point 2: a confidence in blessing. And he articulates in verses 7 and 8 his serene, peaceful confident, assured view of the future. Look at verses 7 and 8. He says,

7 I will bless the LORD who has counseled me; Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night. 8 I have set the LORD continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

This is a statement of complete confidence about what the future holds for him and it's totally separate from his circumstances. It has nothing to do with knowing how this trial or that works out. It has nothing to do with knowing the outcome of his life. He says, "God is at my right hand. God is at the place of preeminence and exultation in my heart and as a result of that, I am confident that I will not be shaken. I will not be moved. God is with me." And beloved, this is so practical and personal: God is not a theoretical concept to David. He's not a theological construct. It's personal. God to David is who he really is. God is a living person who is with him throughout all of his life. It would be abhorrent to David to hear as some people out in the world say, "Ah, the Big Man upstairs." What a shameful way to allude to God. David reveres him. David loves him and this great and compassionate and faithful God so completely consumes his affections that he says, "With this God with me, I am unconquerable. My heart cannot be moved because it is so completely anchored in affection for this one who is my God." And we ask ourselves, "Is that the way that we feel? Is that the way that we think? Is that the way that we respond to our Christ?" Are we so conscience of his presence? Is it so real to us that we can express it in this way with a confidence in blessing that says, "I will not be shaken"? Romans 8:38, "Who can separate us from the love of Christ?" That's actually verse 35. "shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" No, "I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Complete confidence. Settled. That's the thing. This is settled in his mind. It doesn't rise and flow and ebb and flow with his circumstances. He is expressing a settled conviction that God is good, God is sovereign, God is always with him so the destination can only be positive. It can only be good.

So, far from David being in a time of distress when he writes this Psalm, I think that he's in a period of rest where he's able to clarify these convictions. You know, you know from experience that there are times when trials hit and sometimes this view of things gets a little bit cloudy. Well beloved, listen, if you're in a time of blessing, that's the time to seek God all the more and let these convictions and these affections be crystallized and clarified in your mind so that they go even deeper, so that what you see in the light is what establishes your mindset toward life and that when the trials come and when the clouds overshadow you, you don't deny in the darkness what you came to know in the light. David here is writing in a time where things were clear to him and he expresses these settled convictions and they helped to carry him when the trials came later in life. Psalm 23 is similar in import. Verse 4 of Psalm 23 says, "I fear no evil, for," what? "You are," what? "With me." I fear no evil for you are with me. You are my shepherd. You guide me, direct me, provide for me. Verse 8 of Psalm 16, "He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken." These are the settled convictions of the person who truly knows Yahweh.

And listen, beloved, let's get personal about this and let's take this and work this all the way through. This challenges us, if you are like me and you tend toward a more

pessimistic bent, you know, and you have 10 reasons why things can go bad with every situation that comes up. Notice what David is doing here. We need to address that pessimistic streak in our spirits, in our constitutions, in our dispositions and correct it biblically. Notice what David is saying. He is praising God now as he writes this Psalm. He's praising God now because he's confident that God will bless him in the future. He doesn't wait until he experiences the blessing and says, "Oh, I will praise him then." No, he says, "Right now I'm confident. Right now I'm telling you, I will not be shaken. My heritage is beautiful to me right now because he's with me right now." And that defines and shapes the way that he looks at the future.

You see, when you work it all the way through then it could be no other way. Look, listen to me: if God is really who you say you believe that he is, every one of you here would say, almost everyone without exception would say, "He is sovereign. He is good. He is faithful." If we sang hymns like that, you would stand up and you would sing that from your heart, wouldn't you? You would sing those things. Well look, if that's true, then work out the implications of it. If he's good and gracious and faithful now and he is the unchanging God, then that's not going to change in the future and so by what twisted sense of logic do we look at the future with fear and anxiety if our God is who we say that we believe him to be? If this good and gracious and faithful God is always with us, then it can't possibly do anything other than come out good for us in the end. That's why David can say, "He is at my right hand, I won't be shaken." Spiritual confidence. Spiritual maturity.

Listen, there are those who are out and get air time in Christian magazines and on the internet and all of that who glory in their doubt, who like to question things and expose their spiritual uncertainties for all the world to see and there are plenty of people who will praise them for that kind of spiritual exhibitionism. Don't be taken in by that. Doubt is not good. Faith is good. Confidence in God is good. To doubt God in light of what he has revealed himself to be in the Scripture, doubt in light of Christ crucified and resurrected and ascended into heaven, doubt is sin. By what basis do we cast questions on the character of God, on the sovereignty of God? By what righteous basis do we question his character and his intentions for his people? That's not the mark of faith to question that. To do it in a settled way, in an ongoing way and not just in a moment of weakness is a sign of unbelief. No, beloved, for you and me, for those of us gathered under the teaching of the Psalms and the word of God, let's be like David, shall we? Let's settle it in our minds right here, right this moment that says, "Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken." He knows the outcome because he knows his God. Everything else is details.

Imagine what would happen, fantasize with me for a moment, imagine something with me for a moment: imagine how it would transform our prayer lives even, your prayer life, if instead of focusing and majoring on our needs and the physical and circumstantial problems that we are facing in this day and week in our lives, imagine what would happen, imagine how it would be transformed if instead we spent a greater amount of time thanking God that he was at our side and affirming in prayer our confidence that he will always be good, gracious and faithful to us because we are his people. Imagine how

that would change the atmosphere of your prayers from one of desperation to one of serenity and confidence. That's what David is expressing here.

Look at verse 9. David's soul is rejoicing. He says,

9 Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely.

We talk often about noticing words like "therefore." "He's at my right hand, I will not be shaken, therefore," here's the implication that he draws out of that, "because he's at my right hand, because I will not be shaken, therefore the implication of this is that my heart is glad and my glory rejoices and my flesh also will dwell securely." He's expressing in multiple ways that with the word "heart" and "flesh" and "his glory," his inner man is saying, "There is joy. There is security. I'm glad as a result of all of these things. The reality of who God is and who I am in relationship to him drives my disposition toward life." Wow. Do you see what I mean when I say that these things shape the way that we think? This shapes everything about the way, this shapes the fundamental way that you view life and process everything that happens to you. There is nothing that is outside the boundaries of what this encompasses in your inner man.

David is undivided in his confidence. He is not like James describes in chapter 1, verse 8, he is not a double-minded man who is unstable in his ways. David is expressing a settled maturity. God is glorified in his heart and, beloved, to the extent to which you recognize that your heart is not quite there yet, you haven't come to that point yet in your Christian experience, make this tonight the aspiration that, "I want to move in that direction. I reject being a faithless, doubting, professing Christian. I reject that. I want to be like David. Lord, move me in that direction. Move me so that I would be settled and confident and consistently proclaiming my confidence in you and my satisfaction in you."

Now we get to the best part of the Psalm. We haven't even gotten to the good part yet. It's all good but, I mean, David comes to a great climax here in verse 10. His confidence soars to profound and breathtaking heights. In verse 10, he works this all the way through so that it encompasses even his view of death. Verse 10, he says, "My flesh will dwell securely," there at the end of verse 9, "For." He's drawing out another implication. He's just working through implications and taking it all the way to its logical conclusion.

10 For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

Sheol is a reference to the realm of the dead. What David is saying here in verse 10, even as an Old Testament saint, is this, he's saying, "Even death won't separate me from this gracious God who is with me." He says and he's working this all the way through, before Christ, before the resurrection and he says, "I belong to this living God and he is good and he is faithful and that means that when I die, he will still be good and faithful to me and therefore the grave will not be the end of my existence. The grave will not bring a

separation between me and my God. It couldn't be that way because God is too good and faithful to his people."

This is an Old Testament expectation of eternal life and yet it's even more breathtaking than that. David here in this verse is actually prophesying about the eventual resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is no question about that. The New Testament makes this very clear. Turn over to the book of Acts 2 as we'll see this as Peter is preaching on the day of Pentecost, preaching to those who crucified Christ. Acts 2:24, in the midst of this great sermon that he preaches, he quotes from this very passage in the Psalms. He says in verse 24, speaking about the resurrection of Christ he says, "God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power." Watch this, verse 25, "For David says of Him, 'I saw the LORD always in my presence; for He is at my right hand, so that I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted; moreover my flesh also will live in hope; because You will not abandon my soul to Hades, nor will you allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of gladness with Your presence.'"

Notice what he says in verse 25, David is speaking of Christ when he said these words in Psalm 16. David, a thousand years before Christ, from this position of confidence in the blessing and goodness of God was moved by the Holy Spirit to speak of the ultimate resurrection of our Savior. Scripture defines that for us. It says in verse 30 there, I shouldn't skip over verse 29, "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day." He was physically buried, although his spirit was with the Lord. But he's talking about the holy one not undergoing corruption and so verse 30, "He was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne. He looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay." Psalm 16 is a direct prophecy of the resurrection of Christ.

Look over at Acts 13, the Apostle Paul draws on this passage as well. Acts 13:34, the Apostle Paul preaches and says, "As for the fact that God raised Christ up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.' Therefore He also says in another Psalm, 'You will not allow Your Holy One to undergo Decay.' For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay; but He whom God raised did not undergo decay. Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you." David wasn't saying that he himself would not undergo physical decay, he was saying that Christ is the one who would not undergo decay.

Let's go back to Psalm 16 as we wrap this up. In Psalm 16, David is expressing a profound inner sanctification. He is expressing a significant level of spiritual maturity expressed in a mature commitment to faithfulness and a confident expectation of God's blessing on his life and that commitment and trust provide a context for us to understand

the resurrection of Christ. Beloved, listen to me, this has direct bearing on your soul: these words about the resurrection came as David was reflecting and expounding on the goodness and faithfulness of God to his people and he says, "God is so faithful that not even death will separate us from him." David says, "God is so powerful that death could not bring decay to his Christ." Death. Decay. They go together. Not to Christ. That's how supreme the power and faithfulness of God is.

Now watch this, watch what this means for you, those of you who tremble at the thought of death, let that be put away from your soul here tonight. We know the same God that David knew but now we have even more than David had when he wrote those words. For us, Christ has come. We look back now and see that Christ is resurrected. Christ said in John 14:19 to his disciples, "Because I live, you will live also." We have no fear of death. God brought Christ through the resurrection and by our union with Christ, we know for a certain fact that he will bring us through death to the ultimate resurrection as well. We are joined together with Christ. What happened to him will happen to us. Did he have a physical resurrection? Then we will too.

There is no fear of death as a result. That's why we can say with David, look at Psalm 16:11, we say with a confidence born of a knowledge of God and a true knowledge of Christ, David says, he concludes on this final word of confidence that stretches into the realms of eternity,

11 You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is
fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

God will lead us in life. Our Christ will lead us through death. He will bring us safe to the other side. He will give us because he loves us, pleasures at his right hand forever. And when we know this God and we know his intentions for us, what can we do except be committed to faithfulness and confident in his ultimate blessing. We go out tonight in confidence. In peace. In serenity. In a joyous love for our God.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, we trust you and we commit ourselves to faithfulness before you here this evening. You are our highest aspiration. You are our fullest joy and in you, Father, we fear not even the grave. We fear not death. We do not fear the process of dying because, Father, you are at our right hand, we will not be shaken. Help us to live in light of these truths and these affirmations that we have made tonight. Give us a corresponding courage that is incomparable, our God, to live this life to your glory. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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