

O Lord our God and our Father,
satisfy us in the evening with your lovingkindness, that we
may sing for joy and be glad all of our days. Make us glad, O God, according
to the days you have afflicted us, according to the years we
have seen evil. Let the favor of the Lord our
God be upon us and confirm the work of our hands. Yes, Father,
confirm the work of our hands. And so to that end, we pray,
You will send the Holy Spirit down here into this place, that
You would let Your majesty, Your glory appear to Your servants
and to their children, O God, that our hearts would be buoyed
up with faith and hope and love. and that we would be strengthened
to trust you, O God. For without faith it is impossible
to please you. He that comes to God must believe
that you are, and that you are a rewarder of those who seek
you diligently. And so come this evening, we
pray, and grant faith to those who have it not, and strengthen
faith, O Lord, to those who have it, that we may grow more and
more in our confidence, in our God's faithfulness, O Lord. For you know, Father,
that as
strong as our faith is, it is weak. And we pray, help, O Lord. We believe, help Thy
our unbelief. For Jesus' sake we pray, amen. Please take your seats. If you
would, turn with me in your copy of The Psalter to the 16th Psalm.
I'm going to be reading this evening from
the New American Standard Version. Please listen carefully. This
is the word of God. Amichtam, of David. Preserve me, O God, for I take
refuge in you. I said to the Lord, you are my
Lord. I have no good beside you. As for the saints who are in
the earth, they are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight. The sorrows of
those who have
bartered or have hastened for another God will be multiplied.
I shall not pour out their drunk offerings of blood, nor will
I take their names upon my lips. The Lord is the portion of my
inheritance and my cup. You support my lot. The lines
have fallen to me in pleasant places. Indeed, my heritage is
beautiful to me. I will bless the Lord who has
counseled me. Indeed, my mind instructs me
in the night. I have set the Lord continually
before me. Because he's at my right hand,
I will not be shaken. Therefore, my heart is glad.
My glory rejoices. My flesh also will dwell securely,
for you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, nor will you allow
your Holy One to undergo decay. You will make known to me the
path of life. In your presence is fullness of joy. In your right
hand there are pleasures forevermore. Amen. The grass withers and the
flower falls off. but the Word of God endures forever. Well, our psalm this evening
gives us a powerful picture of the life of faith, what it means
to look to God and what we find in Him when we do. Alan Harmon
in his commentary on the psalm says, this psalm was probably
written while David was an outlaw, when he was alienated from his
property and exposed to false gods. He repudiates the thought

of yielding allegiance to such gods, for his trust is firmly placed in Israel's Savior. And I agree with Harmon. This Psalm has the smell of an outlaw about it, a man running for his life, a man fearing for his life. If he wasn't fearing for his life, why would he say, why would he take confidence that you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, to the realm of the dead, the grave? It seems that David is fearful.

He feels perhaps Saul and his accomplices hounding him. He feels harried. He feels the arms of Saul's ambushing commandos, as it were, creeping up on the left and on the right, a bit of pincer grip movement coming in around him. And he is in danger. He cries out to God, where else can he go? God alone can help him. God alone can deliver him. He feels that he's lost every earthly portion, so he looks to God as his portion. He's lost every earthly good, and he finds goodness in God. He feels he has nothing on earth, and then he remembers, oh, I have everything in heaven. It's a picture of the life of faith. And it points, of course, beyond David, whose faith many times faltered. He numbered the troops and grieved God's Holy Spirit when he did. He said, all these things are against me. He cried out in a besieged city, I'm cut off from before God's eyes. There are many times David's faith faltered. And this psalm points beyond David, of course, to great David's greater son, Jesus Christ, and is quoted and referred to in the New Testament to describe Christ and the prophecy of his resurrection.

But it's a picture of faith. And it's meant to search you and me, to ask you, to ask me, are you a man of faith? Are you a woman of faith? Are you trusting God? And what blessings can you expect when you do? It's like when you're pulled over by the highway patrol. and he pulls you out and he asks you for your identification. And he takes your identification, he looks at it, he looks back at you, he looks at it, looks back at you, and if the picture matches, he gives it back to you and then probably writes you a ticket if you've been going too fast. But you look at this psalm and it describes what faith looks like, what faith feels like. And it's like the identification of a believer. And you look at this and you find, well, do I find these marks of faith in my heart and my soul? And we start feeling, yes, I do. And we are assured that we are part of the company of believers heading, as we heard this morning, to that great resurrection of life and not for the great resurrection of judgment. And I've really two points to make this evening, though there are a number of sub-points in the second point, so don't get your hopes up too soon for a quick sermon. First of all, I want you to see the moment faith begins, and then secondly, the blessings faith brings. The moment faith begins, the blessings faith brings. First of all, the moment faith

begins, you see that there in the first verse, preserve me, O God, for In you, I take refuge. I've heard scientists say that at the moment of conception, there's a flash of light. I've heard that disputed. Whether there's a flash of light when the sperm and the ova become one, there is certainly a flash of life. There was no life there before, and suddenly there is life there now. True life, real life, personal life, human life. You remember in Psalm 51, David says, in sin, my mother conceived me. And David is not speaking there about the act of conception, as if human intercourse was sinful. He's speaking about the product

of conception. In sin, my mother conceived me. When I was conceived, when two cells became one, and it's very graphic in the Hebrew, the word is, in sin, my mother was hot for me. It's showing Mr. and Mrs. Jessie in that most intimate of moments when they're cooling down after the passion of the marriage bed. And Mrs. Jessie's still hot, and deep inside her, two cells are becoming one. And in that moment, David says, When those two cells became one, there was a flash of life. And that life was me. It wasn't a bundle of cells. It was me, David says. In sin, my mother conceived me. And at that moment, I was there.

And at that moment, sin was there. The word for sin in Hebrew in 51 describes imperfection, not deliberate conscious disobedience, because David didn't have a mind at that point, or a fully developed and functioning will, so he couldn't be a transgressor, but he was a sinner. He had a sin nature in that moment of conception.

I was there. Life was there. Now, I'm not preaching Psalm 51. Let me get back to Psalm 16.

But here in the first one, David is describing the moment of faith The moment a soul reaches out

to God, now for those of us this evening who are believers, it's a moment that's happened again and again and again, like breathing. But maybe you're here this evening, you're not yet a believer, and this service will mark the time when you first, your soul first breathed in the presence of God, and you became a living soul again. Up until this moment, you've

been a dead soul in a dying body. But this evening, maybe God's word will come into your heart and life will come into your heart. And then the moment life comes into your heart, your soul will breathe and gasp in the air of heaven. And you will experience that first gasp of faith. You'll be trusting God for the first time. What's that moment of faith looks like? Well, it begins with a cry, the cry of faith. Preserve me, oh God. David feels in danger. He's asking

God, Lord, I'm in danger. I need preservation. I need to be kept. I need to be guarded. And for the sinner, of course, that sense of fear comes from our sense of sinfulness. And we need to be guarded not just from sin and not just from hell, but we need to be guarded from God himself. Salvation is not just salvation from sin or salvation from damnation. It's salvation

by God from God. And the moment a person believes for the first time or for the nth time, we feel with this sense of, I need God to save me, to keep me, to guard me, to preserve me. And David looks to God, preserve me, O God. He feels a need for a refuge. And he finds such a refuge in God, the cry of faith. And then you have the helplessness of faith. Preserve me, O God. Trusting God is only half of

the equation. We need God to help us. We need God to save us, to protect us, to preserve us. But we can't do the preserving. We can't do the keeping. We've got to trust God. It's like a little girl in a high tree, and the fireman's ladder goes up to her, but it can't quite reach her. And the fireman's standing there, and the little girl is looking down at the fireman's eyes. She looks down at the ground. I know the ground's a long way down. Maybe change the metaphor. She's not in a tree. She's in a burning building, high up. She looks back at the fireman, and the fireman says, look at me. And the fireman's face is the face of her father. And the father looks at his little girl. And what's he say? He says, trust me. You're my little girl. I've loved you since before you were born. Throw yourself into my arms, and I will catch you. And I will not let you go. Don't look at the ground. Look in my eyes. Throw yourself into my arms." And she does. And in that moment, as she casts herself out into the great expanse between the building and the ladder, she's helpless. If the father doesn't make good on his word, if the father drops her, she's lost. And there's a sense of that in faith. When we're in trouble, when we're in difficulty, there's a helplessness to it. When I left medicine to go into the ministry, a close family member looked at me and says, Neil, you're walking away from your salary in medicine. How are you going to provide for your family in Mississippi? And I said, God will provide, Dad. That was my father. God will provide. And Dad says, that's all very well, but faith won't put food on the table. And that's right, faith won't, but God will. And I said, Dad, I'm just trusting, I'm trusting God, Dad. I can't see. I'm casting myself out, not into the darkness, but into the light of who God is, to the light of what God has said. And he hasn't given me all the answers. But he has told me more than a little about his heart and he's given me vast promises. And I trust myself to him. I trust my family to him. And I trust he'll not let me go. And it's my testimony that God never let us go. In seminary, we provided for us every step of the way. Even one time, this huge medical bill came in. It was hundreds of dollars, way beyond our capacity to provide for. And nobody knew about the bill but Catherine and I. We were praying for it. Lord, have mercy. And the next

day, we went down to the post office where the post office boxes were, opened it, and there was a check from a brother in a church in Jackson who had no idea about our need, and it covered the debt. It was a few cents more than the bill, actually, but it covered the debt in its entirety. But there's a sense of helplessness.

I can't provide for myself. That's the point of faith. We give ourselves to God, the cry of faith, the helplessness of faith, but then also there's the hope of faith. I saw this this afternoon for the first time just looking at this text. Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. There's logic there. For God, I'm trusting you. The psalmist seems to know deep in his heart that the heart of God is neither immune nor insensitive to his cry. Preserve me, oh God. And the reason I'm asking you is because I'm trusting you. It's a bit like the dog at the door. It's a cold night. You're watching a movie. You're sitting there with you.

You have your favorite beverage in your hand. You've just reclined the chair. It's caught to the bottom of the leg rest. It's caught in the carpet. And you have to kind of fiddle with the carpet to get it up. It takes a while. You get the thing up, and you're lying back, and you're watching the movie. And then you hear the scratch at the door, and you try to ignore it. You really do, you try to ignore it. You think the dog, he's not that cold, he'll be fine. He'll get a warm coat, he'll be okay. He'll run off and maybe come back later. Go chase the squirrels or something, I don't know. The squirrels are all in bed, I know, but you have all these thoughts. And then the dog starts to whine at the door. Why do dogs do that? Because they know their master. They whine because they know that my master's inside, and he has been so made by my creator that he is not able to sit comfortably while he hears the sound of misery at the door. Preserve me, O God, for in you

I take refuge. I am trusting you. There's something in the heart of God that cannot hear such logic arising from the dust of the earth and God just can't sit there and say nothing and do nothing when such a cry rises into heaven. And maybe you're here for the first time this evening, and I spent longer on this point than I planned, but that's okay. But you're here, and you've been thinking and feeling your sinfulness and your weight and your desert of judgment. And you fear, what would happen if I die tonight? And you know fine well, you'd go to hell. And I'm telling you, lift these. These are words God has given from heaven for you to send back to heaven. Preserve me, oh God. Save me. Why? For I'm trusting you. I'm trusting you'll not let me go, you'll not let me down, you'll not abandon me, you'll not forsake me, you'll not forget me forever, and I'm telling you, if you bring such words to God, salvation is more sure than the ground

beneath your feet and the sky above your head. They'll pass away, but the heart of God remains forever the same. The moment faith begins, preserve

me, oh God, a cry, a sense of helplessness. If you let me down, I'm lost. Oh, but God, I'm trusting you.

And God will never, ever, ever forget or forsake such a cry when it arises from the depths of the earth. The moment faith begins, and then secondly, The blessing faith begins, and there are three. Satisfaction in life, stability through life, and security beyond life. Let's pick up the pace a bit.

First of all, satisfaction in life. The satisfaction most people look for in the world, the believer finds in God. Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to Yahweh the Lord, you are my Adonai, my sovereign, my master, my boss. I have no good beside you. No good beside you. Here's David on the run, I think. He's no earthly good on earth, but he finds all his goodness in God. That's a powerful sign of sincerity, that God, the goodness of God, the glory of God, the conviction that God is not just the greatest of all beings, but the best, and when I have Him, I have everything, and I need nothing beside Him. You might say that's the priority faith sees, that God is my all. My all in heaven, my all on earth. It's what the psalmist says.

Remember in Psalm 73. And the psalmist's been struggling in this psalm with seeing the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer, which is a constant theme in the psalms. And he gets bitter.

And he says in verse 21, when my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in my heart, I was brutish and ignorant. I was like a beast towards you. Nevertheless, I am continually with you. You hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel. And afterward, you will receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there's nothing on earth

that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Can you say that? Whom have I

in heaven but you? And there's nothing on earth

that I desire beside you. My flesh and my heart may feel

that God is the strength of my heart and my glory forever. Not just is God his good, and

before we go to the next point under this point, Notice that we must submit to God's authority before we find such satisfaction in God's presence. You are my Adonai. I have no

good apart from you. And maybe you're here this evening

and you don't really enjoy God. That's how I really like to say, you have a drug problem, your parents drug you to church Wednesday, Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and you think, oh, here we go

again. But you can never really find the light in God until you submit to God, until you take Him as your Lord, until you relinquish

control over your life to Him, until you tap out Whenever I was in school, we used to play a game called British Bulldogs, and all the school would line

up on one side of the pitch, and there'd be a small cadre of boys, big boys in the middle, and they could call you by name, or they could say school, and everybody would run. Whatever happened, the people running across the pitch had to get to the far side, and these guys in the middle would try and tackle you, like rugby tackled you. And when they got you down on the ground, they'd have to make you submit, which wasn't too hard, because they were big guys. But if you didn't submit, well, we can do this the easy way or the hard way. And if you choose the hard way, then brace yourself for a bit of wrestling and a bit of arm twisting and so forth. And it becomes that point when you're fighting and you're scribbling and you say, I submit. So when you buy a new puppy,

one of the ways to tell the spirit of a puppy is put him on his back and see does he kind of just, Or does he actually fight you a little bit? You don't want a dog that fights you too much, but you don't want a dog that doesn't fight you at all. There's got to be a bit of spirit there. So put him on his back and see, how does he do? Is he happy when you put him on his back? Does he fight you? Does he resist you? But there comes that moment when a dog develops its teeth, and it's suckling at mummy's breast, and the teeth, it kind of bites her mummy's nipple a little bit too hard, and mummy will take her mouth and put it over the dog's throat and squeeze. Just enough. And she'll not stop squeezing until the puppy goes completely limp. Then you've learned the lesson. And off comes the teeth, and back goes on the feeding. And you'll never truly know joy in God until you learn to rest in his lordship and submit to him. You are my lord. I can have no good, I have no good apart from you. And it's not just God, you cannot have God as your delight if his people are not your delight.

Verse three, as for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones in whom is all my delight. They are the majestic ones. They may look pretty feeble on earth, but remember C.S. Lewis' great quote, you look at the weakest, most feeblest, most nerdy, most weird Christian in the church, that's how they look now. Oh, but if you could see them when Christ comes back, glowing, iridescent with the glory of Christ, all of the fullness of the glory of God, not shining from them, but shining through them. It's Christ's glory, but it's all found in them. When we see Him, we'll become like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. If you could see them then. They'd be the nearest thing to God you'd ever seen, and you'd fall on your face and be tempted to worship them. And they'd rebuke you and say, stop this malarkey. You don't worship me. You worship Christ. One day you'll look just like me in the glory. You'll look just like him in the glory. There's a sense in faith that we don't just see through troubles and light hold of God, we see through the church and see their true majesty, their true dignity, and we're drawn to them. They may be different than us,

different races, different culture, different habits, different food tastes. Now that RTS, they were foreign students and you go into their house and they were from different parts of the world and the white walls of the house were stained yellow with the spices of the food. And it was different food, and it smelled different. But when you sat around the table and talked with these people, there was a sense, these are my people. These are my brothers, my sisters. We know the same God. We believe the same gospel. We have the same hope. We love the same glory. Can you say that? Do you love the people of God because they're the people of God? And you can't love the people of God without, in a similar sense, having some sense of pity toward those who know not such a God. The sorrows of those who run after another God shall multiply. Their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out, nor take their names on my lips. I imagine David in the wilderness being tempted to look away from God. Don't trust God. You gotta find some more secure, more visible, more obvious source of protection, or diversify your assets. Don't just trust Yahweh, trust Baal, trust Ashtoreth, trust Moloch. Don't put all your eggs in one basket, they might say. David says, no, if you trust other gods, if you run away from God to try and find a better God, all you manage to do is multiply your sorrows. which is a word that's very similar to the judgment upon Eve in Genesis 3, as God multiplies her sorrows in childbearing. You never gain from exchanging God for other gods, you always lose. I sometimes hear young people say that to me, you know, if I turn away from, if I forsake the world and embrace Christ, think of all the pleasures you lose. Like the pleasures of sex and drink and mindless entertainment. And there's one sensuality is that. But the devil has no true pleasures to offer you. All he can do is steal the pleasures of God, twist them and pervert them and pollute them and corrupt them and present them to you wrapped up in a lie. You take them, and they might give you joy for an instant, but they'll leave you miserable forever. Young people have said this before, but the question is not. The question is, will you trust the God who designed sex to tell you how best and where to enjoy it? Or will you take the devil's word for it, who's a liar and the father of lies, and a murderer from the beginning? That's your choice. And remember, the devil never intends to give you what he promises. As I told the group on Wednesday, he presents the bait, but he hides the hook. He doesn't want to feed you. He wants to give you the hook. And after the hook, he wants to give you the net. And after the net, he wants to give you the billy club. And after the billy club, he wants to give you the fire. Don't trust him. The sorrows of those who run

after other gods will be multiplied. I will not pour out their drink offerings of blood, nor will I take their names upon my lips." So the blessings faith brings, first of all, satisfaction in life. Then secondly, stability through life. The psalmist finds in God a stable foundation for life. The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my cup. You support my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places. Indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me." Now, David here, if you've read the book of Joshua and Judges, is using the language of inheriting the promised land. Lot, lines, portion. Now, again, David is on the run. He has no earthly portion. But he says, the Lord is my portion. Not chosen portion. That's not in the Hebrew. The Lord is my portion and my cup. What's he saying? Well, if you know your Old Testament well, you'll know that every tribe of Israel had a portion in the promised land. They had an allotted portion that had lines marking out east, west, north, and south, the boundaries. But there was one tribe who had no portion in the promised land. Who was that? the Levites. Numbers 18, 20. Then the Lord said to Aaron, you shall have no inheritance in their land nor any portion among them. I am your portion and your inheritance among the sons of Israel. or Deuteronomy 18. Easy to remember. Numbers 18, Deuteronomy 18. Deuteronomy 18, the Levitical priests, the whole tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel. They shall eat the Lord's offering by fire and his portion. They shall have no inheritance among their countrymen. The Lord is their inheritance as he promised them. And here's David. He's been told he's the king, but he's on the run, I think. He's got no earthly lot. He can't go back to a home like Jesus. He's got nowhere to lay his head. The foxes of holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has nowhere where to lay his heads. And here's great David's lesser son. Greater David's lesser son, David himself. And he's got nowhere, he's no portion on the earth. Oh, but he says, I've got a portion in heaven. I've got Christ, I've got God. What's he saying? He says, I might be a king. Oh, but I'd rather be a priest. Not to be distracted by an earthly portion, but to have God alone as my portion. And it's a lot that cannot pass away. The Lord supports my cup. You support my lot, verse five. He supports it, he undergirds it, he holds it up. It's like what Christ said, lay up for yourselves not treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroy and where thieves cannot break in and steal. You've got two banks. There's a man in a barbershop, middle America, 1930s, and he's got two banks in the town. He's got \$1,000 in one bank and a million dollars in the other bank. It's the day before the

FDIC guarantees. And so he's getting his shaving, and this man runs in. The bank's on fire. It's on fire. There only are two banks in the town. He's got \$1,000 in one and a million in the other. What's his first question going to be? Which bank? Have I lost a bit or have I lost a lot? And David is saying, God is my portion, and though I lose everything on earth, I've really lost nothing. He supports it. He undergirds it. I'm secure. A stable foundation for life. A stable direction in life. Verse 7, I will bless the Lord who has counseled me. Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night. That's a beautiful picture of guidance. There's no room in Christian discipleship for checking your brain at the door. I will bless the Lord who has counseled me. Indeed, my mind, literally my kidneys, my gut, instructs me in the night. Now, David is aware of almost two counselors. God is counseling him. But he's counseling him through David's meditations, through his heart, as he ruminates on God's word. Now, the Bible also says, he that trusts in his heart is a fool, right? Or Sam. Proverbs 3, 5, and 6, trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not, it doesn't say use not, lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, literally make knowing him intimately your number one priority and he will direct your paths. What I'm seeing going on here, David's walking about in the battlements, he's thinking, he's praying, he's ruminating over scripture. And as he does, he finds his heart drawn toward the will of God. And there's a sense, it's a wonderful thing, you don't have to look at Samuel or Saul at the end of his life. When he's bereft of God, God has forsaken him and he's left in terror before his battle and his death, resorting to the witch of Endor to try and get a word from the darkness of the spirit world that has abandoned him. But it's not a word from heaven. It's a word from hell. And how different David's testimony, I bless the Lord who has counseled me. Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night. And it's a wonderful thing. I used to disciple a young lad in a different part of the world. And he was a little bit neurotic. He had the mindset of the squirrel in Ice Age, you know, with a nut. The squirrel's kind of terrified that someone's going to steal his nut. And it's really the only funny thing in that whole movie. But this squirrel, I wish he was the only thing in the movie because he was very funny. But he's always terrified of losing this nut and someone taking it from him. And this brother that I would disciple, he was trying to find a wife. And every time he would find a girl and he would start dating her, he'd have this terrible thought, is this the will of God? And he would over-intellectually think, oh, how do I know? How can I be sure? And he would stress and strain. And then this thought would come, well, do I love her more than God? Maybe I do. And then he

thought, well, if I love her more than God, I must sacrifice her for God. And he ended up like. breaking up with girl after girl after girl. And I remember sitting with him at Starbucks and said, you know, don't over-intellectualize it. God has told you in his word what kind of wife you should look for, and there's a list of desirable attributes. You must know God and so forth.

You must have a heart for God. She must be the kind of companion you would enjoy being with, and she must be fair in your eyes, right? And if she ticks all the boxes, and she actually likes you back, right, which is a not insignificant thing, and she's willing to marry you and you want to marry her, marry her. Don't over-intellectualize it.

God's given you directions, but don't be looking for a verse saying, this is the girl. I will bless the Lord who has counseled me. Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night." So he has a stable foundation for life and a stable direction in life. The mind of a man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps. Proverbs 16, verse 9. Many plans are in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord will stand. That's the wonderful thing is, as Solomon's talking here, The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. They're all Proverbs 16, verse one, verse nine, verse 19, 21 chapter as well. But the idea in Proverbs is that we're thinking, thinking what am I gonna say? Many are the plans of a man's heart, but the answer of the tongue belongs to the Lord. What I am planning I might say, what I could say, what will I say, and then what I actually do say. The planning belongs to me, but actually the words that come out of my mouth are directed and sovereignly given by God. Sometimes there are wise words to bless me, and sometimes there are foolish words to chasten me. But there's a sovereign governance of God over the very words we speak and the choices we make. The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps. Again, we're planning, which way am I gonna go? Who am I gonna marry? But the Lord directs his steps. He brings people across our paths. and directs our path to them

or away from them. He opens doors, He closes doors. The Lord nullifies the counsels of the nations. He frustrates the plans of the peoples, but the counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation. And David is this sense that this God has locked him in the grip of tender omnipotence and is guiding him through life. And that guidance comes as he thinks and prays and meditates on the battlements at nighttime. stable foundation for life, a stable direction in life, and a stable companion for life, I have set the Lord continually before me. Because he's at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Now here is the active habit of mind. I have set the Lord continually before me. It's a picture of faith, the mind, remembering God. I'm not alone. I'm not abandoned.

I'm not forsaken. Even the darkness is not dark to him. And night is as bright as the day. And he's bringing God to his mind. And there are storms coming, and the whirlwind, and the tsunami of trials. And he looks to his right hand and there is Yahweh himself standing beside him at his right hand, the position of strength, a trusted companion, a mighty man, his bodyguard. Isn't that a wonderful thing, Christian? Whatever you're facing today, whatever you're facing in life, whatever you face tomorrow, whatever you face ever while you have breath in this world, you will never face it alone. At your right hand, you have a companion. He'll never leave you. He'll never forget you. He'll never forsake you. You'll often forget him, but he will never forget you. A stable foundation for life, a stable direction in life, and a stable companion for life. And then lastly, not just Satisfaction in life and stability through life, but security beyond life. He's secure in death, and He's secure forever. Therefore, my heart is glad. My whole being rejoices. My flesh also dwells secure. Why? He tells you, verse 10, not just that God is with me now, But he'll be with me forever, even in the grave. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your Holy One see corruption." The best thing about the life of faith is that it is relevant for both sides of eternity. Eternity now in this world, and eternity forever in the world to come. And young people, listen to me. Never, ever trust a joy, a source of gladness that won't outlive your current brief earthly life. If it doesn't last forever, it's not worth having for a moment. You're a never-dying soul. Don't put the weight of your soul on pleasures and profits and positions that will only last for a moment when God has designed you to be happy forever. If the best things about your life won't outlast your life, you are in no fit state to meet the last enemy, which is death. And meet him you shall, and sooner than you might like to think. You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, nor allow your Holy One to see corruption to undergo decay. You'll see this is quoted in Acts 13, 35. I've no time to go there this evening, but you can see it there. Listen to me now. This promise is preeminently true for Christ, and that is why it's true for you. The Holy One is not you. The Holy One is Jesus, the Messiah. And because He will not undergo decay, and because by faith you don't just believe in Him, by faith you become part of Him. And because God will not abandon him to Sheol, he will not abandon you to Sheol. You're part of Christ. It's like, mothers, if your two-year-old falls into the swimming pool and she's drowning, and you run over to her and you grab her, and her hands are sinking under

the water, and you see her sinking, and you run across and you grab her hands, you don't just pull her head out of the water. You aren't happy until you've pulled her all the way out of the water and you have her whole body and soul, as it were, wrapped up in your arms in a towel. You don't just pull her lips to the surface, you pull her all the way out, right down to her toesy-woosies, on her feety-weety. And likewise, our head is in heaven. But much of Christ's body is still on earth, and the Father will not be content, and Christ will not be content until the whole body, head, shoulders, knees, and toes are lifted up from this world into the glory. And because Christ wasn't abandoned in the grave, you'll not be abandoned in the grave. Secure in death. and secure forever. You make known to me the path of life. He's speaking beyond the grave here. You make known to me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy at your right hand. My pleasures forevermore. There's a lady in my congregation back in Savannah who was dying of cancer, and she was terrified, terrified of death. She trusted Christ, but she was terrified of dying. Many of God's saints did. The Methodists died well, but they had verses of Scripture hung above their beds. And so I wrote this little ditting, thinking about death, and I read it to her. What will death be like for you, Darlene, when you come to die? Surrounding the hospital, as far as the eye of faith can see, angels kneel in quiet expectation. Another of God's glorious children nears the end of her earthly pilgrimage. Death stands at a distance. Another has paid her debt. Death has no bill to collect from this soul. His only role today is to open the door of heaven and let her in. With difficulty I see death reach for the handle of heaven. The door of the father's house, his pale shadow recoils before the brightness of eternal life beyond. The father's voice breaks the silence. My child, don't be frightened. You're almost well and nearly home. You have more than conquered through him who loved you. He has redeemed you from your sins by his blood. Come and I will make known to you the path of life. In my presence there's fullness of joy. At my right hand there are pleasures forevermore. Be still and know that I am God." Immediately her heart rests, her striving stops, her spirit bursts forth with never before felt freedom. And she's not alone. She's surrounded by the smiling faces of angels who knew her when she was a baby in her mother's arms, who carried her feet past stones on earth, and now they will carry her soul past suns and stars and galaxies to the Father's right hand. With all the gladness of a little girl skipping home from school for the holidays, she begins her journey. Faster than light they fly, leaving suns and moons and stars far behind. And in the distance, a new light begins to dawn, a warm, happy radiance like the sun of

righteousness rising with healing upon his wings. She sees the light, and then she hears the sounds of heaven. Like theology on fire, the city overflows with song, audible beauty that can be felt. Their music surges with the power of 10,000 oceans, yet gently soothes with the happy gurgling of a mountain stream. Here is a sound worthy of God's Son, the Lion of the tribe of Judah who was slain. In a moment, she's through the gates and in the glory. Surrounded by the weightiness of God, her soul is not crushed. It seems to expand. The spirits of just men made perfect throng about her with crowds of happy hallelujahs. Aloft they carry her towards the throne room. And it was as she entered that I lost sight of her. Oh, I hath not seen nor ear heard Neither has it entered into the heart of man what glories I saw through that door. But the king was there in all his beauty. And as soon as her eyes saw him, she became like him forever. And as the door closed, I heard the Lord quiet her with his love and rejoice over her with singing. I have seen of the travail of my soul, and I am satisfied. And all heaven did resound with the song, worthy is the lamb who was slain. You see, Christian, what have you got to fear from death? Absolutely nothing. His only role for you is to open the door of heaven like a butler and let you in. You're secure in life because of Christ. You're secure in death because of Christ. And you're secure forever because of Christ. Are you trusting Him? Do you know this Savior is your Savior, young man, young lady? Old man, old lady, are you trusting Christ as your Savior? There's no one like Him in heaven or on earth. Such a God, such a Savior. and he's worthy of your trust now and your trust forever. Let's pray together. Oh Lord, our God and our Father, we thank you for your word, we thank you for its truth, we thank you for its power, and we pray, oh Lord, that you would speak to the hearts of men and women and boys and girls this evening. Faith is a gift you give. Blessed are your eyes who see, Jesus says, for to you it has been given to see the kingdom of heaven. I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth. You have revealed these things to the wise and the prudent, or hidden these things from the wise and the prudent and revealed them to babes. Oh, Lord Jesus, come into this place this evening and reveal the truth of God. even to the proud and the wise. Too proud to listen to you most days, but grant this day they'll feel themselves like a little child running to the Father, that you would save them and do for them what they cannot do for themselves. In Christ we pray. Amen.