

PSALM 16

This psalm has something of David in it, but much more of Christ. It begins with such expressions of devotion as may be applied to Christ; but concludes with such confidence of a resurrection (and so timely a one as to prevent corruption) as must be applied to Christ, to him only, and cannot be understood of David, as both St. Peter and St. Paul have observed, ^{<4124>}Acts 2:24; 13:36. For David died, and was buried, and saw corruption.

I. David speaks of himself as a member of Christ, and so he speaks the language of all good Christians, professing his confidence in God (v. 1), his consent to him (v. 2), his affection to the people of God (v. 3), his adherence to the true worship of God (v. 4), and his entire complacency and satisfaction in God and the interest he had in him (v. 5-7).

II. He speaks of himself as a type of Christ, and so he speaks the language of Christ himself, to whom all the rest of the psalm is expressly and at large applied (^{<4125>}Acts 2:25, etc.). David speaks concerning him (not concerning himself), "I foresaw the Lord always before my face," etc. And this he spoke, being a prophet (v. 30, 31). He spoke,

1. Of the special presence of God with the Redeemer in his services and sufferings (v. 8).
2. Of the prospect which the Redeemer had of his own resurrection and the glory that should follow, which carried him cheerfully through his undertaking (v. 9-11).

~~<3961>~~ PSALM 16:1-7

BELIEVING CONFIDENCE IN GOD

Michtam of David.

This psalm is entitled *Michtam*, which some translate *a golden psalm*, a very precious one, more to be valued by us than gold, yea, than much fine gold, because it speaks so plainly of Christ and his resurrection, who is the true treasure hidden in the field of the Old Testament.

I. David here flies to God's protection with a cheerful believing confidence in it (v. 1): "*Preserve me, O God! from the deaths, and especially from the sins, to which I am continually exposed; for in thee, and in thee only, do I put my trust.*" Those that by faith commit themselves to the divine care, and submit themselves to the divine guidance, have reason to hope for the benefit of both. This is applicable to Christ, who prayed, *Father, save me from this hour*, and trusted in God that he would deliver him.

II. He recognizes his solemn dedication of himself to God as his God (v. 2): "*O my soul! thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord, and therefore thou mayest venture to trust him.*" Note,

1. It is the duty and interest of every one of us to acknowledge the Lord for our Lord, to subject ourselves to him, and then to stay ourselves upon him. *Adonai* signifies *My stay*, the strength of my heart.

2. This must be done with our souls: "O my soul! thou hast said it." Covenanting with God must be heart-work; all that is within us must be employed therein and engaged thereby.

3. Those who have avouched the Lord for their Lord should be often putting themselves in mind of what they have done. "Hast thou said unto the Lord, *Thou art my Lord*? Say it again then, stand to it, abide by it, and never unsay it. Hast thou said it? Take the comfort of it, and live up to it. He is thy Lord, and worship thou him, and let thy eye be ever towards him."

III. He devotes himself to the honour of God in the service of the saints (v. 2, 3): *My goodness extends not to thee, but to the saints*. Observe,

1. Those that have taken the lord for their Lord must, like him, be good and do good; we do not expect happiness without goodness.

2. Whatever good there is in us, or is done by us, we must humbly acknowledge that it extends not to God; so that we cannot pretend to merit any thing by it. God has no need of our services; he is not benefited by them, nor can they add any thing to his infinite perfection and blessedness. The wisest, and best, and most useful, men in the world cannot be profitable to God, ~~ROM~~ Job 22:2; 35:7. God is infinitely above us, and happy without us, and whatever good we do it is all from him; so that we are

indebted to him, not he to us: David owns it (^{<394>}1 Chronicles 29:14), *Of thy own have we given thee.*

3. If God be ours, we must, for his sake, extend our goodness to those that are his, to the saints in the earth; for what is done to them he is pleased to take as done to himself, having constituted them his receivers. Note,

(1.) There are saints in the earth; and saints on earth we must all be, or we shall never be saints in heaven. Those that are renewed by the grace of God, and devoted to the glory of God, are saints on earth.

(2.) The saints in the earth are excellent ones, great, mighty, magnificent ones, and yet some of them so poor in the world that they need to have David's goodness extended to them. God makes them excellent by the grace he gives them. *The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour,* and then he accounts them excellent. They are precious in his sight and honourable; they are his jewels, his peculiar treasure. Their God is their glory, and a diadem of beauty to them.

(3.) All that have taken the Lord for their God delight in his saints as excellent ones, because they bear his image, and because he loves them. David, though a king, was a *companion of all that feared God* (^{<395>}Psalm 119:63), even the meanest, which was a sign that his delight was in them.

(4.) It is not enough for us to delight in the saints, but, as there is occasion, our goodness must extend to them; we must be ready to show them the kindness they need, distribute to their necessities, and abound in the labour of love to them. This is applicable to Christ. The salvation he wrought out for us was no gain to God, for our ruin would have been no loss to him; but the goodness and benefit of it extend to us men, in whom he delighteth, ^{<396>}Proverbs 8:31. *For their sakes,* says he, *I sanctify myself,* ^{<397>}John 17:19. Christ delights even in the saints on earth, notwithstanding their weaknesses and manifold infirmities, which is a good reason why we should.

IV. He disclaims the worship of all false gods and all communion with their worshippers, v. 4. Here,

1. He reads the doom of idolaters, who hasten after another God, being mad upon their idols, and pursuing them as eagerly as if they were afraid they would escape from them: *Their sorrows shall be multiplied,* both by the judgments they bring upon themselves from the true God whom they

forsake and by the disappointment they will meet with in the false gods they embrace. Those that multiply gods multiply griefs to themselves; for, whoever thinks one God too little, will find two too many, and yet hundreds not enough.

2. He declares his resolution to have no fellowship with them nor with their unfruitful works of darkness: “*Their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer*, not only because the gods they are offered to are a lie, but because the offerings themselves are barbarous.” At God's altar, because the blood made atonement, the drinking of it was most strictly prohibited, and the drink-offerings were of wine; but the devil prescribed to his worshippers to drink of the blood of the sacrifices, to teach them cruelty. “I will have nothing to do” (says David) “with those bloody deities, nor so much as take their names into my lips with any delight in them or respect to them.” Thus must we hate idols and idolatry with a perfect hatred. Some make this also applicable to Christ and his undertaking, showing the nature of the sacrifice he offered (it was not the blood of bulls and goats, which was offered according to the law; that was never named, nor did he ever make any mention of it, but his own blood), showing also the multiplied sorrows of the unbelieving Jews, who hastened after another king, Caesar, and are still hastening after another Messiah, whom they in vain look for.

V. He repeats the solemn choice he had made of God for his portion and happiness (v. 5), takes to himself the comfort of the choice (v. 6), and gives God the glory of it, v. 7. This is very much the language of a devout and pious soul in its gracious exercises.

1. Choosing the Lord for its portion and happiness. “Most men take the world for their chief good, and place their felicity in the enjoyments of it; but this I say, *The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup*, the portion I make choice of, and will gladly take up with, how poor soever my condition is in this world. Let me have the love and favour of God, and be accepted of him; let me have the comfort of communion with God, and satisfaction in the communications of his graces and comforts; let me have an interest in his promises, and a title by promise to everlasting life and happiness in the future state; and I have enough, I need no more, I desire no more, to complete my felicity.” Would we do well and wisely for ourselves, we must take God, in Christ, to be,

(1.) The portion of our inheritance in the other world. Heaven is an inheritance. God himself is the inheritance of the saints there, whose everlasting bliss is to enjoy him. We must take that for our inheritance, our home, our rest, our lasting, everlasting, good, and look upon this world to be no more ours than the country through which our road lies when we are on a journey.

(2.) The portion of our cup in this world, with which we are nourished, and refreshed, and kept from fainting. Those have not God for theirs who do not reckon his comforts the most reviving cordials, acquaint themselves with them, and make use of them as sufficient to counterbalance all the grievances of this present time and to sweeten the most bitter cup of affliction.

2. Confiding in him for the securing of this portion: “*Thou maintainest my lot.* Thou that hast by promise made over thy self to me, to be mine, wilt graciously make good what thou hast promised, and never leave me to myself to forfeit this happiness, nor leave it in the power of my enemies to rob me of it. Nothing shall pluck me out of thy hands, nor separate me from thy love, and the sure mercies of David.” The saints and their bliss are kept by the power of God.

3. Rejoicing in this portion, and taking a complacency in it (v. 6): *The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places.* Those have reason to say so that have God for their portion; they have a worthy portion, a goodly heritage. What can they have better? What can they desire more? *Return unto thy rest, O my soul!* and look no further. Note, Gracious persons, though they still covet more of God, never covet more than God; but, being satisfied of his loving-kindness, they are abundantly satisfied with it, and envy not any their carnal mirth and sensual pleasures and delights, but account themselves truly happy in what they have, and doubt not but to be completely happy in what they hope for. Those whose lot is cast, as David's was, in a land of light, in a valley of vision, where God is known and worshipped, have, upon that account, reason to say, *The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places*; much more those who have not only the means, but the end, not only Immanuel's land, but Immanuel's love.

4. Giving thanks to God for it, and for grace to make this wise and happy choice (v. 7): “*I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel,* this counsel, to take him for my portion and happiness.” So ignorant and foolish are we that, if we be left to ourselves, our hearts will follow our

eyes, and we shall choose our own delusions, and forsake our own mercies for lying vanities; and therefore, if we have indeed taken God for our portion and preferred spiritual and eternal blessings before those that are sensible and temporal, we must thankfully acknowledge the power and goodness of divine grace directing and enabling us to make that choice. If we have the pleasure of it, let God have the praise of it.

5. Making a good use of it. God having given him counsel by his word and Spirit, his own *reins* also (his own thoughts) instructed him in the night-season; when he was silent and solitary, and retired from the world, then his own conscience (which is called the *reins*, ~~2170~~) Jeremiah 17:10) not only reflected with comfort upon the choice he had made, but instructed or admonished him concerning the duties arising out of this choice, catechized him, and engaged and quickened him to live as one that had God for his portion, by faith to live upon him and to live to him. Those who have God for their portion, and who will be faithful to him, must give their own consciences leave to deal thus faithfully and plainly with them.

All this may be applied to Christ, who made the Lord his portion and was pleased with that portion, made his Father's glory his highest end and made it his meat and drink to seek that and to do his will, and delighted to prosecute his undertaking, pursuant to his Father's counsel, depending upon him to maintain his lot and to carry him through his undertaking. We may also apply it to ourselves in singing it, renewing our choice of God as ours, with a holy complacency and satisfaction.

~~368~~ PSALM 16:8-11

PROPHECY RELATING TO THE MESSIAH

All these verses are quoted by St. Peter in his first sermon, after the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of pentecost (~~4425~~ Acts 2:25-28); and he tells us expressly that David in them speaks concerning Christ and particularly of his resurrection. Something we may allow here of the workings of David's own pious and devout affections towards God, depending upon his grace to perfect every thing that concerned him, and looking for the blessed hope, and happy state on the other side death, in the enjoyment of God; but in these holy elevations towards God and heaven he was carried by the spirit of prophecy quite beyond the

consideration of himself and his own case, to foretel the glory of the Messiah, in such expressions as were peculiar to that, and could not be understood of himself. The New Testament furnishes us with a key to let us into the mystery of these lines.

I. These verses must certainly be applied to Christ; of him speaks the prophet this, as did many of the Old-Testament prophets, who *testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow* (~~401~~1 Peter 1:11), and that is the subject of this prophecy here. It is foretold (as he himself showed concerning this, no doubt, among other prophecies in this psalm, ~~424~~Luke 24:44, 46) that *Christ should suffer, and rise from the dead*, ~~433~~1 Corinthians 15:3, 4.

1. That he should suffer and die. This is implied here when he says (v. 8), *I shall not be moved*; he supposed that he should be struck at, and have a dreadful shock given him, as he had in his agony, when his soul was exceedingly sorrowful, and he prayed that the cup might pass from him. When he says, *“My flesh shall rest,”* it is implied that he must put off the body, and therefore must go through the pains of death. It is likewise plainly intimated that his soul must go into a state of separation from the body, and that his body, so deserted, would be in imminent danger of seeing corruption — that he should not only die, but be buried, and abide for some time under the power of death.

2. That he should be wonderfully borne up by the divine power in suffering and dying.

(1.) That he should not be moved, should not be driven off from his undertaking nor sink under the weight of it, that he should not fail nor be discouraged (~~290~~Isaiah 42:4), but should proceed and persevere in it, till he could say, *It is finished*. Though the service was hard and the encounter hot, and he trod the winepress alone, yet he was not moved, did not give up the cause, but set his face as a flint, ~~230~~Isaiah 50:7-9. *Here am I, let these go their way*. Nay,

(2.) That his heart should rejoice and his glory be glad, that he should go on with his undertaking, not only resolutely, but cheerfully, and with unspeakable pleasure and satisfaction, witness that saying (~~471~~John 17:11), *Now I am no more in the world, but I come to thee*, and that (~~481~~John 18:11), *The cup that my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?* and many the like. By his glory is meant his *tongue*, as appears, ~~402~~Acts 2:26.

For our tongue is our glory, and never more so than when it is employed in glorifying God. Now there were three things which bore him up and carried him on thus cheerfully: —

[1.] The respect he had to his Father's will and glory in what he did: *I have set the Lord always before me*. He still had an eye to his Father's commandment (^{<BIB>}John 10:18, 14:31), the will of him that sent him. He aimed at his Father's honour and the restoring of the interests of his kingdom among men, and this kept him from being moved by the difficulties he met with; for he always did those things that pleased his Father.

[2.] The assurance he had of his Father's presence with him in his sufferings: *He is at my right hand*, a present help to me, nigh at hand in the time of need. *He is near that justifieth me* (^{<BIB>}Isaiah 50:8); he is at my right hand, to direct and strengthen it, and hold it up, ^{<BIB>}Psalms 89:21. When he was in his agony an angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him, ^{<BIB>}Luke 22:43. To this the victories and triumphs of the cross were all owing; it was the Lord at his right hand that *struck through kings*, ^{<BIB>}Psalms 110:5; ^{<BIB>}Isaiah 42:1, 2.

[3.] The prospect he had of a glorious issue of his sufferings. It was *for the joy set before him that he endured the cross*, ^{<BIB>}Hebrews 12:2. He rested in hope, and that made his rest glorious, ^{<BIB>}Isaiah 11:10. He knew he should be justified in the Spirit by his resurrection, and straightway glorified. See ^{<BIB>}John 13:31, 32.

3. That he should be brought through his sufferings, and brought from under the power of death by a glorious resurrection.

(1.) That his soul should not be left in hell, that is, his human spirit should not be long left, as other men's spirits are, in a state of separation from the body, but should, in a little time, return and be re-united to it, never to part again.

(2.) That being God's holy One in a peculiar manner, sanctified to the work of redemption and perfectly free from sin, he should not see corruption nor feel it. This implies that he should not only be raised from the grave, but raised so soon that his dead body should not so much as being to corrupt, which, in the course of nature, it would have done if it had not been raised the third day. We, who have so much corruption in our

souls, must expect that our bodies also will corrupt (^{<1819>}Job 24:19); but that holy One of God who knew no sin saw no corruption. Under the law it was strictly ordered that those parts of the sacrifices which were not burnt upon the altar should by no means be kept till the third day, lest they should putrefy (^{<1875>}Leviticus 7:15, 18), which perhaps pointed at Christ's rising the third day, that he might not see corruption — neither was a bone of him broken.

4. That he should be abundantly recompensed for his sufferings, with the joy set before him, v. 11. he was well assured,

(1.) That he should not miss of his glory: “*Thou wilt show me the path of life, and lead me to that life through this darksome valley.*” In confidence of this, when he gave up the ghost, he said, *Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit;* and, a little before, *Father, glorify me with thy own self.*

(2.) That he should be received into the presence of God, to sit at his right hand. His being admitted into God's presence would be the acceptance of his service and his being set at his right hand the recompence of it.

(3.) Thus, as a reward for the sorrows he underwent for our redemption, he should have a *fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore;* not only the glory he had with God, as God, before all worlds, but the joy and pleasure of a Mediator, in seeing his seed, and the success and prosperity of his undertaking, ^{<2530>}Isaiah 53:10, 11.

II. Christ being the Head of the body, the church, these verses may, for the most part, be applied to all good Christians, who are guided and animated by the Spirit of Christ; and, in singing them, when we have first given glory to Christ, in whom, to our everlasting comfort, they have had their accomplishment, we may then encourage and edify ourselves and one another with them, and may hence learn,

1. That it is our wisdom and duty to set the Lord always before us, and to see him continually at our right hand, wherever we are, to eye him as our chief good and highest end, our owner, ruler, and judge, our gracious benefactor, our sure guide and strict observer; and, while we do thus, we shall not be moved either from our duty or from our comfort. Blessed Paul set the Lord before him, when, though bonds and afflictions did await him, he could bravely say, *None of these things move me,* ^{<1411>}Acts 20:24.

2. That, if our eyes be ever towards God, our hearts and tongues may ever rejoice in him; it is our own fault if they do not. If the heart rejoice in God, out of the abundance of that let the mouth speak, to his glory, and the edification of others.

3. That dying Christians, as well as a dying Christ, may cheerfully put off the body, in a believing expectation of a joyful resurrection: *My flesh also shall rest in hope*. Our bodies have little rest in this world, but in the grave they shall rest as in their beds, ^{<250>}Isaiah 57:2. We have little to hope for from this life, but we shall rest in hope of a better life; we may put off the body in that hope. Death *destroys the hope of man* (^{<349>}Job 14:19), but not the hope of a good Christian, ^{<149>}Proverbs 14:32. He has hope in his death, living hopes in dying moments, hopes that the body shall not be left for ever in the grave, but, though it see corruption for a time, it shall, at the end of the time, be raised to immortality; Christ's resurrection is an earnest of ours if we be his.

4. That those who live piously with God in their eye may die comfortably with heaven in their eye. In this world sorrow is our lot, but in heaven there is joy. All our joys here are empty and defective, but in heaven there is a fulness of joy. Our pleasures here are transient and momentary, and such is the nature of them that it is not fit they should last long; but those at God's right hand are pleasures for evermore; for they are the pleasures of immortal souls in the immediate vision and fruition of an eternal God.