

Our Hope in Life and Death

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[0 : 00] Well, we're looking this evening at Psalm 16. Such a beautiful prayer that tells us an amazing thing, given that this is a psalm of David, a psalm that David, the king of Israel, wrote, that it tells us that because of the fact that Jesus Christ, many hundreds of years after this psalm was written, was raised from the dead, we have a sure and certain hope in life and in death.

Because Jesus was raised from the dead, that reality, that truth, we have a sure and certain hope in him, in life and indeed in death.

If we glance at the very first verse of the psalm, we see David crying out to God, and that is quite a common thing in the psalms.

He cries out, Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. It is one of the wonderful aspects of the book of Psalms that within it are displayed the whole spectrum of human experience and emotion. It shows us the reality of the Christian life, and it shows us some of the challenges, some of the trials, and some of the hardships of that life, and gives us comfort and encouragement.

[1 : 58] But this is a common cry in the psalms. Help me, O God, help me. For in you I take refuge.

God is often depicted in this way as a rock and as a refuge and as a hiding place of the psalmist and of his people. Maybe you feel like that tonight.

Maybe you are crying out to God for his help, for his strength, for his support.

Maybe you can identify with the psalmist's words here as he cries out to God for help. Or you can remember a time where you did, where these words, as it were, were your words, and you cried out to God to hear your prayer.

Well, I hope this word tonight will encourage you, will edify you, will build you up in your faith.

[3 : 09] As we see through this psalm, three steps along the way to this sure and certain hope in life and death.

First of all, when we look at the beginning of the psalm, down to verse four, we see a picture of the true God.

Not just any old God. The true God, the living God. And that's the starting place for all true faith and all true hope, is knowing who God actually is.

And then in the second part of the psalm, we see a picture of true security from verses five to eight. When the psalmist says, because the Lord is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. It's a picture of true security. Once you know who God is and you have placed your trust in him, your sense of security rests in him and not in yourself.

[4 : 19] But it doesn't stop there because in verses nine to the end of the psalm, verse 11, we see an even greater thing. We see a picture of true joy.

True joy. Maybe joy has eluded you in this life. This psalm gives us a picture, a pathway to true joy. A joy that is not reliant upon our temporal circumstances in this life.

A joy that is rooted instead in eternity and a very specific hope in bodily resurrection from the dead. A sure and certain hope in a bodily resurrection from the dead before entering in to eternal glory.

[5 : 25] So then let us look first of all at that first part that I outlined before from the beginning of the psalm down to verse four where we see a picture of the true God.

The true God. Where David says, having made this plea to God to preserve him and calling God his refuge, he says in verse two, I say to the Lord, you are my Lord.

I say to the Lord, you are my Lord. It's a confession of faith, a very simple one, where he simply says, the God who is, I personally worship you.

I personally confess you as God. But there is more. Take a look again where we see these words, I say to the Lord, you are my Lord.

You'll see there, the first Lord is in capital letters and the second one isn't. It begins with a capital L but the other letters are lower case and that means there are two different words behind these words.

[6 : 41] In the Hebrew, and the first Lord is God's name that he gives to his people in the Old Testament.

We sometimes call it Jehovah or Yahweh. That is his name, the covenant name that he has revealed, especially to his people. And so David is being very specific about who he's confessing to be God and he is saying, this God, this God, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, this God, you are my Lord.

This second word, Lord, just does mean Lord. He's saying, I say to Yahweh, you are my Adonai. Adonai means Lord.

I say to you, you are my Lord. Even though I'm the King of Israel, when I come before this God, he is my Lord.

He is my King and I am his servant. Now, consider, if you will, for a moment, this specificity, if I can put it that way, the specific confession of faith as to who God is compared to our own age, where if we're talking to someone about God, we might have to ask a few more questions before we get to exactly what sort of God we're talking about.

[8 : 16] Because we might have heard people say in the past, or we may even have heard ourselves say in the past, I like to think of God as such and such.

Well, my idea of God is that he is like this. But of course, that's neither here nor there if that idea, if that thinking of God isn't rooted in the scriptures who tell us what God is like.

Otherwise, we are liable to create a God of our own imagining, a God of our own understanding who is really, of course, no God at all. The only God who is there is the God who reveals himself in Holy Scripture.

And there is where we see what he is like. And sometimes in our evangelism or our outreach, that is the first thing that we must address.

Who do people think God is? Because the wonderful thing is is that we don't have to reason our way up to what God is and imagine what he must be like using our own reason.

[9 : 32] Because there we would surely fail because we are fallen in every respect, including in our minds. But God, in his grace and in his mercy, has condescended to come down to us and reveal himself in his own word so that we may be in no doubt as to what he is like.

Of course, we can't fully comprehend God, the infinite, eternal being. But we can know enough. We can't, as it is said, comprehend him.

But we can, through his grace, apprehend him. We cannot comprehend him, but we can apprehend who he is through his means.

Contrast that, then, to what a worshipper of the true God does compared to those who go after idols. Because David compares, in verse 4, the worshippers of the living God with those who pour out offerings of blood to their idols.

He says, their sorrows will increase. Going after any other idea of God that isn't the true God will just lead to ruin because that's idolatry and, of course, that God can't save because these idols are just wood and stone.

[10 : 59] But look at verse 3. There's a lovely aspect to what David says about what it's like to know and to worship and to confess the true God as your Lord.

He says, in verse 3, as for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones in whom is all my delight. Everyone who knows the true God and who worships the true God takes delight in the company of God's people.

They seek out fellowship with God's people. There's something special when they encounter God's people that they haven't met before and there's something wonderful about walking through this Christian life with other Christian brothers and sisters alongside of us.

It is truly one of the marks of grace, I would say, that we take delight in meeting with one another, meeting together to worship but also in fellowship and to encourage one another as well and to stir one another up into good works.

They're the excellent ones in whom is all my delight, says David and that is true for ourselves as well. Some of the elders were saying to me this morning how good it is to meet with God's people.

[12 : 24] We have that joy in them because we see the joy of the Lord in them and we see God's work in them and give God the glory for that.

But again there's this contrast with those who don't do that. The ruin that leads that idolatry leads to. The sorrows of those who run after another God shall multiply. And it's so true. Now we don't have in this day and age other idols like the nations around Israel had these other gods but that isn't to say that our culture isn't full of idols.

celebrities but also the cravings of our fallen heart for power for status and reputation for money or for the perfect romantic partner that seems to drive so much of today's culture in our land and in the West more generally.

And these of course friends are our idols in much the same way because they enslave the heart and they make people bow down to these things and put all their energy all of themselves and all their time and resources into the pursuit of them.

[13 : 51] But there is ultimately this psalm says no satisfaction in that their sorrows will increase. David is resolute. I won't worship them.

You can't serve two gods. You can only serve when you know this God. You can only serve him exclusively with an undivided heart.

If our hearts are divided tonight, if our affections are divided tonight, we are invited, we are encouraged to center them again on the one, the only one who is worthy of our worship, our creator, our sustainer, our redeemer, the living God.

Once we know who the true God is, we can say with David in verse 2, after he said, I say to the Lord, you are my Lord, a personal relationship with this God, where he sees himself as the servant and this God as his Lord, what does he say?

What does he confess? I have no good apart from you. I have no good apart from you.

[15 : 15] Once you realize who God is, and therefore that he is the source of all goodness in this world, the source of all blessing in this world, you can confess with the psalmist, apart from you, Lord, I have no good thing.

But how often do we lose sight of that? How often do we just get taken up in the blessing and forget to give glory to the blesser? How often do we simply enjoy what we've been given without saying, apart from you, Lord, I wouldn't have this.

It comes from you. Thank you to the blesser. it reminds us to confess with the psalmist and realize and give God the glory for every good thing in our life.

Every blessing that has come to us has come to us from the Father of the heavenly lights. Every good and perfect gift comes down from him.

Thus re-centered with our focus now properly fixed on who God is and the fact that he is the source of all goodness in our lives, we come to the next part which is we can see when we know this God we have true security.

[16 : 38] We have true security because in verses 5 to 8 that's the picture that is painted by David. The Lord is my chosen portion.

And my cup. You hold my lot. Indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance. And then it culminates with verse 8.

I have set the Lord always before me because he is at my right hand I shall not be shaken. A picture of rock solid security and confidence.

Not confidence in himself of course. Confidence in the Lord. It's a wonderful picture here in verse 5 where David says the Lord is my chosen portion and my cup you hold my lot.

He's basically saying and again we say the lines have fallen for me in pleasant places. Indeed I have a beautiful inheritance. we can see some of the wonderful Old Testament significance in these lines.

[17 : 46] Because if we think about when Israel was divided up when the promised land when the Israelites finally came into the promised land it was divided up and each tribe of the 12 tribes of Israel was given a portion or a lot or these boundary lines were drawn and each had its inheritance but one tribe was not given a piece of land because the Lord was their portion.

Levi the tribe of Levi the priests because they got to minister in the presence of God and they had this wonderful function this mediatory function between God and Israel God himself was their portion he was their inheritance what a great inheritance that is and David here is alluding to that in some way he's saying it's like I'm a priest such as my nearness to you such as the felt presence of

the living God in my life then I view you as my inheritance now this is the king of Israel speaking look at the power that is at his disposal look at the riches and all that he has at his command but all that pales into insignificance when he considers the value of knowing God himself and the security that brings when we think of what we might have put away for our retirement or for a rainy day or for plans for once we have gone we know that even if those were to all go belly up as it were if we have put our trust in the

Lord Jesus Christ we can still say just the same as the day before I truly have a beautiful inheritance that is secure and that of course is of infinitely greater value than anything here which rust and moth can destroy we have a beautiful inheritance if we put our trust in God and that gives us security someone recently said to me Robin if you're looking for something beyond knowing God to give you satisfaction it will never be enough because if knowing the infinite eternal triune God in whom is all glory and wonder and goodness and love if that's not going to satisfy if we need something on top of that well nothing will ever satisfy once we realize all the riches that are in God though we say I have a beautiful inheritance simply in knowing him simply in knowing him do you know him in that way can you say this with the psalmist because you are being invited to a nearer relationship with the Lord when you see him for who he is because remember what is the key to David having this security in verse eight we see what it is he set the Lord always before him he keeps the Lord always in view at the centre of his vision because our joy our satisfaction our security can ebb away when we're distracted away from having the Lord always before us when we get lured away into chasing after other things that's where our joy goes that's where our security goes but when we see the faithfulness of

God and he fills our vision then we can say when he is at my right hand I won't be shaken he is faithful this is battle language that David is using in verse eight he was a great warrior under God and having someone at your right hand was a wonderful thing because on your left arm you would have your shield and in your right hand you would have your sword but your arm would be exposed and would be open to attack however if another warrior was standing before your right arm well you were very secure he is saying that God is like this warrior at his right hand who prevents that exposed part of him from being attacked from being wounded and therefore he says he won't be shaken once we know who the true

[23 : 07] God is and have come before him and said you're my Lord not just the Lord you're my Lord I want to worship you I want to follow you we get this great sense of security in who he is we confess to him that because he is with us we won't be shaken but it doesn't just end there we are ushered into the place of true joy we are ushered in in God's grace into a place of true joy are you joyful tonight is there joy in your heart I hope this psalm will lead you will usher you in to a greater sense of joy tonight because David says therefore my heart is glad and my whole being rejoices my flesh also dwells secure what a what a total picture that is isn't it his heart is glad his whole being rejoices and his flesh dwells secure every part of him is is overwhelmed with this joy that comes from security it's founded in his security and in the identity of

God everything is overflowing that's something you can't fake or it would be hard to anyway this overflowing joy that comes from knowing God you even feel it in your body he says my flesh dwells secure he feels it physically because it runs through the whole person when God takes us in this way but why is his heart overflowing with this joy we come to the very core of the psalm the very core of the prayer it's this confession that the whole thing turns on look with me at verse 10 this is why he is so glad for you will not abandon my soul to shield or let your holy one see corruption the psalmist has faith that when he dies it won't be the end shield is the

Jews would refer to that as the place of the dead and he believes he will not be abandoned to that shadowy place he won't even see corruption he won't even see corruption now in one sense of course we can see that this is a prayer of David David has faith in God he has faith in what God will do through one of his own line who is yet greater than him he has faith in God and therefore he knows he has eternal life he knows he has eternal life but this is by no means all that is going on here this is by no means all that is going on here why David says you will not abandon my soul to Sheol or let your holy one see corruption but King David the king of Israel who reigned in Jerusalem died and was buried and he remains buried to this very day and he was in the grave in Jesus' day and so what the apostles under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit clearly saw about Psalm 16 was that it wasn't just talking about David David was speaking prophetically about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ because David's body did see decay and corruption but Jesus' body did not he

was crucified he was taken down from the cross and placed in a tomb but on the third day the stone was rolled away and it was shown to be empty

Jesus had risen and Jesus then revealed himself to his disciples and to many others in many different ways in many different places at many different times over a long period of time of 40 days and showed himself to be alive again he did not see corruption and this is why Peter says in that great sermon that he gives at Pentecost in Jerusalem with a whole host of people gathered together from around the ancient world in Jerusalem he says that Psalm 16 is about Jesus Peter says in Acts chapter 2 verse 25 for David says concerning him then he quotes Psalm 16

[29 : 18] I saw the Lord always before me for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced my flesh also will dwell in hope for you will not abandon my soul to Hades or let your Holy One see corruption you have made known to me the paths of life you will make me full of gladness with your presence brothers I say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried and his tomb is with us to this day being therefore a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of Christ that he was not abandoned to Hades nor did his flesh see corruption this

Jesus God raised up and of that we are all witnesses being therefore exalted at the right hand of God and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing and then later in Acts we see the Apostle Paul in his first recorded sermon saying the same thing in Pisidian Antioch quoting Psalm 16 and saying David was a prophet he was speaking about the Lord and because Jesus was raised from the dead and says to us not just I am resurrected I am the resurrection he promises to us that if we believe in him he will raise us up on the last day as well he is as the scriptures say the first born from the dead he will come back to raise us up as well to take us to be with him for eternity that's why

David's heart is overflowing with joy and that's the confession of Christ can you see then as Jesus saw that the scriptures all testified about him that this was his prayer too when he faced the cross and his soul was greatly troubled what gave him peace his heart was glad because he knew his father would not abandon his soul when he had given it up on the cross he had confidence in his father he confessed to his father you will not abandon my soul to she all nor let your holy one see corruption as

Jesus gave himself up delivered himself up as a sacrifice for us he put his trust in his father it was as if he had to simply hand everything over and say over to you I trust and I know that you will not abandon me but you will raise me to life again such that my body will not see corruption that is love that is amazing love and that is love that is extended towards us in the gospel God the father is running towards us in the gospel with open arms asking that we might receive this full and free salvation that comes and is shown to us in the life the death and yes the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ he is the resurrection by believing in him we are new creations we inherit eternal life the resurrection power the very same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is at work in us renewing us sanctifying us keeping us preserving us for that day for that day when he will return and he will give us that new body I don't know if you're having trouble with your body now because we all grow old don't we outwardly we are we are wasting away aren't we but here's the promise of this psalm of a bodily resurrection a renewed body what is sown corruptible will be raised incorruptible never again will you be susceptible to illness or to death and most gloriously

[35 : 09] I think of all not to sin either I am looking forward to the place where I can no longer sin and offend my Lord I am looking forward to that perfection in glory whereby we will no longer sin but will obey our heavenly father perfectly as we were always meant to but it will be so in a new body that is the hope that we have as I've said it's a hope that is in life but it is also a hope in death the Christian can face it knowing that it has lost its sting because Christ has even conquered death and on that last day that will be the last enemy to be destroyed death itself think of the damage grief does

Jesus experienced it himself and wept over it it will be no more every tear will be wiped from every eye but think if we don't trust in this God if we don't say to this God you Lord are my Lord truly I have a beautiful inheritance then we have no such hope we have no such hope if we do confess this God as our God and trust in him to save us in Christ we know that we won't be abandoned to Sheol but if we don't trust in this God then what will there be there will be abandonment to

Sheol there will be quite the opposite of this joy and assurance there will be only despair and it will all have been so pointless because God was offering this glorious salvation through the gospel of his son so clearly displayed in his resurrection to life that if we come to him we too might have life let's just sum it up now by looking at the last verse in response to this confession of verse 10 the psalmist says you make known to me the path of life in your presence there is fullness of joy at your right hand are pleasures forever more remember earlier how he said because you are at my right hand

I will not be shaken well now he's made the full journey he's reached the journey's end of this psalm real pleasure is perhaps expressed as being at God's right hand not him being at our right hand and there are pleasures forevermore there are eternal pleasures real joy real satisfaction true pleasure is to be found eternally at God's right hand in glory and of course we can see again this is a prayer of the saviour even though Christ was going to Calvary and it was in that sense the path of death that was not going to be the end of the story it was ultimately the path of life he would be raised gloriously to life again on the third day and then he would ascend to where the right hand of the father where he is friends right now interceding for his people enjoying these eternal pleasures the fullness of joy that exists within the triune

God father son and holy spirit Jesus is enjoying these eternal pleasures and he will come to bring us into that eternal pleasure does that give you security tonight does that give you joy tonight I pray that it has brought you some measure of joy that you may know what the Lord has done in Christ and how when we stake our claim and our faith upon that we can enjoy this wonderful assurance and this wonderful joy knowing that even that we will hardly be able to compare it to what we will experience in glory in perfection because of what he has done

[41 : 15] I hope your hearts are thankful for this glorious glorious gospel and even more than that the glorious glorious saviour that the gospel is about he wasn't abandoned to she all he didn't see corruption and that truth is what gives us our hope and our joy amen