

The Path Of Life

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[0 : 00] Let's read it together. Psalm 16, a mictum of David. Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, you are my God.

I have no good apart from you. As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight. The sorrows of those who run after another God shall multiply.

Their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out. Or take their names on my lips. The Lord is my chosen portion in my cup. You hold my lot.

The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places. Indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance. I bless the Lord who gives me counsel. In the night also my heart instructs me.

I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. I shall not be moved. Therefore, my heart is glad and my whole being rejoices.

[1 : 06] My flesh also, it dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol. Or let your Holy One see corruption.

You make known to me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Amen. Psalm 16 is and has been a precious song to Christians. And that is for good reason.

The New Testament actually links this psalm directly to the person and work of Jesus Christ. Both Peter in Acts chapter 2 and Paul in Acts chapter 13 explicitly quote this psalm as a prophetic utterance.

Pointing to the eventual death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. They used it as they were preaching some of their early sermons. Preaching the gospel of Jesus in order for people to be saved.

[2 : 14] This was often their early text. Psalm 16. And what is it that they emphasized? It was a declaration to the Jews that resurrection was always God's plan for his Messiah.

The promised son of David. Which is key to our understanding of the psalm. We might even call this a psalm of resurrection. Within the Christian theology there can be no doubt that Jesus himself is the ultimate fulfillment of the song.

Making it especially precious as a piece of psalm for Christians. For us today. The messianic nature of the psalm is so sure that Christian theologians in every age.

Augustine. Athanasius. Moving forward. Aquinas. Even later than that we see in Calvin and Spurgeon and Luther. All of these men interpreted the psalm as if it was coming directly from the lips of Jesus.

For truly he alone can sing this in the truest sense of the song. And yet we need to remember that God gives us the psalm through the experience of King David.

[3 : 35] He gives us the song not merely as something to see Jesus sing. But as something that he anticipates all of his people beginning with faithful Israel even through his church.

That all of his people would sing this song with joy. Sing it in hope. What was in the minds of David and the people of Israel as they sang it in worship to God?

That's the question. It had a very real meaning to them then. And we should be careful not to remove it too quickly from the context in which it was originally given to us by God.

Because what will happen is if we do that what will happen? We will risk missing the blessings of the psalm that come to us through Christ who fulfills it.

So you want to think about David here. How is David prefiguring his future son Jesus? What is in the minds of Israel in the Old Testament as they lift this song in worship to the Lord?

[4 : 44] And now as we look back through the lens of the gospel, through the cross and the resurrection, what is it to mean for us? The central theme of the psalm, I think, is seen most clearly

in the first line of verse 11.

Just set your eyes on it again. We'll reference it throughout the sermon. Notice what he says. In summary, he says, You make known to me the path of life. You make known to me the path of life. And as we journey through the psalm, we find that there are two dynamics of life at work here. Foremost, I think, in David's thought is the notion of life after death.

Eternal life in the presence of God. And we see that most clearly in verse 10. But then there's also the dynamic of the impact of that notion.

The impact of that confidence in eternal life on David's life in the present. In other words, David has confidence that God will grant him eternal life through his promised son.

[5 : 50] And his faith in God's promise proves to be the key to a joyful life in the here and now. And it is those two dynamics that guide our thoughts today.

How can we be sure of life after death? And how should that assurance affect our lives now? Is joy something that we must wait for in eternity?

Or is a joyful life, is there a key to it now? And I think we will find that both are true here. Notice first the prayer of faith. The prayer of faith in verse 1.

David says, Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. This opening line introduces the song as a prayer for God's protection.

Preserve me, David cries, suggesting that he understands something to be a significant threat to his safety. Like bodyguards surrounding their king or a shepherd fencing in his sheep.

[7 : 00] David cries out for God to keep him safe. That's the heading of the prayer. The question is, safe from what? Many times in David's Psalms, we can discern either because of a contextual element that's explicitly stated, or maybe because of where we see it used in other places in the Bible.

We can discern what distresses in David's life were playing on his emotions, that were causing him to call out to God in any given moment. But no such event is made clear here.

It's not given to us in the superscription, neither is it enumerated throughout the psalm. And what we find as the message unfolds is that David's concern is that he preserve him from death.

And again, we see it in verses 10-11. You will not abandon my soul to Sheol. You will not abandon my soul to the place of the dead.

You will not let your Holy One see corruption. You won't let my body rot in eternity. But instead, you have shown me the path of life.

[8 : 13] That's what he's saying here. That's what he's focused on. Preserve me, O God. Preserve me from what? Preserve me in death. Now, with that understanding, David's prayer here becomes immediately relevant to every person in this room.

David had many enemies during his years on earth. We can read all about them. His greatest enemy, though, is one that we share with him. It is the inevitability of death.

And like him, each of us must contemplate the reality of death and the mystery of what comes after it.

None of us can escape it. Neither can we know when it will actually take place. And when death does come, what happens next? Do we simply cease to exist?

Or as our bodies see corruption in the ground, will our souls live on in some other place? And if so, what kind of place will that be? And how can I be sure of any of it at all?

[9 : 17] All questions that we all ask, that we all must find a way to answer in some way. They plague us in this life, don't they? But how we answer those questions directly impacts how we live in the present.

Whether that be in joyful hope or perhaps in dreadful fear. Maybe in blissful ignorance. David understood God to be sovereign over death and all that follows him.

That becomes clear. Why else would he pray to God to preserve him in death? He understands God to be sovereign over his death. To know his appointed time. To know everything that would take place.

And he cries out for God to come to his aid in it. But what's interesting here is that knowing that God is sovereign over death, David doesn't seek to be spared from it.

He readily acknowledges that it will come. That that will not change. He doesn't ask God to keep him from ever dying. No, he asked God to preserve him through it. Death was an inescapable reality in God's purposes.

[10 : 31] David, though, places all of his hope and his faith in the God who reigns over death itself. In fact, it's David's faith that pervades the opening prayer.

We shouldn't think of this as a request with an uncertain answer. As if he's pleading for God to do something, unsure of whether or not God will do it.

No, that's not exactly what David is doing here. No, notice what he says. Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. There is a stated fact happening here.

This is not a request with an uncertain answer. This is an expression of faith in the saving promises of God. David has, by faith, as it were, run into the refuge of God.

And in so doing, he now turns and expresses his confidence in God's saving grace. You are my refuge. I have run into you. Preserve me.

[11 : 34] The prayer is not a plea of one who hopes to enter the refuge. Rather, it is the song of those who, by faith, already have.

He has taken refuge by faith in God. And now he says, with confidence, preserve me through death. And that's the introduction to the psalm.

That's what he gives us. We'll come to the grounds of David's confidence later. But first, let's examine how his faith affected his worship. That's the second note. Notice his pledge of devotion. We see his prayer of faith. Now we see his pledge of devotion. Verses 2 to 4. Pledge of devotion. David's devotion on full display. His language here, it's intentionally covenantal. He's echoing the first commandment.

[13 : 01] In fact, he uses the same phrase from Exodus 20 and verse 3, where we read the very first commandment. You shall have no other gods before me. Or literally, you shall have no other gods apart from me.

And David turns to the Lord in his devotion. And he says, you are my Lord. I have no good apart from you. He's quoting the commands. It's intentional.

It's covenantal. It's a pledge of devotion and of worship. David declares to Yahweh, you alone are my God. He would set his hope on none other.

And to David, God was the greatest possible good. He was committed to placing no other desire ahead of the Lord.

But why? Verse 11. Because the Lord had made known to him the path of life. The path to eternal life, which then affected his joy in the present life.

[14 : 05] And believing the promise of God and the revelation of God of this path of life, David then turns and he says, you alone are my God. I have no good apart from you.

I will set no desire ahead of you. And of course, we know David failed in that. He wasn't perfect in that. Jesus is perfect in that. But David, at his best, cries out to the Lord meaningfully.

And he says, there is no desire in this life that I would ever put ahead of you. You alone are my God. You alone are my desire. Says Christopher Ashe, David will not, as it were, look over God's shoulder to see if he can find blessing from other sources.

David's devotion to God then naturally spills over into delight in the people of God. That's where he moves.

Next thing he says, as for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones. Perhaps this is a statement coming from a king. Indicating where he would prioritize favor and kingship to those who are right to receive it.

[15 : 17] I think there's something deeper than that. He delights in God's people. Not on the basis of personality. Not on the basis of peripheral matters or secondary agreements.

No, he delights in the people of God solely on the basis of their mutual covenant devotion to God. David, as it were, he says, you alone are my God.

I have no other good apart from you. And then he looks around and he says, the faithful in Israel, they have made you alone their God. They are the excellent ones because of their faith.

And I delight in them. Delight in them. Another reminder to us that just as Jesus plainly taught, we cannot separate our devotion to God from delight in his people.

If we were to put it in New Testament language, we must not separate our devotion to Christ from delight in his church. The two go together.

[16 : 21] Indeed, the one flows out of the other. Finally, David contrasts the joy of these saints with the multiplication of sorrows for those who seek refuge in some other God.

The sorrows of those who run after another God shall multiply, he says. And his covenant devotion was such that he refused to take part in their forms of worship or even to speak the names of their gods with his lips.

There is no place for syncretism in true worship. Any attempt to blend the worship of God with other philosophy and religion is a damning act that will only multiply one's sorrows, David says.

He says, I will not do that. David was committed to serving Yahweh and Yahweh alone. Now, what's the point of the pledge of devotion?

This is what it looks like when one has taken refuge in God. Is that what he says in verse one? Preserve me. I've taken refuge in you.

[17:29] Well, how do we know he's taken refuge in God alone? It's affected his worship. It's affected him now. Our devotion, like David's, it's not a means of earning safety from God.

It's not a password to get into the refuge. It is the worshipful response of a heart that has been freely given that safety by grace. God has blessed him with this promise, and David has believed the promise.

And as a result of God's grace in his life, he now turns and he says, you alone are my God. No other good apart from you. Only you. I won't even take another God's name on my lips.

I certainly won't participate in their worship rituals. This pledge, it gets to the heart of what true worship is.

But then it's carried on in the next set of verses where we find present delight. We have the prayer of faith, and then we have the pledge of devotion, and now we have present delight.

[18:36] Verses five to eight. The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup. You hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places.

Indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance. I bless the Lord who gives me counsel. In the night also, my heart instructs me. I have set the Lord always before me because he's at my right hand.

I shall not be shaken. I shall not be moved from this faith, he intends to say, I believe. These verses show that David's pledge of devotion is not merely religious.

It's deeply personal, relational. Yahweh is not a distant being that David attempts to appease through religious practice.

No, he is the personal God who through covenant with his people pours out blessings and instructs them in his truth and provides security so that they are not moved, so that they are not shaken, so that they are not overcome by the enemy.

[19:49] God himself is David's preeminent desire. He's moved beyond mere forms of religion here to truly know and to love his creator.

It's interesting. In verses 5 and 6, the imagery here is of land allotments. That's what David employs.

Portion, cup, lot, lines, and places all in this context refer to the blessings of the promised land for Israel. That was their inheritance.

And this was meaningful for them. God had promised to give Israel the land of Canaan. Each tribe and clan and family was given an allotment as an inheritance from God through God's covenant. Why did they persevere all those years in the wilderness? Knowing that they themselves would not enter the land. It was the inheritance that God had promised through covenant for their progeny.

[20:55] They thought beyond their own lives. This was meaningful. The people of Israel in singing Psalm 16 would have picked up on this immediately, what David is saying. But it's interesting what he does say.

David uses it to declare that God was his chosen portion and inheritance. More than any blessing that may come from God's hand, David's delight at his best, again, imperfectly for sure, but at his best, David's delight was in God himself.

Notice what he says. The Lord is my chosen portion. He is my inheritance. And it is a beautiful inheritance that I have in him. David also delights in the fact that God takes personal interest in him. Something he expressed so clearly in Psalm 8, when I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, that you have set in place.

What is man that you are mindful of him? And the son of man that you care for him. David knew well God's interest in him, a personal interest, a relational interest.

[22:09] And it overwhelmed him. It amazed him. And once again, he speaks of it, except he speaks of it in a unique way. Here, God's interest comes in the form of counsel and instruction day

and night.

Notice what he says. I bless the Lord who gives me counsel. That's relational. That's personal. In the night also, at all times, my heart instructs me.

How is this happening? Well, I think David lets us in on it in Psalm 1. The blessed man has his delight in the law of the Lord.

And on his law, he meditates day and night. So that David delights in the fact that God cares to reveal himself to his creatures. And he wants to know this God intimately.

He, again, at his best, sets the Lord always before him. What is his present delight? Not the blessings that come from God's hand. No, it is God himself.

[23 : 14] It's not mere religion for David. No, it's very personal. It's relational. It's intimate. It is a pursuit of God. The promises of God.

And why take such delight in God? Well, verse 11. Because God had made known to him the path of life. Which brings us to the final section.

We find David's promised future. David's promised future. This is where the whole psalm is grounded. It's all moving forward to this climactic section.

Verse 9. Therefore, my heart is glad. My whole being rejoices. My flesh also dwells secure. Therefore.

The therefore is important, isn't it? It introduces a conclusion based on the facts just presented. We might understand it this way.

[24 : 15] Because Yahweh is David's God, whom he supremely delights in, his whole being is full of joy and gladness. In other words, David has found God to be the very refuge he so desperately needed.

And despite the reality of grief and suffering in this life, God has blessed him with a joy that would not be overcome. But how?

How can a heart be glad amid brokenness and sorrow? How can a soul rejoice in a world full of evil and suffering?

How could any of us feel secure in a life like this? Well, that's where we come to verse 10.

David had joy in the present because of the promise of his future. Look at verse 10. What he affirms here. You will not abandon my soul to Sheol. That's the place of the dead.

[25 : 32] The realm of the dead. The Greek term or the Greek reference to this would have been Hades. Okay? So this is the realm of death. You will not let your Holy One see corruption.

And in David's mind in this place, at least the immediate interpretation is that it is David's soul. And it is David being the Holy One who will not see corruption. And we're going to see a future fulfillment of this.

But in the immediate, it's David. He says, you will not abandon my soul to Sheol. You will not let your Holy One see corruption. And it is here that the notion of life after death comes into view.

David doesn't expect to escape death. No, he readily acknowledges death as a surety. But he did have confidence that God would not abandon his soul to the realm of the dead.

He was certain that God would indeed preserve him through death, not allowing him to see eternal corruption. But the question is, where does David find this assurance?

[26 : 36] How does he receive such confidence? And the answer is that David's hope rested entirely on the promise of God. You see, the Lord had made a covenant with David.

You can read the full covenant in 2 Samuel 7 or in 1 Chronicles 17. But at the heart of the covenant is a son, a future son for David.

And even in the covenant itself, God tells David, one day you will lie down with your fathers. You will die, David. But I will raise up a son from your lineage.

I will raise up a son after you. And he will not see corruption. No, he will be an eternal king. He will bring salvation for my people.

And he will sit on your throne forever. That's the promise. David hears the promise and he believes. How can David have such confidence in verse 10 that God will not abandon his soul to the realm of the dead or let his Holy One see corruption?

[27 : 40] He simply believed God. David's promised future would come through David's promised son.

And we know that son to be Jesus of Nazareth. Hear the words of Peter in Acts chapter 2. In fact, why don't you just turn there? Acts chapter 2.

This is Peter's first sermon. It's the day of Pentecost and the Spirit of God has come and the dramatic display and fulfillment of the prophet Joel. People have gathered around and they're trying to figure out what's going on.

And Peter steps up and he preaches his first gospel sermon. And what does he take as his text? Well, after he explains the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, he turns his attention into Psalm 16. And I want you to look with me at verse 22. Men of Israel, Peter says, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst.

[28 : 53] As you yourselves know, this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. You crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

But God raised him up, loosing the pains of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it. For David says concerning him, that is concerning Jesus, Psalm 16.

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. And notice Peter's interpretation. Verse 29. Do you see what Peter's doing here?

[30 : 02] He's saying, yes, God gave us this through David. And there is some sense in which David himself has hope in these words. But brothers, go look, his grave is there.

He died. All that's left is bones. You can see them yourselves. What's Peter saying? He's saying Psalm 16 wasn't ultimately about David.

It was about a greater David. Look again, verse 30. 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.

That's the covenant from 2 Samuel 7, 1 Chronicles 17. He foresaw in shadowy form, of course. But he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ.

That he was not abandoned to Hades. Nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up. And of that we are all witnesses.

[31 : 03] That's amazing, isn't it? You see, the disciples got it all. They received it all backwards, didn't they? Jesus would tell them these things and they just couldn't grasp it.

And then finally, they met the risen Christ. And Jesus himself opens his word to show all the ways that he was the fulfillment of all the scriptures. No doubt in that night, on resurrection night, sitting in Jerusalem, Jesus turns at some point to Psalm 16 and he says, Peter, look, this wasn't about David.

This was about me. And understanding what he had seen and what he experienced in the resurrection of Christ. Peter stands up and he tells the Jews the gospel of Jesus through Psalm 16. That's the point. Now from David's viewpoint, this was a mystery, wasn't it? He could only see the gospel in shadowy form. But from our perspective, the mystery has been revealed in the person of Jesus.

Who took our death in order that he might give us his life. And because he lives, so will all who trust in him.

[32 : 17] David wouldn't have comprehended all that was entailed in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There's no way he could have possibly comprehended all of that the way that we understand it.

But he trusted God's promise. Isn't that what Peter says? How could David say such a thing, Peter says? Because he trusted the promise of God. That after he was dead and gone, God was going to raise up a son who would do what David never could do.

By faith, David ran into the refuge of God. And by faith, we must also run into the refuge that is Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Indeed, like David, you can have confidence in life beyond death, but it only comes through Jesus. It only came to David through Jesus. It only comes to any of us through Jesus.

By the way, that's good news. Remember that enemy. The enemy that we share with David. The inevitability of death and the mystery of what will come after. You can have certainty.

[33 : 33] This is at the heart of the gospel. Christ has conquered death. He's conquered it for us. And by faith in Christ, we can confidently sing this verse, knowing that Christ has fulfilled it.

Verse 11. David summarizes the whole thing. He says, You make known to me the paths of life. In your presence, there is fullness of joy.

At your right hand are pleasures forevermore. The path of life is paved with the promises of God that lead to his eternal presence where there are pleasures forever and ever and ever.

What kind of pleasures? God himself is that pleasure. Remember what David says early. I have no good apart from you.

You are my greatest good. What does David mean when he says, In your presence there is complete joy and fullness of joy? What does he mean? He means that God is his greatest desire, and after this life is over, he will be with his greatest desire for eternity.

[34 : 50] That's what completed his joy. It wasn't some vision of golden streets and mansions and beauty, and of course all of that is ahead for those who know the Lord and love the Lord.

No, his desire though, the preeminent thing in his mind was God himself. If I can just get through this life and get to him, then will my joy be complete.

That's why Christians can lay on their deathbed with joy. That's why they die so well. That's why you, many of you, when your day comes, if you've walked with the Lord, if you've come to know his gospel, you will die well.

Why? Because what awaits you in the next life is far better than anything you've enjoyed in this life. Isn't that what Paul affirms for us in Romans 8?

I am persuaded that no suffering in this life can compare to the glory that awaits. And what is that glory in Paul's mind? It is the glory of Christ.

[36 : 03] He is the completion of our joy. He is the pleasure that never comes to an end. God has revealed the path to eternal life in Christ, and all who will walk that path by faith will receive perfect joy and unending pleasure in his presence.

Now what a joy that God has made this known. He hasn't only made it known to David. He has made it known to us in his word. There is no secret to the path of life.

It's been revealed. God has told us. And what a joy that he has. Walking God's path to life is the key to joy now and forever.

Believing his promises. Trusting in him as your refuge. That is the key to this life. David's worship and his desire for God, they were the overflow of his confidence in God's promises.

In other words, he didn't worship and delight in God in order to receive God's promise. Rather, because he trusted in God's promise, taking refuge in him, he then pledged his devotion and made God his delight.

[37 : 24] His faith in God's promise then dramatically affected how he lived in the present. And that will be true for us as well. The psalm really is a precious one, isn't it?

It's precious to all who have come to know Jesus as its fulfillment. But it's also precious in that we can sing it with great depth of meaning as did David and faithful Israel.

Who did not know the fullness of its truth as we now know. What is your refuge? What is your hope? Where does your confidence lie?

Come and find your rest in Christ. You will find that he lacks nothing. What is your protection?

What is your protection? What is your protection? What is your protection? What is your protection?

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