

**Psalm 16**

**A *miktam*<sup>[a]</sup> of David.**

- <sup>1</sup> Keep me safe, my God,  
for in you I take refuge.
- <sup>2</sup> I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord;  
apart from you I have no good thing."
- <sup>3</sup> I say of the holy people who are in the land,  
"They are the noble ones in whom is all my delight."
- <sup>4</sup> Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more.  
I will not pour out libations of blood to such gods  
or take up their names on my lips.
- <sup>5</sup> Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup;  
you make my lot secure.
- <sup>6</sup> The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;  
surely I have a delightful inheritance.
- <sup>7</sup> I will praise the Lord, who counsels me;  
even at night my heart instructs me.
- <sup>8</sup> I keep my eyes always on the Lord.  
With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.
- <sup>9</sup> Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;  
my body also will rest secure,
- <sup>10</sup> because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,  
nor will you let your faithful<sup>[b]</sup> one see decay.
- <sup>11</sup> You make known to me the path of life;  
you will fill me with joy in your presence,  
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Dear Family of God,

After all the distancing and restrictions of the past 2 years, it might be good to remind ourselves that the Lord goes with us in 2022 and also into what could be a third year of this pandemic. We hate to think about that. I know I do. I'm struck, however, by how humbling it is for humanity to be halted in our tracks by a microscopic virus. A time like this should turn people to the Lord but it doesn't do that all the time.

I've heard many times in my life that during World War 2 in western Europe, the churches—in Holland at least—could hardly hold all the people attending. Everybody knew that they needed God when the going was tough. But after the war was over, after loved ones returned home, after food filled the cupboards again and doctors restocked the medicine drawers, many people forgot about God.

King David in Psalm 16 admits that he himself also falls into this trap. And don't we all? We can still easily start to live our daily lives without God. It's easy to point the finger at those people "out there" who only go to worship when the going gets rough or only call out to him when hardship hits their life, but let's stop and look at ourselves today.

If we are honest, we all need to admit that praying seems much more important when someone close to us is sick—a parent, spouse, or child. When your business hits a financial wall, when your marriage starts slipping or your kids don't live the way you taught them, then seeking God's help suddenly seems much more important. It's true for me. How about you?

Psalm 16 is entitled *a miktam of David*. We don't know what *miktam* means exactly, but the *miktam* psalms fall into the tradition of Davidic prayers written during—listen to this—during times of danger! David knows, just as well as we do, that we all need God. It's just that hard times have a way of reminding us about that and raising our urgency to connect with God.

So, in a time of fear, David prays. And as we begin the new year with all of its challenges, uncertainties and possible trials, let's hear what David says. It's important for us to recognize that what David teaches us here is better to practice when things are going well rather than simply waiting until things go bad. This psalm teaches us a lot about the God who goes with us in 2022. What we know and believe about him will show in the attitude of our hearts.

## **A Heart of Dependence**

First off, notice how David begins by calling to God with a deep sense of dependence:

*Ps 16:1 Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge.*

"Keep me safe" or guard me. The word he uses gives the picture of a shepherd guarding his sheep. King David, who could have called on his army to protect him, instead calls upon God because he confesses, in verse 1, that his Creator and covenant God is the only true source of refuge. You may recall that David, at

another time in his life, relied on his own resources to win his battles. That's why, for example, he counted his men. But in the situation that led him to write Psalm 16, he remembers that God is the One who protects him. God is the only refuge he needs to run to. His only help.

It's hard to trust others. It's perhaps even harder to trust a God we cannot see. Our natural tendency is to take care of ourselves. When we have a need, we address it. When we have a problem, we solve it. When we feel threatened, we build a defense. And that's the way David was at times too.

But not in Psalm 16. Here we see mighty King David confessing his need to God like a helpless little lamb. "God, I've got a lot of things, but apart from you I have nothing." We may have power, a good reputation, lots of friends, worldly status symbols, or lots of resources, but we have nothing if we don't have God. All the status and human resources we have, even a stable family and a great network of friends cannot give us the comfort that we all need when troubles come. The only **true** source of help and comfort we can find is God!!

Any other refuge is a false god which can do you no good. That's why David says in v.4,

*Ps 16:4 The sorrows of those will increase  
who run after other gods.*

*I will not pour out their libations of blood  
or take up their names on my lips.*

When I read that, I think of the time Elijah challenged the Baal prophets to see whose God could answer their prayers with fire. Boys and girls, do remember that story? The Baal prophets prayed to Baal. They danced around, and slashed themselves trying to get Baal's attention. They poured out their own blood—slashing themselves—in order to move Baal to action. But it didn't help one bit. Elijah laughed at them. He said, "Maybe Baal can't hear you. Maybe you should shout louder. Maybe Baal is on vacation. Or maybe he is gone to the bathroom." Then after the Baal prophets had jumped around all day long and spilled their blood, Elijah stepped in. Without fanfare or noise, he simply knelt down and prayed to God. And immediately the Lord answered Elijah's prayer with a fire that burned up the offerings, the rocks of the altar and the water around it. The people stood in awe and said, "The Lord He is the only true God."

No wonder David would choose the God of his fathers, the God of Elijah. With a heart of dependence on God, he can say, "*The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods.*" To paraphrase, "You think you've got it bad now," says David. "If you run to the wrong god with your problems and fears, your sorrows will only increase. Your false sources of help might be able to put a band aid on your sorrows, at best. But you won't be safe trusting in no-gods."

And without the safety of knowing that God is with you and is able to help you, you can't have peace in your life, regardless of your situation. That's why in v.3 already, David says,

*Ps 16:3 As for the saints who are in the land,  
they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight*

The people of God, those trusting him, are called saints. The NT makes it crystal clear that all who believe in Jesus Christ are saints. And those are the people that David delights in. In other words, he's learning from them. He's doing what sincere believers in the past—like Elijah—have done and those in the present continue to do. David has compared the lives of believers and unbelievers and he sees a sharp distinction. Those who walk with the Lord have "good things." And those who don't walk with God have "sorrows" that only increase with time. Therefore David calls us to humble, faith-filled dependence on the Lord God.

So the first challenge we find in this passage is the call to depend wholeheartedly on the Lord as we step further and further into this new year with whatever comes our way. This doesn't mean that nothing bad is going to happen. After all, David is facing danger or hardship even as he writes this psalm. Nowhere does he indicate that the saints will be spared from all distress. No, but we have a place to go to. We have a God who helps us through it all as we look to him. Our God reigns. He is great. He hears our prayers. He loves us.

### **A Heart of Confidence**

Closely related to the heart of dependence on God that David teaches us, we see, secondly, a heart of confidence. David's confidence is based on the comfort of knowing that God controls his life and our lives. Not only is God trustworthy and true—the only true source of help and only real refuge in trouble. Not only is God loving. God is all of those things because he doesn't just watch things happen to us. He doesn't sit back helplessly. No, he controls our lives. He holds us in his mighty, loving hands.

While I attended seminary, I served as a youth pastor at a local church. During that time, there was a popular song. A lot of the young people were singing it. While thinking back to it this week, I guessed it was by Bette Midler and I was right. That doesn't happen very often when it comes to remembering who sang what in years past. In any event, her lyrics said, "God is watching us; God is watching us; God is watching us from a distance." And to the first part I say "Amen." The words of Psalm 16 confirm it. God IS watching us. However, he's not just watching his people from a distance. That's what philosophers call *deism*—the idea that God is like a clockmaker who creates and winds up the world and then just watches from a distance as it unwinds. It's all set up and turns as it's supposed to without any attention from God, any involvement in our lives.

But that's not David's comfort. His confidence, even in uncertainty—is that God is right up close. He's involved with each one of us. He counts the hairs on our heads (or even the lack of them). He's intimately involved with our lives. That's why v.5 ought to be on the lips of us all:

*Ps 16:5 Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup;  
you have made my lot secure.*

At times in 2022 you and I may pray something like, "Lord, you are throwing a lot of things my way. And Lord, I don't always like what happens. But I know you are in control of everything. And even if I can't understand it, I know that you love

me and you are watching over me and—this is a big “and”—AND you are working all things for my good. You’re involved!!! So I’m going to keep on trusting you.”

Our God is in control of our lives from the very moment of conception until the time we die. He leads and guides us. David says he even assigns tragedy to come our way as well as sending causes for rejoicing. God uses the highs and lows of our lives to bring us to new spiritual heights we'd never otherwise reach and to accomplish other good in and through us.

In the confidence of this truth, David says in v.6,  
*Ps 16:6 The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;  
surely I have a delightful inheritance.*

He casts his lot with the Lord. He decides that it will be the name of God that is on his lips and not the name of the gods of the world. He goes on in the following verses to praise God for the comfort and confidence he has, whether as a shepherd or a king.

*Ps 16:7 I will praise the LORD, who counsels me;  
even at night my heart instructs me.*

*Ps 16:8 I have set the LORD always before me.  
Because he is at my right hand,  
I will not be shaken.*

God is in control. David is comforted realizing that God loves him, is close to him and is working out a perfect plan in his life. That gives him unshakeable peace.

You see, David does not just have a God who is watching us from distance. A song built around Ecclesiastes 3 says things about the fact that God is with you.

He is with you when your faith is dead  
And you can't even get out of bed  
Or your husband doesn't kiss you anymore.  
He is with you in the ICU  
When the doctors don't know what to do.  
He is with you when your kids are grown  
When there's too much space and you feel alone  
And you're worried if you got it right or wrong.  
He is with you when nothing else is left  
and when you take your final breath,  
He is with you

This is the comfort David has and which we have no matter what we face this year. God is with us. Not a distant and unconcerned God. Not a helpless and powerless God. No, God walks with us through all of life, even when we don't realize it. God the Holy Spirit moves within us, not at a distance from us. The Spirit counsels us. Like little lambs we would wander around aimlessly, vulnerable to the attacks of the big bad wolf if we did not have the Holy Spirit as our Counselor. The Holy Spirit makes our hearts a place that the Father and Son will dwell. Consequently, our lives are secure because of the indwelling presence of God. Therefore we cannot be shaken today or any other day this year. We have a heart of confidence. God is with us and in us!

## A Heart of Praise

And that brings David to the final point of this psalm. He breathes a sigh of relief that comes out in praise. Oh, my Christian friends, what strength and grace and peace and hope we have because God makes his home in us! God makes his home in us only because Christ made his home on earth and took our sin upon himself. He opens up the channels of divine fellowship for us. Praise God!

If Jesus had not come, we would have no hope in this world, no possibility of being rescued from the grave, or even hell. But because of Jesus we can rest with 100% certainty that, no matter what happens to us in this world, God will be with us. **No one** who comes to Jesus in faith will ever be turned away. Verse 9 reads,

*Ps 16:9 My heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let you Holy One see decay.*

It is those exact words that the Apostle Peter quotes in Acts 2:25ff when he preaches his Pentecost sermon. He applies them to Jesus. And as we come under Jesus by faith, those words apply to us.

David was a sinner just like we are. A few weeks ago, we explored his adultery with Bathsheba. In addition, he lied, he murdered, he lived in pride and arrogance at times, and more. But he was saved because he put his trust in God's love—his promised Son, Jesus Christ. David's body is decaying in his grave, but it will not be abandoned there. When Jesus died, his body did not decay because the Holy One rose from the dead freeing all believers from the curse of death. Because Jesus is the true Holy One, we who believe in him as our Saviour are also holy in the eyes of God. And the promise of eternal pleasures and even earthly joy are ours!

Joy and happiness and peace and hope unshakable are ours already now in Christ. God fills our lives with hope and comfort. We will not live without trouble for we still live under the effects of sin on the world. But oh, we have hope! By faith in Christ, we know where we are headed. We have assurance that we will not die and stay in the grave. Jesus arose! So David rests secure in the knowledge that even **if** his enemy gets the upper hand in this life, God will not abandon him to the grave. If his eyes close in death, they will surely awaken in the very presence of God. And that talk of not being abandoned to the grave gives comfort to David not just for the end of his life but for every day of it here on earth.

The blessings of having Christ as our Saviour and Lord are wonderful. Our lives are secure in him. The Holy Spirit dwells in us. The Father not only watches us, but directs our paths according to his perfect plan and walks with us through it all. He hears our prayers and holds us. So, dear friends, live your life in the confidence that the Lord is with us. As the writer of Hebrews meditates on that truth, he quotes Psalm 118 and says,

*Heb 13:6 So we say with confidence,  
"The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.  
What can man do to me?"*

There you have it! There is no power of humans or even of Satan that can destroy us and separate us from God's love in Christ. Praise God.

Don't be afraid of the challenges or even the trials we face this year. Some of us will face hard trials. It happens each year. It could be me. But let our hearts be filled with dependence, confidence and praise because God is with us and always will be! Jesus is Immanuel. The Holy Spirit is in us. We are held in the Father's love. So when God puts opportunities and challenges before us, let us step forward in faith. Without a doubt, my friends, God goes with us into 2022. Let us therefore throw off all false sources of security. And let us look to God alone who will hold us safe and lead us forward.