

Text: Psalm 16

Title: A Prayer of Hope in God Whom We Believe Part 1

Occasion: Westminster Presbyterian Church

Date: April 15, AD 2012

## **Introduction**

We come again to a Messianic Psalm. We are not left to speculate about this since both the Apostles Peter and Paul expressly use it. Speaking by the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Peter declares in Acts 2:25, "For David says concerning Him..." In that great Pentecost sermon the Apostle goes on, "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption." Then the Apostle Paul speaking by the same inspiring Spirit quotes from Psalm 16, in Acts 13:35f, declaring that David was writing about Christ and that "through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins."

It seems that some of the fathers of the early Church identified this Psalm with Christ in Gethsemane. It is certain from the testimony of the Apostles by the Holy Spirit that David spoke of Christ in this Psalm. David was himself a type of Christ and so we may safely apply this not just to David, but to Christ and His own.

### **I. The prayer of confident trust in the Lord.**

There is here both a prayer and a plea. The prayer: "Preserve me, O God." His prayer is *preserve me, guard me, keep me*. It is prayer for that action which the shepherds do keeping their flock or guards attending their king. Of course God, the Almighty, is addressed as well able to do this. There is in the very word *God* in addressing Him the knowledge that He is well able to preserve us.

#### **A. We must pray acknowledging God as the Author of our preservation.**

It is in God that we live and move and have our being. We are brought into natural life by His power and goodness. So to as sinners we are brought into the spiritual and blessed state of grace by the Lord's grace and power. I pray we all acknowledge that. We also pray for this with regard to ourselves thanking the Lord for saving us. We often pray for this earnestly for others; that the Lord would save them. This is good and right and as it should be. But in addition we are taught that our being kept alive both naturally and spiritually is of the Lord and we have a obligation of gratitude to acknowledge God in this as well. We must not only trust the promises as in Phil. 1:6, "...that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it

until the day of Jesus Christ” and that the Good Shepherd as Jn. 10:28, gives and keeps without fail those given to Him by His Father, “And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.” But we must in faith pray these promises back to God to keep, guard, preserve us. David sets before us a good example. Yes, the context of the Psalm and its application point to the great enemy death and all the reasons for that. But here, at the very beginning of the Psalm, he trusts in God praying for preservation. That must be a constant practice of ours even when we are not immediately confronted by any -- as it appears to us -- great danger. What is often our case is that we tend to lean upon our own wisdom, our own strength, our own holiness. But we are taught to lean in trust upon God to preserve us. There are good reasons for this: (1.) We are constantly much more threatened than we think. I Pe. 5:8, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” We do not realize the strength of the enemy within of our own remaining corruption. We do not realize the strength of the drawing power of the fallen world upon us. (2.) We are not independently strong. The Apostle warned the Corinthian Church/Christians from the OT of the Israelites of old who had great privileges, yet fell away: I Cor. 10:12, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” We always over-estimate our strength and underestimate our danger. It is necessary for us to ask God to preserve us.

**B. We must ground our hope and assurance of perseverance in the reality of God’s having given us faith in Him.**

Ps. 16:1, “Preserve me, O God, *for in You I put my trust.*” The Psalmist places His confidence in God. He finds grounds for hope and assurance to persevere and to continue to be preserved in what he finds of God’s grace operative in His life. Where does faith in God, trust in God, come from? It arises from the grace and Spirit of God operative in our lives. It is not faith in our own faith; No. It is seeing that God has brought me to trust in Him, to believe and have confidence in Him so therefore I am confirmed in my request that God would preserve me in this hope and confidence, keeping me.

**C. The Lord Jesus Christ was promised preservation by His Father.**

In all Christ’s work as Mediator as He humbled Himself to Redeem us, He was promised that He would be preserved in that work. God the Father not only sent him into the world to accomplish this great work but promised to uphold Him in it. Isa. 49:7,8, “Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, His Holy One, To Him whom man despises, To Him whom the nation abhors, to the Servant of rulers....Thus says the Lord: “In an acceptable time I have heard You, and in the day of salvation I have helped You; *I will preserve You and give You as a covenant to the People...*” God by sustaining power preserved Christ in all His work and sufferings. Being preserved Himself He is able to restore the preserved of Israel for we are, as Jude 1:1, “...To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ.” As all

God's elect are chosen in Christ and in time united to Christ by the Spirit and faith, so this application of preservation to Christ as our Great High Priest and Representative comes to apply to believers. As you read in Jn. 17, as Christ prays for our keeping and our being brought to glory where He is, He prays for His preservation and ours. Do you see how Christ's preservation in the midst of the hour of His sufferings is our preservation and protection. And if our Lord, though expressly promised protection and preservation, so prayed for it (Jn. 12:27; 17:1-5), then how much more need have we to pray this prayer for preservation as we have seen?!

## **II. Faith prevailing in prayer for perseverance.**

How are these next verses found in Christ? Ps. 16:2, "O my soul, you have said to the Lord, "You are my Lord, My goodness is nothing apart from You." Our Lord Jesus Christ in the covenant of redemption between Himself and God the Father humbled Himself to do the work the heavenly Father gave Him to do. This is not a subordination of essence as if Jesus Christ were something less than God; as if God the Son were something less than God the Father. Rather for the sake of redemption Christ humbles Himself, subordinates Himself to the will of God for our salvation to become the instrument of accomplishing it. You notice that this was not simply a matter of lip-service, but as was demonstrated in Christ's life, from His soul. The language, "My goodness is nothing apart from You" - points us to a lesson we learned in one of the Adult SS Classes, that God was under no necessity from His own nature to save sinners. The Triune God would have been and continued to be supremely glorious without it, even though God's glorious attributes shine forth in redemption. The point is, that God the Father is not won over to save by God the Son, but the Scriptures tell us that God gave Christ - Isa. 42:6, "I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles." But once God has in grace and mercy decided to save, as He is the holy God and men are sinners, then Christ's work is necessary. More in the future....

But note David's example here for us in believing prayer.

### **A. Sincerity of faith evidenced in laying hold of the covenant of grace in taking God as his Lord.**

We should all recognize that the first great solid evidence of the sincerity of faith bearing witness to the conscience of anyone, is that they have taken to themselves God's covenant of grace in taking God for their Savior, Protector, and Lord, resolving to depend, to trust completely in Him and serve Him. "O my soul, you have said to the Lord, "You are my Lord." It is the duty and in the interest of each and every person to solemnly dedicate themselves to God as their God. Mt. 10:32, "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven." And not just with the mouth, but with our souls. Covenanting with God is heart work! Ro. 10:9, "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the

mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

### **B. Sincerity of faith evidenced in renouncing all confidence in human work or merit before God.**

Now it is absolutely true and must be the case that all those who trust in the Lord must be like the Lord in their doing of others good. They keep the law to their neighbors. They are known for faithfulness, trustworthiness, responsibility, honorableness, virtue. I Pe. 2:11, “Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.” That is the reputation which must be ours as Christians before others by word and deed.

But now having done all, we have hear another evidence of the sincerity of faith, in rejecting, renouncing all confidence in human good works. What exactly is it that we can merit at God’s hand? Does not David say truly in I Chron. 29:14. All the offerings for the building of the Temple are gathered in willingly and it was an overflowing, amazing quantity! And David says, “But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? *For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You.* For we are aliens and pilgrims before You, as were all our fathers; Our days on earth are as a shadow, and without hope. O Lord our God, all this abundance that we have prepared to build You a house for Your holy Name is from Your hand, and is all Your own.” Yes we render to God the glory due His Name. Yes we were bought with a price so we are to honor God body and soul. Yes we are stewards of talents - time, education, resources, relationships, family -- all, yes all comes from God and is entrusted into our hands to use for His glory. But when we have done all - Do we add to God’s essential, eternal glory? Does it come up to the level of His goodness to us so that we can say, *Ok, we are even Steven!??* Can we ever bring God into debt to us as if by doing more than is required we may then have Him owing us? Lk. 17:10, “So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’” Calvin writes, “The import of his language is, *I am, indeed, fully convinced in my heart, and know assuredly, that God can derive no profit or advantage from me; but notwithstanding this, I will join myself in fellowship with the saints, that with one accord we may worship Him by the sacrifice of praise.*” You see David points out that God has a right to require of us whatever He pleases sees we are completely bound to Him as our rightful Owner and Lord. That is what David ascribes to God as LORD in terms of power, authority, and dominion so that both himself and all he has are the property of God. But then by saying *my goodness extends not to You* - He lays out this very broad statement that we can bring not advantage to God for He does not stand in need of anything. Job 35:7, “If you are righteous, what do you give Him? Or what does He receive from your hand?” Coming to God requires this humility of renouncing all presumption of good in us because it takes away from Him the honor which is His due. Rather we acknowledge

that all the services are not deserving of any notice by Him at all. This humility is the sweet smelling perfume which bring acceptance of our sacrifice before God. Sincerity of faith is evidenced in renouncing all confidence in human work or merit before God.

### **C. Sincerity of faith evidenced in love of the godly.**

Ps. 16:3, "As for the saints who are on the earth, "They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight." Another evidence or fruit of the genuine and sincere faith is expressed in this love of God's people. In Dicken's *Great Expectations*, young Pip is swept up from a poor, plain, uneducated blacksmith home of Joe to be among the wealthy by an unknown benefactor. When his expectations are for all this wealth he has all the acknowledgment from worldlings that could be imagined. He is ashamed of Joe and the plainness, baseness from which he came. He doesn't go back to visit even when he was in the town. Of course when his money supply turns out to be from a very horrible source and even that is taken away -- Who is it that nurses him back to health but old Joe. Do we prize and seek our friendship not with those the world calls great, important, courting them while ultimately despising or having a distaste for the company of the saints? If we are told in Ps. 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" then do we prize them? Think of this? To whom did Peter address these words in I Pe. 2:9? "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people...."? They were people deprived of house and homeland and scattered across Asia Minor. But they are: Dt. 7:6, "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth." His people are the ones whom He has set His love upon. Now that is amazing because this delight is expressed toward God's people separated to be His *in the earth* while they are still with so many imperfections and weaknesses! -- How then should we live? For David says "...the saints on the earth..." We must learn to love not only our families, but our Church family, above the godless world. Where do you invest the pleasure of friendship? Invest the time of friendship? Where would be first to give our help?

### **D. Sincerity of faith evidenced in disapproving all false religion.**

The same heart which opens in love towards God's own is closed against those who continue in their rebellion against God. Ps. 16:4, "Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten after another god; Their drink offerings of blood I will not offer, nor take up their names on my lips." Another fruit of faith and evidence of trust set in the God of the Bible is a disapproving of all false religion. There are so many today who seem to have the notion that allegiance to Christ means that both God and Christians are to become pluralists! That like all roads led to Rome, so every religion leads to God and God just loves all and tolerance means that every religion is equally legitimate! They have never read the Gospels! Our Lord Jesus was certainly gentle with the Samaritan Woman at the Well, but He did not

endorse her sin nor her idolatrous religion! Jn. 4:22, "You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews." Or if you read even a portion of Mt. 23? V. 13, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men, for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in." Did Jesus love this wickedness? Did He endorse it as just another well meant cultural expression of man towards God? Remember that two times He with great vigor cleansed the Temple! The Lord abhors false religion. But then note how the Spirit of God points out that the path of idolatry and the worship that goes with it, is a path of multiplying and increasing sorrows. While God's people are often slow in their pursuit of Him, yet those who go after themselves, who go their own way and not for God, greedily run after every false way! And it seems that while Christ's yoke is easy and His burden light - that such is the corruption of man, such is his rebellion and enmity against God, that no matter how hard, how difficult or rather the more hard the way is the more eagerly they pursue it!

Now you might think that David goes a bit far here?! After all: "Nor take up their names on my lips"?? Surely a bit of dallying around with cannot be all that dangerous? I loved this from Spurgeon: "The old proverb says, "It is not safe to eat at the devil's mess, though the spoon be never so long." The mere mentioning of ill names it were well to avoid, -- "nor take up their names into my lips." If we allow poison upon the lip, it may ere long penetrate to the inwards, and it is well to keep out of the mouth that which we would shut out from the heart. If the Church would enjoy union with Christ, she must break all the bonds of impiety, and keep herself pure from all the pollutions of carnal will-worship, which now pollute the service of God." He goes on to warn of Roman superstitious worship.

### **E. Sincerity of faith evidenced in finding full satisfaction in God.**

The last fruit and evidence of faith in God is this full satisfaction in and resting on God as his all-sufficient portion. God is sufficient for all my happiness and blessedness: "O Lord, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You maintain my lot." What a tremendous and satisfying claim? It is the claim of faith: God is my God and my portion and my inheritance and He shall keep me into the full enjoyment of Himself in which I am perfectly satisfied. It is the right of the children of God which they have by free gift, by spiritual birth-right. Jn. 1:12, "...He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Ro. 8:17, "And if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together."

laying hold of the covenant of grace in taking God as his Lord  
in renouncing all confidence in human work or merit before God  
in disapproving all false religion  
in finding full satisfaction in God      Such faith encourages us to pray:  
Preserve Me, O God, for in You I put my trust.