

TRUTH B-P CHURCH
Adults Sunday School

PSALM 16 – GOD PRESERVES HIS PEOPLE

I. INTRODUCTION

Michtam of David. What is the meaning of “michtam”? It means “engraved poem.” Why is it engraved? It is hard work to engrave words or pictures upon the stones. Therefore it tells the significant of the content of the poem that is being engraved. It was believed that this “michtam” was engraved upon gold to show its preciousness and excellency. These are the golden verses of David. It was likely written during his reign as the great king of Israel.

In this psalm we shall learn how the psalmist trusted in God's preservation. Yet at the same time, David did not take God's preservation for granted. He acknowledged the basis, the promise and the hope of God's preservation that belong to him and to all of God's people. The occasion of this psalm is unknown. It was written probably at a dangerous time whereby David was facing a great threat from his enemy. May this psalm encourage our heart to keep trusting in God for indeed He preserves His own people to the end.

II. THE BASIS FOR GOD'S PRESERVATION

Verse 1, “Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.”

The force of the psalm is shown in verse 1 as an urgent cry to God for His preservation. However the psalmist is able to compose himself well enough to place his confidence in God. He did not panic. Neither did he take it easy. He knew that there is only one way out for him and that is: To trust in God to bring about the preservation of his life. This is a humble plea.

The word “preserve” means to keep, save or guard. Indeed only God can keep, save and guard the psalmist in his situation. And the reason why the psalmist prays this prayer shows that he is not taking God for granted. He did not assume that God must and should definitely keep, save and guard him. However, we know that God works independently to His own glory. Even without our prayer (so to speak; this is not to encourage anyone from prayer), since God is true in own Word, He will surely be able to fulfill His promise. But it pleased Him to use us to fulfill His promise.

Therefore we must put our trust in Him and Him alone. What does it mean to trust in God? To trust God means to humbly accept what God has done to put us where we are to go through the difficult trial, even when we may not fully understand why. To trust God requires having an unwavering faith in God despite the circumstances. Do you really trust God?

Verse 2, “O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee;”

After crying out to God in verse 1, verse 2 is his own self reflection. The King James translators added the first three words in this verse, “O my soul,” which were not found in the Hebrew Masoretic Text underlies the King James Bible. The only reason for this “inclusion” is to make the verse clearer. This is not violating the law of traditional translation, especially the faithful literal (word-for-word) translation.

The psalmist puts himself in the second person as if he is speaking with him. "Thou art my Lord" is a heartfelt expression of his confession. He is submitting to God as his Lord which is rightly means his Master. In other words, the psalmist is acknowledging himself to be God's servant and God his rightful and personal Master.

Then he also says, "... my goodness extendeth not to thee." What do these words mean? It means that God is good in Himself. He is all sufficient in His goodness. No added goodness is required. The psalmist's goodness does not add to God's goodness at all. The emphasis is God and His independent character. It is us who need Him and must be dependent upon Him. Not the other way round!

Verse 3, "But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight."

However the psalmist's goodness extends to the saints on earth. This is the testimony he bore for God. And it is excellent which means the psalmist has succeeded in bearing a testimony that is worthy of God. He was able to influence others to do the same, who become a delight to him. This should be our desire as well as we gather as God's people. We are not here to promote self or anyone, but Christ, and Him crucified. When Christ is honoured, His people is honoured as well.

III. THE PROMISE OF GOD'S PRESERVATION

Verse 4, "Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips."

These sorrows are not the sorrows of the true believers but the unbelievers in their idolatry. Their sorrows are multiplied which means there is no end to their sorrow. There is no relief at all. By following another god does not give proof to the existence of another divine being like God. This is from the perspective of men how they in their own mind would rather worship the creatures than the Creator.

These unbelievers were really believing that following all these pagan idols, they will receive the help they desire. But there is no help available at all because these are false worship. What drink offerings of blood are the psalmist referred to that he himself will not touch them? It is likely the offering of human sacrifices to these so-called gods. And when they realize that there is still no help, sorrow upon sorrow filled their hearts because their children became the victim of their own folly. Even the names of these idols, the psalmist would not want to mention them. It is as good as defiling his own mouth when he mentioned them.

Verse 5, "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot."

Sorrow is the sure end for one's pursuit of idolatry. But the Lord Himself is the promise given to all of God's servants. God gave Himself to us. You have God; you have everything. There is nothing you will lack anymore. But how is God our everything? The psalmist says, "The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup.

The meaning of "portion" is "weighed out." Before the LORD is his inheritance, the psalmist has weighed everything carefully and found that the wealth of this world cannot fill and satisfy him, only God can. Therefore the rightful place is to be given to God if one were to receive an everlasting inheritance. What is in the cup that can truly quench our thirst? It is the LORD, and Him alone.

Such satisfaction is not temporal but eternal. And again God is the One who makes it worked! The psalmist declared, "Thou maintainest my lot." Indeed without Christ we can do nothing.

All that we have and possess now, all rightly belong to God. And He sustains us by giving us strength enough each day to succeed and overcome. And this will go on till the day we meet our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ face to face.

Verse 6, “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.”

The psalmist expresses his satisfaction and contentment in the LORD. The lines are the measuring lines to mark out the boundary of the land. And here the psalmist is glad that these lines fell in pleasant places. Good land has been marked out for him. In other words, this referred to the great blessings that the LORD is pleased to give him.

And the psalmist calls it a goodly heritage. It is most desirable and, most sought-after blessings of God. No one can take that away from you. It is yours and forever yours.

Verse 7, “I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.”

How can the psalmist not bless the good Lord? For God has given him the counsel he needs in life. Counsel means godly advice. Every child of God must subject himself to God’s counsel. There is wisdom and life in God’s counsel. We only lose out if we choose to ignore or disobey God’s counsel.

To bless the Lord does not mean we add more blessing to God. We are simply giving God what He deserves from us when we bless Him. God did not become less blessed when we do not bless Him. God is always blessed even without us blessing Him.

“Reins” here refer to the heart of man which is rightly the seat of all affections. The night seasons are the night times when you are supposed to be asleep. But what if you are awaked? Is God sleeping? No, He never sleeps. Even when you are still awake at night, and you can still continue to receive divine instruction that enables you to draw closer to God and be wiser in life.

Verse 8, “I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.”

This verse reveals how the psalmist regards God in his life. He will always consult God for His will be done in his life. He will not take another step without God. The right hand represents an important position of trust. God is at his right hand means that the psalmist trusts in God completely. Nothing will move him from putting his trust in God and His promises.

IV. THE HOPE OF GOD'S PRESERVATION

Verse 9, “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.”

Knowing God is the basis of our preservation and nothing will move us from putting our trust in Him and His promises should bring gladness to our heart. This is the experience of the psalmist. The word “glad” means rejoice or brighten up. The word “glory” refers to the heart. The psalmist confesses his heart rejoices because of what God has done to preserve him. And the hope of God’s preservation goes beyond this life.

The psalmist declares that his flesh also shall rest in hope. He is thinking of the future bodily resurrection. David knew that one day he will die and be buried in the grave. But he will not remain in the grave forever. It is this hope that leads him to know that one day he will rise from the dead bodily.

Verse 10, “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

This verse is prophetic and must refer only to Christ. This was proven by the Scriptures itself in Acts 2:22-28 and Acts 13:34-37. It must have delighted the psalmist’s heart with high hope of the future bodily resurrection because of the Holy One. This means that death is forever defeated and the promise and hope of God’s preservation begins and ends with Christ’s resurrection.

Verse 11, “Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”

Though all men may end their life when they die and be buried in the grave, yet the hope of life is promised to all God’s people. For God is the Source of life. He will give life to all His people. His people live forever. And this life is not a miserable life anymore. There will be no more sin, bodily weakness and no more struggles of the flesh anymore. God’s presence will fill them forever. As such, there will only be joy, no sorrow; there will only be pleasures, no pain and suffering. Do you hope for such a life?

V. CONCLUSION

God’s preservation is ours. No man or angel can take that away from us. Know the basis of our preservation. Know the promise of our preservation and finally, know the hope of our preservation. Without Christ, we have nothing at all. But with Christ, there is life forevermore. Let us long to live that everlasting life, dwelling in God’s presence by worship and service to no end. It will be joy, peace, and love forever and ever. This is God’s preservation of us for that very purpose. May God help us. Amen.