

# At God's Right Hand

## Psalm 16

This psalm is a desperate cry for deliverance made from steadfast faith in the deliverer. David's expectation goes far beyond the present trouble, declaring the Lord will ultimately deliver him, body and soul, from the grave. The New Testament reveals the fulfillment of this promise to the Lord Jesus Christ who was raised up by the Father and seated at His right hand.

### Summary of the Text

A *michtam* could mean hidden or secret, a thing with depths to be revealed (cf. Col. 1:26). Psalm 16 has three sections beginning with a plea for God to save David because he trusts in Him (v. 1). Next, verses 2-6 give reasons why he calls on the Lord, the things He has done for and through him. And last, verses 7-11 contain his great hope. He asks to be preserved, having trusted God (v. 1) and acknowledges his goodness comes only from God and adds nothing to Him (v. 2). But he can add to God's people, so he delights in the excellent ones, in the saints on earth (v. 3). In contrast to that joy, sadness multiplies for those chasing false gods, and David won't partake in their blood offerings or even say their names (v. 4). He is like the Levites whose "lot" in the land of Canaan was Yahweh Himself (Dt. 18:2). He is the portion of David's inheritance and his cup, and he doesn't have to manage it because the Lord upholds Himself (v. 5). Though in need of immediate rescue, David sees the big picture of what God has done: lines set in pleasant places, a good inheritance (v. 6). He blesses Yahweh for His counsel, and his kidneys ("heart", "reins") instruct him at night as he prays and seeks wisdom (v. 7). He has permanently placed the Lord in front of him, keeping Him at his right hand, so therefore he can't be moved (v. 8; cf. Ps. 15:5). This doesn't make him grim and dour, but the opposite; his heart is glad and his glory rejoices, which results in this song (v. 9). His flesh rests in hope knowing God will not leave his soul in Sheol, the place of the dead, nor his body in final corruption (v. 10). God will reveal the path of life, the way to His presence, where joy brims over; at His right hand are pleasures forevermore (v. 11).

### Delight in the Saints

David wants to go on living so he can continue enjoying the saints of God (v. 3). His goodness doesn't add anything to the Lord, but David can take the goodness given by God and bless those excellent and normal Israelites, the ones "on the earth" (v. 3). You can't touch or talk to the departed saints, but Mrs. Schwartz over there is fair game. The saints are the "holy ones" (*qedoshim*), those who have been given the holiness of God by becoming His children by grace through faith alone. So even as the brothers in Corinth struggle with factionalism, division, lawsuits against each other, sexual immorality, drunkenness at communion, and more, they are "those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:2). Christians will be at different spots on the road of sanctification, but every single one of us has received the Holy Spirit and the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and therefore bears the honor of being called saints, and the duty that comes with it. When God called Abraham, He promised to bless those who bless him, and curse those who dishonor him, promising that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:3). Human history centers on the people of Abraham, those who follow the Lord Jesus who is the greater Abraham (Jn. 8:58). David therefore simply shares God's delight in His saints (cf. Dt. 32:10). He is blessed because he blesses them, and notice the contrasting misery of those who worship idols with their blood libations (v. 4). Blood atonement must be made, so it will either be the blood of Christ or some other blood that can't atone, blood that restores

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or blood that sets people at odds. When the gospel is preached, believed, and practiced in the church, a swift river of delight runs and overflows the banks. The people of God delight in one another because God does, and therefore bless one another with no ulterior motives.

### Delight in God

We almost forget that David writes all this because he wants to keep living (v. 1). It's like Paul saying he could go to be with Lord at any time, which is fine with him, but it seems better to stick around for the church's sake (Phil. 1:21-22). The ability to see the bigger picture of lines having fallen in pleasant places, staying focused on faithful worship, blessing God for His counsel, and getting instructions from the gut in the night all happens because David keeps the Lord front and center; he relies on Him at his right hand (v. 8). We tend to think of Scripture and prayer as inspirational and devotional, but not practical. But David's right hand is the one he works with, his go to (cf. 2 Tim. 3:17). This reliance on the Lord necessarily results in gladness and singing that goes all the way to death and beyond (v. 9). The more seriously the worshipper of false gods take their faith, the worse it gets because you become like what you worship (v. 4; Ps. 115:8). But the more seriously you love and worship the triune God, the more delighted you become (cf. Gal. 5:22-23). Some people think that to be more like Christ means to be more serious about everything, detached from people, less emotional, that if we could somehow get away from all earthly "distractions", including bodily and communal life, we would love God more. This is the monastic tendency, and it's gnostic and ultimately worldly: "Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—'Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,' which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men?" (Col. 2:21-22). David delights in the saints, writes psalms, offers sacrifices, brings the ark to Zion with dancing, establishes the tabernacle in Jerusalem, and rules Israel while rejoicing in God, knowing that even greater joy will come in the resurrection. John Piper says we ought to improve the WLC #1: What is the chief and highest end of man? The chief end of man is glorify God by enjoying Him forever.

### Christ At God's Right Hand

This is how Jesus saved the world: "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2). This psalm is a prayer of the Lord Jesus. Peter preaches at Pentecost that "God raised Him up, loosing the pangs of death.... For David says concerning him," and then he quotes Psalm 16:8-11. He says David is dead and buried, but being a prophet, he spoke about Jesus' resurrection, that God would not abandon Him to Hades but exalted Him to His right hand (Acts 2:24-33). Paul preaches the same thing at Antioch (Acts 13:35-37). Jesus endured the cross for the joy that was set before Him, the joy of sitting at the right hand of His Father, where there are pleasures forevermore, and taking us there with Him. Jesus is the fullness of the Father's joy, and *in Him*, so are you. Is this not what it means that He "raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6)? Receive the Father's delight in you, given through the Son, and received in power of the Spirit.