

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

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by
William D. Barrick, Th.D.
Professor of OT, The Master's Seminary



Psalm 16 — The LORD, My Portion and My Cup

1.0 Introducing Psalm 16

1.1 “Mikhtam of David”

- ◆ The same heading is found on Psalms 56–60.
- ◆ Luther gave the meaning of “*mikhtam*” as “golden jewel.”
- ◆ The Latin Vulgate translation interpreted the word as “humble” or “blameless.”
- ◆ A recent suggestion was that it referred to what was called “an atonement psalm.”
- ◆ Others have given the interpretation as “secret (or, silent) prayer.”
- ◆ One of the more likely explanations was found in the old Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) 250 years before Christ: “inscription.”
- ◆ “Inscription” fits well with the idea of indelible preservation.
 - Jeremiah 2:22 — a related word (*nikhtam*) is translated “stain” to express that something is indelible.
 - Job 19:23-24 — the description of words written on stone in order to preserve them.

1.2 New Testament Usage

- ◆ Non-Messianic
 - Immediate crisis and immediate deliverance.
 - The psalmist's experience is typical of all mortals.
 - The psalmist's experience is applicable to Christ.
- ◆ Messianic
 - Peter in Acts 2:25-28.
 - Paul in Acts 13:35.

2.0 Reading Psalm 16

16:1 A Mikhtam of David.

Preserve me, O **God**,
for I take refuge in You.

16:2 I said to the **LORD**,
“You are my **Lord**;
I have no good besides You.”

16:3 As for the saints who are in the earth,
They are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight.

16:4 The sorrows of those who have bartered for another *god* will be multiplied;
I shall not pour out their drink offerings of blood,
Nor will I take their names upon my lips.

16:5 The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup;
You support my lot.

16:6 The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places;
Indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me.

16:7 I will bless the LORD who has counseled me;
Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night.

16:8 I have set the LORD continually before me;
Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

16:9 Therefore my **heart** is glad
and my **glory** rejoices;
My **flesh** also will dwell securely.

16:10 For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol;
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

16:11 You will make known to me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

3.0 Understanding Psalm 16

3.1 Outline

- I. Petition (v. 1)
- II. Confession of Faith (vv. 2-4)
- III. Thanksgiving (vv. 5-11)
 - A. Experiencing Blessing (vv. 5-6)
 - B. Expressing Praise (v. 7)
 - C. Explaining Confidence (vv. 8-11)



W. Graham Scroggie's Outline (*The Psalms* [Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1973 reprint of 1948 revised edition], 106):

- (1) Looking *Above* (vv. 1-2)
- (2) Looking *Around* (vv. 3-4)
- (3) Looking *Within* (vv. 5-8)
- (4) Looking *Beyond* (vv. 9-11)

3.2 Notes

- **v. 1 "God"**
 - The name of God used here is *El* (as in "El Shaddai"). It is the title used of the supreme deity and indicates His strength and power.
 - "LORD" (= *Yahweh*; some pronounce it *Jehovah*) is the divine title that points to the covenant relationship that God has with His people.
 - "Lord" (= *Adonai*) speaks of the sovereignty and authority of God.
- **vv. 3-4**
 - David delights in the fellowship he experiences with fellow believers ("saints." v. 3).
 - But, he detests the deeds and character of the ungodly. See Psalm 15:4.
- **v. 4 "sorrows ... will be multiplied"**
 - The language is basically the same as that in the first line of Genesis 3:16.
- **vv. 5-6**
 - Compare David's blessings with those of the Levites in Numbers 18:20, 24.
 - Expresses David's total trust in the LORD.

- **v. 7** “has counseled me”
 - The psalmist speaks of the LORD’s guidance.
 - Note that it is counsel, not coercion.

- **v. 8** “I will not be shaken”
 - The reference is to stability in the life of the psalmist regardless of the circumstances in which he might find himself.
 - *I will not be, I will not be moved ...*

- **vv. 9-10**
 - Resurrection is deliverance from the realm of the dead (Sheol).
 - Peter (Acts 2:25-28) indicated that David understood the reference.
 - Paul (Acts 13:35) tied it to the covenant with David (2 Samuel 7).
 - God will not abandon David or God’s promised “seed” in the grave.



- **v. 10** “to undergo decay”
 - The second half of the verse could have been fulfilled only by the Messiah. See Psalm 49:7-9; 89:48; Acts 13:36-37!
 - “[T]his language is too strong even for David’s hope of his own resurrection” (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1 – 72*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary [Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1975], 86).

- **v. 11** “fullness of joy”
 - See 1 Peter 1:8 (“joy inexpressible and full of glory”).

- **v. 11** “the path of life” = Heaven or Earth?
 - Earth



- “not the afterlife, but the fullness of life here and now” — Peter C. Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1983), 158.
- The psalmist’s prayer was already answered – refers to undisturbed life in this world.

- Heaven = eternal life
 - Traditionally and liturgically taken as reference to immortality.
 - “he is thinking of everlasting life” — Charles Augustus Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, *The Book of Psalms*, 2 vols., International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1987), 1:122.
 - Is eternal life an Old Testament concept? See Psalm 133:3.

4.0 Singing Psalm 16

O God, Preserve Me (Tune: “Amazing Grace”)

O God, preserve me, for in Thee
Alone my trust has stood;
My soul has said, Thou art my Lord,
My chief and only good.

I love Thy saints, who fear Thy Name,
And walk as in Thy sight;
They are the excellent of earth,
In them is my delight.

Their sorrows shall be multiplied
Who worship aught but Thee;
I share not in their offerings,
Nor join their company.

The Lord is mine inheritance,
The Lord alone remains
The fullness of my cup of bliss;
The Lord my lot maintains.

The lines are fallen unto me
In places large and fair;
A goodly heritage is mine,
Marked out with gracious care.

— Author unknown



5.0 Praying Psalm 16

- O God, keep me safe and faithful (v. 1).
- You are my Lord. Teach me obedience (v. 2).
- Thank You for Your blessings (vv. 5-6).
- Praise the Lord for His counsel (v. 7).
- Father, thank You for being with me and strengthening me (v. 8).
- Lord, show me the path of life and give me joy (v. 11).

