

## PSALM 16

### Theme: Blessings on Him Who Trusts in God

Few dispute the Davidic authorship of [Psalm 16](#). Many think that he may have written it while at Ziklag ([1 Sam. 27:5–28](#)), but this writer believes with Lange that it was composed, perhaps after a severe sickness, near the close of David's life.<sup>53</sup>

The traditional title of the psalm is "Michtam of David." The meaning of the word *miktam* is obscure, but it is thought to connote "a secret or mystery,"<sup>54</sup> suggesting in this psalm the secret of true happiness.

[Psalm 16](#) is one of the great Messianic psalms, being so designated both by Peter ([Acts 2:31, 32](#)) and Paul ([Acts 13:34–37](#)). It is evident that some of its statements, especially those in verse [10](#), could be true in their fuller sense only of Christ. In these utterances it is probable that David wrote beyond his comprehension as his thoughts were borne along by the inspiring Spirit (cf. [1 Pet. 1:10–12](#); [2 Pet. 1:21](#)). Since the Messianic elements of the psalm appear to be completely clear to readers in the Christian era, and since this psalm has its primary fulfillment in David and in all believers, its relation to the believer will be stressed in these comments.

### I. A CONFESSION OF TRUST IN GOD ([Ps. 16:1–4](#))

<sup>1</sup> Preserve me, O God; for in thee do I take refuge.

<sup>2</sup> *O my soul*, thou hast said unto Jehovah, Thou art my Lord:

I have no good beyond thee.

<sup>3</sup> As for the saints that are in the earth,

They are the excellent in whom is all my delight.

<sup>4</sup> Their sorrows shall be multiplied that give gifts for another *god*:

Their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer,

Nor take their names upon my lips.

The germinal thought of the whole psalm is contained in the first two verses: the sincere believer always has God's protection and blessing.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Lange, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

<sup>54</sup> Spurgeon, *op. cit.*, p. 222. Others render, "psalm of expiation" (Mowinckel), "poem" (Gesenius), "golden" or "most precious" (Tregelles). (This has been called "the golden psalm.")

Although [Psalm 16](#), as several other psalms already discussed, begins with a cry for help, the atmosphere is different here. While in other such psalms he came to complete confidence only after prayer, in this psalm David is confident from the very first. He begins by a confession of confidence in God, to whom he submits unconditionally (**thou art my Lord**) and whom he sets above all other gods.<sup>55</sup> Recognizing that the Lord is the source of all good (cf. [Jas. 1:17](#)) in this life and the next, he says, **I have no good beyond thee**. To recognize God thus is to love Him. To love Him is to love and appreciate His people (cf. [1 John 4:20, 21](#)): **the saints that are in the earth, they are the excellent in whom is all my delight** (v. 3).

If it is right to serve God, it is wrong to serve idols, which, after all, are but the work of man's hands and powerless ([Isa. 44:12–20](#)). The psalmist will have nothing to do with them; not even will he **take their names upon his lips** (v. 4; cf. [Exod. 23:13](#)).

Religious eclecticism is utterly forbidden to the people of God: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” ([Exod. 20:3](#)). The Lord our “God is a jealous God” ([Exod. 20:5](#)), and rightly so; yet many today make to themselves gods of pleasure, and wealth, and power! In the final analysis, whatever receives our deepest devotion is our god. **Their sorrows shall be multiplied that give gifts for another god** (v. 4); but the true believer's heart looks to the Lord: **I have no good beyond thee** (v. 2).

## II. PRESENT BLESSINGS ON HIM WHO TRUSTS IN GOD ([Ps. 16:5–8](#))

<sup>5</sup> Jehovah is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup:

Thou maintainest my lot.

<sup>6</sup> The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places;

Yea, I have a goodly heritage.

<sup>7</sup> I will bless Jehovah, who hath given me counsel;

Yea, my heart instructeth me in the night seasons.

<sup>8</sup> I have set Jehovah always before me:

Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

The Levites did not receive an inheritance of land with the other tribes of Israel but

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Lange, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

<sup>56</sup> The latter thought is suggested especially by the Hebrew word used for God: David calls Him 'El, “the Almighty.”

were given the Lord as their inheritance ([Num. 18:20, 24](#); [Deut. 10:9; 18:1–8](#)). Thus the Levites' fortunes were a barometer of the degree of the nation's adherence to God (cf. [Neh. 13:10](#)). The system also encouraged deeper spirituality on the part of this priestly tribe (the teachers of the other tribes; cf. [Mal. 2:7](#)) by making them trust God for their daily bread. With a like recognition of his own dependence on God, David wrote, **Jehovah is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup** (v. 5).

When Israel received her inheritance in Canaan, the tribal territories were assigned by lot ([Num. 26:55, 56](#); [Josh. 14:1ff.](#)). The psalmist, seeing God's providences in his life as his lot from the Lord, said, **The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places** (v. 6). To have God as one's inheritance is indeed to **have a goodly heritage** (v. 6), as every man of God can testify. The evidences of God's concern for His own "are more than can be numbered" ([Ps. 40:5](#)). For all this, therefore, and for the way **He instructeth me in my heart in the night seasons and hath given me counsel, I will bless Jehovah** (v. 7).

For David, God was personal and near at hand. Neither did David have just a "Sunday religion," for he had **set Jehovah always before him**, making God the center of his affections. God was at his **right hand**. Since he had thus sought and honored God, he also was confident that he would **not be moved** (v. 8).

### III. THE ETERNAL BLESSINGS ON HIM WHO TRUSTS IN GOD ([Ps. 16:9–11](#))

<sup>9</sup> Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth:

My flesh also shall dwell in safety.

<sup>10</sup> For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol;

Neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption.

<sup>11</sup> Thou wilt show me the path of life:

In thy presence is fulness of joy;

In thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

Death is man's door to eternity. As the psalmist faces death he does so without fear. Revelation of the hereafter is very meager in the Old Testament, yet the psalmist's deep sense of commitment to God, and his trust in Him throughout the years of his life, gave him confidence as he faced death. In his soul he was sure that God would continue to care for him, body and soul, through and after death just as He had done through the years of his life. The Christ who brought "life and immortality to light" ([2 Tim. 1:10](#)) also gave Old Testament believers peace and confidence as they were gathered to their

fathers. The Spirit of God made clear to David that the same God who gave him his **goodly heritage** through his earthly days would show him the **path of eternal life**. In the future declaration of the Apostle Paul, he could say, “I know him whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day” ([2 Tim. 1:12](#)).