

PSALMS

Chapter 16

Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge. ² I said to the LORD, “You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing.” ³ As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight. ⁴ The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods. I will not pour out their libations of blood or take up their names on my lips. ⁵ LORD, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. ⁶ The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance. ⁷ I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. ⁸ I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. ⁹ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, ¹⁰ because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. ¹¹ You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand forevermore.

Ps 16 A prayer for safekeeping (the petition element in prayer psalms is often relatively short; see 3:7; 22:19–21; 44:23–26), pleading for the Lord’s protection against the threat of death. It could also be called a psalm of trust. (CSB)

Luther: “A prophecy of the suffering and resurrection of Christ, as the apostles themselves powerfully indicate. (TLSB)

Format: Vv 1–2, prayer for refuge; v 3, saints; v 4, idolaters; vv 5–6, inheritance of God’s people; vv 7–8, the Lord’s counsel; vv 9–10, rescue from corruption; v 11, joy at God’s right hand. (TLSB)

Psalm 16 elaborates on one of the key thoughts of Psalm 15, namely, dwelling with God. This psalm describes the security and eternal life of God’s Holy One. This is a Messianic psalm which refers first of all to the resurrection of Christ, by which he conquered death for us. However, we can also use this psalm as our personal prayer, because Christ has won all the blessing of this psalm for us. (PBC)

16 title *miktam*. The term remains unexplained, though it always stands in the superscription of Davidic prayers occasioned by great danger (see Ps 56–60). (CSB)

16:1 The petition and the basis for it. The rest of the psalm elaborates on the latter element. (CSB)

This first verse, which expresses confidence in God’s ability to save even as it cries out for help, sets the tone for the entire psalm. The psalmist expresses a confidence in the Lord that extends beyond the grave. (TLSB)

GOD – He calls God el in the Hebrew, which means “the Strong One,” implying that according to the import of that name God is well able to do what His suppliant asks. (Leupold)

16:2–4 The Lord is David’s one and only good thing (see 73:25, 28); David will have nothing to do with the counterfeit gods to whom others pour out their libations (see 4:2). (CSB)

16:2 LORD – Hebrew – Yahweh – Covenant God and keeper.

I HAVE NO GOOD THING – David emphasizes the Lord as his one source of blessing, a criticism of idolatry. (TLSB)

16:3 See Ps 101. (CSB)

16:4 *sorrows ... will increase.* In contrast with David’s good “portion” (v. 5; see note on 11:6), which affords him much joy (see 73:18–20). (CSB)

libations of blood. Blood of sacrifices poured on altars. (CSB)

Surrounding nations often worshiped their gods by pouring libations on the ground or on an altar. (TLSB)

Christ rejected such idolatry when he refused Satan’s offer to an easy way to glory if he would fall down and worship him. (PBC)

take up their names. Appeal to or worship them (see Jos 23:7). (CSB)

David refuses to invoke or confess any pagan deity. (TLSB)

16:5–6 Joy over the inheritance received from the Lord. David refers to what the Lord bestowed on his people in the promised land, either to the gift of fields there (see Nu 16:14) or to the Lord himself (as in 73:26; 119:57; 142:5; La 3:24), who was the inheritance of the priests (see Nu 18:20) and the Levites (see Dt 10:9). (CSB)

16:5 *cup.* A metaphor referring to what the host offers his guests to drink. To the godly the Lord offers a cup of blessings (see 23:5) or salvation (see 116:13); he makes the wicked drink from a cup of wrath (see Jer 25:15; Rev 14:10; 16:19). (CSB)

Psalms offers his drink offering to the Lord, not the surrounding pagan deities. (TLSB)

LOT – Cf Jsh 13–19; 21 for Joshua’s distribution of the Promised Land after the conquest. David claims that the Lord is as precious to him as his ancestral plot of land. (TLSB)

secure. Just as each Israelite’s family inheritance in the promised land was to be secure (see Lev 25; Nu 36:7). (CSB)

16:6 DELIGHTFUL INHERITNCE – David offers thanks and praise for a beautiful estate and holding of property. However, David also refers to his eternal dwelling (cf vv 10–11). (TLSB)

16:7–8 Praise of the Lord who counsels and keeps. (CSB)

16:7 *counsels*. Shows the way that leads to life (see v. 11). (CSB)

Throughout the Psalms, the Lord is praised for the counsel He gives by means of the Torah (or written Word; cf 119:24). (TLSB)

EVEN AT NIGHT – Whenever he thinks his situation over in the quiet of the night when all distracting influences are silenced, his inmost thoughts instruct him that he has done the right thing. (Leupold)

David prayed and meditated on God’s Word nightly. (TLSB)

heart. Lit. “kidneys” (see note on 7:9). (CSB)

16:8 SET THE LORD ALWAYS BEFORE ME – I am keeping Him always before my mind’s eye. (Leupold)

His great business did not divert him for God. Page 18. As he proceeded in his work he continued his familiar conversation with his maker, imploring His grace and offering to Him all his actions. Page 40. The time of business said he, does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clutter of my kitchen while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were on my knees at the blessed Sacrament. Page 42. I made this my business as much all the day long as at the appointed times of prayer; for at all times – every hour, every minute, even in the height of my business – I drove away from my mind everything that was capable of interrupting my thought of God. Page 47. (“The Practice of the Presence of God” Conversations and Letters of Brother Lawrence)

he is at my right hand. As sustainer and protector (see 73:23; 109:31; 110:5; 121:5); complemented by the reference to the Lord’s right hand in v. 11. (CSB)

David writes as though the Lord stands beside him and holds his hand, like a father caring for his son. The Lord is the focus of David’s service and his ally. (TLSB)

This is the position of honor. (Leupold)

not be shaken. See note on 10:6 (Disturb my well-being, unsettle my security.). (CSB)

While life is not easy, David is secure because the Lord is near him. (LL)

16:9–11 Describes the joy of total security. David speaks here, as in the rest of his psalms, first of all of himself and of the life he now enjoys by the gracious provision and care of God. The Lord, in whom the psalmist takes refuge, will live for him (hence he made known to him the path of life, v. 11) and will not abandon him to the grave, even though “flesh and ... heart ... fail” (73:26). But implicit in these words of assurance (if not actually explicit) is the confidence that, with the Lord as his refuge, even the grave cannot rob him of life (see 17:15; 73:24; see also note on 11:7). If this could be said of David, how much more of David’s promised Son! So Peter quotes vv. 8–11 and declares that with these words David prophesied of Christ and his resurrection (Ac 2:25–28; see Paul’s similar use of v. 10b in Ac 13:35). See also note on 6:5. (CSB)

16:9 *heart.* See note on 4:7. (CSB)

HEART IS GLAD – True joy is deeper than mere happiness, for it is based on God’s continued presence. Happiness come and goes, because it is based in circumstances which always change. (LL)

The knowledge that the Lord is always present and active in his life leaves David with a profound sense of well-being and security. (TLSB)

tongue. Lit. “glory” (see note on 7:5 – A way of referring to the core of one’s being). (CSB)

16:10 GRAVE – ESV has SHEOL – This word, occurring 65 times in the Hebrew OT, is still obscure. Since the derivation of the word is uncertain, the context must determine the meaning in each case.

1. *Sheol* can mean the resting place of mankind’s mortal remains (Jb 17:16; Is 38:10).
2. *Sheol* can also mean “realm of the dead,” into which all enter who depart this life, righteous as well as wicked (e.g., Gn 37:35; Jb 7:9; Ps 16:10; 31:17; 89:48). In this sense, it is a general term used very much like the English phrase “the hereafter” or “the beyond.” The phrase “to go down into Sheol” means “to die, to depart from the land of the living.” But it should be noted that when the righteous are said to descend into Sheol, their fate beyond is rarely taken into account. The hope of the pious in the OT is expressed differently (e.g., Ps 73:24).
3. *Sheol* can mean the place where God’s judgment overtakes evildoers. In this sense, Sheol receives those who are taken away in God’s anger. Korah’s rebel band went down to Sheol because they had provoked the Lord (Nu 16:30, 33). Harlots go to

Sheol (Pr 5:5). The anger of the Lord burns to the depths of Sheol (Dt 32:22). According to Ps 49, all people die physically, the righteous as well as the ungodly (v 10), but there is a difference in their existence in the hereafter. The confidence of the psalmist is expressed in the words “They [i.e., the wicked] are appointed for Sheol; Death shall be their shepherd.... But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for He will receive me” (vv 14–15). Clearly, there is a sharp contrast between the doom of the ungodly and the glorious hope of the believer, who hopes to rest securely in the hands of God (Ps 73). (TLSB p. 792)

Holy One. Hebrew *hasid* (see note on 4:3 (CSB))

Occurs 26 times in the Psalms (once of God: 145:17, “loving”; cf. 18:25) and is usually rendered (in the plural) in the NIV as “the godly” or “saints.” It is one of several Hebrew words for God’s people, referring to them as people who are or should be devoted to God and faithful to him.). Reference is first of all to David (hence the NIV text note; see also note on 2:2), but the psalm is ultimately fulfilled in Christ. – This psalm was fulfilled only by Christ, who did not remain in the grave, but rose and conquered death. But because Christ fulfilled the words of this psalm, it became possible for David and for us to make this psalm our own prayer. All of us can apply all of the thoughts of this prayer to ourselves as we seek to follow in Christ’s footsteps. We too have a delightful inheritance, because Christ has gone to prepare a place for us. Though we still must pass through physical death, Christ will keep our bodies safe at peaceful rest in the grave until he appears to call them to life again. Then we will enjoy eternal pleasures at his side forever. Because Christ has shown us the path of life, we have a secure inheritance in a pleasant place. (PBC)

SEE DECAY – Because of his enduring relationship with the giver and sustainer of life, David is confident that the righteous will endure despite physical death. This prophesies Jesus’ resurrection (Ac 2:25–28). (TLSB)

16:11 *path of life.* See Pr 15:24. (CSB)

KNOWN – The meaning is that the path that leads to life is known and the psalmist is traveling of which is life. (Leupold)

PRESENCE – The central point at issue was that the psalmist had firmly grasped God in faith and would not let go. In that sense is he in the presence of God. (Leupold)

PLEASURES – Gifts are held in readiness by God to give to those that abide in Him. (Leupold)

your right hand. See note on v. 8. (CSB)

Because David keeps the Lord at his right hand (so we read in v 8), he also has a sure and certain hope that God will keep him at His right hand, where there is fullness of eternal joy. (TLSB)

In Israelite thought, the right hand was the favored one. As such, it symbolized the place of privilege or strength. The chief court official was seated at the king's right hand as a symbol of his power and authority. The term can describe God's chosen servant (e.g., King David). (TLSB p. 843)

Ps 16 The psalm praises the Lord for numerous earthly blessings but moves toward a climactic expression of hope for life in God's presence beyond the grave. Far too often our prayers are simply laundry lists of earthly desires. This psalm reminds us of our greater need to thank and praise God and make spiritual blessings a priority. Those who have the Lord have the source of all good things, even everlasting life. We who are in Christ have been set at God's right hand, where we can never be removed. • Lord, keep us in Your presence throughout our earthly pilgrimage, that we may come to the fullness of Your joy in heaven; through Jesus Christ, our resurrected Lord. Amen. (TLSB)