

The Book of Psalms

Psalm 16

Opening Prayer

Read Psalm 16

Overview

Psalm 16 is an intimate psalm of individual trust¹ in God alone. Nowhere in the psalm does anyone but the psalmist speak and the psalm echoes with trust and prayer to God. The psalm speaks of the trust that the psalmist has in God and the reason for that trust, namely that there is joy in God's presence.

It is possible that the historical circumstances of the psalm are when David was driven into the Wilderness of Ziph by Saul in *1 Samuel 26*. The language of "portion" and "inheritance" found in 1 Samuel is mirrored in the language of Psalm 16.

Outline/Structure

There is an alternating of prayer and reflection in this individual psalm of trust. The reflections tell why the psalmist continues to go to the Lord in prayer, that is the reflections demonstrate why the psalmist puts his trust in the Lord.

1. Prayer – 16:1
2. Report of prayer – 16:2
3. Reflection – 16:3-4
4. Prayer – 16:5
5. Reflection – 16:6
6. Intent to praise (implied prayer) – 16:7
7. Reflection – 16:8
8. Concluding prayer of faith – 16:9-11

The title of the psalm calls it a *mikhtam of David*. A mikhtam seems to be a literary style. It may be a particular style of poetry.

¹ Individual psalms of trust include Psalm 4, 16, 23, 27, 62, and 73.

Prayer – 16:1

- :1 - The image communicated by this opening verse is one of sanctuary. David calls for God to preserve him and it could also be understood to “keep guard” over him. This preservation is most certainly of a spiritual nature given the text of the rest of the psalm.

Report of Prayer – 16:2

- :2 - “good” - All good things come from God. **Read James 1:17; Psalm 73:25**
The passage in James comes in the midst of encouragement in the middle of trials and also a warning against giving into temptation.
How does a focus on the good things coming from God allow us to be thankful even in the midst of difficult times?

Reflection – 16:3-4

- :3-4 - The psalmist contrasts in these verses the “saints” in verse 3 with the “idolators” in verse 4. In verse 3 the saints are the “majestic” or “glorious ones”. The same word is used of God in **Exodus 15:11**. David is calling attention to those who are faithful in verse 3.
How does the faithfulness of other Christians benefit our faith?
- The word translated “sorrows” could also be translated as “pains”. The implication of the first part of verse 4 is that idolatry brings with it pain. Indeed sin itself causes pain to the earth. **Read Romans 8:22-23**
How do we see this pain in our world? What evidence do you see of “creation groaning”?
 - We see here some of the worship practices of the pagans. While there were drink offerings in Israel, they were not blood. Blood was not to be eaten. **Read Deuteronomy 12:23-25**. The drink offerings of Israel were of wine. **See Exodus 29:40**. Additionally, David would not even utter the names of the other gods.
How are we to deal with other religions and friends and family engaged in them? What if we are visiting their houses?

Prayer – 16:5

- :5 - Here is almost a parallel to verse 2 in that whatever good we have comes from God. The implication here is the destiny of David is in God's hands. "Inheritance", "cup", and "lot" are all ways of talking about destiny, that which is appointed for our lives.

Lot was the means for assigning the portions of the tribe of Israel to their lands. ***Read Joshua 14:1-2***

Cup was used by Jesus to talk about destiny.

Read Matthew 20:22

What is Jesus' question to James and John?

How does He respond to them?

Reflection – 16:6

- :6 - "The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places" – This is an allusion to the survey boundary lines used to mark the land of the tribal inheritances of the Israelites. ***See Joshua 17:5.***² The psalmist is still talking about the destiny that God has appointed to him here. It not only appears beautiful to him, but it sounds beautiful. The word for beautiful in the second half of this verse is *shofar*, which is also the name of the musical instrument made from the ram's horn. Thus David's "lot", "inheritance", "portion", "cup", sounds beautiful to him.

Intent to Praise – 16:7

- :7 - We should indeed bless and thank God for the instruction, encouragement, exhortation, and hope He bestows upon us through His Word. The purpose of Scripture is to "make us wise to salvation" (2 Timothy 3:15), yet the Scripture also provides deep counsel. ***Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17***

What are some of the things that the Word does?

Reflection – 16:8

- :8 - The same Hebrew word used for "shaken" here is used in Psalm 15:5 for "shaken" and in Psalm 17:5 for "slipped" or "stumbled". Since God is with us we will not be shaken. We enter every battle, temptation, trial, and

² In the ancient Near East, boundary lines were often marked by stones known as *kudurru*. The stones would have markings which would identify who the land belonged to and why.

sickness with God at our side. The Almighty stands beside us! ***Read Isaiah 41:10***. What a great verse to memorize!

Concluding Prayer of Faith – 16:9-11

:9-11 - This concluding prayer also contains a prophecy picked up on by both Peter and Paul in regards to Jesus' resurrection.

Read Acts 2:25-32

How does Peter use Psalm 16?

What was Peter's point in using this particular psalm and citing David's own demise?

Read Acts 13:35-39

How does Paul expand on the benefits of Christ's resurrection?

How is this comforting to you?

- David resolves at the end of the psalm that God will reveal his destiny or lot, his "path of life", in God's own time.

Why do we struggle with the unknown future so much?

What is the thing that gives David the ability to accept whatever the future may hold?

Summary

Psalm 16 presents us with a prayer and reflection dialogue of David as he considers what might be in store for him. His destiny or "lot" or "cup" or "inheritance" is always in God's hands. His resolve at the end of the psalm is instructive to us. Whatever our lot in life may be, as long as God is present we may rejoice and accept what comes!

Closing Prayer