

PSALLO

Psalm 16:1–11

Here the Psalmist, King David, has penned one of his “golden Psalms,” or perhaps his “precious truths” to be taught and learned (see the title of Psalm 60). Since *chetem* means “gold” a *michtam* is by many scholars believed to be “golden” or very precious. This Psalm then, as well as Psalms 56–60, bear in their titles the witness of their preciousness; and in Psalm 60 we read that this is to be taught and learned.

The Psalm itself begins with a plea for preservation, literally “a keeping.” The text does not state if David is in danger, or being tried, but only that David desires to be kept by the Lord because the Lord is his refuge, or place of safety. There is perhaps an implication of danger or affliction, and that especially as we consider the end of the Psalm. However, the Psalm is conspicuously full of declarations of good, happiness, etc., and the prayer for safe-keeping here is most probably in response to the life of goodness enjoyed by the King and his hope of an eternal and blessed future. David has enjoyed safety and protection at the hand of the Lord and desires to be maintained in that blessed estate. The next statement begins with an ellipsis, supplied by most translations as “O my soul” answering to the phrase, “thou hast said.” While the speaker is not named, it is clear that it is the author referring to himself in the second person. It seems good wisdom then to understand David as speaking to his “soul” (his whole self) as another party, which gives an arresting and objective impress to the Psalm. We see this in the life of David, as it is said of him that he “encouraged himself in the Lord his God” (1 Samuel 30:6) in the situation of the Amalekites at Ziklag, when the wives and children of David and his army were captured, and David directed his attention to the Lord and took comfort there. Many of the Psalms also bear this out, where the phrase “O my soul” need not be supplied as an implication of the text, but is found there explicitly (see Psalms 103, 104, 146). David speaks of himself, and in so doing provides a good example of objectivity as he turns his gaze upon himself; and speaking to himself in the second person, he declares two things he has done. First, he declares the Lord as his “Lord.” The Authorized Version (AV) is helpful here, as are many other translations, preserving the Covenant Name of God (Yahveh) in the translation as LORD (all upper case), and the second

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“Lord” in the text (upper and lower case) as the translation of the Hebrew *Adonai*. Thus David says to Yahveh, “Thou art my sovereign,” thus declaring his allegiance to Him. This reinforces the relationship described by David earlier, of God being his refuge, his place of trust—or as the English used to say, the place where David has plighted his troth.

David’s second declaration is of varied interpretation. Our metrical translation reflects what seems best given the context. Literally, the text reads “my good is not above Thee.” This ought to be taken in the sense that Yahveh is David’s highest and only good, blessedness and reward. This understanding is borne out by the rest of the Psalm, in which the King declares his great satisfaction with the blessed spiritual estate he enjoys because of the provision and inheritance given him by the Lord.

David then turns his declaration to the saints of the land—those of the inheritance. He calls them the excellent ones, where all his delight is found—that is, all his earthly delight. We note here the great care, and the great delight, with which he acknowledges his faithful brethren. Turning to them, he declares several things that are indicative of his office as a prophet.

First, he shows his disapprobation of those who follow other gods, and his disdain for their ceremonies and oaths. David has declared that his highest and only good is from Yahveh, the true God. Here he affirms the corollary, that those who follow after other gods will have multiplied, heavy sorrow. Following other gods is then defined as participating in idolatrous worship, namely offerings, oaths of allegiance and faith, and perhaps prayer offered to the idols of the nations, which in themselves are a kind of oath or pledge.

Second, he affirms the greatness of the inheritance received from the Lord. He uses terms that are common to the Scriptures when speaking of those good things we receive of the Lord: Inheritance, Heritage, Lot, Cup, Portion—all terms designed to teach us to hope in the Lord’s everlasting and sure provision, which David describes as good, pleasant, productive, etc. He declares that the lines are measured out in places of pleasure, not pinched, arid, or sparse, but bountiful. And in all of this blessedness, it is the Lord who “maintains” (literally, “to place in safekeeping”) the King’s inheritance.

Third, the King affirms that the Lord is his teacher above all others, such that even his inward parts instruct him by night. In this declaration it seems that the King has turned away his declaration from the saints and has given the basis of this instruction to them. Teaching about blessings that extend beyond things merely external, he teaches that the inheritance provided by the Lord is not only, or even primarily, outward—it is inward as well; such that even in the night, when to the ancient Near Eastern mind a man was most vulnerable to danger or death; even in such otherwise perilous times the Lord instructs His prophet, teaching him such things about his safety and security.

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calling “Views in Review,” which will be under the purview of the reviews editor. For the inaugural outing of the feature, I asked our Reviews editor Lane Keiſter to arrange an exchange of papers on the topic of the “Weſtminſter Seminary California Diſtinctives?” The ſection preſents three papers and three reſponſes: “I. Law and Goſpel,” by Michael S. Horton (Reſponſe by Mark Garcia); “II. The Reformed Two Kingdoms Doctrines: An Explanation and Defense,” by David VanDrunen (reſponſe by Jeffrey C. Waddington); “III. The Republication of the Covenant of Works,” by J. V. Feſko (reſponſe by Cornelis Venema). Next year we hope to reverse the roles and complete the exchange.

In addition to a ſhortened review ſection (due to the new ſection) containing ſeveral fine reviews, the *Psallo* entry for this year is Psalm 16 (with thanks to the Rev. Todd Ruddell, who has contributed to this feature for the laſt 8 iſſues), and Barry Waugh ſteps into my accuſtomed place for this iſſue’s *Antiquary* entry with “James Henley Thornwell’s Firſt Paſtoral Miniſtry at the Waxhaw Presbyterian Church.”

And if this were not enough, for the translation piece this year we have a rather lengthy firſt time translation from the French of a fairly late tract of John Calvin’s, in which he opoſed George Caſſander’s attempt at a ‘middle way’ between Rome and Proteſtantism. This tract, the longeſt piece we have had translated for the journal to date, exhibits ſome important principles, and one in particular regarding the worſhip of God.

As always, we thank you, our readers, for your intereſt in the work of this journal theſe laſt eight years, and with your continued ſupport we hope to continue with future iſſues of *The Confessional Presbyterian*. To aid that effort we have added to the editing ſtaff, the Revs. Jeffrey C. Waddington and Nicholas T. Batzig. My ſpecial thanks to Dr. Alan Strange and Rich Leino for their aſſiſtance to Lane Keiſter in vetting and working with the contributors to the new ſection, and my thanks as well to Drs. Horton, VanDrunen, Feſko, Venema, Garcia and the Rev. Waddington for their ſcholarly and irenic contributions.

This has been a difficult year for ſome of the editors on many fronts. I appreciate very much not only the efforts but the intereſt and enthuſiaſm which the Revs. Willborn, Caſſidy, Waddington, Batzig and Keiſter have for this publication and their aid in getting another fine iſſue to print.

CHRIS COLDWELL ■

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In verſe 8 the King, aſcending to the high point of the inheritance he has received from the Lord, declares firſt that it is the Lord Himſelf. Note: “I have ſet the Lord at all times, or always before me.” Here, David declares in personal form (“I have ſet”) that he has placed himſelf in the way of the Lord. His Word, His Law, His Revelation, etc., all theſe are David’s conſtant companions; and in a very real ſenſe this is the greateſt part of David’s inheritance. He deſcribes the Lord as at his right

hand, meaning that the Lord is his ſtrength. The inheritance he has cheriſhed is ſecure becauſe the Lord is his ſtrength. But not only is this inheritance ſure for the time preſent, but it is an inheritance that tranſcends the very bounds of human frailty. Certainly an inheritance is only as good, and laſts only as long, as one can enjoy it; and the proud ſtrength of man reaching its limit at death, his ability to take pleaſure in his inheritance alſo comes to an end. But this is not ſo with David and his inheritance. His expectation is that he will continue to enjoy his inheritance beyond the “terminal limit.” His confidence is that he will that pleaſurable inheritance forever. So for David, this begins with the underſtanding that he has no good but from Yahveh, and that this good maniſeſts not only in an earthly inheritance, but in inſtruction from the Lord for that which is ſpiritual, and finally, that this inheritance is not loſt – no, not even at death.

Finally, let us alſo remember that the end of this Psalm is quoted twice in the New Teſtament, once by the Apoſtle Peter and once by the Apoſtle Paul. In both of theſe citations, the inſpired Apoſtles teach us to keep one eye on David and one eye on Chriſt as we interpret the Pſalms; for often David ſpeaks not only for himſelf, but prophetically of Chriſt. In Acts 2:25–36 Peter waxes eloquent about David being a prophet and ſpeaking of Chriſt. The inheritance that Peter applies to Chriſt is nothing ſhort of the Spirit of God, that Chriſt diſpenſes to His own. In other words, Chriſt, through the ſucceſſful proſecution of His meſſianic labors in the Covenant of Grace, has procured from the Father and His promise an inheritance; and for the realization of that inheritance the Father has given to Chriſt the Holy Spirit to ſend to whomſoever He wills (John 16:7–14); and it is by the agency of that Spirit that Chriſt receives His everlaſting inheritance. Having conquered death, His eternal inheritance is ſecure. In Acts 13:33–35 the Apoſtle Paul draws upon the paſſage before us, as well as the ſecond Psalm and Isaiah 55:3, to ſpeak of the “ſure mercies of David”—that ſure inheritance that laſts beyond death. For David’s part, he ſaw his own reſurrection, and alſo the promises of the Lord regarding his kingdom and inheritance “for a great while to come” (2 Samuel 7:19). Following the example of the Apoſtles then, we can, I believe, rightly ſay that it is Chriſt who poſſeſſes this everlaſting inheritance; that He who “always does the will of His Father” has heard the counſel of His Father; who turns to His people, His faithful ones, as a Prophet to inſtruct; and who will not reſt in the grave, but will break out of that ſtrong graſp into an inheritance everlaſting and pleaſant for all time. When we remember that we are bleſſed with Chriſt, that David’s hope is our hope, and that it is founded upon Chriſt and His reſurrection, then truly we can rejoice to know that becauſe HE lives, we ſhall alſo; that the promise of eternal life in that pleaſant inheritance has ever been the hope, the expectation of God’s people as they looked to the “greater David.”

Todd L. RUDELL ■

Psalm 16:1-11

Shamreni-El

Todd L. Ruddell

¹ O God, me keep be - cause in Thee, I do my ref - uge take.
 My good - ness, Lord, of Thee a - lone *pro - ceeds*; ³ and to the saints,
⁴ Grief shall be great to them who af - ter oth - er *gods* do stray,
⁵ The LORD *Him - self* my por - tion is, an her - it - age to me,
⁶ My lot and her - it - age are meas - ur'd out in pleas - ant - ness;
⁷ So I the LORD, who un - to me good coun - sel gives, will bless,

² Thou art my Sov'r-eign to the LORD *my soul* thou *thus* hath spake, *my soul* thou *thus* hath spake:
 Of earth, the ex-c'lent ones in whom my full de-light is placed, my full de-light is placed:
 Their blood-of-f'rings I do re - fuse, my lips re-fuse their names, my lips re-fuse their names.
 My cup and mine in-her-it - ance, is ev - er kept by Thee, is ev - er kept by Thee.
 Un - to me ver - y boun-ti - ful is mine in - her - it - ance, is mine in - her - it - ance.
 That night-by-night my in-most parts on me wis-dom im - press, on me wis-dom im - press.

⁸ Ever unto me have I set the Lord before my face,
 Sith He's at my right hand I'll not be mov'd *out of my place*, be mov'd *out of my place*.

⁹ Therefore rejoiceth doth mine heart, my glory shalt exult,
 And also in my flesh I shall in expectation dwell, in expectation dwell.

¹⁰ For Thou my soul will not abandon ever to the grave,
 Thine Holy One corruption Thou to suffer will not have, to suffer will not have.

¹¹ The way of life to me Thou shew'st, joy fill'd is Thee before;
 The pleasures that pertain to Thy Right Hand are evermore, Right Hand are evermore.