

Hope in Troubled Times

Preserve Me, O God

Psalm 16:1-11

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Scripture

Someone imagined what the history books say:

There was a global pandemic caused by a virus. The number of infected people grew daily. Officials recommended frequent handwashing and quarantining of the sick. Cities went so far as to ban public worship services and other public gatherings! In the end, the pandemic killed 50 million people, including 675,000 Americans. No, we are not describing the COVID-19 pandemic of 2019-2020, but rather what is commonly known as the Spanish Flu pandemic of 1918.

Chris Gehrz, a history professor at Bethel University, recently wrote how churches and church leaders responded to that 1918 pandemic, as reported by local newspapers:

- Some pastors were creative and led outdoor services, encouraged home worship, and even reading sermons published in newspapers.
- An interim pastor in San Francisco preached that many Christians had caused the pandemic as a result of being “cowardly” and “worldly,” and only repentance of these sins would stop the spread of the virus.
- At the other spectrum, a Methodist leader wrote that “...the pandemic should convince ‘Intelligent Christians’ to trust science rather than seeking to ‘tempt God to perform a miracle in the preservation of our health.’ ”
- Some pastors refused to close their doors, held services in protest, and in at least one city a pastor was arrested for refusing to cancel services.

In this time of international crisis, we are reminded that this is not the first time that churches have faced a major disruption of regular activities. And just as history is judged in retrospect, how we respond to our current crisis not only gives witness to our faith but will also be reported and evaluated by future generations.

So, how do we want our response to be remembered?¹

Psalm 16 shows us how David responded to a crisis that he faced.

Please follow along as I read Psalm 16:1-11:

A Miktam of David.

¹Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

**²I say to the Lord, “You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you.”**

**³As for the saints in the land,
they are the excellent ones,
in whom is all my delight.**

**⁴The sorrows of those who run after another god
shall multiply;
their drink offerings of blood I will
not pour out
or take their names on my lips.**

**⁵The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.**

**⁶The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.**

**⁷I bless the Lord who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.**

**⁸I have set the Lord always before me;
because he is at my right hand,**

¹ See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/search/?menu%5Bcontenttypedisplay-name%5D=Illustration&query=Preservation>.

I shall not be shaken.
⁹Therefore my heart is glad,
and my whole being rejoices;
my flesh also dwells secure.
¹⁰For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let your holy one see corruption.
¹¹You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.
(Psalm 16:1-11)

Introduction

Psalm 16 was written by David. We don't know the specific occasion for this psalm. David's petition for God's preservation (in verse 1) and his mention of Sheol (in verse 10) seems to suggest that he was confronted by death. David faced a crisis in his life, and he wrote this psalm as his response to the present crisis.

When a pastor preaches, he seeks to address a need or an issue that members of the congregation are facing. Sometimes his address is applicable to everyone, but usually, it is applicable to certain individuals in the congregation. Every one of us is faced with the international coronavirus pandemic. Indeed, one of our very own members died this past week as a result of the coronavirus.

So, how shall we respond to this—or any—crisis?

Lesson

Psalm 16:1-11 shows us how to respond to a crisis.
Let's use the following outline:

1. When Facing a Crisis, Pray (16:1)

2. When Facing a Crisis, Act (16:2-11)

I. When Facing a Crisis, Pray (16:1)

First, when a crisis, pray.

David's prayer to God is in verse 1a, **"Preserve me, O God."** This is David's petition to God. The Hebrew word for **"preserve"** means "to *hedge* about (as with thorns); to *guard*; to *protect*."² David wanted God to protect him in the crisis he was facing. Most likely, it was when Saul wanted to kill David.

We all want God to preserve us at the present time. We are all facing the threat of coronavirus. And so our petition to God is the same as David's, **"Preserve me, O God."**

Now, I don't want you to miss the reason David was able to make his petition to God. He asked God to preserve him, **"for in you I take refuge"** (16:1b). The Hebrew word for **"refuge"** means "a shelter."³ When the Lord brought his people from Egypt to the Promised Land, he established "cities of refuge" to which people accused of unintentional manslaughter could flee and find safety (Numbers 35:9-15). David affirmed that his refuge was not a city but the Lord himself. In other words, David was grounding his preservation in the person of the Lord. He belonged to the Lord, and that was the basis for his petition to God.

If you have taken refuge in Jesus Christ, that is, if you have saving faith in Jesus, then during this—or any—crisis, you may pray, **"Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge."**

² James Strong, *The New Strong's Dictionary of Hebrew and Greek Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996).

³ James Strong, *The New Strong's Dictionary of Hebrew and Greek Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996).

II. When Facing a Crisis, Act (16:2-11)

And second, when facing a crisis, act.

There are three things to do when facing a crisis.

A. Take Refuge in God's Security (16:1-4)

First, take refuge in God's security.

David asked God to preserve him for God was his refuge.

There are three evidences of God's security.

The first evidence of God's security is a delight in the Lord.

David said in verse 2, **"I say to the Lord, 'You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.'"** David's life was filled with crises. He escaped sixteen attempts on his life by Saul, he faced and killed Goliath, he engaged in many bloody battles, he encountered betrayal, and so on. And yet through it all, David said to God, **"I have no good apart from you,"** which *The Message* paraphrases as, "Without you, nothing makes sense."

My dear brother and sister, is your delight in the Lord? Are you able to say, **"I have no good apart from you"?**

The second evidence of God's security is a delight in the Lord's people.

David said in verse 3, **"As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight."** The **"saints in the land"** are fellow believers. They are brothers and sisters in the Lord. David found his delight in believers.

One aspect of the coronavirus pandemic is that we have been ordered by our Governor to "stay at home." Fortunately, we are able to call one another by telephone and see one another by video. But, I miss the fellowship of being in the presence of **"the saints in the land."** You are my delight, and I

look forward to the time when we are able to get together.

Do you also find a delight in the Lord's people?

The third evidence of God's security is a delight in the Lord's truth.

David said in verse 4, **“The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply; their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names on my lips.”**

David rightly understood that there is only one God, and his name is Jehovah. He revealed himself and his truth to David, and David embraced it. With typical insight, the Puritan Matthew Henry wrote, “Those that multiply gods multiply griefs to themselves; for, whoever thinks one God too little, will find two too many, and yet hundreds not enough.”⁴

Do you find a delight in the Lord's truth?

B. *Give Thanks for Present Blessings (16:5-8)*

Second, give thanks for present blessings.

There are four blessings for which to give thanks.

First, give thanks for the blessing of a relationship with God.

David said in verse 5, **“The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.”** When the people of God entered the Promised Land, each tribe except Levi was assigned a portion of the land in which to live. Because of their service to the Lord in the sanctuary, the Levites had the Lord as their special portion. David saw himself in a similar way. He enjoyed a beautiful, personal relationship with the Lord.

Prior to my conversion to Christ, I had no relationship with the Lord. But, when I was converted to Christ, I began a wonderful relationship with Jesus. I remember reading his

⁴ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 763.

word and it suddenly made sense to me; it came alive for me! Such is the blessing of a relationship with God.

Second, give thanks for the blessing of an inheritance.

David said in verse 6, **“The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.”** The tribes each inherited a portion of the land. They found in each portion that there were **pleasant places**. David found delight in what God had called him to do.

The Rev. Gordon Keddie was the pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church in State College, PA. He was a good mentor and friend to me. I remember Gordon quoting verse 6 once in reference to his life and ministry. At first, it struck me as an odd expression. But, as I reflected on it, it made sense to me. The Lord had blessed him with a fruitful life and ministry, and he saw that as the blessing of God’s inheritance to him.

Are you able to give thanks for the inheritance God has given to you?

Third, give thanks for the blessing of a counselor.

David said in verse 7, **“I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me.”** David often sought the Lord’s guidance, which the Lord gave him.

Do you find that there are times in your life when you are facing a difficult issue or decision or crisis? And do you sometimes wish that God would come alongside you and tell you the way forward? I do!

God provides counsel to me through his word, through providential circumstances, through prayer, and through the prompting of his Holy Spirit in my life. However, I miss the Lord’s guidance in my life when I don’t seek it.

And fourth, give thanks for the blessing of a companion.

David said in verse 8, **“I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be**

shaken.” David had a very clear sense that the Lord was with him. He was not shaken when he faced a crisis because his Sovereign Companion was with him.

Not long ago, I watched the Faithlife Original documentary titled, “Known by God: An Interview with J. I. Packer.” Dr. Packer is ninety-three years old, and he is one of the Church’s most distinguished theologians. Throughout his ministry, Dr. Packer tackled very difficult theological issues. He was engaged in many controversies. The comment that struck me most was when he said, “I can honestly say that I have never been kept sleepless by anxiety. That I think is the first fruit of being known by God. I am in his hand, and there I am safe.” That is the blessing of having God as a companion.

C. Rejoice in Future Hope (16:9-11)

And third, rejoice in future hope.

There are four ways to rejoice in future hope.

First, rejoice in the resurrection.

David said in verses 9-10, **“Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.”** The Hebrew word for **“Sheol”** means “grave, hell, pit.”⁵ David’s statement is really remarkable because he lived before Jesus, his Greater Son, was resurrected back to life. Yet, he believed that God would preserve him and resurrect him.

Centuries later, the Apostle Peter used verses 8-11 to point to Jesus’ resurrection (*cf.* Acts 2:25-28). Jesus did not see

⁵ James Strong, *The New Strong’s Dictionary of Hebrew and Greek Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996).

corruption, and his body was not abandoned to Sheol. And because of Jesus' resurrection, David also rejoiced in his future resurrection.

And we who believe in Jesus may also rejoice in our future resurrection.

Second, rejoice in the path of life.

David said in verse 11a, **“You make known to me the path of life.”** That is to say that David had a personal relationship with God. He knew God personally. The **path to life** is walking with God and knowing him personally as we go through life's journey.

Third, rejoice in the fullness of joy.

David said in verse 11b, **“...in your presence there is fullness of joy.”** For David, the **fullness of joy** was to be found in the **presence** of God.

We look forward to a future hope, but the focal point of glory is not the pearly gates, streets of gold, angels, or even glorified believers who have gone ahead of us. No, the focal point of glory is the fullness of joy that will be found in the **presence** of God. We shall see God and be immeasurably filled with joy, and we will be overcome by the presence of our glorified Savior. We will rejoice in the fullness of joy.

And fourth, rejoice in the pleasures forevermore.

David said in verse 11c, **“...at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”** Whatever earthly pleasures we may have enjoyed, they will pale in comparison to the **pleasures forevermore** that we will experience in heaven.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed how to respond to a crisis in Psalm 16:1-11, let us be sure that Jesus is our refuge.

Bob Guest was a Deacon in our church. He died a little over two years ago. Bob's wife, Karen, showed me Bob's Bible, where he had written that he wanted Psalm 16:11 preached at his funeral because he rejoiced in the hope of his resurrection. I did preach on Psalm 16 and focused on verse 11 at Bob's funeral. I also shared the following illustration.

Winston Churchill died in 1965 when Bob was seventeen years old, and soon to enter the United States Military Academy at West Point. I don't know if Bob listened to the funeral service for Winston Churchill, but I did. I later learned that Winston Churchill planned his funeral with the hope of the resurrection in mind. Churchill instructed that after the benediction at the close of the service, a bugler, positioned high in the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, play "Taps"—the universal signal indicating that the day is ended.

But then came the most dramatic part. Churchill instructed that once "Taps" was ended, another bugler, on the other side of the dome, play "Reveille"—the universal signal that a new day has dawned and that is time to arise.

Churchill was testifying that for the Christian, for the one who takes refuge in God's security, who gives thanks for present blessings, and who rejoices in a future hope, the last note is not "Taps" but "Reveille."

There is hope for every sinner who puts his or her faith in Jesus Christ—because Jesus has opened a door to a new life and heaven itself by his own sacrificial death and resurrection. If you have never done so, pray as David did, **"Preserve me, O God, for in you [that is, in Jesus] I take refuge."** Amen.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can
be found at:

1. www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons.
2. www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp.
3. www.sermonaudio.com/source_detail.asp?sourceid=Fred-dyFritz.

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