

Preserve Me, O God

Psalm 16:1-11

Halifax: 11 April 2004

Introduction

“Preserve me, O God, for in You do I trust.”

- This is the Church’s prayer when trials and temptations assault us!
- These opening words sum up the whole of Psalm 16—
 - The 16th of the 150 songs that God has given His covenant people to sing before Him with our Lord Jesus Christ at our head.

We are God’s people because He has set us apart from the world to be His own and He will preserve us.

- He has called us out the kingdom of darkness and translated us in the Kingdom of His Son.
- But this does not mean that we are not daily bombarded with trials and temptations...
 - **Trials** are those difficulties you meet with as we follow the Lord... because you are following Him.
 - When people laugh at you because of what you believe or practice... when you must sacrifice something precious (like a relationship) for Christ...
 - Trials try to drive us away from Christ...
 - They say to us “You need not bear reproach for following Christ in *that* way... you can still follow Him, but you do not need to suffer for *that*.”
 - **Temptations** are those things that try to lure us and entice us to come after them instead of Christ.
 - They say, “Come and follow me and you will find true happiness and comfort.”
 - Here is covetousness that calls you to serve money...
 - Here is the seductress that calls you to come and find pleasure in her embrace...
 - Here are a thousand other voices that call you to turn from Christ (if only for a moment) and follow them.

The world, the flesh, and the Devil continually assault the church to either drive us away or draw us away from the Lord.

- But when this happens to the true people of God,
 - They lift pray to God as in Psalm 16:
 - “Preserve me, O God, for in you do I trust.”

- And God answers from heaven...
 - He preserves us.
 - The word **preserve** (*shamar*) that is used here means **to keep** or **to guard**.
 - The Lord keeps us from turning away from Him in the hour of testing.
- But you should not think of this as merely an individualistic prayer.
 - It is a prayer for God’s covenant people (the church) as a body with Christ as our head.
 - It is above all things that prayer that He prays for Himself and all of us who are His members!
 - Do I need to tell you how great His desire is that His church be persevered?
 - He will not allow one of His sheep to perish!
 - He went to the cross for the church in order to redeem us, and all those He redeems He also keeps to the end—not one will perish.
 - And so this prayer is His prayer for the whole church...
 - “Preserve Me, O God, for in you do I trust!”

This was the prayer He prayed when He came into this world and was bombarded with every trial and temptation that we experience...

- It was His prayer when all our iniquities were put on His account and He was called to bear the full penalty of them for us.
- He went to the cross with the sins of the whole church on His shoulders...
 - He was given every enticement to draw Him away from this course...
 - He was given the severest trial—even the rejection of the Father who turned away from Him—
 - Yet He cried out to God, saying...
 - “Preserve Me O God, for in you do I trust!”
 - This was His prayer for the entire church—“Preserve me!”
 - Brothers and sisters, He went to the cross and the grave with that prayer...
 - And God heard Him and raised Him from the dead!
 - And in Him, the whole church was raised up!
 - If He had stayed in the tomb, the whole church would have perished with Him...
 - There would have been no salvation for us at all... only God’s holy wrath and eternal condemnation!
 - But God did hear, and we are preserved forever!

And now Jesus calls us to follow Him.

- He told us that in this world we will have tribulation, but to be of good cheer because He has overcome the world...
 - not for Himself alone, but for us also!
 - He has already made the way to the Father, and we are called to follow Him there.
- So when we are tempted, we are to sing this song...
 - “Preserve me, O God, for in you do I trust.”
 - We are to sing this song in Jesus’ name—
 - He continues to sing it for us, and we are to continue to sing it with Him.

This morning I want to present to you this Psalm so that you will learn to sing it with Jesus as you face temptation and trials in this world.

This Psalm teaches you that...

I. When the trials and temptations come, the first thing you must do is, remember that you belong to the Lord.

A. In verse 2, when you sing this Psalm, you remind yourself that you belong to the Lord.

- v. 2: “O my soul, you have said to the LORD, You are my Lord, My goodness is nothing apart from you.”
- 1. You said this to the Lord when you were baptised!
 - a. You entered into covenant with Him, declaring that He is your Lord.
 - You solemnly took Him as your husband and master.
 - Baptism seals the covenant relationship that you are His and that He is your God.
 - b. And so now, when temptations come, you need to remember that you belong to Him and not to another.
 - What is this complaining in your trials?
 - Would you rather be back in Egypt again?
 - You do not belong to world—you are married to Christ.
 - What is this going out of your heart after another?
 - Has He not bought you with a price?
 - Have you not made a covenant with Him?
- 2. When you took Him as your master, you gave up your own identity...

- a. Your whole life is now tied together with Him, the way it should be!
 - The Human race fell when we tried to establish our own life apart from God.
 - This was the root of our undoing!
 - We are God's image...
 - An image does not have an independent identity...
 - It is made to reflect the glory of the original object of which it is an image.
 - I don't mean that we are all supposed to come out looking the same in personality and employment...
 - God does not give us all the same particular callings and abilities and interests...
 - But we are all to reflect the glory of God's wisdom, love, justice, and mercy in the way we go about our particular callings...
 - We are not to live our own way, but in accordance with His commandments as they are given to us in His word.
 - Unless we do this, we are full of evil and death.
- b. As the second part of verse 2 teaches you to confess:
 - v. 2: "My goodness is nothing apart from you."
 - The idea here is that when you are disconnected from reflecting Him as His image...
 - there is nothing good in you, only evil...
 - You were made to glorify Him, and anything else but that is evil.
 - When you were baptised, you returned to that purpose once again...
 - You declared that He was your Lord and entered into covenant with Him through Jesus Christ.
 - Your cry is:
 - "Preserve me, do not let these trials drive me away from you or these temptations draw me away..."
 - For I have nothing good apart from you!"

B. Moreover, your camaraderie is with His people!

- Thus in verse 3 you confess:

- v. 3: “As for the saints who are on the earth, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight.”
1. The **saints of the earth** are those who are also (like you) restored to the Lord as their husband and master.
 - a. You have a common purpose with **them; not** with those who rebel against God.
 - You are not to measure excellence as the world does...
 - by riches and honours...
 - but you are to delight in those who are also seeking to honour and serve God...
 - who have taken Him as their master and who are living for His glory.
 - b. Consider the example of Jesus in this!
 - 1) He looked beyond the rich and the noble and the mighty of this world...
 - and took His delight in the sheep that God had given Him.
 - He did not care if they were poor and lowly...
 - to Him they were the excellent ones in whom was all His delight because they were set apart to serve God.
 - 2) See how He gave Himself for them—
 - in order that they might freely serve God as their master!
 - See how He prayed and suffered for their sake!
 - He delighted in them with all His heart and cast in His lot with them.
2. How can you then be enticed by the sons of this world to go with them?
 - What business do you have sharing a purse with them?
 - a. In verse 4, you are taught to repudiate those who go after false gods.
 - You cannot serve God with idols.
 - You must choose between one or the other...
 - to follow the Lord is renounce all other gods and all false worship.
 - You cannot join hands with those who invent false worship...
 - who approach God according to the commandments of men.
 - b. Thus you are taught to promise in the second part of verse 4:

- “Their drink offerings of blood I will not offer, nor take up their names on my lips.”
- If you had lived in Israel, you were not to worship at the high places as so many did.
- If you live in Canada today, you are not worship God in the Roman Catholic mass or in some other way not appointed in His word...
 - with drama or side shows...
 - or with doctrine that denies or twists the truth.
- Idolatry arises in the church when men become discontent with God...
 - They begin to adjust what they believe about Him and how they will worship Him.
 - They do not like to retain Him in their minds so they make their adjustments...
 - Soon they are worshipping another god altogether.
 - God turns them over to blindness for their ingratitude.

TRANS> Ask God to preserve you from such things when temptation comes!

- You belong to Him and not to another.

II. The second thing you must do when trials and temptations come is, consider what great gain it is to belong to the Lord.

- You will not have much of a heart to pray “Preserve me O God...”
 - if you have forgotten what a blessing it is to **have** the Lord!
- You will not particularly want to be kept in something that you don’t have much pleasure in or regard for...

A. So begin by reminding yourself that those who pursue other gods multiply sorrows.

- verse 4 says: “Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten after another god.”
- Say to yourself,
 - “I don’t want to go with them because that is the path to many sorrows.”
- 1. First, there is the sorrow of disappointment that comes from serving these gods...
 - a. The word “hasten” suggests that great effort is expended!
 - People can be very zealous for idols!
 - I mentioned last week that the excitement of Israel around the golden calf was without rival!
 - They freely gave up their gold to make the calf,
 - Then they made a lot of noise that could be heard from far away.

- b. But what disappointment it is in the end when you have spent so much and these gods prove to be worthless!
 - They are empty and unsatisfying.
 - Their service is sometimes very hard, but their rewards are meagre.
 - Those who worship them set themselves up for disappointment.

TRANS> Not only is there the sorrows that come from the weakness of these gods,

- 2. There is also the sorrow that comes from God's judgement upon those who serve them.
 - a. He is a jealous God who will not allow those who serve other gods to go unpunished!
 - They may think they are getting away with it for a while,
 - but God's judgement will catch up to them at the appointed hour...
 - If not in this life, then on the day of resurrection.
 - b. And what cries of sorrow there will be in that day!
 - How hard it will be when the sentence of judgement is passed!
 - It will be too late to repent then!
 - Wickedness does not seem so bad until the day you are called to answer for it...
 - Then you cry out and say,
 - Prov 5:12: "How I have hated instruction, And my heart despised correction! I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, Nor inclined my ear to those who instructed me!"
 - The person who serves idols is laying up sorrows in a big account, and the day will come when he will have to take all those sorrows out.

TRANS> But don't only look at the negative consequences of going after something other than god...

- B. Also continue to remind yourself how excellent it is to have God as your inheritance.
 - 1. Just think, you have Him as your very own inheritance and portion!
 - What a great gain this is!
 - a. If you consider how excellent this inheritance is,
 - you will not want to walk away from it!

- 1) God gives you **Himself** to glory in and to enjoy!
 - v. 5 “O LORD, you are the portion of my inheritance and my cup”
 - 2) We are “worshipping creatures” by nature...
 - We are always looking for excellent things to delight in...
 - Something to give ourselves too...
 - Something that we can have as our own.
- b. And in His covenant, God promises Himself to us!
- “I will be your God!”
 - “I am your shield and your exceedingly great reward!”
- c. Now we often talk about all the excellent things that God gives us, but let us remember to talk also about the sweet excellence of God Himself!
- In eternity, your attention will be captivated with marvellous delight in Him.
 - He is the Holy One who excels all others!
- 1) Consider how He excels in majesty, grandeur and power!
 - Here is the One who speaks a word and the worlds are created!
 - Who speaks again and they are destroyed.
 - Who can stand before such power?
 - There is no weakness, no flaw, nothing but excellent greatness.
 - 2) Consider how He excels in justice, purity and equity!
 - All His ways are pure righteousness and there is no wrong in Him ever; nothing impure or unclean.
 - See how He destroys all His enemies and brings every work to judgement.
 - He always does the right thing.
 - 3) Consider how He excels in mercy, grace and love!
 - What kind of God is this that gives His only Son to redeem His enemies?
 - What kind of God is this that removes our iniquities as far as the east is from west?
 - What kind of God is this that commits to do us good and not evil forever?

- d. My brothers and sisters,
 - His greatest gift to you is Himself...
 - that you will be able to see Him and live before Him with perfect understanding of His holy excellence!
 - He maintains this lot for you forever!
2. Truly you can say with verse 6:
- “The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Yes, I have a good inheritance.”
 - a. You remember how the land was divided up in Israel...
 - The lines refer to the boundary lines in which each person’s inheritance was contained...
 - b. You have been given the best inheritance of all!
 - It is a charming district, a most pleasurable habitation, the most blessed domain of love
 - You have been situated in the valley of vision where you can behold the glory of God... a land of light where His glory shines continually
 - There is not better place to live!
 - c. Here is the pearl of great price!
 - Here is an inheritance that is worth leaving all others to obtain!
 - Here is an inheritance that is worth suffering and fighting for!
 - He is the lily of the valley, the fairest of ten thousand!
 - Who else has loved you so well?
 - Who else can offer you so much?
- C. Give thanks to God for opening your eyes to see this excellent inheritance!
- verse 7 says, “I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel...”
 - 1. If you had been left to yourself, you would never have seen the glory of this inheritance...
 - a. Your sinful heart would have blinded you to behold His glorious majesty...
 - Even with creation to testify, you would have missed His glory...
 - Even with the gospel to testify, you would have been cold and indifferent.
 - Either because you dazzled by the lying vanities of this world...
 - or you would have seen no glory anywhere at all.
 - b. Because of the fall, your judgement is very defective...

- You cannot distinguish what is excellent from what is vain.
 - Paul talks about the nations who walk:
 - Eph 4:17-18: “in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.
2. But Jesus Christ is the One who opens the eyes of the blind.
- a. He gives us counsel by giving us the Holy Spirit who opens our eyes and our hearts to believe.
 - b. The scripture says:
 - 1 Cor 2:9-10: Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit.
 - God must open our eyes are we will not see the great gain that there is in having Him as our inheritance!
 - c. If your eyes have been opened to see the glory of your inheritance,
 - Then you ought to bless God...
 - He is the One who has given you this counsel...
 - He has revealed Christ to you.
 - He has convinced you with the call of the gospel that says:
 - Mark 8:36: "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"
3. And now that He has shown you this, your own heart instructs you in the night seasons (as verse 7 goes on to confess).
- a. The revelation of Christ is now a part of you because God has made it a part of you.
 - b. As you lay on your bed night after night, you are able to consider how excellent and superior your inheritance is to all others!
 - How can you complain in your trials when you have such promises?
 - How can your heart go out after temptations when you have so excellent a place to dwell?

TRANS> It is with this spirit that you cry out earnestly to God in your temptations and trials...

- “Preserve me O God, for in you do I trust!”
- And this leads us to the third thing you must do when trials and temptations assault...

III. You must believe that the Lord will indeed preserve you.

- Prayer is to be offered to God with faith.

- A. When you ask Him to preserve you, be confident that He will.
 - This is the assurance you confess in verse 8:
 - “I have set the Lord always before my me; Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.”

 - 1. You can see how this an echo of verse 1...
 - “Preserve me O God for in you do I trust.”

 - a. To “not be moved” (in v. 8) is to be “preserved” or “kept” (in v. 1).
 - b. To “set the Lord always before you” (in v. 8) is to “trust in Him” (v. 1).

 - 2. You set Him before you when you have genuine faith.
 - Setting Him before your means that you are following Him; and that in two respects:
 - a. First, you are following Him as an object of trust...
 - This includes looking to Him for help, even as you are doing in this prayer...
 - And it means believing that serving Him is the most excellent way—that He is superior to all other gods and ways.

 - b. Second, you are following Him as your God to obey
 - You are keeping before you His revealed will so that you might obey it.
 - This includes everything from how you worship Him to how you do your daily work.

- TRANS> When you are thus following Him, He is there with you to preserve you...
 - And thus you can be sure that:

- 3. You will not be moved (the second part of verse 8)
 - a. God takes special care of those who are looking to Him.
 - He promises that none who look to Him will be ashamed or disappointed.
 - He will not let you down.

 - b. If it is truly your desire to honour Him and to continue to serve Him through trials and temptations,

- You will not be moved from your purpose.
- Now I don't mean this in a mechanical way or a perfectionistic way...
 - Peter was a sincere disciple of Christ and this was true of him...
 - Yet God did allow him to deny Christ three times.
 - In one sense, Peter was **moved**...
 - But in another more important sense He was not moved...
 - Jesus prayed for Him that His faith would not fail...
 - And it didn't...
 - The seed of faith remained so that in time Peter repented and returned to Christ.
- The important thing is that God will never let you (as a true disciple) fall completely away from Him.
 - There is such a thing as apostasy among God's covenant people,
 - but John tells us that those who apostatise were never sincere in the first place—in spite of their pretences.
 - In His first epistle he says:
 - 1 John 2:19: They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but *they went out* that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.
 - But if you truly trust in God,
 - Your faith will never fail...
 - You can say with all confidence,
 - “Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.”
 - The right hand in this case is the place where a protector and helper stands to guard you and keep you in all your ways.

B. Let this confidence make you joyful...

- Verse 9 says, “Therefore...”
 - “Therefore, [because I know that I shall not be moved] my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope.”

1. Let your heart be glad!

- What greater comfort is there than to know that God will keep you forever?
- When you face great trials and temptations, they can be very difficult to bear...

- But you can have a deep-seated unshakeable joy because God is at your right hand to help you...
 - These trials will not destroy you, but will refine your faith like gold!
 - 1 Peter 1:3 ¶ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 ¶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of *your* souls.
2. And it is yours not only to be glad in heart, but also to “Let your glory rejoice.”
- The word “glory” refers to your weight or influence...
 - “Letting your glory rejoice” means to employ your strength in praising God...
 - A “glad heart” is within...
 - “Letting your glory rejoice” is what you do outwardly!
 - It is singing praise with your lips, giving thanks to God in prayer, speaking of His excellence to others...
 - Telling them that He is a God who preserves His own!
 - It is using your strength, your wealth, your influence, all that you are to praise God in the world.
 - May people gather all over the world in worshipping assemblies to let their glory rejoice!
 - Bring your strength to praise Him!
 - Call all the earth to join you!
3. And, because God is a God who preserves,
- a. Your flesh can rest in hope...
 - This speaks of dwelling in security.
 - God will not abandon you, but will keep you serving Him forever.
 - Even if your body is destroyed, God will raise it up again.
 - Even death cannot keep you from serving Him in the end.

- b. This is your confidence before God, that nothing will succeed in drawing you away from Him.

TRANS> But how can you obtain this confidence?

C. I tell you, the gospel is the foundation for this confidence...

1. The gospel is the good news about Christ—how He died for us and was raised again on the third day.
 - Because Christ has done this,
 - We can now look back upon what God has done,
 - just as David and Christ looked to what God was going to do...
 - This is what is spoken of in verse 10-11:
 - Psalm 16:10-11: For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You will show me the path of life; In Your presence *is* fullness of joy; At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore.
2. You can look back and see that God did not leave Him in the grave!
 - a. Remember that Jesus, as the Head of the church,
 - went to the cross as our representative...
 - He went to pay the penalty for the sins of the whole church!
 - b. And if God had left Him in the grave to rot away,
 - We would still be in our sins...
 - It would have shown us that God did not accept His sacrifice for us and that we cannot be forgiven through His death.
 - It would mean that His prayer for the church ...
 - “Preserve me O God, for in you do I trust”
 - Was not answered...
 - That Jesus and His church had perished and would not be preserved.
 - c. There would be no confidence for us to come after Jesus Christ and pray that God would preserve us...
 - But you know that God **did** hear Him!

- You know that Jesus **did not** see corruption, but that God raised Him on the third day!
 - If God has done all this for His church, you can be sure that He will answer your prayer when you ask Him to preserve you in Jesus' name.
 - Even death will not keep the church from serving God because Jesus has overcome death for us!
 - Nothing can separate us from God!
 - Romans 8:31: What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? 33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? *It is* God who justifies. 34 Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." 37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

TRANS> Look and see how God not only preserved Christ **from** destruction, but also preserved Him **to** a most glorious inheritance!

3. Verse 11 describes how God would bring (and for us, has brought) Him into the fullness of His blessing...
 - And of course once again, He brings the whole church into this blessing also.
 - a. First, it says that He showed Him the path of life...
 - This does not mean that He just pointed at it like showing a movie or something...
 - It means that He brought Him to experience life!
 - While Jesus was on earth, He had a body like ours—
 - subject to infirmity, subject to trials and temptations, subject to death...
 - but now He is able to serve God in glory without any molestation...
 - He is able to serve freely and without pain and struggle!
 - That is true life—immortality will swallow up death!
 - That is what God has in store for all who trust in Christ.

- b. And not only that, but He will also bring us into His presence where there is fullness of joy!
 - 1) His “presence” is literally “His face”
 - God will bring us to see His shining countenance.
 - We will behold His glory in all the fullness that is humanly possible for us to contain!
 - 2) And the result for us will be the fullness of joy.
 - I have already spoken about how His greatest gift to you is Himself...
 - That you will be able to see Him and live before Him with perfect understanding of His holy excellence!
 - This will be perfectly satisfying so that the result will be the fullness of joy.
- c. And, we will also find that at His right hand are pleasures forevermore...
 - 1) God has given this place—at His right hand—to the church through our Mediator Jesus Christ.
 - This is the place of honour and authority above all creation.
 - Jesus Christ has taken His place there...
 - There is a sense in which we are already seated with Him there...
 - And there is a sense in which is yet to bring us there when our bodies are raised up.
 - But it is a place of delight because it is the place of service to God.
 - 2) Not only will we have the fullness of joy, but also pleasures for evermore.
 - Serving God will be our place forever...
 - The pleasures of that will never be exhausted for all eternity!
 - There will be no boredom in Heaven, but only eternal delight.

Conclusion!

Christian, God is bringing you to this place!

- If you are serving Him today through Jesus Christ,
 - You can be sure that He will preserve you until you are brought into the full enjoyment of this inheritance!

Here is the bottom line!

- On the cross you see Jesus as the whole church hanging on the cross, condemned for all our sins!

- And the question is raised, “Will God preserve His church?”
- And on the third day, the unmistakable answer comes...
 - There is Jesus as the whole church, risen from the dead!
 - God as given as an eternal inheritance, and even the sentence of eternal death could not keep Him from giving it to us!
 - Take heart, Christian, He will preserve you to the end!
 - If you are not a Christian, what is it that keeps you from so great a salvation?