

The Resurrection Psalm

Text: Psalm 16:1-5

Introduction:

1. The Author of the Psalm: David is cited as the author. This Psalm is specifically called a "Mitscham of David". There are 6 "Mitscham" Psalms, the others being Psalm 56-60. The word "Mitscham" has been variously understood. The word comes from a root which signifies "to cover" or "to hide" but another view understands the word to mean "engraved", perhaps in gold, as letters engraved on a monument, so that these six Psalms have become known as "David's Golden Psalms". (Flanigan) Luther calls it "a golden jewel".
2. Occasion: No specifics are given concerning the occasion of writing but was likely during a period of danger in David's life (Vs. 1). E.g., when he was fleeing from Saul.
3. The law of double reference applies to this Psalm. There are primary references to David and prophetic references to Christ. It is the third of the Messianic Psalms and is quoted by both Peter and Paul and perhaps also by the writer of the Hebrews (Acts 2:25-31, 13:35-37; Heb. 2:13). To summarize, the Psalm is:
 - **Practical in its message** – the Psalm was a prayer of David and thus provides many lessons for the saints.
 - **Prophetic in its message** – the Psalm looks beyond David to the Messiah's resurrection.
4. In this Psalm, David uses three words for God – *El*, *Jehovah* and *Adonai*. *El* is the abbreviated form of *Elohim*, God the Creator. He is the Omnipotent, all powerful One. It refers to God in all His strength and might. It is the first word for God in the Bible. LORD is *Jehovah*, the self-existent, self-sufficient, ever present, covenant keeping God. *Adonai* reveals God as Lord, Master and King. "Bringing the three titles together we could say "EL" is God my Maker, Jehovah is God my Mediator, and Adonai is God my Master." (Phillips)
5. We have divided the Psalm under **4 headings** for this expository study.

I. THE PSALMIST'S PRAYER (VS. 1-4)

"The first section is a prayer, but one in which David confesses his faith and affirms his loyalty to God." (Ross)

A. The Request (Vs. 1)

1. The appeal of the request (Vs. 1a) – "Preserve me, O God". The word 'preserve' has the idea of "to hedge about, guard, keep". This was a prayer for preservation/protection from harm. The word 'preserve' is most often translated "keep". "Along with its noun form "keeper", it may be found so translated more than three hundred times in the AV. The thought is of a shepherd keeping his flock, of a garrison of soldiers keeping a city, or of a bodyguard guarding the monarch." (Flanigan) See the promise of preservation in Psalm 121:4-8. We should also pray that the Lord will protect us:
 - a. Physically – there are physical dangers in the world we live in.
 - b. Spiritually – Christ's model prayer exhorts us to pray "deliver us from evil". We need protection from the three enemies we face – the world, the flesh and the devil.

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2. The argument of the request (Vs. 1b). David adds a reason why he believes his prayer should be answered – he was putting his **full, complete** trust in His God. Faith in God is always rewarded so this is appropriate language. David was essentially saying “Lord, I need you to keep me and I am trusting in you to do that.” The phrase has the sense of “to take refuge in”.

B. The Reflection (Vs. 2-4)

David opens his heart and reveals some of his inner communion with God.

David reflects upon:

1. His lowliness before God (Vs. 2).
 - a. David is reflecting on a prayer he had prayed to the Lord in his heart (“O my soul”). In this prayer he expresses his personal attachment to His God, “Thou art **my Lord**” and his humble view of self “my goodness extendeth not to thee”.
 - b. David was conscious that the God He served was the all sufficient One. God was not in any need of any goodness from David as He is the source of all grace and goodness. Any goodness David possessed came from His God! “David appears to be saying that he has nothing of goodness that he can offer or extend to Jehovah the All-sufficient One.” (Flanigan)
 - c. Illustration: Years ago, in a European kingdom there was a poor widow who had a very sick child. She needed fruit for her child, but it was winter and fruit was costly and she was poor. One day she noticed fruit in the royal greenhouses but it was in accessible as fruit for sale in the stores. It so happened that the princess saw the widow gazing wistfully at the fruit and a few brief questions told her the whole story. In a moment the princess cut a large bunch of grapes and gave them to the widow, who offered a few pennies in payment. But the princess said: “I cannot take your money. My father is a king, and he does not need your coins. You can have these grapes freely or not at all.”
2. His love for the saints (Vs. 3). David's love for the saints is expressed in two ways.
 - a. The saints were blessed by David (Vs. 3a) David knew that he could not contribute any goodness to His God but He did seek to be a channel of blessing to the Lord's people.
 - b. The saints were beloved of David (Vs. 3b). He calls them 'saints'. The word 'saints' means “holy ones” or “separated ones”. As a separated man, David wanted to be with other separated people. He refers to them as 'excellent', meaning 'noble', 'gallant', 'mighty', 'majestic', “high ranking”. David's held godly people in the highest esteem, not the heroes of the world.
3. His loathing of evil (Vs. 4) David now contrasts his attitude towards the wicked. He was separate from them. David wanted no part of the:
 - a. Anguish of the wicked – “Their sorrows shall be multiplied” (Vs. 4a). Applies to both this life and the next.
 - b. Abominations of the wicked – “their drink offerings of blood will I not offer”. (Vs. 4b) “The Gentiles were known to drink the blood of their sacrifices, sometimes indeed the blood of human sacrifices, as in the worship of Molech and Chemosh.” (Flanigan)

II. THE PSALMIST'S PORTION (VS. 5-6)

David now extols the goodness God had shown to him in granting him a wonderful inheritance. Note three truths about this Divine inheritance:

A. The Source of the Inheritance (Vs. 5a)

1. "portion of mine inheritance" = the imagery is likely from the tribal allotments recorded in the Book of Joshua.
2. Not only does our inheritance come from the Lord, the greatest, most precious aspect to our inheritance is the Lord Himself! God is our possession and the source of every blessing in our lives. This is in contrast to the idol worshippers referenced in the previous verse (Vs. 4).
3. The 'cup' "symbolizes one's destiny in the Scriptures. It represents one's portion in life, what one is given to drink as it were. For the wicked it refers to judgment (Ps. 11:6) but for the righteous the cup is a cup of blessing (Ps. 23:5). The believer's lot in life is good as it is the LORD. He is our provision and destiny." (Ross) It also speaks of conscious enjoyment of and participation in something. David was enjoying the Lord! Albert Barnes notes, "The idea here is this: "The cup that I drink - that cheers, refreshes, and sustains me - is the Lord. I find comfort, refreshment, happiness, in him alone; not in the intoxicating bowl; not in sensual joys; but in God - in his being, perfections, friendship."

B. The Sustaining of the Inheritance (Vs. 5b)

1. The Lord not only provides for our inheritance, he preserves and defends it. The word 'maintainest' means "to hold or retain". David was looking to the Lord to maintain his portion.
2. This phrase reminds us of the truth of our security in Christ.

C. The Splendour of the Inheritance (Vs. 6)

The inheritance God had blessed David with was wonderful and indescribable. Look at...

1. The determination of it (Vs. 9a).
 - a. Barnes explains the reference to "the lines" here well. "The word used here refers to the "lines" (cords, measuring lines) employed in measuring and dividing land, (Amos 7:17; 2 Sam. 8:2). Hence, the word comes to denote a portion of land that is "measured out" (or that is "surveyed off") to anyone - his possession or property; and hence, the word refers to the condition in life. The meaning here is, that in running out such a survey, "his" inheritance had been fixed in a pleasant and desirable part of the land."
 - b. The word 'pleasant' means "delightful, sweet". The same Hebrew word is translated 'pleasures' in verse 11.
 - c. "Just as one would go out to survey the allotment of land that was inherited to see how good it was, so the Psalmist is saying that what he has in God, what he has received from God is truly blessed. The more he sees of it the more he is convinced it is the finest possession anyone could have." (Ross)
2. The description of it (Vs. 9b) Because God was the one who determined David's inheritance, he could call it a "goodly heritage". The word 'goodly' here has the idea of "to glisten". What an apt description of the inheritance God has blessed us with. It beautifully describes:
 - a. The blessedness of God's will for us in this life. How wonderful the will of God is which He has marked out for our lives!

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- b. The indescribable glories of our inheritance that await us in heaven.

III. THE PSALMIST'S PRAISE (VS. 7-11)

David now pronounces a blessing upon God – “I will bless the LORD”. The word ‘bless’ comes from the Hebrew word meaning “to kneel”, thus to bless God as an act of adoration. We have so much to thank our God for! Thanksgiving should be the natural heart response of the believer to the goodness of God. David blesses His God for:

A. Instruction (Vs. 7)

God had favoured David with:

1. Counsel from the Scriptures (Vs. 7a)
 - a. Getting good, godly advice is an important part of the Christian life (See Prov. 11:14; 15:22; 24:6).
 - b. However, the most important counsel is the counsel that God Himself has given in the Scriptures. All human counsel should be checked against the Scriptures. No doubt this is what David had in mind.
 - i. Psalm 33:11 “The **counsel of the LORD** standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.”
 - ii. Psalm 73:24 “Thou shalt guide me with thy **counsel**, and afterward receive me *to glory*.”
2. Counsel in the night Seasons (Vs. 7b)
 - a. “The “reins” are here put for the mind, the soul. They were regarded as the seat of the affections, (Jer. 11:20; Job. 19:27). The meaning here is, that in the wakeful hours of night, when meditating on the divine character and goodness, he found instruction in regard to God.” (Barnes)
 - b. The night seasons of life can be some of the most challenging. Those wakeful hours when we tend to fret and worry. Such seasons can be beneficial if like David, we turn our thoughts heavenward and mediate upon God and His Word.

B. Protection (Vs. 8)

1. The secret of his protection (Vs. 8a). David stayed close to the Lord and this was the secret behind his protection. This truth is expressed in two ways:
 - a. “I have set the LORD always before me” = God was the focus and passion of David’s life and this brought tremendous blessing and stability to his life. May God grant us a focused Christian life!
 - b. “because he is at my right hand” = not only did David consciously keep himself in God’s presence, he also had assurance that the Lord was with him and would not forsake him. To have the Lord at one’s right hand is to have security, stability and safety. William Macdonald notes that in Scripture the right hand speaks of:
 - i. Power (Ps. 89:13)
 - ii. Safety (Ps. 20:6)
 - iii. Honor (Ps. 45:9; 110:1)
 - iv. Pleasure (Ps. 16:11)
 - v. Favour (Ps. 80:17)
 - vi. Support (Ps. 18:35)
 - vii. Here (Vs. 8) it speaks of safety and security.

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- c. Note: Both aspects to the presence of God are true. On our end, we need to consciously keep the Lord in focus and enjoy His presence. At the same time, we need to be assured that the Lord is always with us and will not forsake us.
2. The stability of his protection (Vs. 8b)
 - a. David had assurance of safety and stability in God's presence – "I shall not be moved". The word 'moved' has the idea of "to waver, slip or fall". Praise God, He can keep us in a world that is always moving and shifting.
 - b. Jude 1:24 "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,"

C. Resurrection (Vs. 9-10)

1. Anticipation of resurrection (Vs. 9)
 - a. 'Therefore' = on the basis of what he just said. David had assurance not only for the present but also for the future because of his relationship with God.
 - b. "my heart is glad...my glory rejoiceth" = David was full of joy and gladness in the inmost part of his being. The meaning of "my glory" here is "that whatever there was in him that was honourable, dignified, or glorious - all the faculties of his soul, as well as his heart - had occasion to rejoice in God. His whole nature - his undying soul - his exalted powers as he was made by God - all - all, found cause of exultation in the favour and friendship of God. The heart - the understanding - the imagination - the whole immortal soul, found occasion for joy in God."
 - c. "my flesh also shall rest in hope" = even David's body could be at rest because of the hope he had for the future.
2. Assurance of resurrection (Vs. 10). David anticipates his own resurrection, but more importantly, the resurrection of Messiah (refer next point).

D. Direction (Vs. 11)

David makes reference to:

1. The path of life – "Thou wilt shew me the path of life". David was confident that the Lord would direct his steps in his will.
2. The presence of God – "in thy presence is fulness of joy". Knowing God brings true joy and blessing to our lives. We will experience that complete fulness in the future when we are in our glorified state before the throne of God in heaven.
3. The pleasures from God – "at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." We experience manifold blessings in this life as we walk with God but its only a little taste of what is to come. Notice that the blessings of God are eternal – "for evermore".

IV. THE PSALMIST'S PROPHECY (VS. 8-11)

Verse 8-11 of this Psalm are a Messianic prophecy concerning Christ's resurrection (read Acts 2:25-31). We have the voice of Messiah speaking in this Psalm through David concerning His coming resurrection. The prophecy speaks of both the soul and body of Messiah.

A. Messiah's Soul would not be left in Hell (Sheol) (Vs. 10a)

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1. Christ did not suffer in the flames of hell for our sin as some erroneously conclude from this verse. Christ accomplished a full and complete sacrifice for sin on the cross and no further sufferings were needed.
2. The word 'hell' is a translation of the Hebrew word 'sheol' which was a reference to the grave as well as the region of departed spirits. Both believers and non-believers in the Old Testament went to Sheol after death. Believers went to a place of comfort and non-believers went to a place of torment.
3. Luke 16:20-31 rolls back the curtain on Sheol (Hades) and reveals that there were two sections with a great gulf fixed between. On the one side a place of fiery torment, on the other a place of comfort and rest. Christ referred to this section of Hades as "paradise" (Luke 23:43).

B. Messiah's Body would not see Corruption (Vs. 10b)

1. "Holy One" = a title of the Messiah (See Mk. 1:24; Lk. 4:34; Acts. 3:14; compare Lk. 1:35.)
2. "corruption" = Messiah's body would not decay in the tomb. Decay is a result of sin and Christ's body was perfectly free from sin. Acts 2:31 – "...neither his flesh did see corruption."
3. Arno Gaebelin writes, "With this shout of triumph over death and the grave the "Golden Jewel" closes. Like a precious diamond these beautiful words flash forth the Glory of the obedient One, who walked on earth as a Servant and who went into the jaws of death."

Conclusion:

1. Christological lessons – how the Psalm speaks of Christ.
 - Christ lived a life of total dependence upon the Father in His humanity (Vs. 1).
 - Christ delights in His saints. They are the objects of his love and affection (Vs. 2-3).
 - Christ was totally separate from idolatry and sin (Vs. 4).
 - Christ was yielded to the Father's will and knew that on the other side of the cross there would be joy and unspeakable exaltation (Vs. 5-6; Heb. 12:2; Phil. 2:5-11).
 - Christ was guided by His Heavenly Father during His earthly life and ministry. Christ spent many night seasons in communion with His Heavenly Father (Mk. 1:35; 6:46; Lk. 6:12; Lk. 9:28)
 - Christ knew that He would die for the sins of the world, be buried and then rise again from the dead (Vs. 8-10).
 - Christ anticipated His ascension where he would be received into heaven in splendour and glory (Vs. 11).
2. Practical lessons – what we can learn for the Christian life.
 - Believers need to pray for the Lord's ministry of preservation in light of the many spiritual dangers we face (Vs. 1).
 - Believers need to consciously trust in the Lord at all times (Vs. 1).
 - Believers need to have a humble view of self, recognising that all goodness comes from God (Vs. 2). Our own righteousness is no acceptable to God (Is. 64:6).
 - Believers who love the Lord will love the saints (Vs. 3)

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- Believers need to pursue a life of separation from idolatry in both our choices and our conversation (life and lips). We are to love what God loves and hate what God hates. (Vs. 4)
- Believers can be filled with thanksgiving and praise for the godly heritage they have been given by God (Vs. 5-6).
- Believers need to seek counsel from the Lord in the Word of God and grow in the practice of meditation upon God's Word (Vs. 7).
- Believers need to make the Lord their focus and passion. A double minded Christian is unstable but a single-minded Christian knows stability (Vs. 8)
- Believers can rest in the truth and reliability of Christ's resurrection. Christ's resurrection was prophesied and Christ's resurrection as fulfilled! (Vs. 9-11).