

Psalm 16

Written by K B Napier

Thursday, 13 January 2011 17:08

All Christians say they trust God. Why, then, do most of them run around in a frenzy when anything happens they consider to be bad or troublesome?

What do you think God does when we are in trouble? Sit back and just watch? No, He observes to see how we react, because most of us only react. What He wants to see is an holy *response*. This should be based not on knee-jerk reactions but on considered, measured beliefs and emotions. If, when we feel threatened, or anxious, or afraid, we run amok, or scream, or act like demented flies, then we are not acting like saved men and women!

We might be surprised by a sudden onset of trouble or perceived trouble, but that should quickly settle, so that we do not become vile in how we respond. Then comes what we ought to expect from a Christian – calm, rational thinking, unruffled emotions and respect for others. When this is our normal outlook and response, we are acting as Christians, not like unsaved fools.

When God sees this proper response He steps in and couches us in His mighty hand. He gives whatever is needed in our circumstance. His hand is always there, but we reject it by running around foolishly, letting our minds go into heated overdrive, trying to think of ways to avoid the trouble (most of which, incidentally, are perceived rather than actual; in the future and not a present reality).

As our Father, He wants to give us the best, but when we do not respond properly He is prevented from offering help by our sin. He is prevented NOT by any act of ours, but by His own law: He cannot help us when we sin.

So, if you are saved you will ground your feelings, actions and mind on God and not on self. You will live in a godly way despite troubles, real or imaginary. You will always present a picture of calm, decency and order, no matter what happens. And when you live like that, God will instantly be there to help you. Do not expect it otherwise, for God will not go against His own commands.

As David says, when God is always before you, you will be strong and full of godly intent. Those who continually reject this model of action are suspect as Christians, for Christians who know

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the truth must act it out. Refusal to do so suggests an unsaved soul pretending to be saved, or a saved soul being sinful!

Verse 1

1.

Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.

This Psalm is a “Michtam of David”; that is, a poem written by him, with the added meaning of being a very bold statement or conjecture.

David asks God to preserve him, because he trusts Him to do so. David addresses God as ‘el, which specifically infers the strength and power of an hero; the root, ‘ayil, reinforces this meaning. Thus, David is calling upon the absolute power of Almighty God to help him. In this David is expressing his trust or faith.

Not only is David asking for God’s power but he is also declaring his hope in God’s role as protector and refuge from enemies and troubles. David has complete trust in God’s ability and willingness to preserve him. Preserve, shamar, means to guard and keep watch over him. How many Christians understand that they need not continually plead with God to look after them, for He does so anyway – He is our Father, our protector (even when we fail Him on occasions)? This is the beauty of our relationship with the Lord: He guards us even from our own stupidity, as we bumble along, often unaware that we are not acting responsibly.

Verses 2&3

1.

O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee;

2.

But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.

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Verse 2 is very awkward in the English translation. In essence David is admitting that he is of no worth to God (his soul tells him so), so why should God give him any help at all! He also admits that whilst he helps his fellow men on earth, he sometimes does not extend praise to God as he should. Matthew Henry, I note, puts it differently, but I am sure my interpretation is correct.

The first use of 'LORD' is Jehovah. The second use, four words later, is Adonay. Thus, David addresses God very formally as 'the existing One', absolute Lord, before he speaks to Him as his personal Lord (Adonay). Both titles are marks of deep reverence, implying godly obedience.

It would appear (as I said, the statement is very difficult to decipher), then, that David is complaining against himself, that whilst his faith in God is strong, he does not praise Him enough (we can all say that), yet David offers help and goodness to the "saints that are in the earth".

Again, this is not so easy to interpret, but it appears to be saying that he comes to the side of the saints, the qadowsh. These are people set-apart or consecrated, so he is probably referring to the Hebrew nation, when they are free from defilement (which they often were not!). This is a reference to the whole of the nation, not to individuals within it. Otherwise, God could never "walk in the midst of thy camp", if there was not 100% obedience from all Hebrews. Yes, He expects it, but in His mercy He allows the Hebrews to live, though only a few were faithful, because of His promises to the nation as a whole.

We find this mercy in our modern lives, where God overlooks* our many sins because of His promise to look after us. It is a promise made to Jesus Christ as Saviour, so God will keep it. There are times when He must discipline us by visiting us with punishment or by allowing our sins to get the better of us, so we will experience the ill effects, driving us closer to Himself. (*Temporarily)

This care and concern for the chosen people includes those who are 'addiyr (the excellent), or great, whether nobles or servants, because they are worthy in God's eyes. The emphasis, then, is on those who are 'noble' or excellent in all their ways, no matter who they are. In these, says David, he has "delight", chephets – pleasure, a longing to accept them. David does not help

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people who are not like this.

Do we have this kind of respect and delight in fellow believers? Even if, at times, they do not meet out our own exacting standards (which are usually set too high because we forget our own failings! We are very fortunate that Jesus Christ does not apply similarly stringent rules to His people). No matter what wrongs our fellows commit, God allows them the privilege of repentance in order to get back to their holy position in Him. Whilst we give ourselves great latitude in sin, we tend to narrow the latitude we give to others, such is our pride and sin! It should be God Who judges, not us.

In everyday terms, we must love the brethren for their salvation and acceptance in the Lord, but we must also, at the same time, counsel against evil and judge what is sinful. We must thus judge because God says we must, but we must always judge as those saved by grace, so that our judgment is not personal but delivered on behalf of God, allowing for repentance and never pretending we are better.

Verses 4&5

1.

Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.

2.

The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.

David recognises that even the chosen can commit sin, so he says that they will know trouble if they go after other, false, gods. Indeed, "Their sorrows will be multiplied". Do not think that you can sin, and sin again, without repercussions from the Lord! He will visit you with wrath, and you will reap far more than you sow.

Charismatics and others who go after false gods are already condemned by God. Though many of us are prone to ignorance at times, it can never be used as an excuse for long. As believers we MUST examine ourselves and what we follow after, to see if everything is acceptable to

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God. If we do not, God will act against us.

This is why David says that no matter how pagan the situation, he would never follow the ways of the godless, whether they were believers or not (yes, believers can act in godless ways). He would never drink the blood offerings or offer them to God or false gods, for God had condemned the drinking or eating of blood (which applies today to those awful 'rare' meats eaten at meals! We may not eat meats that have not been thoroughly cooked, regardless of taste).

Nor would David bother to speak the names of the false gods or those who follow them. How many Christians allow friendships or even close relationships with family, to dupe them into allowing sin to continue? I know of many. There is no excuse. We must identify and condemn all sin, even in a brother or father.

The reason is simple – God is the ONLY God and only He must be worshipped, obeyed and given praise. By allowing sin to continue or to remain silent when believers follow after falsity, we praise what is being followed. We become as guilty as they are. We must say with David: "The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot."

God gives you peace, forgives you, and promises you a place in Heaven, so *why* do you want to follow after sin, or allow it to occur without judgment? It is God Who keeps us in this life, so why spoil it with error? Many believers have walked down the road of perdition, so slowly as to go unnoticed, until they finally keep out of God's way altogether. I have seen it, and continue to see it. Their lives will never again be at peace, as they go after their daily work and try to forget God. But, God never forgets

them

! To those I say with passion – REPENT. NOW.

With some their sin slips out, because they cannot always hide it. How often I hear sinful believers utter the odd swear word, or similar sinful thing! Or, they cannot hide their backslidden state and speak in derogatory terms, etc. Another indication is their refusal to meet with fellow believers, or to attend meetings, or even to speak naturally of God. As the maxim puts it: "The truth will out".

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But – who do they think they are fooling? Even if family or friends do not realise they are slipped far down into a pit, God is fully aware and knows. He watches them as they struggle to live without Him, probably experiencing troubles in their marriages, or with children, or at work, because they no longer trust their only protector, God.

Verses 6-9

1.

The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.

2.

I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.

3.

I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

4.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.

David recalls that “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places”. There can be a number of interpretations for ‘lines’, chebel, but in this text it means the portion allotted to David by God. These lines can be for ill or for good. David says they are for his good. It is God’s intention to give us what is good. When we ask for bread He does not give us a stone! But, we must obey and live holy lives, or these blessings will not come. When we repent and live holy lives our “lines (fall) into pleasant places” – we will know many blessings and a good life. We will, like David, “have a goodly heritage”!

Thus, we must “bless the LORD” for guiding us onto the right path. Do not kick against this. Do not go after what worldly men enjoy, for their end is hell, and their lives are filled with tragedy, failure and sadness. But, like so many habits and continual sins, we can learn to adopt them as our own, though they harm us and remove our peace with God. Never allow this to happen – nip all sins in the bud, before their roots drive into our souls.

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We cannot claim we did not know, for God “hath given me counsel”, night and day. The Holy Spirit does not sit back and allow us to enter into sin without counsel. He prompts us always, showing us by conscience what to do, or not to do. If we never experience this then we are either unsaved, or we are far gone down the road of evil, and God has given us over to our sin, which is a fearful thing.

The genuine Christian will “set the LORD always before me”. God will be in our minds and hearts every moment of the day and night. When this happens there is no place at all for Satan and his temptations to sin. Always, we must subject everything we come across, or see, or think, or hear, to God’s laws. If they do not comply, they must be cast aside. In this way we live holy lives. And the more we do it, with knowledge of scripture, the less likely we are to fall into sin. This is why reading God’s word must be a top priority, together with meditation on that word, and prayer.

God will then be “at my right hand”, closer than a brother, and we will never be moved towards sin or give in to evil pressure. For this reason David says his “heart is glad”. How can we possibly fail when God our LORD is always with us, at our side, and guiding us away from evil, towards the Light? Our “glory rejoiceth”. Our ‘glory’ is our kabowd – riches, honour, reputation, reverence. That is, we receive blessings from God, which rebound back onto God, and our earthly bodies will have everything to hope for. We WILL know blessings if we live holy lives. Why live any other way?

Verses 10&11

1.

For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

2.

Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

We are able to rejoice, because God “wilt not leave my soul in hell”. This is a double reference to Christ, though it initially speaks of David. David says that because he belongs to God, and he

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lives obediently, God will not allow his spirit to remain in she'owl. We should understand this part in the Hebrew sense.

Hebrews believed that sheol, or the underworld of death, had a special section just for true believers, who waited there before entering Heaven. The rest of sheol was dark, miserable and without hope. So, David says God will not let his dead body stay in the darkness of death, nor would he allow him to "see corruption" – just let his body rot away to nothing.

The reference to the "Holy One" is definitely to Christ, because there are references to this in the New Testament. But, it was meant to refer to David at the time David wrote it, for chaciyd applies to faithful, pious believers; it is an adjective not a noun. Therefore, the capitals were added by translators. It is only a 'type' of Christ because we see the same allusion in the New Testament.... Christ is the Holy One Whose body never succumbed to the natural processes of death, but remained perfect, finally arising as new and refreshed.

Furthermore, says David, speaking directly to God: "Thou wilt show me the path of life". If you do not know this path, then you are unsaved. If you are saved and still are not aware of this path, then you sin and your holy senses are dulled. The "path of life" is the way we live that is full of spiritual power and life.

This "life" is fresh, vibrant and active. It has reference to green and spring. Is your life like this? It does not matter if you are young or old, full of health or riddled with illness... you must know this freshness and vibrancy of spiritual life if you are truly saved! It is what gives you hope and longing for truth; it is what drives you onwards in times of trouble and despair; it is what shows you that your spirit is saved and alive!

Such a term can never apply to the unsaved, who God regards as the 'walking dead', without hope and without the promise of Heaven; their souls being lifeless and their lives filled with nothing.

Only in God's presence (and we who are saved are already in His presence, even before we go to Heaven) do we know "fullness of joy". Our "cup runneth over" with the abundance of His blessings. I know many will read this and mutter "What blessings? What joy!" If that is your honest reaction, then it means you have not handed over your whole life to God. It means you

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are living sinfully, not obeying God's commands.

That is the ONLY reason why you do not know blessings in your life. And remember this – do not plead with God to remove your sins or to stop you enjoying this or that error. He will not do it. It is up to YOU to remove these things. If you cannot do it, it is because you prefer sin to holiness! Repent and then God will come to you in all His glory and love.

And what stops you? If you are saved, surely you want “pleasures for evermore” at His right hand? What fool does not want these pleasures and blessings? The fool who is saved but living sinfully, not complying with God's demands! Be assured that if you belong to God, He demands your soul's total obedience; only then will He pour His blessings upon your life in abundance, time and again. Check your position to see if you truly obey and truly hand everything over to Him.

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