

### PRELUDE

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I especially enjoy reading the Psalms and praying over it together with other men. And no prize for guessing that my favorite Psalm is Psalm 16. 20 years ago, as I stepped out in full-time ministry, Psalm 16:5-6 was the Lord's promise to us. It had been true all these years. Recently I picked up an old practice that I have not done for a while. I was in between appointments and had an hour to myself. I sat in the car and pored over the cross references in the Bible on Psalm 16 and had a very enjoyable hour doing that. This is listed at the end of the article, though it is easily available in most Bibles.

Jeremiah 15:16(NASB) says, *'Your words were found and I ate them and they were to me the joy and delight of my heart'*. That aptly describes the thrill of the Word of God being enjoyed richly.

When the two disciples met up with Jesus on the road to Emmaus, they reflected on it and said, *"Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"* (Luke 24:32). That is my prayer for all of us

### PSALM XVI - THE LORD IS MY SECURITY & MY SATISFACTION

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There are only 11 verses in this Psalm but the opening and closing verses bring out the two major themes - security and satisfaction in the Lord. In v.1 David started off with "Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge" and ended off in v.11 with *"You have made known to me the path of life, you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand"*.

He started off crying out for refuge, seeking safety in the Lord. The rest of the Psalm develops how this happens and ends off not with him merely finding his desired security in trusting God but also a deep seated joy and satisfaction in trusting God. We can break this down in three simple outlines:

#### ONLY GOD AND NO OTHER vv 1-4

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The first verse is an honest admission to the Lord, a diagnostic revelation.

The second is the prescriptive therapy that leads eventually to the conclusion at the end of the psalm. V.2 usually sparks off the heart responses of those who look at this psalm *'I said to the LORD, "You are my Lord, apart from you I have no good thing"*. Contrast this with the rich young ruler in Matthew 19, *'what good thing must I do to get eternal life?'* When Jesus knowingly pointed to the commandments without mentioning to him, *'Thou shall not covet'*, he naively replied that he had kept them and asked, *'what do I still lack?'* Upon which Jesus challenged him to go and sell his possessions, give it to the poor and follow Him. The rich young man went away sorrowful because he could not part with his wealth.

David declared upfront, *'apart from you, I have no good thing'*. We can also be reminded in John 15:5 when Jesus said, *'Apart from me, you can do nothing'*. We too need to recognize that that is where we truly are. We cannot do anything good in the eyes of God. Only God can and there is no other way.

In vv.3 & 4, David pointed to the examples of those who follow after other gods and the fact that they will suffer much sorrows. He does not wish to be associated with any who does so. In fact, v.3 offers an alternate reading which is found in some Bibles. *'As for the pagan priest who are in the land and the nobles in whom all delight I said'*. I prefer this over the normal reading *'as for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight'*. It lends to a better support to the conclusion in v.4.

Still in the first part of Psalm 16 from vv.1-4, we can see the emphasis on David's assertion that it is only God and no other gods for him. He found refuge, security in God and no one else. Only God can meet his needs, the good that only God can do. There is no other substitute that can do that.

On our regular Tuesday early mornings at the SMU canteen, next to the entrance of the Botanical Gardens, we have a gathering of men. Dr Tung and I would be there. Sometimes it would be us alone, usually at least one other, sometimes as many as four others. These men are patients of Dr Tung who runs a urology clinic. They come seeking for refuge. Medically they have been taken care of – the best possible. But for them, deteriorating health has woken up their inner spiritual needs, the need for respite from anxiety, for peace that only God could give. Often they would say, 'I woke up to see the need for God'. We would pray for them, read Scriptures to them, answer their questions about trusting Jesus. Quite a few have made peace with God. They are finding out what we have found out too: ONLY GOD AND NO OTHER

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### *ONLY GOD'S CHOICEST PORTION vv 5-6*

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In vv.5-6, David is ecstatic. He is almost jumping up and down. Having laid down his final answer to life, he is reveling in God's goodness to him. *'LORD, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance'*.

The inheritance that we receive from the Lord is a good one. The boundary lines have fallen in pleasant places. One day you decided to go and check out the estate you have inherited: lush vegetation, good soil, leeward side of a slope, good site for rain. Within the confines of the boundary of your estate there is even a natural hill spring, source of abundant water. It is a good inheritance indeed.

Our inheritance in the Lord allows us to love richly and deeply. It permits us to let go. Not afraid to serve others and seek their best. Our service is to the Lord. Blessings flow from our lives.

These truths for a believer are powerful secrets to a contented life, a satisfied life, a grateful life brimming over with thanksgiving. Are these only for David, are they meant for others too? Did not John 3:16 demonstrate God's love for us? In Jeremiah 31:3, God declares *'I have loved you with an everlasting love, I have drawn you with loving kindness to myself.'* In the book of First John, we, the church for which Christ died for, are constantly reminded of the love God has for us. He wants to give us the choicest portions. Like the Levites, when the people made sacrifices to God at the Temple, they received the best portions. We are all priests (1 Peter 2:9). God intends to overwhelm us with His love with the choicest portions and the secured lots of inheritance with boundaries of your allotted estate that have fallen in pleasant places.

Each one of us is unique with differing gifts, capacities and talents. When blended together as a love offering to the Lord in our service to Him, it is a beautiful gift indeed. Recently at a church prayer meeting, I heard of the tuition ministry reaching out to the children in the nearby community by a faithful few. It was heartwarming to hear what God is doing. I felt that I was standing on holy ground as we hear stories of transformation of lives being reached and touched. I am also grateful for the recent evangelistic dinner that pulled in 16 tables with half of them guests. Two men made decisions to follow Christ. Two other men shared of conversions and transformation of their friends and loved ones who responded to Christ through persevering prayers. Different ones with differing gifts, some with the gift of helps like in the tuition ministry, some with the gift of leadership in organizing outreach activities but all with the availability of prayer to the Lord to change lives.

There is no room for complaints to the Lord. He has gifted us personally as individuals and corporately as a church with marvelous portions of the best kind. We are to be glad for who we are. He made us with our uniqueness and He is working in us still.. He is not finished with us yet. He desires that we reflect His glory and His workmanship. Included in that is the cup of suffering – His perfecting of our lives and shaping of our characters. Storms are permitted into our lives to test the foundation of our works. The psalmist is not through yet.

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### *ONLY GOD'S CLOSEST PRESENCE vv 7-11*

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In this final portion, in vv.7-11, David goes to the core of our fears. What is our worst fear? On Vesak Day, I read an article in the Straits Times of a veteran reporter who went for a medical check-up. I gathered that he was a health freak - exercise, eat wisely, etc but he was also approaching middle age. The results of that check-up shook him up. 'Abnormal readings.' It shattered his peaceful normal life. Suddenly life took on a different perspective. The grim reaper seemed to be at the door. Death did not seem too far away. His family was concerned. Happily the article ended on a cheerful note. It was a false alarm. Next reading - OK.

David in v.10 asserted that *'you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay'*. This is a direct reference to Christ in a Messianic prophecy. But when David saw his greatest fear in the background, God's presence was closest to him. He reflected his security in God in vv.7-9 *'the Lord who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body will also rest secure'*. We can only overcome our greatest fear when we can claim God's closest presence. Is He at your right hand? Does He instruct your heart, even at night with counsel? My thoughts on the night instructions came as I prayed this with others over this psalm. Our minds are flooded with activities and thoughts in the day. When we lay down to rest, God is able to speak to us when we are not preoccupied with other things. Coupled with having the word of God in our lives, whether through our devotions, our quiet times, when our hearts are touched by a message or a reading, the Holy Spirit will use that to meet us at our point of need.

Billy Graham's father-in-law made this statement, *'you are not prepared to live until you are prepared to die'*. This quote is taken from a book *'The Road Less Traveled'* by Dr Robert Jeffress, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Wichita Falls, Texas. A chapter from that book, *'Seeing God In Your Death'* has this specific quote. In it, he also shared this example - he asked his church during a service to say together, 'I'M GOING TO DIE'. This is a statement of fact and we ought to recognize it. It is a topic that we should not ignore. God told Hezekiah through Isaiah in 2 Kings 20:1, *'Put your house in order, for you are going to die'*. That got hold of Hezekiah's attention. I am sure it will get our attention too. What if today's sermon had a warning tag from God to you. Would you heed it? How would you heed it? Would you seek to cultivate 'God's presence in your life, walking with Him daily? A firm example is that of Enoch in Genesis 5:24. He was walking with God and it was recorded, *'He was no more because God took him away'*. The Sunday School version of it went like this, *'One day, God took Enoch for a long walk. Finally they looked up and God said, "It is so near heaven, let's not go back home"'*. And God took Enoch to heaven with Him'.

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## CONCLUSION

Remember we started off with a cry from David for safety, seeking security in the Lord? We saw how David began to focus on the Lord, asserting that *'apart from you, I have no good thing'*. He refused to associate with those who go after false gods, no other substitutes in his life. For him, it is GOD AND NO OTHER.

He reflected and recognized all that God had done for him. He acknowledged all that God had given him – GOD'S CHOICEST PORTIONS. Including the cup that was assigned him. He accepted all of his life portions as God's best choice for him.

Finally in facing his worst fear, he recognized GOD'S CLOSEST PRESENCE in his life. He could face death knowing that God's presence was so close. He affirmed in his last verse, *'You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand'*.

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## How can we apply Psalm 16 to our lives?

1. Read Psalm 16. Meditate on it. Pore over the cross references given to you. Review the headings:
  - a. Only God and no other;
  - b. God's choicest portion;
  - c. God's closest presence.Pray over it.
2. Reflect on where you are. Give thanks for God's choicest portion in your life. How can we live it out and bless others as well?
3. Recognize the realities of death. *'Put your house in order'*. Do you need to give attention to this? Ask for a copy of *'Seeing God In Your Death'* from me. A good extract from *'The Road Less Traveled'*. Good material for practical action.

### *Cross References for Psalm 16*

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- v.1 Keep me safe Psalm 12:7  
Take refuge Psalm 2:12
- v.2 My Lord Psalm 31:14; Psalm 118:28; Psalm 140:6  
Apart from you I have no good thing Psalm 73:25
- v.3 As for the saints Deuteronomy 33:3; Psalm 30:4; Psalm 85:8; Daniel 7:18; Acts 9:13; Romans 1:7  
Who are in the land Psalm 101:6
- v.4 The sorrows Psalm 32:10; Proverbs 23:29  
Who run after other gods Exodus 18:11; Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 8:19; Psalm 31:20  
Take up their names Exodus 23:13
- v.5 My Portion Lamentations 2:2  
My cup Psalm 23:5; Psalm 75:8; Psalm 116:13; Isaiah 51:17; Lamentations 4:21; Ezekiel 23:32-34;  
Hebrews 2:16  
My lot Job 31:2
- v.6 Boundary lines Deuteronomy 19:14; Palm 104:9; Proverbs. 8:29; Jeremiah 5:22  
Inheritance Job 22:26
- v.7 Counsels me Psalm 73:24; Proverbs 15:22; Isaiah 11:2  
At night Job 35:10; Psalm 42:8; Psalm 77:6
- v.8 At my right hand 1 Kings 2:19; I Chronicles 6:39; Psalm 73:23  
Not be shaken Psalm 15:5
- v.9 My heart is glad Psalm 4:7; Psalm 13:5; Psalm 28:7; Psalm 30:11  
Body will also rest secure Deuteronomy 33:28
- v.10 The grave Numbers 16:30; Psalm 30:3; Psalm 31:17; Psalm 86:13; Hosea 13:14  
Holy One 2 Kings 19:22  
See decay Job 17:14
- v.11 The path of life Psalm 139:24; Matthew 7:14  
Joy in Your Presence Acts 2:25-28  
Eternal Pleasures Psalm 21:6  
At your right hand Psalm 80: 17