

Psalms 16:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust. This opening cry establishes the psalm's foundation—urgent prayer for divine preservation grounded in trust. Psalm 16 is profoundly Messianic, quoted in Acts 2:25-31 as prophesying Christ's resurrection, yet it begins with simple, desperate dependence on God.

"Preserve me" (שְׁמֹרֵנִי/shomreni) means guard, keep, protect, watch over. The Hebrew shamar appears throughout Scripture describing God's protective care. Genesis 28:15 records God's promise to Jacob: "I am with thee, and will keep thee [shamar] in all places." Numbers 6:24 blesses: "The LORD bless thee, and keep thee [shamar]." The imperative form indicates urgent plea—not casual request but desperate cry for God's protection.

"O God" (אֱלֹהִים/El) uses the shorter divine name emphasizing God's might and power. While Yahweh stresses covenant relationship, El emphasizes strength and ability. The psalmist appeals to God's power to protect.

"For in thee do I put my trust" (בְּךָ-חָסַתִּי/vakh) provides the grounds for the request. Chasiti (I have taken refuge) pictures running to God as shelter from danger. The perfect tense indicates completed action with ongoing results: "I have taken refuge and continue to find refuge." This isn't future intention but present reality—the psalmist has already committed himself to God's protection and bases his appeal on that relationship.

The psalm's dual reference—David's experience and Messianic prophecy—

illustrates how Scripture layers meaning. David genuinely prayed for preservation during persecution. Yet his words found ultimate fulfillment in Christ, who trusted the Father completely through death to resurrection. Acts 2:27-28 quotes verses 10-11 as prophesying Christ's resurrection: God would not abandon His soul to Sheol nor allow His Holy One to see corruption.

The structure moves from cry for preservation (v.1) to declaration of loyalty (v.2), acknowledgment of God's people (v.3), rejection of false gods (v.4), confidence in God's sufficiency (v.5-6), determination to bless the Lord (v.7), resolve to set the Lord always before him (v.8), resulting in gladness, security, and confidence that God will not abandon him to death but will show him life's path (v.9-11).

Historical Context

Psalm 16 is titled "Michtam of David." Michtam is uncertain—possibly meaning "golden psalm," "inscription," "atonement," or "secret treasure." Five other psalms bear this title (56-60), all expressing trust amid danger.

David's life provides rich context for this psalm. As fugitive fleeing Saul, living in caves and wilderness, depending completely on God for protection while abandoned by nation and family, David learned desperate trust. His cry "preserve me" wasn't theoretical theology but survival prayer. Yet even in extremity, David maintained faith that God would not abandon him to death but would show him life's path.

Early church fathers recognized this psalm's Messianic nature. Justin Martyr (c.150 CE) cited it as prophesying Christ's resurrection. Irenaeus (c.180) used it to demonstrate Jesus's real death and physical resurrection. Church tradition saw Psalm 16 as Christ's psalm par excellence—His prayer in Gethsemane ("preserve me"), His trust during crucifixion ("in thee do I put my trust"), His confidence in resurrection ("thou wilt not leave my soul in hell").

Peter's Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:25-31) explicitly interprets Psalm 16:8-11 as Messianic prophecy. Peter argues: David died and his tomb remains (Acts 2:29), therefore these words couldn't refer ultimately to David but to Christ whom God

raised from the dead. Paul similarly cites verse 10 in his Antioch sermon (Acts 13:35-37), contrasting David who saw corruption with Jesus who didn't.

This dual application—historical David yet prophetically Christ—illustrates typology, where Old Testament figures/events foreshadow greater New Testament realities. David's experiences pointed toward greater David (Messiah). David's preservation from death was temporal; Christ's was eternal. David's trust in God's protective presence found ultimate expression in Christ's trust through death to resurrection.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to 'put your trust' in God, and how does this differ from merely believing He exists?
2. How does understanding this psalm as both David's prayer and Christ's prophecy deepen its meaning?
3. What circumstances in your life prompt the desperate cry 'preserve me, O God'?
4. How did Jesus perfectly fulfill the trust described in this psalm during His passion and resurrection?
5. In what ways does Christ's resurrection provide basis for believers' confidence in divine preservation?

Interlinear Text

בָּרוּךְ יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ לִשְׁמָרֵנוּ בָּרוּךְ
Preserve me O God for in thee do I put my trust H3588 H2620 H0

H8104

H410

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 56:1 (References God): Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresseth me.

Psalms 17:8 (Parallel theme): Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings,

Psalms 116:6 (Parallel theme): The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me.

Psalms 84:12 (Faith): O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

Psalms 31:23 (Faith): O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.

Psalms 9:10 (Faith): And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

Psalms 146:5 (References God): Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God:

Proverbs 2:8 (Parallel theme): He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.

2 Timothy 1:12 (Faith): For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

Psalms 25:20 (Faith): O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee.