

Psalms 16:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. This verse reveals the secret of spiritual stability—continual God-consciousness resulting in unshakable security. It forms the hinge between trust declared (v.1-7) and confidence expressed (v.9-11).

"I have set" (שִׁיַּוְתִי/shivviti) uses a verb meaning to place, set, put. The intensive stem (Piel) indicates deliberate, purposeful action. The perfect tense indicates completed action with ongoing results: "I have set and continue to keep set." This isn't passive drift but active, intentional positioning of one's attention and focus.

"The LORD always before me" (יְהוָה לְנִגְדִי תָמִיד/Yahweh lenegdi tamid) describes continuous God-consciousness. Lenegdi means before me, in front of me, in my sight. Tamid means continually, constantly, perpetually. The psalmist maintains constant awareness of God's presence—not merely during prayer or worship but throughout all activities and circumstances.

This practice—"setting the LORD always before me"—became central to Jewish mysticism. The Hebrew phrase "Shiviti Adonai l'negdi tamid" is often displayed in synagogues and homes as constant reminder. The practice acknowledges that while God is omnipresent objectively, we must consciously position our attention to remain aware of His presence.

"Because he is at my right hand" (כִּי מִיְמִינִי/ki mimini) provides rationale. The right

hand symbolized strength, power, protection, and honor. In battle, a warrior wanted protection on his right (shield) side. In ancient courts, standing at the king's right hand indicated highest honor and proximity to power. God at the psalmist's right hand means divine presence, protection, and empowerment for whatever he faces.

"I shall not be moved" (וַיִּמָּוֶז/bal-emot) declares the result. Bal is strong negative: "never, not at all." Emot means to totter, slip, fall, be shaken, lose position. Constant God-consciousness produces unshakable stability—not because circumstances don't threaten but because God's presence makes the difference. This echoes Psalm 15:5's conclusion ("shall never be moved") and anticipates Psalm 62:6 ("he only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved").

Acts 2:25 quotes this verse in Peter's Pentecost sermon as Messianic prophecy. Jesus perfectly embodied continuous Father-consciousness, never moving independently of divine will. Through crucifixion's horror, He remained unshaken because the Father was at His right hand—even when feeling forsaken, He trusted ("into thy hands I commend my spirit").

Historical Context

Psalm 16:8-11 forms the core of Peter's Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:25-28), where he quotes the Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) translation. Peter argues these verses couldn't refer ultimately to David (whose body decayed) but prophesy the Messiah's resurrection. The psalm's first-person voice, spoken by David historically, finds ultimate fulfillment in Christ.

Jewish tradition treasured this verse as spiritual discipline. The shiviti plaques displaying "I have set the LORD always before me" decorated synagogues, reminding worshipers of perpetual God-consciousness. Hasidic spirituality especially emphasized this practice as foundation for prayer and holy living. Rabbi Moshe Cordovero (16th century) taught that constant awareness of divine presence transforms all activities into worship.

Ancient Near Eastern monarchs claimed divine presence and protection. Kings depicted deities standing behind their thrones or at their right hand, symbolizing divine authorization and support. However, pagan gods were capricious and distant. In contrast, Yahweh promises real presence with those who seek Him: "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee" (1 Chronicles 28:9).

The practice of God's presence became central to Christian mysticism. Brother Lawrence's *The Practice of the Presence of God* (17th century) described maintaining continual awareness of God during menial kitchen tasks. Frank Laubach (20th century missionary) experimented with moment-by-moment God-consciousness, documenting the practice's transformative power. These modern practitioners built on this ancient psalm's wisdom.

Theologically, this verse addresses the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility. God is objectively present everywhere (omnipresent), yet we must subjectively "set Him before us" through intentional attention. God's objective presence doesn't automatically produce subjective stability; we must actively cultivate awareness of His presence.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What does it mean practically to 'set the LORD always before you,' and how can you cultivate this continual God-consciousness?
2. How does having God 'at your right hand' provide stability that circumstances alone cannot shake?
3. What obstacles prevent maintaining constant awareness of God's presence, and how can you address them?
4. How did Jesus perfectly exemplify continuous Father-consciousness, even through crucifixion?

5. In what ways does modern distraction culture work against 'setting the LORD always before me,' and how can you counteract this?

Interlinear Text

שׁוּ יָתִי	יְהוָה ה	לְנֶגְדִי	תָּמָּ יָד	כִּי
I have set	the LORD	H5048	always	H3588
H7737	H3068		H8548	
מִיָּמִינִי		בְּיָד	אֶמּוּט:	
before me because he is at my right hand		H1077	I shall not be moved	
H3225			H4131	

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 121:5 (References Lord): The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.

Psalms 62:6 (Parallel theme): He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved.

Psalms 73:23 (Parallel theme): Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand.

Psalms 73:26 (Parallel theme): My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

Psalms 110:5 (References Lord): The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.

Psalms 109:31 (Parallel theme): For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul.

Hebrews 11:27 (Parallel theme): By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

Psalms 15:5 (Parallel theme): He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

Psalms 139:18 (Parallel theme): If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.

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