

Challenge

THE GOOD NEWS PAPER

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PRAYER LETTER OF CHALLENGE LITERATURE FELLOWSHIP (AUST.) INC.

Psalm 16 – Making Our Life Count

This is a Psalm of David and one of those important teaching Psalms about how we might experience the Lord in our daily walk both in terms of His care and protection as well as His effectiveness in service. So we see in the opening verse of Psalm 16 that David's prayer in verse 1 encompasses a number of key things.

First of all we see God's protection. Again and again as I travel and move around this globe and country I have become more and more aware of how God watches over us. Just recently my wife and I had the unpleasant experience of a break-in into our home at about 4am in the morning. Whilst initially one is upset and disappointed that such a thing should happen we were nonetheless grateful for the Lord's care and protection. As we thought back on the occasion there were many things that could have happened which didn't, and in the scheme of things we were very grateful to the Lord that He granted us His protection and care in this difficult situation.

Secondly we not only see God's protection but we see God's providence in it all. As we put our trust in the Lord then what we do is trust Him to guide and lead us in what is His perfect will and purpose. We are leaving ourselves open to God's providential working because we believe He reigns sovereign over all things. It is interesting that as we look to the Lord and trust in Him then it takes all of the anxiety out of life well and truly. I remember only a matter of days after we had the break-in I found myself having difficulty in sleeping, and as I was laying there one night and thinking about the situation and keeping an ear to the ground, it came to me that I needed to recognise we are in God's hands and we need to trust Him despite what may happen to us, and commit ourselves to His care and protection moment by moment.

We not only see David's prayer but David's testimony in verses 2-11. This is broken up into a number of things that are important in terms of how we walk with God.

First we see our communion with God. Now there is a divine dimension to this communion in the fact that verse 2 says "Oh my soul, you have said to the Lord, You are my Lord." This speaks to us of a personal faith and submission to God, as we go on to see there later in the second half of verse 2. Paul uses this Psalm in Romans 3 where he states my goodness is nothing apart from you. Of course Paul gave greater expansion to the thought in Romans 3 when he declared our total depravity, as the theologians call it, in that in us dwells no good thing whatsoever. We need to recognise there is nothing acceptable in the life of the flesh that God can use and that is why we celebrate the Cross. The Cross is all about doing away with ourselves so that He might come and indwell and empower us to honour Him and glorify Him through service.

We see the human dimension then in verse 3-4. We see that the saints are described as the excellent ones and that God delights in His saints because the word "saint" means to set apart. Somehow or other we have lost sight of this fact, that we as the Lord's people are set apart not only as the church and as individual Christians, but we are set apart for a particular work which involves a personal holiness if you will, where we are walking in unison with the Lord indwelt with Him and empowered by Him. Notice also there in verse 4 in this human dimension that God detests the worship of other gods and idols. We live in a world that is beset with syncretism. I remember on one occasion preaching in South Africa in a large prison and after finishing my message I spoke with a young man who declared he was a Christian but that his grandparents had taught him how to worship his ancestors. Of course I was very quick to point out to him that Jesus was very exclusive about the means of salvation but wonderfully inclusive of who could experience salvation.

Then we can see that we not only have communion with God but we can also have confidence in God in verses 5-11. I love the way David talks about the fact that we can have present confidence on the basis of past confidence. This is a constant recurring theme in the book of Psalms because we know that God has been faithful in the past we can have confidence He will be faithful in the future. The encouraging thing for me has been to see how God over the years has been incredibly faithful to the work of Challenge, not only in providing the right team but also prayer warriors and praying churches from around the world to back and support the work. Notice also that in verses 5-6 that the Lord is our inheritance. The Lord says there in verse 5 "O Lord you are the portion of my inheritance and my cup." This sort of terminology is a nice way of expressing the fact that God blesses those who walk with Him. That as it were; as we walk in obedience to the Lord He gives and reveals His blessings to us. We can also see in verse 6 that the Lord keeps us in our walk. Where it says "the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places yes I have a good inheritance". That the Lord is able to watch over us and keep us day by day and moment by moment in our walk is a wonderful encouragement and catalyst to further steps of obedience.

Then in verse 7 we see that the Lord counsels us. I like the way the Psalmist puts this as it again declares his dependence upon the Lord because he wants to honour God and bless him in the way that he lives and serves the living God. We live in an age where sadly for many Christians seeking God's counsel may come more as a last resort or as a step of desperation rather than a way of life which is what it should be. Then again in verse 7 we see that the Lord not only counsels us but He instructs us in the night seasons. The word for heart there in verse 7 can literally mean vital organs and of course the application is that deep within us we experience the Lord's instruction in the night seasons. The use of the expression the night season could also suggest extended times of prayer or seeking and crying out to the Lord especially in difficult times. That is why we get the expression that the Lord is ever before us, that in a two fold meaning we are like Paul suggested
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in Thessalonians praying without ceasing and secondly that the Lord is omnipresent, He is there with us wherever we are and with whatever we are doing.

Also we can see in this Psalm as we look at these final verses that as the Lord is ever before us and that He is at our right hand then we can have confidence in the fact that God is able to keep us in our daily walk with Him. As we meditate on this thought we can see in verse 9 that our heart is gladdened and we are moved to rejoice or to praise the Lord. We can also see that the Lord counsels us in all that we do and instructs us in what we do. I like the way David talks about this whole idea of being not only in an attitude of prayer but also being open to that continual instruction and counsel of the Lord. In all of this as we read in verse 8 the Lord can be seen as our security and protection as well.

So in closing let me sum up by saying that we can have a present and future confidence in the Lord in the fact that as we rejoice and praise the Lord that gives us great confidence for future steps. We can also rest in the hope that we have in the Lord because it is a rest that doesn't disappoint. The idea there is to rest with a great feeling of security. It is sad to say so often in our society today many people feel very insecure. Not only do we have an ongoing secure future here on earth but we also have a secure future in heaven as verse 10 tells us "For you will not leave my soul in Sheol nor will you allow your holy one to see corruption". For those who know and love the Lord their destiny is secure and their future is assured in heaven.

Then our lives are marked with the confidence of God's direction and presence; and in God's presence comes that fullness of joy and that glorying in His counsel and instruction.

— Carl Carmody, Editor of Challenge



Praise

1. Praise the Lord for Andrew and Karen Trezona who have commenced working for Challenge. Andrew's role will be the promotion and development of the work here in Australia and New Zealand.
2. Praise God for the amazing time Carl and Graeme had while in the United States. It was a very full itinerary with Carl having many opportunities to promote and speak about Challenge. We are very thankful to the Lord for the positive response to the newspaper.
3. We are very thankful to the Lord for each of the ministry organisations we work with around the world and for the unity of vision and passion for the gospel we share.
4. Praise the Lord for our first edition of the Challenge newspaper being produced in Malawi. We are thankful to the Lord for Jonathan Newell and his team who have worked very hard to get this edition out.

Prayer

1. Please continue to pray for Andrew and Karen and the girls as they settle into Challenge. We would value prayer for them particularly for housing and for Andrew as he endeavours to get a handle on things in the office.
2. Please pray for the ongoing financial support of the many project areas for Challenge. As many of the countries we are working with are very poor the majority of funding for the printing of the paper comes from our office
3. Please pray with us for Malawi as the first edition has now been printed and distributed. We are praying that the team over there will be overwhelmed with responses.
4. Please pray for each paper being distributed this month. We are praying for a seed planted and a harvest reaped.
5. Please remember Pastor Jabulani who heads up the work of Multi Ministries in Zimbabwe. We have 30,000 papers going into Zimbabwe but are having difficulty getting these papers across the border. Please pray with us that Jabulani will not only receive the papers regularly, but will continue to see wonderful results from the use of the paper
6. Please pray for Carl as he will be going to India this month with Jonathan James (Asia Evangelistic Fellowship) to begin negotiations there for a Hindi/English edition of Challenge.



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