

* **Who Benefits from Our Good Works?**

Psalm 16:2, 3

* **Jehovah Is My Portion**

Psalm 16:5, 6

* **The Lord Always Before Me**

Psalm 16:8

* **Facing Death Triumphantly**

Psalm 16:9-11

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February 1, 2015 — No. 3761

February 22, 2015 — No. 3764

Reformed Witness Hour
(www.reformedwitnesshour.org)

Station Listings

Station	Location	Frequency	Time/day
KARI	Blaine, WA.....	550AM.....	8:00 P.M./Sunday
KCWN	Pella, IA.....	99.9FM.....	3:30 P.M./Sunday
KDCR	Sioux Center, IA.....	88.5FM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KGDN	Tri-Cities Walla Walla, OR.....	101.3FM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KLOH	Pipestone, MN.....	1050AM.....	8:00 A.M./Sunday
KLTT	Denver, CO.....	670AM.....	1:30 P.M./Sunday
KPRO	Riverside, CA.....	1570AM.....	11:30 A.M./Sunday
KSPO	Spokane, WA.....	106.5FM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KTAC	Moses Lake, WA.....	93.9FM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KTBI	Wenatchee/Moses Lake, WA.....	810AM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
KTRW	Spokane, WA.....	630AM.....	9:30 A.M./Sunday
KYAK	Yakima, WA.....	930AM.....	5:00 P.M./Sunday
WFDL	Fond Du Lac, WI.....	1170AM.....	8:00 A.M./Sunday
WFUR	Grand Rapids, MI.....	102.9FM.....	8:00 A.M./Sunday
WFUR	Grand Rapids, MI.....	1570AM, 92.9FM ..	4:00 P.M./Sunday
WORD	Pittsburgh, PA.....	101.5FM.....	10:00 A.M./Sunday
WPFG	Carlisle, PA.....	91.3FM.....	8:00A.M./Sunday
UK			
GOSPEL	Northern Ireland.....	846AM.....	8:30A.M./Sunday
	Philippines		
DYSB	Philippines.....	1197AM.....	6:30 P.M./Sunday
	Canada		
CKNX	Wingham, ON.....	920 AM.....	7:00A.M./Sunday

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

February 1, 2015
No. 3761

Who Benefits from Our Good Works?
Rev. Rodney Kleyn

Dear Radio Friends,

It is my privilege to be on the air again for the Reformed Witness Hour over the coming four months. My prayer is that the Word that I bring will be of spiritual benefit to you. And I ask you also to remember me in your prayers as I do this work.

Today we are going to begin a four-part series on Psalm 16. This is one of the most beautiful psalms in the Bible, written by David from his own experience, and something that we as believers can identify with in many ways. But it is not only a personal confession. It is also prophetic, that is, David writes here of Jesus Christ who is to come. Even though this was written a thousand years before Jesus came, the primary speaker in the psalm is the Savior. That is most clear from the last verses in the psalm that Peter quotes in Acts 2 in reference to the resurrection of Jesus: “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” But this psalm is Messianic throughout. We must remember this as we look at each of the different passages in this psalm.

I want to look with you today at verses 2 and 3, where David says: “O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.”

Before I explain those verses, I want to back up and say some things about verse 1, which is a kind of introduction to this psalm. Here David says, “Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.” He prays here for God’s protection, and he expresses his dependence on God. What is important for us to see is that even though things are going very well for David in his life at this time (there is no indication of difficulties in the life of David in this psalm; in fact, he seems to be living in a very prosperous point in his life, for he says in verse 6, “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage”) still, he expresses his dependence on God.

How important it is for us to remember this in easy and prosperous days in our life. Even then we depend on God. Maybe things are going well for us in

our family and church. Maybe we are prospering financially, we have good health, and everything is going well. Still then we must pray: “Preserve me, O God,” because always sin lies at the door, and in prosperous and easy days the temptations can often be greater for us.

The beginning of verse 2 indicates that David is in a contemplative mood. “O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord.” He is speaking to himself. In his ease he is meditating on the things of God. And one of the questions that comes to his mind is this, Who benefits from the good things that I do? Why is it important for me as a believer to do good works? Perhaps in his prosperity and ease, David had opportunity to assist the poor. Maybe he is tempted to be selfish and he needs to encourage himself to be benevolent. And so this question.

We understand here that the Bible does teach good works. It does not teach that salvation is by good works, but it does teach that God’s people are able to do good works and are, in fact, a people zealous, that is, enthusiastic of good works.

But, what are good works? Good works are the things that

we do as believers out of love and gratitude to God and that are in agreement with His Word. God, in the end, is the Judge of whether a work is good or evil. And His judgment falls primarily on the motivation. A good work is not simply an act of giving a bunch of money to a cause or dedicating your life to some particular calling. But a good work is one that is born out of faith and is the response of gratitude to God. A good work is one in which we work not for man’s praise but for the glory of God above all.

And that is what David has in mind when he mentions in verse 2: “My goodness.” He is referring to that which is admirable or good in him. He is not denying here his depravity, but he is saying, There are good virtues and good works in me as a child of God. He is speaking of his life of sanctification. God, by His grace and the power of His Holy Spirit, works this in His people. They bear a resemblance to God in their lives. They show the fruits of the work of the Holy Spirit.

But now, what is the purpose of our sanctification? What is the purpose of our good works? That is answered by the psalmist when he says to God: “My

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is a wonderful and positive description of heaven. Many of the Bible’s descriptions of heaven are described in the negative, compared to the earthly. And we are told that heaven will not be like it is here on the earth. In heaven, Revelation 21, there will be no more sorrow or sighing or pain. But here it is put very positively. This is what we anticipate as believers.

God shows us the path of life. Sometimes that is a path of suffering. But it leads to the fullness of joy in God’s presence. To be present with the Lord—that is the essence of heaven in the Bible. When we see Him we will be like Him. Do you long to see God?

When we do see Him, there will be eternal pleasures. God created man in the beginning to know and to enjoy Him. Heaven is a world of joy, a fulfillment, a finishing of the purpose for

which God created man. There without the restraints of sin, without the struggles and trials of suffering, we will serve God to eternity in perfection. Is that not your longing?

My inmost being thrills with joy, and gladness fills my breast, because on Him my trust is stayed, my flesh in hope shall rest.

Let us pray.

Father, fill us with the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Give us to believe on Him, to trust His death and resurrection. And, Lord, fill us with the joys of heaven, a longing for the day when we will see our Savior and have our bodies fashioned like to His glorious body. And free us, Lord, from being saturated with this earth and its pleasures and cares. We ask it for Jesus’ sake. Amen

We are one with the Old Testament saints. Their suffering is our suffering. Their pilgrimage is our pilgrimage. Their hope is our hope. They were joined to Jesus Christ by faith, and so are we. And joined to Jesus Christ, their confidence and joy is also ours.

Today, Jesus is risen. He is the first-fruits of them that slept. And all who die believing in Him will be raised again into the glories of heaven.

Just as Jesus said to Martha when He came to the tomb of Lazarus, in John 11:25-26, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Then He added to Martha, "Believest thou this?"

That is the question for you today. Do you believe this? You know, if Christ is not risen, then no one else who is dead can be raised. If Christ is not risen, as I Corinthians 15 tells us, there is no forgiveness of sins, we are yet in our sins. So, what we have here is the foundation. The fact of the physical bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is the

foundation for our confidence and joy. Because He lives, we live and we shall live again.

I want to finish this message with a few words on

the last verse here, verse 11. "Thy wilt show me the path of life. In thy presence is fullness of joy. At thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." Obviously, what the psalmist has in view here is the joy and the experience of

life in heaven.

But let us remember that the primary speaker here is Jesus Christ. The path of life that God showed Him was a path of suffering that led through death and resurrection to eternal life and glory. Jesus always said to God, "In Thy presence is fullness of joy." Just think of how often and much He loved to pray, and understand that prayer is an expression of man's desire to be with God. And also in anticipation of His exaltation, Jesus said at the end of the verse, "at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

But again, these are also David's confession and ours. And what we have in this verse

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goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the saints that are in the earth." We could summarize it this way: By our good works, we cannot and do not enrich or add anything to God. And yet, we must do good works for the benefit of our fellow believers. God enables us to do good works so that we can show this goodness to others.

God enables us to do good works so that we can show this goodness to others.

The first thing to see here is that God does not benefit from our good. "My goodness," the psalmist says, "extendeth not to thee." He means our good works add nothing to God. They do not enrich Him. They do not make Him happier. God does not need them. And that is because of who God is—as the triune, self-sufficient, self-existent God He is completely happy and He is morally perfect in Himself. He is the unchangeable God and we do not add to or enrich Him by what we do. We do not teach Him, we cannot create Him. God did not create us because He needs us. You see that in the verse, in the two names that David uses in reference to God. First the name LORD in capital letters in the English, which is Jehovah. This refers to Him as the "I AM THAT I AM," the self-existent and self-sufficient God, who is eternal and immutable. He is faithful to His covenant and Word. How could we add the

tinest bit to the completeness of Jehovah?

The other name that he uses is Lord, not now in all capital letters but the name that means "Adonai," or Lord, as we would use it. This refers to Him as the absolute sovereign over all

things, the master of the universe, the creator, the infinitely exalted and

powerful owner of all things. How can a creature of the dust add to God? At the same time, in this name we acknowledge that God is the Lord and sovereign over us, that we are His servants. And so, even though we add nothing to God, still we owe Him everything—complete service.

That is the personal confession of every true believer. We do not say, I can do something for God, but we say that God is all, God possesses all, God does everything by His sovereign will and power, and even what I do cannot add to Him. As Paul puts it in Romans 11: "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever." When we look at God and when we see who He is in these names, we say, "My goodness extendeth not to thee." God does not need us.

Besides this, there is another reason our goodness

cannot enrich God, and that is because of who we are—not only creatures and earthly creatures, but also sinners. This is the confession of every true believer: O wretched man that I am. We confess that even our best works are as filthy rags before God. We admit that any good that we have, any virtue in us, any physical or spiritual strength, is only on account of God's grace and goodness to us. Our goodness does not extend to Him, but His goodness extends to us. We are debtors to Him. God never becomes a debtor to us. We do not place Him under obligation by our good and say, "Lord, I've done this, now You owe me." And the truth that we are talking about here is the truth of grace—the unmerited favor of God—a grace that has no conditions, a grace that is free and sovereign in Christ to the elect. Everything that we have and all that we are is from God. We did not choose Him, but He chose us. We love Him because He first loved us.

This teaching of Scripture is not found only in this verse. It is the truth of the whole of God's Word. Listen, for example, to the words of Elihu in Job 35:7. Job was starting to think that, because he had been such an upright man, God owed better

things to him than he was receiving. And Elihu says to Job: "If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?" and then he adds: "Thy righteousness may profit the son of man." In other words, what you do may be a benefit to others, but it adds nothing to God. And that is exactly the point here in Psalm 16. God does not need our good. We cannot give Him anything that He does not already possess or that He did not first give to us.

Listen also to the words of Jesus in Luke 17:10: "When ye shall have done all those things

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we have done that which was our duty to do." By our good we do not get bonus points with God, we do not merit His attention, we do not distinguish ourselves from others. This confession is a humble confession of complete dependence on the grace of God. My goodness extendeth not to thee.

How important this message is today for the church. Not only does it put to bed the heresy of salvation by good works, but it also addresses a very popular notion today of doing things for the Lord or, what has become

tament perspective, Jesus will come and will conquer death and the grave, by His bodily resurrection. The lesser David can say what he does here, because of the greater David who is yet to come, Jesus Christ. If these things were not true for Jesus, they could never be true for David, or for us.

This is exactly the way the New Testament explains these verses. Peter tells us in Acts 2 that these words are primarily prophetic of Jesus' resurrection. After quoting these verses from Psalm 16 in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter says, Acts 2:29, "men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption." What Peter is saying is this, that when David said things that could not be true of himself in these verses, he was expressing his faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ

as the foundation and reason for his confidence and joy.

And so, these words in Psalm 16 are first Christ's words. His flesh rested in hope after the burial. He died knowing that God would not abandon Him in the grave, that this was im-

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And because these are Christ's words, they can be David's words and our words as believers. We see here that we have a common faith with the Old Testament saints. They trusted in Christ, looking forward to His coming. Their salvation, the payment for and forgiveness of their sins, their hope, was also through Jesus Christ. They trusted in the promises, the oath, of God. We in faith look back at the fulfillment of those promises in the person of Jesus Christ. But our salvation and theirs comes the same way, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

That helps us to understand, too, how we should read the Old Testament. It is a narrative of the experience of God's people. It is a record of God's wondrous grace in salvation to His own.

And then, our joy as believers is also this, that during our lives here on this earth, already now we have the experience of eternal life. With the life of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in us, we have the beginning of eternal joy. That is really what David is saying here in Psalm 16. The resurrection is not merely something that he contemplates in the future; but this is something that he experiences; it surrounds his

life; it is the fullness of his joy and life in the present. He is not like a child waiting to go on vacation, counting

down the days. His rejoicing is not just in something that he will receive in the future, but this is a joy that he has already. Look back at verses 5 and 6. The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places. You see, heaven and our resurrection will not be a change in the quality, but only in quantity of life. Now we know in part, then in fullness. And so in Ephesians 2, our salvation in the present is described as the privilege of being made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. And, having that joy now, we just want it to get better. And that is what heaven will be. The disciples sat and

they fellowshiped with Jesus, and He said, "I go away. I go to prepare a place for you. And I will come again and receive you to myself, so that we can be together again, perfectly and eternally."

And so as believers we rejoice, and we do rejoice, even at the prospect of death.

To the unbelieving mind, all this sounds quite silly.

...then, our joy as believers is also this, that during our lives here on this earth, already now we have the experience of eternal life.

Not only that we talk about death, which is a subject to avoid, but especially that we speak of death and joy in the same sentence. The

mind of unbelief says, "You've got to live for the moment. Seize the day. Life is short, so get the most out of the here and now every day." And that is because without God, in unbelief, one is without hope in this world. You have nothing more to live for and to anticipate than what life can bring you here. You have no foundation.

But in the Christian gospel there is a foundation. We do not just believe in a fantasy, but our hope is founded on Jesus Christ, and His resurrection. And in the verses here from Psalm 16, that is on the foreground. David's confidence and hope are founded in this, that from his Old Tes-

known as Christian service. I do not mean to say here that Christians should not be serving the Lord. Every Christian should be serving the Lord. But today, in many circles, the sole purpose of the church seems to be to get people to do things for God, so that a church service is a kind of pep rally to encourage people into full-time ministry either in the local church or in overseas missions. And I do not say this because I am opposed to missions and full-time ministry. I myself am a full-time pastor and

I pray often the words of Jesus, The harvest is plenteous and the laborers few; Lord, send

forth laborers. But the emphasis of Christian service today is flawed. It is theologically flawed. It is built on the idea that God needs us and that we can be useful to Him only if we are involved in full-time ministry. I want to tell you, God does not need *you*, God does not need *me*. We need Him.

I make this point also because, as I have seen it, the call to full-time Christian service is actually very discouraging for Christians who are faithful and busy serving the Lord in their families, in their daytime jobs, as witnesses to their neighbors,

by participating in the life of their local church. They are made to think that their work is not important, that they somehow are second-rate Christians.

All of us are called to full-time service. But full-time service does not mean that all of us are called to be missionaries. Serving the Lord is not doing some extraordinary or special work for God. But it is to love Him and to serve Him in everything that we do—whatever that calling is and whatever position we have in life. This is not

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said to discourage you from serving the Lord. But, if you are involved in full-time service,

check your

motives. Are you doing good so that you feel good about yourself? Are you doing it for the recognition of others so that you can gain a kind of celebrity status? Or, are you humble enough to say: "God doesn't need me. And wherever He calls me, I will serve Him faithfully."

So the psalmist continues in verse 3, My goodness extendeth not to thee, "but to the saints." God does not benefit from my good, but the saints do. God enables us to do good works, not because He profits from it, but so that we might profit others.

By our love for others, we demonstrate our love for God. As David thinks about the purpose of his own good works, this is his conclusion, and it encourages him in the life of good works.

Behind the words of David here we see in his description of God's people a proper attitude toward fellow believers. He describes them in three ways, three ways that we also should think of each other in the church of Jesus Christ. He says my goodness extends to the "saints." "Saints" means literally "holy ones." God's people are holy ones. They have been separated spiritually from the world and they are living sacrifices to God. This is the way we should think of one another in the church—not thinking of somebody else, "He's not much of a Christian," because then you are judging by the outward, but thinking spiritually, "This one, this fellow believer, is separated unto God. He is holy, he is sanctified." Paul addresses the churches this way: "The saints which are in..." and then the name of the church. This is the way we ought to view one another in the church.

Second, the psalmist calls them the "excellent of the earth." The word "excellent" means "outstanding, worthy of admiration, extremely good." David thinks of God's people this way. He does not think of them as a mixed bunch of sin-

ners. He does not think only of some of them that they are good. But he sees God's work in them. He views all the believers as a wonderful creation of God. The most admirable thing to him is that God has worked salvation in the heart of fellow believers. They have been saved by death. These are the ones for whom God sent His Son. These are precious to Him, the excellent of the earth.

And so he says of them, in them is all my delight. He derives his joy from and finds his happiness in other believers. He finds their company refreshing. In verse 6, when he says, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places," he is talking about his place in the church. He delights in the company of other believers. He is not an individualistic Christian.

Obviously there is a calling implied for us here—not just to be with fellow believers in worship or in friendship or fellowship—but to have the proper attitudes towards them, to think of them as God thinks of them, to see them as God sees them in Jesus Christ. And thinking of the ones he is talking about, David is not thinking in the abstract. He has in mind men like Joab and others who were a burden to him. And yet David says, "These are the excellent of the earth, in whom is all my delight." It is only when we

end for him, but through death God will be with him and he will be raised incorruptible.

You know, sometimes unbelieving scholars say there was no thought of resurrection in the Old Testament, that in the New Testament the disciples invented the idea of resurrection. But here, in the plainest language, David expresses the truth of his own bodily resurrection.

And believing this, he has reason for great joy in the prospect of death.

And for us, today, there is the same joy. That not only will my soul immediately go to glory with Christ at death, but also that this my body, though it must be buried and it will decay, this body will be resurrected, it will be made incorruptible, and with my eyes I will see Jesus Christ my Savior. That ought to give us confidence and joy as we face death.

In I Corinthians 15, the inspired apostle Paul expresses the confidence as a victorious and fearless boast, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" As be-

lievers, we ought to say that when the fears of death come. We have this triumph too. One of the most beautiful and real and triumphant experiences of the Christian life is to stand on the edge of a gaping grave, laying a loved one to rest. Yes, so painful, but also glorious. At that moment all that is trivial in this world is forgotten, and the things that really matter, heaven and eternal truths, are front and center in our minds. Ecclesiastes 7:2, "It is better to dwell in the house of mourning than in the house of feasting, for that is the end of every man, and the living will lay it to heart." As painful as grief is, every

believer knows the joy and the hope that is his beyond death.

There is a joy in knowing that the glory that will be ours beyond the grave far outweighs what we lose in death. And that joy creates

a longing in our hearts for that day. Paul says in Philippians 1, "To die is gain" and to "depart and be with the Lord" is far better than staying here in this world. Is that your longing? To be delivered from the body of this death, from the struggles with sin? To see Jesus Christ face to face?

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ful pictures of how we should think of our death. Jesus said of Jairus' daughter and of Lazarus, "not dead, but sleeping." And so in I Thessalonians 4, Paul says that when we die as believers, we "fall asleep in Jesus." And what does falling asleep and resting imply, but this, that we will wake up again. That is our hope, the resurrection of our bodies. Death is not the end of our bodies.

And then in the beginning of verse 10, we are given the reason for this. "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell." Hell,

here, refers to the grave. The soul, refers to the entire person, a part of which is our physical bodies. And the word "leave," here, has the

idea of being abandoned and forsaken. David is saying, God never leaves or forsakes the bodies of His people when they are buried. He never forgets us. That is His promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." And now, David applies that promise of God, to his body laid in the grave. What are cemeteries? They are places where we leave the remains of our loved ones. They are places where people who were once well known are forgotten. But God does not leave or forget a

single one of His own, not in their graves either. He remembers them, and because of this, they rest in hope of the resurrection.

And with that thought, David continues in verse 10, "neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption." Now as we know, this phrase is a prophecy of the fact that when Jesus was buried, His body did not decay; that it was sustained by the Divine presence for His resurrection on the third day. Death could not bring decay to His body. "Thou wilt not suffer thine holy one to see corruption."

...we know that death is not the end for us, that, in fact, death is but a servant to bring us into the richer experience of life with God.

And yet, these are words that David is speaking, in the first person, about himself. Does he mean that his own body will not see

corruption? Obviously not. So what he is saying is that even though his body will decay, that will not destroy him. It is an expression of utmost confidence concerning his own bodily resurrection. Something like Job, "though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." And on that day, it will be as though his body never saw corruption. As I Corinthians 15 has it, "this corruptible must put on incorruption." This is David's confidence: death will not be the

have proper thoughts of others that we can be of any profit to them. A person with wrong attitudes withdraws himself from the fellowship of believers. He does not contribute to them. If you think little of others, you will do little for them. If you think nothing of somebody else, you will do nothing for him. Is that not true? The more highly we esteem someone, the more we think of him, the more we will do for him. That is the subject of David here. "My goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the saints, to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." They benefit, he is saying, from his good works.

Let us fill that out a little bit here. What are some good works? We could think of things like worship and prayer, generosity, obedience to God's commandments, and the work of raising our family in homes. When we do these things they are not profitable to God, but He calls us to do them for the benefit of others. When we go to worship, that is not, first of all, for our own personal benefit, but it is something that we do in the fellowship of the saints to encourage and to administer to the needs of others. When we are generous to the support of the poor, when we take a meal

and make a visit to the sick, when we send a card, when we call someone, when we come to Bible Study, when we fellowship with other believers after a church service, who benefits?

It is only when we have proper thoughts of others that we can be of any profit to them.

Does God? Do we add to Him? No. And it is not just for me, it is not primarily for me, but for the benefit of others,

the saints, the excellent of the earth. That is beautiful. God calls us to honor and glorify Him. And this is the way we do it: by serving other members of the body.

So, the sum of the text is this: You and I cannot enrich God. We can love Him, but we do not benefit Him. But we can help the saints who are here on the earth with us. And so we should think of them as God thinks of them. We should seek to be with them. We should find our delight in them, not primarily for ourselves and our benefit, but so that our goodness, which God has worked in us by His grace and Spirit, may extend to them. This is what it is to be a member, an active member, in the church. This is how we serve and love God as believers.

This is what Paul is talking about when in Galatians 6:10 he says, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto

all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” Yes, we should be good to all men: love the neighbor as yourself. But there is a special delight that we should take in serving the fellow members of the body of Christ with our loving deeds.

I want to close by calling attention to the

fact that these are Messianic words, that these are the words of Jesus Christ. Here we see the beauty and grace of God in the cross, and in this text itself. This should motivate us in our good works also.

The primary speaker here in the text is not David. It is not the believer. But it is Jesus Christ as He comes into the world, as He goes to the cross, as He obeys God’s will for Him. This is what He says of His goodness, His good works. Even though He was perfectly obedient, He did not add anything to God’s glory. He did not come into this world because God needed Him to. But He came for us. He came for the members of His body. All that He did, His perfect obedience, His suffering, His sacrifice, His death, His burial, His resurrection, He did for His people. And even today, as He

rules in heaven, He rules over all things and makes intercession for believers. So, He says to God, “My goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the saints, to the excellent in the earth, in

whom is all my delight.” This is how He thinks of the people for whom He came to die.

And this shows us the heart of

God. It shows us the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. That should motivate us, too, to say, “My goodness extends to the saints, to the excellent of the earth, in whom is all my delight.” We can add nothing to God. We cannot enrich Him. Yet, He gives us, by His grace, the ability to do good works so that we can serve one another in the body of Jesus Christ.

Let us pray.

Father, we thank Thee for the work of Thy grace that makes us a people zealous of good works. And we pray that we may be faithful in using what Thou hast given to us even though it cannot add to Thee, using it for the benefit of fellow believers in the body of Jesus Christ in the earth. We pray this for Jesus’ sake, Amen.

*God calls us to
honor and glorify Him.
And this is the way
we do it: by serving
other members of the body.*

the cross in His own death, He speaks these words. But still, they are the words of David, and so they are also our confession as Christians.

David here is talking about his own physical death. He speaks of his body resting. In this life there is a constant busyness, but when death comes our bodies are laid down for the last time in the grave and there they rest. David has the grave in mind when he speaks of hell. In the grave, corruption comes to our bodies; they deteriorate, they rot, they decay. This is all a part of death.

What is death?

First, death is an expression of the wrath and justice of God against sin. In the beginning God said to Adam and Eve concerning the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, “in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” Sin, their fall into sin, and our sin too, requires death. The wages of sin is death.

Second, as to what we experience when we die, death is a vicious rending, a tearing apart and a tearing away from all things that we know and from things that belong together. It is the tearing apart of body and soul, which God originally created as one. It is the rending of all earthly ties and relationships. The experience of death is painful, emotionally, and very often

also physically. Very few simply drift from life. Accompanying the experience of death, there is disease and old age; there is the violence of a death by accident. There is the agony of death by starvation or drowning. And, for the onlooker, the loved one who is left behind, there is the sorrow of an empty place that can never be filled again.

This is what David has in view as he writes this psalm: his own physical death. And I have described all that, to demonstrate that death for us is usually a terrifying prospect and a painful experience.

And yet, as we look at these verses, we see none of this. Instead, there is an expression here of the greatest joy. Let us look more closely at what David says.

First, in verse 9, “My heart is glad; my glory rejoiceth.” David means that he is filled with a deep, inexpressible thrill. With his whole being he celebrates, not the life he has lived, but death and the hope that is his in the grave. And we can do that too, because as children of God we know that death is not the end for us, that, in fact, death is but a servant to bring us into the richer experience of life with God.

And so David continues in verse 9: “My flesh also shall rest in hope.” To rest is to sleep, and this is one of the Bible’s beauti-

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

February 22, 2015
No. 3764

Facing Death Triumphantly
Rev. Rodney Kleyon

Dear Radio Friends,

The Christian lives in hope, that is, he lives in anticipation of things to come. He does not merely live on good memories of the past; she does not live only enjoying present pleasures. But as believers we live in hope, with our eye on the future, anticipating glorious things that are yet to come.

In this world, one of the things that we anticipate is death. Unless Jesus returns first, every one of us will face his own death. The Bible says in Hebrews 9:27 that we each have an appointment with death; a day and an hour that God has appointed as the moment we meet death. The timing of that, we do not know. For some it may be very close, for others it may seem to be far off, but in fact no one knows the day or the hour. And, looking ahead, we face not only our own death, but death in our families and relationships as well.

There is something fearful and terrifying about the prospect of death. The Bible calls death, “the last enemy.” In all of us, there is an aversion to death, and desire to preserve our own

lives. But how, as believers, should we face and think about death?

It is in anticipation of death, his own death, that the psalmist writes the words of Psalm 16, and as he does, he rejoices, he is filled with hope, and he expresses greatest confidence and triumph. He says, in Psalm 16:9-11, “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”

Is that your hope? Is this your confession as you contemplate the reality of death? Is this your song, “My inmost being thrills with joy, and gladness fills my breast, because on Him my trust is stayed, my flesh in hope shall rest”?

As we pointed out in earlier messages, the words of this psalm are Messianic, that is, they are properly the words of Jesus Christ. He says these words and, as He approaches

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

February 8, 2015
No. 3762

Jehovah Is My Portion
Rev. Rodney Kleyon

Dear Radio Friends,

Are you content in life? Do you have contentment and satisfaction with your situation? If so, what is it that makes you content? Do you look at the things that you have and say, “I’m content because I have more than enough already, or because I’m healthy and happy”? Or, if you are not content, why not? Is your lack of contentment because you see that other people have things or are able to do things that are not available to you? Are you lacking contentment because of difficult circumstances in your life?

I ask those questions at the beginning of our message today because the confession of the psalmist in the verses that we look at today is a confession of contentment. He says in Psalm 16:5 and 6: “The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.” What stands out here is his contentment and his satisfaction. And they have nothing to do with the external circumstances of his life. Rather, his contentment is founded on this: Jehovah, the

LORD, is his God and his portion.

Paul says in Philippians 4:11: “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” Contentment and satisfaction come to the Christian when, by faith, he realizes that God, in His grace, has given him a possession that is spiritual and eternal. That is what we hope to see in these verses today.

Last week we began to look at this beautiful psalm, Psalm 16:2-3, and we noticed a few important truths. First, we saw that our good works can add nothing to God. The psalmist, reflecting on a life of godliness to God, says: “My good extendeth not to Thee.” God is the self-sufficient, immutable God who does not need us. And yet, in the second place, we saw that God does, by His grace, enable us to do good works and to live in a way that pleases Him, not because He needs it, but so that we may be a benefit and service to other believers. My goodness extendeth not to Thee, “but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.” With a love and

delight for God and His people, we will willingly serve the other members of the body of Christ. And, third, we noticed that the main voice, the main speaker in this psalm, is not David but Christ. In the last verses of the psalm that is very obvious. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Those words are prophetic of the resurrection of Christ. Jesus says these words. And, in connection with verses 2 and 3, we saw His grace. He says to God, when He comes into this world to save His people, "I am not doing this because You, Lord, need this, but I am doing it for the saints in the earth in whom is all my delight." God does not need us. And yet, in His love and grace, He comes to save and deliver us from sin and to bring us into the joy of covenant life and friendship with Himself.

And, today, we are going to look at verses 5 and 6, in which David expresses the joy and satisfaction of the child of God who is in communion and fellowship with God. In verse 4, the intervening verse, the psalmist tells us that fellowship with God means enmity with the world. They are mutually exclusive. As Jesus says, "Ye cannot serve two masters. You will always hate the one and love the other." You cannot be the friend of God and the friend of the world. And so

David says, "My delight," verse 3, "is in the people of God. I will not take up into my lips the names of a strange god and I will not participate with the world in hastening after another god" (v. 4). Instead, verse 5: "The LORD [Jehovah] is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup."

As we look at verses 5 and 6, we see on the foreground the idea of an inheritance. "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance...thou maintainest my lot." A lot is something that is allotted or distributed to you. "The lines," that is, the boundary lines on a piece of property, "are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage," again the idea of an inheritance.

This is a beautiful and a rich biblical picture of what God's people receive from Him in the gracious gift of salvation. An inheritance is something valuable that is gifted to you from another. It is not something that you deserve or have earned. But it points to the grace, the undeserved grace, of God in salvation.

In the Old Testament, we find this idea of the inheritance to be very prominent. When Israel came into Canaan, they received the inheritance of the Lord. Each family was given a portion or piece of land in Canaan. And they were very jealous to keep that inheritance

task. He was not moved because God was at His right hand and was His helper.

This is a marvelous promise of God's care and protection for every believer. I said earlier that this is a psalm for one preparing for death. And, certainly, that was true for Christ. He was preparing for death all through His life. And He did this by setting the Lord before Him.

With God close by, with God at my right hand, I can go on. There is assurance as I look forward. In whatever life may bring me, I do not have to be fearful. God has not failed me and God will not fail me. So,

with God at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Let us pray.

Father, we thank Thee for the wonderful promise of Thy Word. We thank Thee for Thy

constancy and Thy help in our time of need, Thy grace that is always sufficient. Lord, help us to set Thee always before our mind, to have this firm resolve as believers.

We pray it for Jesus' sake, Amen.

*...as we set Him before us
and His will,
He is there to guide us
and help us, to support us
when we are weak,
to meet our every need.
He is there for us to lean on.*

filled with a constancy of drawing into the presence of God. When you meet such a person, it is a delight. God is constantly in their thoughts. They are in the Word of God, and it overflows into their conversation.

You and I can think of believers like that and what an encouragement

they are to us—to be undistracted from having God before you. That brings satisfaction in the life of the child of God. A child

of God who truly sets the Lord before him is satisfied with God. He says with the psalmist in the earlier verses of this psalm: “The Lord is my portion and the fullness of my cup.” He does not find his satisfaction in the things of the earth, but he says, “Let me have the Lord. Let me have His love. Let me know His grace. Let me know justification and acceptance by Him. Let me have the comfort of knowing that I am His. Let me find joy in His promises. Let me rejoice in His gifts. Let me have sweet communion with Him. God is my all. I have set the Lord always before me.”

The psalmist speaks of God, then, at the end of the verse as his protector. “He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.” Usually when we think

of the right hand in Scripture, we think of a place of honor. Jesus is exalted today at God’s right hand. But, in a sense, the picture is reversed here. It is not us at God’s right hand, but it is God at our right hand. Since He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. And the reverse of

the idea portrays this, that now we are not in a position of honor near God, but that God is in a position of being a helper to us. Just as a servant helps his

master, he is at the right hand of his master to serve him.

That does not mean for us that God is at our beck and call, but it does mean this, that, as we set Him before us and His will, He is there to guide us and help us, to support us when we are weak, to meet our every need. He is there for us to lean on. “I shall not be moved,” that is, I shall not be shaken from my purpose. And what is your purpose? It is to live to the glory of God. It is to enjoy God in whatever you do and wherever you go and in whatever God brings into your life. And, again, we can think of Christ. With God at His right hand, He was not moved. When He was buffeted and beaten and persecuted, He was not moved. When He was led out to the cross, and He faced the prospect of death, He set Himself to His

in their family. In fact, if they had to sell it to pay off their debt, then at the end of the year of Jubilee, it had to be returned to them again. That was significant because Canaan was an earthly picture of heaven, what Hebrews 11 calls “the city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” And the portion that an Israelite received in Canaan was a picture of his belonging to the people of God. It was a promise to him of his place with God in glory. So, when the psalmist speaks of his inheritance here, he has in mind his spiritual and eternal inheritance.

Now David could have been, and of course was, thankful for his earthly inheritance. He would have had a right to a portion of his father’s land. As king, David inherited Judah and Jerusalem, and, indeed, all of Israel, through the conquests of all of Canaan. And also, in a sense, he inherited the whole nation of Israel, the people, over whom he was made king. But David realizes that all these are but a picture of the real treasures that he has that are spiritual and eternal. And so, in the last verse of the psalm, he speaks of “fulness of joy” and “pleasures for evermore” at God’s right hand. Like Abraham, he had his eye fixed on his eternal inheritance.

Now, when we come to the New Testament, we see this

idea of inheritance again. But it is not applied to Canaan, or an earthly inheritance, rather it is the eternal and spiritual inheritance of salvation and the kingdom of heaven. For example, in Matthew 5:3, Jesus says: “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Or, again, in Ephesians 1:11: “In whom [that is, in Christ] also we have obtained an inheritance.” And then in verse 14 we read that the Holy Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, giving the idea that we have a part of our inheritance already. Then, verse 18 speaks of the “riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.” So, in Christ we have an amazing and a rich inheritance.

Then, if we turn to I Peter 1:3, 4, we read that we are born again “to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.” So, our inheritance is eternal and spiritual.

Now, going back to Psalm 16, we ask, What is that inheritance? What does David say? He says the most astounding thing. He does not say that Canaan is his inheritance, nor Jerusalem, nor even heaven or salvation or his resurrection body, of which he speaks later in the psalm. But this: “The LORD [Jehovah] is the portion of mine inheritance.” He means that the substance and essence of his inheritance

is God Himself. He means that God is given to him. And notice, he does not say, "I belong to God," though that is true. But God belongs to me. He is my portion and my inheritance. In salvation, God Himself comes and gives Himself to His people. What a beautiful and rich idea!

Now, what does that mean? It means, first of all, that salva-

tion is a relationship, that salvation is God taking us into the relationship of covenant with Himself. Covenant is the biblical idea for relationship. So, the Bible describes the relationship of God with His people in terms of marriage, which is the closest and most intimate friendship, or in terms of the family, where God is our heavenly Father and we are His dear children. Those are the ideas that David has in mind here. The Lord is my portion. He gives Himself to me. In the Song of Solomon: "My beloved is mine, and I am his, and his banner over me is love." God is mine. He is my Father. He is my Savior. He is my Redeemer. He is my all. The Lord is my portion. There is tenderness there, relationship, in those words. He is not a father who is distant from his children, a father who is never home and instead sends gifts to his children to try to show his

love to them. And the children think, "I don't want the gifts, father. I want you." God is not that kind of a father. He enters into family-relationship with His people.

And that is the importance in the text of the name "LORD," in capital letters, or "Jehovah," in the

original Hebrew. That is the name of God's covenant love and faithfulness to His people.

The psalmist rejoices in this. "The Lord, Jehovah, is my portion and my inheritance!" Is that true for you? Do you believe that, as a Christian? It is quite staggering for us to think about, is it not? God Himself is mine. And yet, that is His promise in His Word to me as one of His children. He is not going to give me just things to show me His love. He is going to give me Himself. A young man asks the hand of his girl friend in marriage and she says, "Yes." And he rejoices. She's mine. She is giving herself to me. And in salvation, that is what Jehovah has done to His people—He has given Himself to them.

How does He do that to me as a Christian? How does God become my portion? He does that first in Jesus Christ. What does Jesus do? Paul says in Galatians 2: He loved me and gave Himself

served other gods, who broke the Sabbath day, who offered false worship, and on and on—people who did this because they did not set the Lord before them. Just think of David. He saw Bathsheba. He took his eyes off God and he looked on her. Later he confesses, in Psalm 51, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned." That sin started when he did not set the Lord before him.

Then, on the other side of it, we have an example of Elijah, one who did set the Lord before him. In I Kings 17:1, Elijah stands before Ahab and he says this: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth before whom I stand, there shall be no dew nor rain these years but according to my word." It was because he lived before the Lord that he had the confidence to stand in the presence of the wicked king Ahab and speak this word of judgment.

And, again, in Scripture there are many examples of this. Just think of what Hebrews 11 says of those who "saw him who was invisible," God. Hebrews 11:33-38 says this: That they, seeing Him who was invisible, "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in

fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens," and so on. They had this firm resolve to set the Lord before them.

Do you have that firm resolve?

Then, in the second place, this resolution is something that we do constantly as believers. "I have set the LORD *always* before me." This is not something to do only sometimes, when things are going well, or when things are going really rough, but always. There is nothing that deters the psalmist from setting his eyes on God. This gave him obedience in temptation. This gave him contentment in lack, joy in grief, strength under the burden, love for the enemy when hated, endurance through sickness and pain and trial and poverty. When we set the Lord before us, we will have this strength and this constancy to persevere. Always. Do you always set the Lord before you?

Then, third, this is an active resolution, not just something that we say with our mouth, but something that involves our whole life. "I'm a Christian. I believe in God. So I will set Him before me." The one who sets before him the Lord is constant in prayer. He is one who devours the Word of God. He is one who delights to be with the people of God. His whole life, his personal life and his public life, his physical life and his spiritual life, are

the glory that awaited Him. And this gave Him the strength and the hope to persevere.

So, this is, first, a Messianic word: “I have set the LORD always before me.” But this is also the confession of the believer. As a believer you say, and as a believer I say, “I have set the LORD always before me.” That is a resolve, a resolution, that we make as believers. We do this, first of all, intentionally. It is a personal determination not to turn our eyes from God. It is a personal determination to turn our eyes from the things of this earth to God.

Now, you and I realize, of course, that whether we look to God or not, God is always before us and God is always with us. And His eye is always on us. But, it is only when we look to Him that we will obey and have strength and hope. Otherwise we will despair.

Let me give you a couple of examples from Scripture. There is Jacob. Jacob, you remember, was hated by his brother Esau, and Esau had determined to kill Jacob. Jacob’s parents advise him to flee. So Jacob is running away from his parents to the home of his uncle Laban in Haran. And you remember that first night, when he went

out all alone. He stopped in the darkness to sleep. He lay down and he thought to himself, “I am all by myself here.” And he was afraid. Then in a dream God came to him with a ladder and the angels going up and down to heaven. And God, at the top of the ladder, speaks promises to him: “I will go with you and I will bring you back to the land of promise.” What was the cause of Jacob’s fear? It was that he did not have the Lord before him. He did not have this firm resolution. Yes, God was there. And God was not going to fail him. But because he did not look to God, he was terrified and afraid. When he woke up, he said, “Surely God is in this place and I knew it not.” And he called the place Bethel, the house of God. He put up there a memorial to remind him always of the presence of God. He did

...it is only when we
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not set the Lord before him and that caused fear. But then, understanding that Jehovah was before him, and determined to look to Him, he had confidence to go on.

There are, of course, many other examples of such in the Bible as well. There were believers who were afraid, or angry, who stole, who killed, who committed adultery, who in pride were lifted up, who

for me. In that statement, Paul has in view His giving, sacrificial death on the cross—His dying as my substitute to bear the wrath of God against my sin. This is how God gives Himself for me. He becomes my Savior. And the death of Jesus Christ for me gives

me the legal right to every spiritual and eternal blessing in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus secured my inheritance for me. David has that in mind as he writes here. Peter says in Acts 2 that, as David wrote this psalm, he knew the promise of God that of his flesh God “would raise up Christ to sit on his throne.” And that is why David wrote this psalm. God gave David a great inheritance by giving him Jesus Christ from his loins to be his Savior and his Lord.

Second, God becomes my portion in this life by giving me the Holy Spirit. This is a beautiful idea because it means that my inheritance is not something that I have to wait to enjoy, but rather, it is something that I possess already and enjoy already in this present world. The Holy Spirit is called in Scripture “the earnest of our inheritance” (Eph. 1:14). By giving us the Holy Spirit, God gives to us already in this life the experience of

some of the heavenly joys that we will have in the future—freedom from sin, for example. He changes our sinful inclinations

*By giving us the Holy Spirit,
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and desires so that, with the Spirit, we are fruitful Christians. We have love and joy and peace and patience and long-suffering and so on—

things not natural to our experience as sinners.

That is the beginning of heaven, is it not? That is our inheritance. And by the Holy Spirit God also changes my life and my perspective so that I am not grounded in time and the things of this earth, but rather, I live by faith and as a creature of hope, with my eyes on God and glory. He creates in me a heart that seeks after the things above. That is your experience as a believer of the heavenly and the eternal and spiritual inheritance. And that is created in you by the Holy Spirit, who is the earnest of our inheritance.

And then, third, I would say this, that as our portion God gives us all things. Our inheritance includes everything in heaven and in earth. Now, that does not mean that everything comes into our possession. But it does mean that the sovereign Lord over all things, who has

given Himself to me, rules all things and directs them for my profit as His child. The Lord, who is our inheritance, is the God of sovereign providence, and He works everything in history for His people. In II Corinthians 4:15 Paul says, "For all things are for you sakes." Or, in Romans 8: "All things work together for good to them who love God."

And that means, too, in the fourth place, that our inheritance is secure. In Psalm 16: "thou maintainest my lot." Sometimes a tenant has to take care of the property in which he lives. Or sometimes someone who has an inheritance has it in trust, which means that it is in the care of somebody else. But our inheritance is secure in the hand of God Himself. We have an inheritance incorruptible, that fades not away. And we are kept by the power of God through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time (I Pet. 1:4, 5). God Himself, who is eternal and who binds Himself to His people in Jesus Christ and who, because of His eternal, unchanging love in election, will keep and preserve us and our inheritance to eternity. The security of our salvation rests not in ourselves or in something that we have done, but in the God who has saved us, who has given us the Holy Spirit, who has given us His Son, and who is faithful and whose

promises in grace are eternal and unfailing. The Lord is the portion of my inheritance. Thou maintainest my lot.

Well, as a child of God, if you know and confess that, it will produce in you contentment, contentment in your life. And that really is what David is expressing in verse 6 when he says: "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." He looks at what God has given him and he says, "I couldn't wish for anything else. There is nothing better." He is satisfied in God with his spiritual and eternal inheritance.

And that is contentment. To say, "I'm happy, whatever my situation, whatever the Lord has given, or whatever the Lord has kept back from me. This is a Christian grace. It is not tied to our earthly lot, but it is given by the Holy Spirit, who causes us to see and enjoy and long for things spiritual. Contentment is not something based on possessions or pleasure or clothing or health or your relationships in marriage or your job or how much money or wealth you might have. But, as Paul puts it, "In whatsoever state I am, I have learned therewith to be content." Contentment is to receive what you have from the Lord, to be thankful for it, to be glad and to rejoice. Habakkuk says, "Though the fig tree shall

He knew that it would please the Lord to bruise Him. He says in Luke 9:22, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day." That word at the beginning of the verse: "The Son of man *must*." He understands that God had laid this necessity upon Him.

Yet we read in Luke 9:51, "It came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." He did not waver from the will of God for Him. He set the Lord before Him and He was obedient then to the Father's will for Him.

In the second place, looking to God was the source of strength for Him throughout His life. We should not think that Jesus' life was easy. No, it was a life of intense suffering. Hebrews 5:7, 8 speaks of His strong crying and tears and the agony that He experienced. Remember the agony of the Garden of Gethsemane when He cried out: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." The agony of His suffering again was that death was in front of Him. That comes out even in Psalm 16. In the end of this psalm the psalmist is speaking of facing death: "My flesh also shall rest in hope... thou wilt not leave my soul in hell." This is what was

in front of Christ all through His ministry. And, having the Lord before Him, there was strength for Him.

There is a certain mystery in the suffering of Jesus Christ and His death. There was nowhere for Him to turn—no man to help Him. The disciples all forsook Him. He was hated and rejected of all. And then He turned to God, the God who punished Him, and He cried out even on the cross: "My God, my God." This was His strength.

Then, third, looking to God was what gave Him promise beyond the suffering of His death. This is what sustained Him. Hebrews 12 says that, for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross. In the last verse of Psalm 16, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore," He did not simply see God as one laying on Him a heavy hand of wrath, but as a God of love and a God of promise. He saw Him as Jehovah God. "I have set the LORD [Jehovah] always before me"—the God who would be faithful, the God who would care for Him. There would be a reward for Him beyond His suffering and beyond the cross. Think of the joy that was before Jesus Christ in His exaltation. This is what God presented Him on the Mount of Transfiguration. He saw there

when He prayed. For example, in John 11 Jesus prayed at the grave of Lazarus. And He said this: "I thank thee, Father, that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always, but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou has sent me." Jesus is saying that He was in constant communion with God. And He only spoke this prayer out loud for the sake of His audience.

And because Jesus was in this constant communion with His Father, He was never deterred by man from what God had put before Him. When Satan came to Him with temptations, when the unbelieving Jews wanted to crown Him as king, when the leaders of the Jews persecuted Him, Jesus always had His eye upon God. For example, in John 5, after Jesus had performed a miracle on the Sabbath day and He was persecuted and questioned over this, He said in John 5:17: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." He is saying, This is the work of God that I am busy with. Or, in Matthew 16, after Peter's beautiful confession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and the disciples now understand that He is the Messiah, Jesus explains to them that this means that He must go up to Jerusalem and suffer and die. And Peter says to Him, "That shall never be."

And Jesus' response, having God before Him, is: "Get thee behind me, Satan. Thou art an offence unto me. Thou savorest not the things that be of God but those that be of man." Jesus understood what the Father's will was for Him.

It was this constancy of living in God's presence that gave Jesus strength throughout His ministry. Because God was at His right hand, in the words of Psalm 16, He could not be moved. That comes out in three different ways in the ministry of Jesus. First, this motivated Him to obey the will of God, who sent Him. This is why He rebukes Peter and says, "Get behind me, Satan." He says in John 6:38, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." Throughout His ministry, Jesus was never a man-pleaser. He did not ask, "What will people think of Me?" Or, "How will this help My reputation or status or acceptance with the multitudes?" No, He lived before God and He delighted to do the will of God.

Now, what was God's will for Him that He had to obey? Whenever He looked to God, there was always only one word for Him from God and it was this: "That He must die." Jesus was deeply aware of this. He was a man of sorrows. He was acquainted with grief. He read the Old Testament Scriptures.

not blossom, though there be no herd in the stall, yet will I rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation." Contentment is realizing that my peace is not tied to an earthly portion but to my heavenly inheritance, to the fact that God Jehovah Himself has given Himself to me. That ought to lift my heart in praise and gratitude to God. If you struggle with contentment as a Christian, this is what you must remember.

David expresses that in two other words in verse 5 when he says that God is his portion and his cup. He gives us here the imagery of a sumptuous feast. Imagine sitting down at a king's table like Joseph's brothers did in Egypt, and a portion of food is given to each, a sumptuous feast. And the wine is poured out in abundance. As a guest you feel honored and you eat and you drink and you are full. That is how the Lord is described here to us—as our portion and our cup—who satisfies us to overflowing so that we are grateful and thankful and so content.

That means that we can let go of earthly things. Martin Luther wrote: "Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also. The body they may kill; God's truth abideth still." Can you say that? If you can, that is contentment.

And so, in conclusion, I want to encourage you as a child of

God to make the Lord your portion, to find your pleasure and your fullness in Him. Nothing else in life can satisfy. We find our fullness in God by looking at ourselves and our emptiness, by sorrowing over sin, by repenting of our world-mindedness, by not making a god and an idol of the things of this world, by coming in faith to Jesus Christ, in whom are found all the riches of salvation. Then we find our delight in the Word of God. We find our delight (v. 3), in the people of God. And in that we find contentment. You see, contentment is not only negative so that you say, "I've learned not to covet. I've learned not to want things that I don't have." And you have a fatalistic perspective on your life: "I can't change it anyway." No, contentment is finding your fullness and your satisfaction in the Lord.

May God give to you to be able to say with David the psalmist, "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup. Thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."

Let us pray.

Father, give us to know Thy covenant love and communion and to find our fullness in Thee. We pray it for Jesus' sake, Amen.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

February 15, 2015
No. 3763

The Lord Always Before Me
Rev. Rodney Kley

Dear radio friends,

In the last couple of weeks we have considered the first part of Psalm 16. Today we continue our study in this psalm by looking together at verse 8. There David writes: “I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.”

The psalm is sometimes called “A Psalm written for those preparing to die.” That is because there is no obvious distress in the life of the psalmist that he responds to as he writes this psalm. In fact, this is very much a psalm of joy. But at the end of this psalm, the psalmist does speak of death, and the prospect of his own physical death. Next week we will look at those verses. But in the verse that we consider today, we see this psalmist’s resolve, in the face of whatever comes his way, to keep the Lord always before him; and in doing that, he will find his strength in the Lord.

The verse that we consider is made up of two parts. First, the psalmist expresses a firm resolve. He says, “I have set the LORD always before me.” To set the Lord before him means to

have a deliberate and conscious resolve to have God, front and center, in all of his life and in all of his thinking, so that the thought of God captivates all of his senses and all his activity and focus in life. Notice the psalmist says he will do this always, in every situation, whatever comes his way, in every pleasure, in every trouble. Nothing in his life will be a distraction, to take his thoughts and his mind and his eye of faith away from God. In every responsibility, in every relationship, in every temptation, in every difficulty, even in the prospect of death, he will not be distracted from the reality of God.

In the second part of the verse, the psalmist speaks of the resulting strength: “because he is at my right hand,” he says, “I shall not be moved.” The psalmist is in a solid position. He is strong. He does not waver or doubt, and that is because he knows that the Lord God, Jehovah, the faithful, unchanging covenant God, is at his right hand and is his helper.

Today I want to look at this verse from two perspectives:

first, from the perspective of Jesus Christ, and then from the believers’ point of view.

We have already said in the earlier messages that this psalm is Messianic. We know that especially from the last verses of the psalm, which are quoted by Peter in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost, those words where Christ says, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” What is true of those verses is true of the entire psalm: it is a psalm spoken by Jesus Christ—also the words of our text for this message. They are written by David and are his confession and his resolve, and David said them with many imperfections. But Christ did not. He set the Lord always before Him in a way that has never been true of any other man. And there is nothing, for us as believers, so encouraging and inspiring as to look to Him. Hebrews 12 says we look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. When Peter quotes these words in Acts 2, he quotes them this way from the Septuagint, which is a Greek translation of the Old Testament Bible. I quote: “I foresaw the Lord always before” Me. And that is the idea of these words: setting before or foreseeing the Lord. The psalmist is saying that God was always in front of him—that the first thing that he saw wherever he saw anything

else was God. He never was distracted by anything from his perspective and view of God.

And when we look at the life of Jesus Christ we certainly see this. In Luke 2, at the end of the chapter, we have Christ’s first recorded words, when He was just twelve years old. His parents had taken him to Jerusalem for the Passover feast, and a couple of days after they had headed home they noticed that He was missing from the group that was traveling with them. So they go back to Jerusalem to find Him. And they ask Him, Where have you been? They are distressed. And His answer is: “I must be about my Father’s business.” His resolve, even as a child, was to do the work that God had sent Him to do. He saw and He understood God’s purpose for Him. And He wanted to get busy with that right away.

This is something that we see throughout His entire ministry, particularly in His prayer life. The gospels tell us that when everybody else went to bed, Jesus, exhausted at the end of the day, would find a quiet place to pray. And He prayed infinitely more times than the gospels record. Every thought that He had was a prayer to God. He was always sensitive to the presence of God. His life was one of perpetual communion with God. It was because of this that He could confidently expect that God would hear Him also