



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Psalm 16:1-11

“Pleasant Places Now, Then Pleasures Forevermore”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] So turn to Psalm 16. We’re going to read through this chapter for our Scripture reading. This is a Psalm of David, and David writes,

“Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust. O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not beyond Thee.”

Now I have modified the Authorized Version there from which I'm reading this morning. You will, if you have a New American Standard Bible, you'll read in yours, “I have no good besides Thee.” For those of you that have the Revised Standard Version, “I have no good apart from Thee.” Now, we'll lay a little stress on that later on so I'd like for you to notice it particularly. David says,

“My goodness extend beyond thee; As for the saints that are in the earth, they are the excellent, in whom is all my delight. Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into

my lips. The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.”

That word for lot is the word not for inheritance. That word is sometimes translated lot, inheritance. We have it in this Psalm. This is a word that means a lot that is thrown, like a die. And what the Psalmist is saying is that the Lord is the one who throws the die for him. And therefore since the Lord throws the die for him, if I may be permitted a little bit of language that the men will understand at least, the die always comes up 7 when the Lord throws it. So, that’s what he means, the Lord is the one who maintains the lot for him. It would be nice if that were true, would it not be? Well it is true.

“The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. (Or as the New American Standard Bible has it) “My heritage is beautiful to me. I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins (or my mind) also instruct me in the night seasons. I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.”

Isn't it a marvelous thing to think? I'm not going to say too much about this later on, but that’s a marvelous thing to meditate upon. “My flesh shall rest in hope,” because the future is ours. Everything is optimistic for the believer. The future is secure. Fret if you will all the way to the future, it’s still good for the believers in Christ. But it’s much better if you’ll enjoy it now as well. “My flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in sheol; 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; in thy right hand.” The Hebrew text reads, “In Thy right hand.” This word could be translated “at,” but more

likely “in.” “In Thy right hand, there are pleasures for evermore.” And again it’s the picture of the Lord with a full hand extending blessings to us constantly. “In Thy right hand are pleasures forever.” Let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we give Thee thanks for Thy word and the marvelous promises that are found within it. Who could ever, Lord, express to Thee what these mean to us? And we know, Lord, they mean far more to us than we have ever comprehended, perhaps shall ever comprehend. What a faithful God Thou art. We thank Thee that Thy right hand is full of pleasures, true pleasures, spiritual pleasures, for the saints of God, and how marvelous that Thou hast guided us to him whom to know is life eternal and brought us into the family of God possessed of all of these promises. O God, we worship Thee today. We praise Thy name.

And Lord we ask Thy blessing upon the whole church of Jesus Christ today. As David says, “All of his delight is in the saints of God.” We thank Thee and praise Thee for the body of Christ. Bless the body of Christ, supply the needs, and bring us all safely home.

We pray for our country. We ask, Lord, that by Thy grace we may have opportunity to proclaim the gospel freely in this land. Deliver us from those who would seek to take away our freedoms, to impose other philosophies and other cultures upon us that come not from the Lord God in heaven. May by Thy grace we be given insight to the extent that we thereby are able to show even more plainly and clearly that truth comes from the Lord God in heaven, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray for this church, for its leadership, for its members, and friends and the visitors who are here today, we pray for them. Bless the ministry over the radio and through the tapes and through the written page and through the testimonies of each of the believers.

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We pray especially too for those who are ill and sick. We remember especially the Griffins. We pray Thy blessing upon them. Manifest Thy might and Thy power in their lives.

And Lord, now, we pray Thy blessing upon us as we sing, as we reflect upon David's great Psalm, written ultimately of him who loved us and gave himself for us, through whom, alone there is eternal life. We pray in his name. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today as we turn to Psalm 16 is “Pleasant Places Now, Then Pleasures Forevermore.” The 16th Psalm is written of a great saint. We really ought to put that in capital letters for the ultimate reference is to our Lord. It's written of a great saint in danger of death. That's why the Psalmist prays, “Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust;” and why in the 10th verse he says, “For thou wilt not leave my soul in shol; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” His boldness before the tragedy of his apparently approaching death leaves us rather breathless as he meditates upon the God whom he trusts. He has no depression because he knows his doctrine. Those who know their doctrine do not know depression.

Now I know there are many people who would say, “Well I know a lot of doctrine, or I know a person who knows a lot of doctrine and he has depression.” No, he has his depression because he doesn't know his doctrine. He doesn't really know his doctrine. To know the doctrine is inclusive of trust in the doctrine. It's through the experiences of life that many of us come to realize we don't know our doctrine which we are able to express, and upon which we may have passed an exam of sorts, but we come to know through the experiences that lead us to realize that our doctrine is truth.

So, here is a saint in the historical situation of which we are ignorant, who has come to know his doctrine, and because he knows his doctrine in the midst of his trials and troubles, his trust holds. I say we don't know the historical situation, it's possible that David wrote this when he was fleeing from Saul and possibly also in the light of verse 4,

“Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.” It’s possible that it was the time in 1 Samuel, chapter 26 where David says he was exhorted by some of his enemies to give up his God and his heritage in the land and go follow other gods. Speaking to Saul, David said,

“Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant. If the LORD have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering; but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the LORD; for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go, serve other gods.”

So it may have been associated with that temptation posed to him by some of the other Israelites to leave his heritage in the land.

The New Testament without equivocation informs us that this Psalm was written of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you read Peter’s great sermon on the day of Pentecost looking at verses 25 through 32, you’ll note Peter cites this particular Psalm and says it has to do with the Lord Jesus Christ, and then Paul also, in his great sermon, cites this passage and states that it refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. So we have New Testament reason for thinking that this Psalm is a Psalm that ultimately refers to Christ.

One might ask, “How did this come about, that the apostles reading this Psalm, pointed those who heard them to the Lord Jesus?” Well think of this, David had had a direct revelation that his throne would be established forever. It was something that was so big for David that even at the time of his death he comments upon it. He says,

“The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by

clear shining after rain. Although my house be not so with God; (that is the covenantal promises have not yet been fulfilled) yet (David said) he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: (now notice what David says about these promises, he says,) ‘This is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow’.”

In other words, David came to the realization through his experiences that in that life he would not realize those promises but nevertheless he still is able to say, “This is all my salvation and all my desire, although he has not brought it to pass yet.”

Now David had that direct revelation from the Lord. In the four glancings of the prophetic vision that was given to David as a prophet, he saw the holy one in the coming age as its ruler and its head. He saw also the holy one going down into the tomb as he writes here in this particular Psalm. He also sees the holy one rising again. He is told by the Lord God that all of his hope rests in him. And it was on this sublime Messianic hope that the Psalmist built his own hope. That is it was built on the word of God. And of course that which is true of the members of the Messiah is true in its highest sense of the head and is only true of the members because they are joined to the head. So those who are in Christ have the promises because they are in him.

So David wrote, as Peter says in Acts chapter 2, as a prophet, and he foresaw the resurrection of Christ. That may seem remarkable and of course is incredible to the world of our day. They cannot really believe that someone could foretell the future. Their philosophy does not make room for that. Their philosophy is that that is impossible. Of course that’s a faith stance, isn’t it? And so they live by faith too. Not grounded in the revelation of God, but grounded in human reason. So, David couldn’t know that.

Socrates has some very interesting things to say which might even make rationalists think twice. It was that great man’s idea that even the men of his day, at times, were given some prophetic vision and were able to see into the future. Some of

the things that those men wrote are remarkable things indeed. If you want to read a Christian man's interpretation of that read C.S. Lewis, in which Mr. Lewis subscribes to that, that some of those pagan prophets were occasionally given a little bit of an insight into the future and said things that may ultimately have been traced to God's common grace to men. Keeble, a well known professing believing man and a poet himself said of the pagan poets, “Thoughts beyond their thoughts to those high bards were given.” This, of course, is a Psalm and a poem written by a believing man and is therefore the work of God, the Holy Spirit in divine revelation and one that we may trust.

Now, there are certain things said in this Psalm that I want to try to emphasize. Some years ago I spoke on this Psalm. I don't want to repeat everything that I said then, but there are a few other things that I'd like to stress here. I'd like for you to turn now to the Psalmist request for divine preservation in verse 1 through verse 3. Martin Luther says, “He begins as one seeing his ruin before his eyes, abandoned by men and abandoned by the angels.” “Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.” One can say this I think without question that the beginning of the relationship of God and the basis of our approach to God is found in that expression, “In Thee do I put my trust.” It is not the merit of the Psalmist upon which the Psalmist depends, it's upon the merit of the Lord God. And he puts his trust in him.

The natural man is always thinking about merit. He's always thinking that ultimately he can be justified before God by the things that he does. The Lord Jesus had a number of encounters of men who felt just that way. For example, the lawyer who came to him stood up and said to him tempting him, “Master, what should I do that I may inherit eternal life?” Jesus replies, “What is written in the law? How readest the law?” He answering said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind and thy neighbor as thyself.” And Jesus replied to the lawyer, you've answered right. Do this and you shall live, except that he said, “Keep on doing this and you shall live.” Now he should have just stopped at

that point and should have said to the Lord, “But I cannot do this,” but that would be a believing man who, recognizing his sin, would recognize also his weakness and his need, but he’s not that kind of man. So, in the desire to justify himself, he said to the Lord, “Who is my neighbor?” And the Lord Jesus tells him the story of the good Samaritan. He said, “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.”

You remember the story, a certain priest came by and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. A Levite, when he was at the place came and looked at him, passed by on the other side.

“But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.”

The lesson is very simple. The lesson is simply this, it’s impossible for any man to inherit life on the basis of his good deeds. And then instead of just stopping at that point and saying it’s impossible to inherit life on the basis of what we do. He goes on to unfold how a ruined sinner can be saved. Illustrates it by the Samaritan who takes the wounded man, brings him to the inn, cares for him and then even when he leaves, leaves something for him in order that after he is gone he may be cared for because Jesus wanted to teach that the savior is one in whom but for his ruin and misery the sinner would despise and rebel, but in him there is eternal life. And of course the motive is nothing more than the infinite compassion of the Lord God himself.

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Now when the Psalmist says, “Preserve me, O God: for in Thee do I put my trust,” in essence he has the same attitude as that our Lord expounds in that great parable, as we sometimes sing “Just as I am, without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me, and that Thou bidst me come to Thee O Lamb of God, I come, I come.”

“Preserve me, O God: for in Thee do I put my trust.” The Psalmist goes on to say, “O my soul,” he has a little conversation with his soul. Have you ever had a conversation with your soul? Well all of us have. We talk to ourselves back and forth. Sometimes we say, “Why in the world did you do that?” or various other kinds of things more significant go on within us. The Psalmist says, “O my soul,” that’s not in the original text. In the original text all that is found here is simply, “Thou hast said,” but there’s no other Thou except the Thou of his soul, and so the translators have, I think, properly inserted, “O my soul.” “Thou hast said unto the Lord,” notice, “The Lord,” “Yahweh,” the covenant keeping God, “Thou art my Lord,” “Adonai,” which means something like, “sovereign master.” “Thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my master,” “sovereign master,” and that’s a lovely thought to remember.

When I was speaking in a Bible conference many years ago in California, Mount Herman, one of the speakers was a friend of mine, much older than I, who now is with the Lord, went to be with the Lord when he was in his 90’s, Dr. Carl Armerding, well known around Dallas. He was speaking on a Psalm at that time and he referred to the fact that we are servants of the Lord God, and in fact he went on to emphasize that we were bond slaves. And afterwards a woman came after Dr. Armerding after one of his, I think it was this message, if not one previously given, and said to him, “I can’t understand the philosophy of life which rejoices in being a bond slave.” I remember Dr. Armerding saying afterwards, “She was not married.” [Laughter] And then Armerding said, “Don’t pity us, we’re enjoying it, enjoying being a bond slave, and here, “O my soul, Thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my sovereign master.” He enjoyed it too. What a wonderful

thing it is to be the bond slave of the Lord God. And then the Psalmist says something that is most significant.

When I grew up, as you well know, I learned Shorter Catechism, not a whole lot of the wording do I remember because I have not tried to study it since, and I was very small. I grew up in the First Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama and then later on in the First Presbyterian Church in Charleston, South Carolina. And my father was a Presbyterian elder and he felt that we should go to Sunday school and study and I did. Incidentally I was in Birmingham recently about two weeks ago having the funeral for my mother-in-law, and two ladies were there. And they were one of them was a Sunday school class member with me, a believing lady, and her sister, younger sister, who also went to that church and who supported me through theological seminary voluntarily. They decided that when I left the business in Birmingham and came to Dallas to go to theological seminary that they ought to help and so they went me a tithe, they didn't know the biblical teaching yet, that's what they were taught. They sent a tithe of their salaries every month. I'm happy to report that they kept getting raises too. [Laughter] And the amounts that came every month were a little larger and I was enabled by Thy grace of God without appealing to anybody going through seminary to get out of theological seminary without a debt of one dollar. I do know experientially that if by

Thy grace of God you are brought to trust in him, he will meet your need. Well they were there and I enjoyed speaking with them, but it is a marvelous thing to be the bond slave of the Lord. Now I got off on that. I don't remember what I was talking about, but [Laughter] we'll have to get back to the Psalm. It may come to me later on and I'll say, “Why did I do that?” [Laughter]

Now there is an important text here though and I was talking, I remember, about the Westminster Confession of Faith when I don't have any good thoughts it comes back to that. You see? “The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.” “The chief end of man is to glorify God.” Now let me say this. We cannot really glorify God in

the sense that we make him more glorious than he already is. You must see, of course, that if God is the totally glorious God, he cannot have any excess glory that you give to him. He already has all the glory there is. Why does Scripture speak then about glorifying God? Well what we are by Thy grace of God enabled to do because we're creatures is not to increase his glory, it's infinite. But we can, through our experiences and the sovereign determination of God, be the means for the declaration of the glory that he possesses. That's the sense in which we glorify God. We don't make him glorious. We are the instrumentalities by which his glory becomes known. That's how.

Now that word from the Catechism says, “Glorify God and enjoy him forever.” Now when the Psalmist writes here, “Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to Thee,” or “I have no good besides Thee,” or “I have no good apart from Thee,” it means simply my Christian friend, and my non Christian friend too that everything that transpires in our life, even down to every thought we have is ultimately a means by which ideally the glory of God should be declared. That means everything we do from morning until evening is ultimately a means by which God's glory, not may be increased, but may be declared, may be made known. What a difference that would make if we kept that before you constantly, that our lives are the means by which the Lord God is glorified, everything, your business, you're getting in your automobile, driving to your work, your conversations, the work that you do, the meditations that you have, the thoughts that you have, those are the means by which the Lord God in heaven is glorified. You cannot increase his glory but you can have that marvelous privilege of being the means for the declaration of it. What a difference if we really had this attitude. “My goodness does not extend beyond Thee.” “I have no good apart from Thee.”

Well I think the Psalmist must at this point have thought, “Well the saints are there, other saints besides me.” So he adds, “As for the saints that are in the earth,” as over against the heavenly beings above, “As for the saints in the earth, they are the excellent ones in whom is all my delight.” Isn't it marvelous? Here is David thinking

about the fact that he has no good apart from God, but then he remembers all these other saints about him, and he says, “Yes, the saints on earth, they are excellent and my delight is in them.” I cannot help but think of that incident in Matthew chapter 12 when the Lord Jesus Christ after some ministry is approached by some of his own people and as he was talking,

“His mother and his brethren (Matthew says) stood without, desiring to speak with him. Someone came to our Lord and said your mother and your brethren stand without desiring to speak with you. He said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?”

And he didn't wait for an answer, but “he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples,” who were standing about, and Mary and the brothers of the Lord were there off on the side, he stretched forth his hands to the disciples that were in front of him and he said, “Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”

Well that's really something to think that those who are the Lord's are those who are closer to us than those who are members of our own family if they are believers. Now, of course we're not trying to say that family relationships are not important. We're just simply saying this, that believers are more significant and should be closer to us in our thoughts and affections than even our family if our families are not believing people. That's the oneness of the body of Christ. That's the eternal relationship that we have. And it's a marvelous thing to think about that we shall have that eternal relationship with them. So the Psalmist cannot help but say, “As for the saints that are in the earth they are the excellent ones in whom is all my delight.”

God's the center. Those that are nearest him are nearest to one another. Sometimes we need to rethink all of our relationships in the light of the word of God

because I'm quite sure that many of us feel those closest to us are our family members and even when many of them may not be believers.

Now at this point it's clear that the Psalmist had been at least in a situation which tended to make him think that he had enemies and that they were trying to do away with him to cause him to leave his inheritance with the children of Israel and the land. And so he writes in verse 4, “Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips. The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.”

Now, it seems clear from this that what David is really saying is simply the sacrifices of the false gods are something that he has no desire for. He only desires to have the Lord God first in his life, in other words, something like God-centeredness is the thing that moves him. That's a marvelous word I think that one could speak an entire lecture on this point and point out that present day gods are just the opposite. We live in the days of the gods of materialism, the gods of philosophy, positivism, existentialism, nihilism, etcetera, etcetera, a long list of the philosophies of men, relativism, activism, all types of things that our generation would substitute for what David might call God-centeredness, trusting in him.

The apostle said, “For me, to live is Christ, to die is gain.” That's the philosophy of the Psalmist. I think the most makob movement in theology that has ever come was the recent movement a generation ago of the God is Dead movement, and men got real excited in the Christian church about the God is Dead movement because they didn't know exactly how to grab the handle by which they may show that that was just foolishness. But you know in the light of the Psalmist, I think he would have very quickly seen to the heart of it and he would have said, “Look individuals who say God is dead are simply, to put it very simply, are confessing that they have not found him. And so that's really essentially what it was, a movement of individuals confessing that they had not found the Lord God.

John the apostle writes, “My little children keep yourselves from idols.” And so the Psalmist speaks about that, and he says he will not offer offerings to those gods, “The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup, Thou maintainest my lot.” Well that starts him off in thinking about the blessings that he has and so, he says in the 6th verse, “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places.” Look Christians the lines have fallen unto you in pleasant places. They have. You have a goodly heritage. The Hebrew text actually says there what the New American Standard Bible says, “My heritage is beautiful to me,” a goodly heritage, the fellowship of the Lord God, the fellowship of the saints of God. Further, and for those of you who are troubled in the slightest, listen to what he goes on to say. “I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel.” Now if there is anything that characterizes the evangelical church today it is the fact that the evangelical church does not have any counsel to offer. And so the evangelical church is fleeing outside of the Christian church largely for counseling. David said the Lord God had given him counsel.

John White is a well known Christian psychiatrist, Canadian, has been a professor in a Canadian institution. I attended a meeting, in fact it was a kind of a panel discussion after papers had been given in which he responded, and he said, “Look,” to an audience largely of Christian professors and preachers, he said, “Look, you are the source of the kind of counsel that people should have. The Christian church has failed by coming to us and to psychologists for counsel. Counsel is found in the divine revelation. You pastors and preachers, you are the ones who are failing. You have the true light.” It’s a very interesting thing, and a very really exciting thing. I already had two or three of his books. I went out and I bought another one. But that’s what the Psalmist says, “The Lord has given me counsel.” He’s given me guidance, and in fact, the fundamental guidance of the Lord God was the guiding of David to faith in Christ, so that he could say, “In Thee do I put my trust.” Further, “I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.”

Now I want to say that this is likely David’s thought, but he expresses it in a way that could not fully be of David. No David, as great a saint as he was, could ever say, “I have set the Lord always before me,” continually before me. No can say that except the son of David. He did. He started out by saying, “I must be about my Father’s business.” Every act, every thought, every word spoken in the will of God until finally he said, “Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit.” He kept the Lord always before him. David could never do that. Paul could never do that. Paul confessed that. Others can never do that. No one of you can do that. This is a text that ultimately refers to the Lord Jesus Christ in a typical way.

I think of a funny story, but it illustrates the point. I attended a meeting twenty years ago in which Leon Morris was the speaker in the Parks Street Church of Boston. We’d been in some meetings at Gordon College and on Sunday morning he was speaking, and he, in his sermon, told of General McAuliffe, who in the famous incident replied to the Germans command to surrender at Bastogne, in Belgium with one word, “Nuts.” Incidentally the General Hasso von Manteuffel came to the United States later on. They asked him about it and his relationship to McAuliffe. He said, “We became just colleagues, not winner or loser.” But anyway he made that famous reply, “Nuts,” and managed to survive the incident.

At any rate he told about this, and he said later on when General McAuliffe was back after the war, he was invited everywhere to give speeches, and there were banquets for him. And every time they told the story. Well he got very tired of it, hearing that story. And so word got out somewhere or other that he was very tired of it and he was invited to one place and at this place the woman in charge determined that no one would utter the despised word, “Nuts” during the whole time. So he was brought. They had their festivities. He spoke. Nothing was said about the whole thing until finally saying good bye to the General; she thanked him for coming and being so entertaining. And her last words to him were good night General McNuts. [Laughter] Well, that word just got

out just like that thought or that idea or that act will sooner or later be the responsibility of us and we have violated the law of God. Only the Lord Jesus could possibly say, “I have set the Lord always before me because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved.”

Now the final words are really a ratification of the Davidic covenant. I wish I had time to turn back to one of the passages, either Psalm 89, 1 Chronicles chapter 17, or 2 Samuel 7 in which those promises are given. In 1 Chronicles chapter 17 in the unfolding of the promises of the Davidic covenant there are seven great statements made by Nathan whose is voice of the Lord, and they’re all in the future tense with the sense of the command, the imperatives, “I will do” so and so. “I shall do” such and such. Seven great things are set forth which someone has called seven rays of light, boldly affirming deliverance from death and resurrection. He states in the 9th verse, “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.” That’s what it means to believe the word of God. “My flesh shall rest in hope.”

Look as I said when we were reading the Scriptures, my Christian friends, if you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ your future is secure. It’s settled. You shall be in the presence of the Lord. There are two ways for this to come to pass. You can start doubting it if you wish and live a doubting disappointed, discouraged, defeated kind of life, but if you have really trusted in the Lord, you’ll be there. I don’t mean a sinning life, if we live a sinning life in the sense of the kinds of sins set forth in the New Testament, that’s pretty good evidence we haven’t really believed, but it is possible for us to live a life with a lot of doubt, a lot of discouragement and defeat. Take Jacob, Jacob went through all of those years until finally as he’s about to enter the presence of the Lord, he looks back and he realizes he’s been wrong the whole time. And he says, “The God who fed me all the days of my life.” But it’s much better to realize that earlier in your life. And so how much nicer it is to learn to trust in the word of God. And as the experiences of life come and they’re not good for Jacob’s or Abraham’s or David’s or even our Lord, it’s the

word of God that guarantees our future and the promises of God that sustain us in the experiences of life. “My flesh shall rest in hope.”

He says, “For thou wilt not leave my soul in shol; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One,” he’s a saint, not the saint, but a saint, “the 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.” And the Lord is constantly extending his blessings to us if we just want to look at Scripture and live in the light of them.

Now I confess when I think of pleasure forevermore and particularly this expression, “Thou wilt show me the path of life,” think of that, a guide, Thou, me, on the way, “Thou wilt show me,” a path that I am to follow and it leads to life. “Thou wilt show me the path of life.” He trusts in the Lord to make that plain to him. We don't know what that path is. We do not know what we must go through, but we know that in his presence is fullness of joy and in his right hand, as he pours them out, are pleasures forevermore.

Now I confess I think of one passage in the Book of Revelation. In the 7th chapter and along about the 14th verse where, you remember, John has this little conversation and it’s about the individuals he sees in heaven. “One of the elders answered him saying, ‘What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?’” He sees, in his vision, people who have come from every tribe, kindred, tongue, and nation. And the elder asked John what are these? Where did they come from?

“And I said unto him, Sir, you know. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and they’ve washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in the temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the

Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”

I can imagine a theologian saying, “Wait this is for the tribulation saints.” Yes that’s right. It’s for those who have come out of the great tribulation. But the principle that is set forth here is the principle of the word of God. It’s just spelled out for them. We’re perfectly justified in taking these things as references to our future as well. And what a marvelous picture it is. Think of things down here on the earth for the sheep, bleak, herbage, in the wilderness, brookless channels, fallings snows, angry tempests, the roar of ravening wolves, they’re known no more. The sheep are in heaven. Glorious picture of unbroken sunshine gleaming pastures, pellucid waters, living fountains--did you notice the strange change of metaphor? He says, in this particular verse he says, “They are before the throne of God,” and he states that, “The lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall shepherd them.” Who ever heard of a lamb shepherding? But this is a figure designed to teach us that the one who shepherds is the lamb who was slain, that is the sacrifice, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. He is the shepherd, and it’s just John’s way, or our Lord’s way who gave him this revelation of reminding us that there must be a continual remembrance of the fact that the reason we have any blessings my Christian friends is because he died for sinners as the Lamb of God. That’s why. Everything comes from him who shed his blood for sinners. It’s suggestive also of the perpetuity of his human nature. He’s one of the flock as well as being the Lord God. He’s one of us. He’s the Lamb, the God-man forever.

But further, “Fountains of waters,” not one, “Fountains” infinite progression in joys in heaven, infinite progression in felicities, from pasture to pasture, from fountain to fountain, variety and diversity. He feeds. He leads. He wipes away tears, no heaven without him even though the Arch-angels were there and heaven must be an exciting place. Think of it; just let your mind and heart revel in the figures of the apostle trying to

tell us something that is impossible for us to understand at the present time. Someone has said this is the final fulfillment of, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” Here we have the explanation of the crevices into which we’ve fallen. The attacks we’ve experienced, the thorns we have run into. “Tears in heaven,” one might ask? You mean “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes,” there are tears in heaven? No, I like the figure of one of the expositives who said, “You know this is like a great rain storm that has come in a forest, and then the sun suddenly comes out.” We had a very small picture of that this week. We had a rain storm, when was it, Thursday? And then if you’d come out early Friday, the sun was out, but the leaves were still wet, and they were still dripping. And so it reminds us of the fact that when we get to heaven, we will, as Jacob, come to understand the God which fed me all my life long unto that day was feeding us all along. As one of the preacher friends that I used to know, he used to say, “Brother, God certainly has a big handkerchief.” He does. And there we shall learn the reasons for so many things that we don't know the reasons for now.

Well our time is up. I'm sorry. I'll pass over the conclusion. It's only a homiletical device anyway. The important thing for us to remember is that statement about David's God centeredness. “I have no goodness beyond Thee.” May the Lord give us to understand something of that, and may we enjoy what it is to know him in his revelation and to know that he has guaranteed through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ to meet all of our needs.

If you're here today and you've never believed in our Lord Jesus, if you don't know the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, then you do not know him who is the ratification of the Davidic covenant in his death, burial and resurrection, and who is at the right hand of the throne of God dispensing at the present time blessings to his saints, come to him. Believe in him. Give yourself over to him acknowledging the fact that you have not always kept the Lord before your face. You have not loved the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your strength, with all your mind, and with all

“Pleasant Places Now, Then Pleasures Forevermore” by S. Lewis Johnson
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your soul, and if you have not you are lost and headed for a Christless eternity, but you may have the forgiveness of sins as you come to Christ, confess your need, acknowledge it to the Lord. Receive as a free gift, in grace, the forgiveness of sins, justification of life, able to say with David and the prophets and the Psalmist, “I have no good outside of Thee.” Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for the word of God...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]