

Before me and beside me

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[0 : 00] Now for our text let us turn to the book of Psalms and to Psalm 16. Verse 8, Psalm 16 and verse 8, let us read from verse 5.

The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup. Thou maintainest my lot. The limes have fallen unto me in pleasant places.

Yea, I have a goodly heritage. I will bless the Lord who hath given me counsel. My reins 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 rejoices. My flesh also shall rest in hope.

These words in verse 8, I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand I shall not be moved.

[1 : 00] It has been said that contented minds are as scarce as snowflakes and harvest. We would like to think that that is not so.

But it may well be so. And in any case, a person with a contented mind, a contented thankful person is a person who ought to be listened to.

For such a person's judgments and opinions are more likely to be reliable and trustworthy than those of a person who is overwrought, disturbed or discontented.

Now the psalmist was the former. He wasn't overwrought or disturbed or discontented. We read in this psalm about the contentment of the psalmist.

And if a contented mind is a mind that is, that, whose opinions are more to be relied upon, then we are to listen to the mind and to the opinions and thoughts of this contented man.

[2 : 08] For the psalmist knew what the apostle Paul knew, that godliness with contentment is great gain. And here in the 16th psalm, he is counting his blessings.

And he gives thanks to God. And that's why we are gathered here this evening, to give thanks to God. And here the psalmist gives thanks to God for his future inheritance, of which the psalm speaks, about the great hope of glory which he has.

But more than that, he not only speaks and gives thanks for his future inheritance, but he thanks God for his present inheritance and for his present possession, for what he has right now, here and now.

That's what he's speaking about here. He says, my lines, my boundary lines, that is, my boundary lines have fallen in pleasant places. Surely I have a goodly heritage, I have a delightful inheritance. And he is speaking of his present inheritance. The boundary lines that go around his inheritance while he lives on earth. And he blesses the Lord for the instruction and the counsel that he got from the Lord regarding these matters, even in the night seasons.

[3 : 27] What a grateful and contented man he shows himself to be in the 16th psalm. And if we are inquiring people at all, if we are inquiring minds, we are bound to ask, what was the secret of his contentment?

Why could he bless the Lord so much? Why was he thankful for his lot and for the boundary lines that marked his possession and inheritance, even in a world of sin? And I think the answer to that question is in verse 8.

I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Then notice verse 9 in the conclusion. Therefore, my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices.

My flesh also shall rest in hope. So the contentment and the gladness is in verse 9 and the reason for it is in verse 8.

And it's verse 8 we now look at. I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. So let us think of the Lord then in this line.

[4 : 34] First, he is before me. Then, he is beside me. And then, therefore, nothing shall move me. Now, there's the structure of it.

He is before me. He is beside me. Therefore, nothing shall move me. And it may well be that God will use these words at the end of this communion season to bless us and to send us on our way rejoicing with a thankful heart for what we have received of our inheritance in the past and what you have received over the past weekend as the down payment of the ultimate inheritance that lies before every believer.

Well, he says, he is before me. Now, of course, this is true in terms of time. For we read there in Colossians chapter 1 that he is before all things and by him all things are held together.

We read that he is the first begotten of all creation. He is the firstborn of all creation. In terms of time, he is before us.

And as the living word, as the word of God, he was in the beginning with God. Before the world was. So then, in that sense, in terms of time, he is before us.

[6 : 01] Well before us. And while that is wonderfully true, it is not the truth that is taught here. Because you notice that the psalmist does not say, he is before me, but the psalmist does say, I have set him before me.

So he is before us, not only in terms of time, but here he is before us in terms of Christian experience. This is something that we have done if we are believing people.

We have consciously and deliberately and knowingly set the Lord before us. It is the activity of faith. It is the experience of the soul. And faith is not real faith.

That does not set Jesus before the eyes of the soul. And not just now and then, here and there, on the odd occasion, but as the psalmist says, always, I have consciously, by my faith, set the Lord always before us.

He is before me. He is at my right hand. Therefore I shall not be moved. He is before me.

[7 : 18] Now having said that, I want to make these two points. And the first is this, that He is before us. and we have set Him before us, by our faith, He is before us as the great objective for living.

He gives purpose to life. For the believer, He ought to be the great purpose for His life, the great objective for living. whom I lie in the heavens, whom I lie in the heavens high, that the Lord alone, and in the earth, whom I desire, besides Thee, there is none.

As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord, for to me, to live, is Christ.

Now there you have a triple testimony, regarding this very thing, that He is speaking about, in this first part of our text. There you have the testimony, of the psalmist, in Psalm 73, of Joshua, the leader of the armies of Israel, and of an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, a cross section of the people of God, and they are speaking with one voice, and they are saying the same thing, only in different words.

They have one thing in common, that the Lord, was consciously before them, before their eyes, before their minds, before their hearts, and that very fact, motivated them, and that very fact, was clearly a center of them, in everything they did.

[8 : 59] That the Lord was before them, that was their motivation. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord, I have no one on earth, whom I desire, besides the Lord, for to me to live, is the Lord Jesus.

That's the motivation for life, that gives purpose for living. And we've got to remember this, that that was precisely, what the Lord Jesus himself, did. He was only 12 years old, when he said, don't you know, that I must be about, my father's business.

That was a great objective, to perform his father's business. And then, in manhood, he said, I came, not to do my own will, but the will, of the father, who sent me.

That was his great motivation, to do the will of the father. And that must be ours. And that was the apostle. Just let us look for a moment, at these tremendous words, of the apostle, that gave purpose to his life.

Paul says, for to me, to live, is Christ. Christ. Now, whatever else that means, it means that, for Paul, Christ was ever, before his eyes.

[10 : 12] He was ever, in his thoughts. And Christ was, ever the reason, for all he did. As an apostle of the Lord. And if the Lord Jesus, is really before us, and our faith, has set him, before the eyes, of our soul.

Then that means, for us, that we are, beholding his person. We are trusting, in his work. We are feeding, on his word. We are serving, in his kingdom.

We are waiting, for his coming. I believe, all these things, are involved, in this little place, for to me, to live, is Christ. And how can I say, all these things?

Because, as the psalmist, says elsewhere, my eyes, upon the Lord, continually, are set. He is before me. And, he is before me.

Not just in some, neutral, mindless way, but he is before me, as the great objective, for living. I wonder, can we say that, this evening, as we, go down from this, communion season.

[11:18] He gives purpose, to my life. And then, the other thing is this, that he is before us, not only as the great objective, for living, but as the giver of all good.

He is the giver of all good. And that may seem to you, a very commonplace thing, to say. But really, it's not. It's a very important thing. It's a very necessary thing.

And it's anything, but commonplace. Because, the one, whom we have set, before us consciously, by our faith, is the one, in whom we live, and move, and have our being, and without whom, we can do nothing.

He, the one before us, is the one, who is forever giving, and giving, and giving. And his giving, was never greater, than when he gave, himself, for us, and to us.

Now, having established that, that, he is before us, as the giver of, every good thing, that we have, let us, let us make these, one or two points.

[12:27] That means, that he is before us, as the pole star, of our light. That's what he gives us. He guides us, as the pole star, would guide the mariner.

Now, the pole star, is the nearest, conspicuous star, to the north pole. And it shines, in the dark, in the darkest night. And it often, and often, guided the ancient mariner, through, through, through, the trackless ocean.

Long before, the sophisticated, equipment, was available, that we have today. Now, that is what, Christ, before us is. he guides us, through the trackless seas, of life, to the eternal shore.

And as surely, as it was a star, that guided the wise men, to Bethlehem, it is the bright, and morning star, who guides us, to Bethlehem, which means, the house of bread.

And more than that, it is this bright, and morning star, that guides us, to the city, which has foundations, and which is built, on the eternal shore. He is the pole star, of our life, and takes us, through the trackless, ocean of life, to that city, that is ready, prepared, for those who believe.

[13:51] We can also say this, that, he is before us too, of course, as the great shepherd, of the sheep. John makes that so clear, in his tenth chapter. The shepherd, goes before his sheep, says John.

The shepherd is before them. And they see him, the sheep can see the shepherd, and the shepherd, know the sheep, and he knows their names, and he calls his own sheep, by name. But more than that, the shepherd also, who goes before his sheep, knows every precipice, and ledge, and he knows, every crag, and torrent. And he leads on, unerringly, until the foal is reached. That's what Jesus is to us, as he is before us. We have set him there, and he is before us, as the great shepherd, of the sheep, through the blood, of the everlasting covenant.

But he is also, before us, as the captain, of our salvation. And we did about that, in Hebrews chapter 2, and in verse 10. He is the captain, of our salvation.

[14:53] And he is a captain, who was not self-appointed, but who was, appointed by his father, and anointed, king over Zion. Psalm 2.

He was anointed, and appointed, by the Lord himself, over Zion. In other words, as Isaiah puts it, the Lord is the commander, and the leader, of his people.

And he is before us, before our cave, as the captain, the leader, and the commander, of his people. The captain, of our salvation. And we're bound to say this, about the captain, thinking of Hebrews 2.10.

We are bound to say this, that we have, a perfect captain, who makes no mistakes. And we are told that, he was made perfect, through suffering.

He was made perfect, through suffering. Now notice this, he was made perfect, not in the sense, of moral improvement.

[15:55] For that wasn't possible, for he was always, perfectly, perfectly, moral, and upright, and holy. There was no, imperfection in him.

So it's not perfection, in the sense, of moral improvement. But this means, that through his sufferings, he was perfectly fitted, to be our captain, and the leader, and the commander, of his people.

And he's before us. He's not behind us, hiding behind us. He's out ahead. He leads us on. He is a regal captain. Gird thy sword, on thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory, and with thy majesty. That's the one who's ahead of us. And we have a captain, therefore, who leads his people to victory. Listen to what Paul says, in 2 Corinthians 2.14.

Paul says, God, always, causes us, to triumph, in Christ. What does that mean? It means that we are led, as believers, in a triumphal procession, by him, who gives us the victory, and makes us more, than conquerors, through him who loved us.

[17:11] So, this is the one, who is always before us, as the pole star of our life, as the great shepherd of the sheep, as the captain of our salvation. He is before us.

And we have set him before us, by faith. What a blessing faith is. If we didn't have faith, we wouldn't have a captain of salvation, before us. We'll be in a trackless ocean, without any guide, in a desert, without any shepherd, for a hopeless and useless life.

We have set him there by faith, but this is the point. Is this, in fact, true of every one of us, here this evening, in this hall? Have we set the Lord before us?

Is he, consciously, and constantly, before us? Is this where Christ is, in relation to us?

If that is so, if he is before us, then we are behind him, as his followers. But notice this, let us make sure, that we are not, so well behind him, and so far behind him, that we have lost sight of him.

[18:24] For if we lose sight of him, we'll never make it. Let us be able to say, what the psalmist, he is before me. I can see him with my faith, my eyes are upon him, continually set upon him.

I haven't lost sight of him. And if he, since he is before me, here is what the psalmist says, therefore, is my heart glad, and my tongue rejoices.

Now the second thing, he is before me, he is beside me, he is beside me, and indeed, so much so, that he is at my right hand.

He is beside me, he is at my right hand. But, if he is before me, then how can he be beside me?

Is he before me, at one time of the day, and then beside me, at another time? Not at all. But, at one, and the same time, he is before us, and beside us, and all the time, before us, and beside us.

[19:43] But, how can he be ahead of us, as the pole star, and the shepherd, and the captain, and still be at my right hand? The only answer to that is this, because, he is God, and not man.

Man is confined, to one place, at one time. But God, is everywhere. Nothing confines him. And that's the first thing, I want us to notice, very briefly. His presence, is everywhere.

His presence, is everywhere. He is not only, all powerful, and all wise, but he is ever present. He is everywhere present. He is ahead of me, breaking up the way, before me.

He is beside me, holding me, on that way, and he is around me. He is everywhere. My dear friends, this is one of the greatest facts, that our little minds, can be hold upon.

The omnipresence of God. Of all the things, that are, God supremely is. He is everywhere. And that's what we were singing about there, in Psalm 139.

[20:53] The psalmist asks, the rhetorical question, where can I go from your presence? And he knew that he couldn't go anywhere. Because he says, God's presence is everywhere. If I ascend to the heavens, you're there.

If I go down to the grave, you're there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, and settle on the other side of the sea, even there, go out. What a marvelous insight, the psalmist had, into the omnipresence of God.

I'm sure he was given a special insight, into that, as a writer of scripture. But I want to say this, that if we ourselves, are not, to a significant degree, sensitive, of this great fact, of God's omnipresence, that God is everywhere, at the same time.

If we are not sensitive of this, to a significant degree, then this is just a further proof, of our alienation, and our backwardness, and our hardness, and our blindness, that we don't realize it.

His presence is everywhere. But that's not the emphasis, in the text here. The emphasis here, is that his presence is here. He is at my right hand, he's before me, but he's also beside me.

[22:14] And it's the nearness, of his presence, that is the great thought, here for us to grasp. For it's the nearness, of his presence, that makes his presence, a sustaining presence.

Why is he at my right hand? Is it some kind of ornamentation, or something like that? Of course not. He is at my right hand, to sustain me, and to help me, and to be a stay to me, and to maintain me, on my way.

Well, if that is true, we can say this. That he is at my right hand, he is near to me, as an ally to help. As an ally to help.

When the disciples were in the storm, he walked, on the waters towards them, and when he came into the ship, the wind ceased. He was their ally, he wasn't their enemy, he was their ally to help, in the storm.

My dear friends, we don't know what storms, are ahead of us. We know, nothing about the billows, and the raging sea, that's ahead of us.

[23 : 23] We don't know, what a day, well, an hour may bring forth. The people in Bradford, on Saturday afternoon, 52 of them didn't know that, 53 of them didn't know that.

We don't know, what a day, or an hour, we don't know, what storms are ahead of us, but if we are believing people, then, let's hold on to this. Whatever happens, he's at my right hand.

Whatever assaults come to us, from the devil, that kind of storm, in the soul, he's at my right hand, and he's there, as an ally to help. And he's also, at our right hand, as a friend to comfort.

And none of us, is above being comforted. However self-sufficient, and strong, and resilient, and vibrant we may be, not one of us, is above the need of being comforted, at some time or other in life.

And when the Lord Jesus, drew along, and when the Lord Jesus, draws alongside us, in the storms, and the difficulties, then he is to us, what he was to the two men, on the road to Emmaus.

[24 : 34] When he drew us, before he drew, alongside them, they were sad. When he drew alongside them, they were glad. And they said, did not our heart burn within us, as he talked to us by the way, and as he opened up to us, the scriptures.

He is, at our right hand, as an ally to help, as a friend to comfort, and he is at our right hand too, as a husband to support.

At the marriage, the bridegroom, stands beside the bride, and when they take their vows, they take each other by the right hand, to have and to hold, till death do them part.

And our, heavenly bridegroom, will, who is at our right hand, and who holds our right hand, our heavenly bridegroom, will never break that marriage covenant, nor will never break that saving union, so that death will not, not even death will part us.

Because that is a union, that has been made by grace. He is at my right hand. Let's hold on to this as well. He is before me.

[25 : 51] He is beside me. Therefore, nothing shall move me. That's the last point. Nothing shall move me.

I shall not be moved. Not even fear shall move me, or regret, or remorse, or temptation, or loss, or loneliness, or any other, any other known factor, or circumstance, shall move me, because he's before me, and he's beside me.

Nothing shall move me. Let me say two things about that. And the first is, that nothing shall move us, from our Christian profession.

and most people here, perhaps yesterday, made that particular kind of profession, is not the only kind of profession, but sitting at the Lord's table, is a very special kind of profession, a Christian profession.

And are we going to leave the church tonight, and say, and say, in our own strength, nothing will move me, from what I did yesterday. I'll abide by that, to my dying day. My dear friends, that's arrogance.

[26 : 57] And we will prove ourselves wrong. Consistent Christian living, is possible, only because, he is beside me.

It's only because, he's beside me, that we can say, I shall not be moved, from my Christian profession, and from Christian living, from consistent living. I shall not be moved, from my Christian profession, and that is possible, only if the place, at my right hand, is not vacant.

No one can give us, consistency, but the one who gave us salvation. And both the source, of our salvation, and our consistency, in the working out, of our salvation, come from him.

We cannot dispense, with him ever. And if the time comes, when he withdraws himself, from our right hand, if the time comes, when there's, as it were, a vacancy, and an empty space, at our right

hand, then it won't be, consistency, it will mark us, but inconsistency.

And I believe, there is so much, inconsistency, amongst those, who profess the Lord, because he is not, consciously, at the right hand, of such people.

[28 : 24] And if he is, consciously, at our right hand, then that will hold us, that will keep us, from being moved away, from our Christian profession. And one of the great, tragedies of the church today, that is undermining, the witness of the church, is the fact, that so many, are being moved away, from their Christian profession, taking a lower stance, following the world, so that the line, of demarcation, between themselves, and the world, is very, very blurred, and is almost, not there at all.

They are being moved away, from their Christian profession, because in some way, they've lost touch, with the man, of God's right hand, who is not, as, who is not, at their right hand, as once he was.

He is before me, he is beside me, therefore, nothing shall move me, from my Christian profession, and from consistent, Christian living.

My dear friends, let's make sure, that this is true of us, that there's not a vacancy there, at our right hand, otherwise, our life will be marked, by inconsistency, and failure, and sliding, and backsliding, unless he is, at our right hand, and we are conscious, of that every day.

My last point is this, we shall not be moved, not only from our Christian profession, but we shall not be moved, from our sure, and certain hope. From our sure, and certain hope.

[29 : 56] Now we read about that again, in Colossians chapter 1, for example, in verse 23, the apostle there speaks, about being moved away, from the hope, of the gospel.

Moved away, from the hope, of the gospel. That is, from the hope, given by the gospel. From the hope, produced in us, by the gospel. From the hope, derived from the gospel.

From the hope, fed and nourished, by the gospel. Now if Christ, is at our right hand, we shall not be, dislodged, from that hope. We shall not be, shunted as if, but into some siding, away from the bright future, and the ardent expectation, which the gospel gives us.

So long as he's there, at our right hand, we won't be shunted away, from that hope, or dislodged.

For in that same chapter, in Colossians 1, Paul speaks of the hope, that is laid up, for us in heaven, whereof you have heard before, in the word, of the truth, of the gospel.

The hope of the gospel, is the hope, which we hear of, in the word, of the truth, of the gospel. And we shall not, be moved away from it, if he is before me, and beside me.

[31 : 10] Therefore, nothing shall move me, from the hope, of the gospel. And also, nothing shall move me, from that hope, which is an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.

Should the Lord, leave our right hand, then the anchor of hope, will be weighed, and lifted. And then we drift.

But his presence, at our right hand, guarantees, that the anchor is functioning, as it were. And that we shall not drift, or backslide. Now just notice this.

I shall not be moved, from the hope, of the gospel. Nothing shall move me, from hope, as an anchor of the soul. And nothing shall move me, from the hope, of glory.

Again, in Colossians 1, verse 27, Paul speaks about, Christ in you, the hope, of glory. Christ in you, is that hope. Christ at our right hand, is that hope.

[32 : 15] The hope, of glory. With Christ, at our right hand, that hope, will remain, whatever the storms, however dark, however steep the hill, however low the clouds, however strong the wind, however high the waves.

That hope, will never be taken from us, the hope of glory, so long as he's, at our right hand. Our hope, will remain. And that hope, is the hope of resurrection, as the psalmist says here, Therefore my heart is glad, and my tongue rejoices, my flesh also, shall rest in hope.

My flesh, shall rest, it's a resurrection hope. My flesh, shall rest in hope, for thou wilt not leave, my soul in the grave, in the place of the dead. But, the great hope, of the psalmist, was that at, God's right hand, there shall be pleasures, for evermore.

Now, will you notice, in closing, the distinct connection, in the psalmist's mind, between, the Lord being, beside us, and the Lord being, our hope of glory.

There's a connection between, the connection is, being, his being, beside us, as we live here, and our being, with him, as we live there.

[33 : 40] He is, at our right hand here, but then, at the moment of death, we shall be, at his right hand there. Here, with Christ, at our right hand, we shall not be moved, away from that hope.

and there, at Christ's right hand, we shall be moved away, from the full realization, and fulfillment, of that hope.

We shall be like, the church, of Philadelphia, you shall go, no more out. I shall not be moved.

From the hope of the gospel, from hope of an anchor, and above all, from the hope of glory. Nothing shall move me, from that hope, because, he is before me, as the pole staff, and the captain, of my salvation.

And he is beside me, as the friend, who sticketh, closer than a brother. As the heavenly bridegroom, who will never dissolve, the union, that grace has made.

[34 : 54] Until traveling days are done, that union will abide, and abide, throughout the eternal ages. Well, there is one way, of understanding these verses. This verse.

Here we have, a man, full of contentment, and happiness, and thankfulness. He blessed the Lord, for his future inheritance.

And he blessed the Lord, for his present possession. And he, his thankfulness, and his contentedness, brought joy, and gladness.

My heart is glad, my tongue rejoices, my flesh shall rest in hope. Why such confidence, and why such contentment? Because, I have set the Lord, always before me.

And because, he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Let's put our hand, in his hand, and discover, the contentedness, and the happiness, and the thankfulness, that the psalmist had, because of his union, with one who was the same yesterday, and today, and forever.

[36 : 03] Let us pray. O Lord, our God, what shall we render unto the Lord, for all his goodness to us?

We give thanks to thee, for these words, that thou has brought before us, and brought to our minds, from the scriptures. We thank thee, for their practical truth, for their practical application.

We thank thee, that these words, were the source, of the psalmist's contentment, and thankfulness of spirit. That he was a contented, and thankful man.

And such people, when they express opinions, are to be listened to. Help us, Lord, to listen to his voice, for when we listen to his voice, we are listening to thine.

Help us to remember, O God, that thou art everywhere, and yet, because thou art God, thou art beside us, even at our right hand.

[37 : 05] And O Lord, enable us to grasp, this wonderful truth, that we shall not be moved. And when the storms, of life come upon us, and when we feel, that perhaps the bottom, is falling out of our lives, if we are thy people, then may we, ever, remind ourselves, consciously, that thou art before us, and beside us.

And therefore, nothing can move us. Not even the prince, of the power of the air. He cannot command, the almighty. He cannot dismiss, the blessed, and the only potentate, the king of kings, and lord of lords.

He acts only, within the will and permission, of our eternal king. And whatever the temptation, whatever the assaults, whatever the trials, and persecutions, whatever the sorrows, however deep the darkness, however steep the hill, Lord, remind us of these words, of the psalmist, that in the midst of it all, we can have peace, and contentment, and thankfulness, believing, that God is in control, of everything, and that there's nothing, impossible, for him to do for us.

We ask, O God, that thou would take, each one of us, into thy care. We pray for this congregation, we give thanks to thee, for thy servant, and for those, who uphold his hands here.

We thank thee, for their work, and for their witness, in this part of the city. We thank thee, that, they are linked, with us, in the other congregations, in the one work, of the Lord, and that we have, one master, and that we are engaged, in one work, and facing the same direction, and under the same, tutelage, of the spirit of God.

[39 : 06] Draw near, O God, we pray, to all thy people here, and we pray, for those, who as yet are not, thy people, and we long, for the day, when they will become, the people of God. Bless every effort, made here, in the congregation.

Encourage thy folk, strengthen them, and assure them, that what they do, is not in vain, in the Lord. Hear us, O Lord, and bless us, in all our interests.

Remember us, in our, congregational families, and remember us, in our own families. And keep us, in times of temptation, in times of difficulty.

Remember, those who may be, unemployed, with all the tensions, and the trials, and the testings, that that brings, to homes, and to individuals.

Thou knowest, O God, the difficulties, that face, people, whatever church, they belong to, or no church at all. Draw near, we pray, to thy people, who are afflicted people, and who are in need, of a strength, they do not possess, in themselves.

[40 : 14] May they know, the strength, that God supplies, through his eternal son. Hear us, we humbly pray, and part us, each one, with thy blessing. For Jesus' sake.

Amen.