

Acts 2: 25-28 and Psalm 16: 7-11; “Setting the Lord Always Before Me”,
A Communion Sermon prepared by Pastor Paul
Rendall and Delivered on July 3rd, 2011,
in the Morning Worship Service.

I would like us to focus on this one truth this morning, in relation to taking the Lord's Supper; “setting the Lord always before you”. The psalm was written by David, and it was written by him as the person who, in the words of prophecy, represented both the Christ, and all of the Elect people of God. David speaks in the first person singular as though he is referring to himself, and yet we know that he died and was buried and his body experienced corruption, as Peter says in Acts Chapter 2. So this psalm cannot refer to David in all of its particulars because of verse 10 where it says, “You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption”. The Apostle Peter amply proves that David is not the Holy One referred to, here in Psalm 16. But because David was a great king over Israel, who waged war against all of Israel's enemies and overcame them; he was a type of the coming Messiah; our Lord Jesus Christ. It is Christ who is the greater King David over all of His spiritual Israel. It is He who has overcome all of our spiritual enemies; the world, our flesh, and the Devil. And that is why David could write this way. He was writing prophetically of His Savior and Lord; the One who would be the perfect fulfillment of the text in verse 8. Furthermore, because David was “a man after God's own heart”, as a prophet he could also write in a way that would represent all of God's Elect people's thoughts concerning their sure and certain hope of their complete sanctification; of their becoming more righteous and more holy by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ as they walk through this world. And this process of sanctification will most certainly culminate in their attaining to the resurrection of the dead. This is what every Christian believes, or what they should believe. It is these truths which are the basis of our faith.

So what I would have you to understand at the outset of our study, here this morning, is that this verse 8 was never fulfilled perfectly by King David, or by any of God's dear people. But it was fulfilled perfectly by our Lord Jesus Christ on your behalf, as a believer in Him. He was the One who “set the Lord always before Him”. He was the One who “was not moved” at all the things which came upon Him in relation to doing and accomplishing everything necessary to purchase our great salvation. And Christ purchased this marvelous grace for us at the cross so that we ourselves, who believe in Him, should be able to set the Lord before us; and as a result of that, we also should never be moved. This will be a fitting topic for our consideration as we come to the table of our Lord this morning: What did it mean for Christ to set the Lord always before Him? And what does it mean for us to do the same? I believe that there are 3 thoughts from these verses which we should consider. 1st – To set the Lord always before Him, our Lord Jesus received His Father's counsel. (Verse 7) 2nd – To set the Lord before Him, our Lord Jesus consciously and deliberately and continually sought the Father's presence and help, and the Spirit's presence and help, in order to keep all of the commandments of God. 3^{rdly} -The Lord Jesus set the Father before Him by declaring His faith in the sure hope of His own resurrection. (Verse 9) I pray that these precious truths will strengthen your heart and your faith today, so that you will indeed live them out in your life.

1st of all – To set the Lord always before Him, our Lord Jesus received His Father's counsel. (Verse 7)

“I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel; my heart also instructs me in the night seasons.” The counsel of the Father to the Son was something which began in eternity past, it continued after the Son became incarnate, and it will continue until Christ comes back again. The Lord Jesus has always, from eternity past “blessed the Lord for His counsel”, and during

that time of His earthly ministry, 'His heart instructed Him in the night seasons'." I think that we need to see this truth better, so turn with me to Proverbs Chapter 8, verse 22. This chapter speaks of the personification of wisdom as a "she" in this chapter and in Chapter 9, verses 1-6. And it can be taken in that way to refer to the Church, the Bride of Christ in both Old Testament and New, who preaches and teaches the whole counsel of God; who cries out by the gates and at the entry of the city, and at the doors of men's hearts." (Proverbs 8: 3) She is the one who preaches the gospel of Christ; the Christ in whom are hidden "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge", as it says in Colossians 2: 3. Listen to these words which perfectly describe the Father and the Son, and the counsel given and received during that time of the creation of the world and in eternity beforehand: "The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way, before His works of old." "I have been established from everlasting, from the beginning, before there was ever an earth." "When there were no depth I was brought forth, when there were no fountains abounding with water." "Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, I was brought forth; while as yet He had not made the earth or the fields, or the primal dust of the world." "When He prepared the heavens, I was there." "When He drew a circle on the face of the deep, when He established the clouds above, when He strengthened the fountains of the deep, when He assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters would not transgress His command, when He marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside Him as a master craftsman; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him, rejoicing in His inhabited world, and my delight was with the sons of men."

These verses very clearly establish the fact that the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ was brought forth from all eternity as "the only-begotten of the Father". As the second person of the Divine Trinity, He was established by the plan and purpose of the Father, from everlasting. "His goings forth were from of old, from everlasting," it says in Micah 5: 2. He would be the One through whom the world was created. The pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ was there in the beginning with the Father, as a "wise master craftsman". In other words, the Father counseled the Son as to what His eternal purposes were; in terms of the creation of the world and the creation of man in His own image and likeness; that He might have a people for His own possession. The Father made all things for and through the Word (the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ). He spoke them into existence in relation to Him. The Word, the eternal Son of God was delighted in, by His Father, in all the 6 literal days of the creation. The Son was rejoicing from all eternity in the Father's purposes in creation and redemption. He rejoiced in the more specific sense of what He knew that the Father had willed for Him to do and to accomplish in relation to "the sons of men". He blessed the Lord for this counsel. What the Father had purposed, was that His Son would be sent into the world, in the fullness of time; assume human nature in the incarnation, and then perfectly fulfill all of His Father's righteous demands in relation to His law and justice. This would be absolutely necessary because the Father and the Son foresaw; they most definitely knew and ordained it, that the first man Adam and the first woman Eve, would not be able to keep the one command given to Adam when he was created and placed in the garden; not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They would be created with free will, but they would not be able to pass the test of obedience to the one good command given to them. And so, the Father knew that it was absolutely necessary that all things be summed up in His Son, and that He would become their Savior. And not theirs only, but also the Savior of all who would believe in Him for eternal life.

What is very wonderful is verse 31. Here the pre-incarnate Christ is being pictured as "rejoicing always before the Father; rejoicing in the Father's inhabited world, and His delight was with the sons of men." He is "setting the Lord before Him always". There were no men created yet. Yet Christ was rejoicing in them, and in all of the people whom God would create through Him, even though both the Father and the Son knew that Adam, left to himself, would

fall from his original righteousness. The Son, the living Word of God, knew what the Father would have Him to do for all of His Elect; and that was to redeem them; to buy them back from the slavery and the eternal consequences to which their sin would bring them. He loved them with an everlasting love because the Father's counsel to Him, and with Him, was to love them and to rejoice over them, because of what He would do for them. What He was rejoicing over, was what His obedience to God's law, and His sufferings in the place of God's Elect, would accomplish. Let me apply it in this way. When you hear that The Son rejoiced in this great undertaking, on your behalf as a sinner, who has broken God's law, and who has not pleased Him; should you not be always rejoicing that God the Father and God the Son forged such a plan, so that you could be saved? Should you not bless the Lord who has given you this counsel of the gospel? Should you not praise Him today that He is the God who leads you and guides you by His Spirit and His Word into all the blessings of this great salvation which is now yours? Will you not praise the Lord Jesus that you can now set the Lord always before you, because of His grace?

Christ's heart instructed Him on many occasions in the night seasons. Sometimes He would spend the whole night in prayer. He did so before He chose His 12 Apostles. In Luke 21: 37 it says that "He was teaching in the temple, but at night He went out and stayed on the mountain called Olivet," where He often prayed. But what great counsel our Lord Jesus received that night in prayer; the night on which He was betrayed. His heart and His mind were instructing Him then because He had set His Father's will always before Him. In Matthew 27: 38, He said to His disciples, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death." "Stay here and watch with Me." "He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed saying, 'O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.'" His Father instructed His mind and heart that it was not His will to let the cup pass. And Christ received this counsel because He knew that His sufferings would be for our salvation. This was so your sins could be forgiven, and so that you could have your heart instructed in the night seasons in the times when you are praying, and when the hour of temptation is near. Will you not bless the Lord who has counseled you with the gospel, and who has given you Christ? Will you not bless the Lord that our Lord Jesus Christ "set the Lord always before Him?" He did this so that you also might receive the counsel of God's word, be able to set the Lord, in all situations, before you so that you will not be moved in the greatest of trials and difficulties. Will you not praise Him as you partake of the Supper today that because He set the Lord always before Him, so that the Spirit of the Lord at that time rested upon Him; the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord?" (Isaiah 11: 2) This same Spirit; His Spirit, is now in you; working in you to bring about what is pleasing according to the Father's eternal counsel for your life. Your Savior's delight was in the fear of the Lord continually, so that you could be saved and so that you could learn to set the Lord before you. Will it not also become your delight to fear the Lord and to walk in His holy ways? This is what we thank God for today; for giving us Christ who was perfect in this way, that He set the Lord always before Him.

2ndly - To set the Lord before Him, meant that our Lord Jesus continually sought the Father's presence and help. (Verse 8)

"I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved." Here was a conscious and deliberate "setting of the Lord before Him". He sought for the help of God the Father and God the Spirit in order to do this, at every point. If there was anyone who had to face the temptation to give up the mission on which the Father sent Him, it was our Lord Jesus Christ. In Isaiah 53, we read that "He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." We who were sinners "hid, as it were, our faces from Him." "He was despised, and we did not esteem Him," before we received grace. The way that He faced all of these potentially great

discouragements, to His perseverance in doing everything right on our behalf, was to “set the Lord always before Him.” As He learned to do this, He was not moved. The Lord Jesus was not daunted when the false religionists of His day, among His own people the Jews, came to Him time and time again; doubting His claims, disputing His authority, contradicting His teaching, trying to kill Him for speaking the truth to them. He no doubt prayed the prayer of David in Psalm 54 – “Save me, O God, by Your name, and vindicate me by Your strength.” “Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth, for strangers have risen up against me, and oppressors have sought after my life; they have not set God before them.” Unbelieving men do not set God before them. Rather, they oppress other people to get their own way. The Lord Jesus showed us the way to set God before you; it is to pray. The Lord Jesus was the perfect example of prayer. Just as David was treacherously dealt with by the Ziphites of His day, so the Lord Jesus Christ was dealt treacherously with by His own brothers the Jews. They acted the part of strangers to Him; strangers who rose up against Him and delivered Him over to the Roman power to have Him put to death. The Lord Jesus even went beyond David in his prayer in this Psalm. David says in verse 4 – “Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is with those who uphold my life.” “He will repay my enemies for their evil.” “Cut them off in Your truth.” David would have his enemies cut off; the Lord Jesus would have His enemies saved and become those who would become His friends and “uphold His life”. That is; after they had trusted in Him for salvation, they would then, by His grace, become His faithful followers through His having laid down His life for them. This was done for you and me who believe in Him.

Turn with me to Psalm 91, verse 1. How do you face temptations to sin and the onslaught of the evil one when he comes to tempt? This Psalm tells us how Jesus did it; how He did it on our behalf. “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” “I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.’” “Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence.” “He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler.” “You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.” “A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you.” “Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked.” “Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; for He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.” “In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.” “You shall tread upon the lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot.” “Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name.” “He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him.” “With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation.”

We know that this Psalm is referring in the first and most primary sense, to our Lord Jesus Christ, because when Satan came to Jesus, early in His earthly ministry, he quoted the words of verses 11 and 12 to our Lord in order to see if he could draw our Lord off from setting the Lord, His Father, always before Him. Jesus knew that He must overcome the evil one’s temptations or else He would sin and thus become ineligible to become our Redeemer, and thus His life would be tarnished by sin, and a dishonor to the Father. Satan took the very promises given to Jesus to trust in, and he used them against our Lord. It says in both the gospel of Matthew and the gospel of Luke, “Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here.’” “For it is written: He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you,’ and “In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.” But our Lord Jesus passed the test. He set the Lord

always before Him. He answered Satan's partial quote of the Scripture with a verse related to His Father. "It has been said (or written again), "You shall not tempt the Lord your God." This would be to tempt God if He listened to Satan's suggestions to prove Himself to be the Son of God by throwing Himself off the pinnacle of the temple, to see if the angels would catch Him. No, the part of the verse that Satan failed to quote was at the end of verse 11 – "For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways." Jesus set the Lord always before Him, and so He was kept in all of His ways from falling into sin.

The same shall be true for you dear believer, if you will set the Lord always before you. You should always trust in the promises of God to you. Dwell in the secret place of the Most High. Abide in the shadow of the Almighty. Set Him before you as your refuge and your fortress. Say to Him in prayer that He is your God and in Him you will trust. And He will "surely deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence." His truth shall be your shield and buckler, and you shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in the darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday." Why? Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place. Because of this, no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling. Do you set the Lord your God before you in this strong way? It is because of Christ's obedience to set the Father always before Him, that you can; and you will, set Him before you, if you are wise. Now, the time to resolve to do so is now; as you sit and take the Communion. I like verse 14 and it is a good verse to hear and think about as you come down front now to observe the Communion. "Because He has set His love upon Me, therefore I will deliver Him; I will set him on high, because He has known My name." It was because Christ set His love upon God the Father, and loved Him always in His life, and altogether in His death, in order to satisfy the Father's justice to have one holy and righteous man walk the earth; that is the reason that the Father delivered Him; why He raised Jesus His Son from the dead. He then set Him on high at His right hand, and made Him King and Lord of all; gave Him a name which is above every name. Let us come down now to the front and honor Him who the Father has so honored.

3rdly – The Lord Jesus set the Father before Him by declaring His faith in the sure hope of His own resurrection. (Verses 9-11)

"Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope." "For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption." "You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." We have seen this morning how the Lord Jesus set the Lord always before Him in that He always exercised faith toward God; loving God and keeping His commandments; and loving sinful unbelieving people like you and me, enough to lay down His life for us. There is one other way that the Lord Jesus set the Father always before Him. He did these things in the sure hope of His own resurrection and ours. The Lord Jesus knew that He had accomplished all that the Father had sent Him to do, even before He went to the cross. For in John 17: 4 He says, "I have glorified You on the earth." "I have finished the work which You have given me to do." And now glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." Jesus knew that He was going to the cross; but He also knew that He would finish that final work of earthly ministry, and so He prays to have the Father set before Him in that final earthly work which was set before Him of the cross. "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross and despised the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high." Turn with me over to John 19, verse 28. "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I thirst!" "Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth." "So when Jesus received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' "And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit." Even though bearing the wrath of God at that time, He still

had a sure and certain hope of His own resurrection. For in Luke 23: 46 He says, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.” He placed the Father before Him even then; knowing that He was under the curse of God on the cross for our sakes. This is why He could say in verse 9 of Psalm 16 – “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell in hope.” He knew that the Father was pleased, and that He could commend His soul into the Father’s safekeeping. The Father would not leave his body to corrupt in the grave. The Father would not leave His soul in the abode of the dead. Instead, His flesh also would rest in hope, in the grave, in those 3 days and 3 nights. And His heart would be glad. As you partake of the Supper now, will you not thank God that the same will be true of you, as a believer in Jesus Christ? You need not fear death now that you have Jesus as your life. You need not fear your body being placed in the grave, or your soul being in a place of torment when you die. For Jesus has opened heaven’s gate for you, and Jesus will raise your body from the dead some day when He returns. Let your mind feast upon these great truths, and remember to set the Lord always before you as you live this earthly life and finish your course. Remember that faith and love and hope are graces which do this very thing, when you have them in exercise toward Christ. O do set Him before you!