

Psalms 118:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about:
but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.

Analysis

They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. The threefold repetition of s'vavuni (they surrounded me) in verses 10-12 intensifies the description of siege conditions. Hebrew repetition signals emphasis, urgency, and completeness—the psalmist is utterly surrounded with no human escape route. The doubling within this single verse (s'vavuni, gam s'vavuni) stresses the totality of encirclement: completely surrounded, hemmed in, trapped.

Yet the refrain remains identical: **but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them** (b'shem YHWH ki amilam). The repetition of both threat and response creates liturgical rhythm suitable for corporate worship—congregation recounting desperate circumstances while repeatedly affirming confident trust in God's name. This pattern appears throughout Psalms: dire circumstances described in detail followed by unchanging confidence in divine deliverance (Psalms 3, 27, 46, 91). The constancy of the refrain despite intensifying threats demonstrates that faith's foundation isn't circumstantial optimism but theological conviction rooted in God's character and covenant promises.

Historical Context

Siege warfare was ancient Near East's most common military tactic. Jerusalem itself endured multiple sieges: by Assyria under Hezekiah (2 Kings 18-19), by Babylon under Zedekiah (2 Kings 25:1-2), by Rome in AD 70. David experienced

being surrounded at Keilah (1 Samuel 23:1-14) and pursued through wilderness. The psalm's imagery would resonate viscerally with post-exilic Israelites who remembered Babylonian siege, exile, and miraculous return. The New Testament uses similar imagery for spiritual siege: believers are "troubled on every side" yet not distressed, "perplexed" yet not in despair (2 Corinthians 4:8-9), facing schemes of the devil requiring God's full armor (Ephesians 6:11-18).

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does repetition in prayer and worship reinforce faith when circumstances intensify rather than improve?
2. What does it mean practically to 'destroy enemies in the LORD's name' rather than through human retaliation?
3. How can believers maintain unchanging confidence in God's deliverance when circumstances grow progressively worse?

Interlinear Text

סָבַב וַיָּנִי	גַּם	סָבַב וַיָּנִי	בְּשֵׁם
They compassed me about	H1571	They compassed me about	but in the name
H5437		H5437	H8034
אֶמְלֹךְ:	כִּי	יְהוָה	
I will destroy	H3588	of the LORD	
H4135		H3068	

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 88:17 (Parallel theme): They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together.

1 Samuel 23:26 (Parallel theme): And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them.

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