

Psalms 118:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.

Analysis

"It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man." The comparative *tov lachasot b'YHWH mibtoach b'adam* (better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man) contrasts two objects of trust. *Chasah* (take refuge/seek shelter) pictures fleeing to secure hiding place—God as fortress. *Batach* (trust/be confident) means to rely on, feel secure in. *Adam* (man/humanity) represents human resources—whether human strength, wisdom, alliances, or support. The verse doesn't forbid appropriate human relationships but warns against ultimate dependence on human aid. Humans are finite, fallible, fickle—they die, fail, disappoint. God alone offers absolute reliability. Jeremiah 17:5-8 elaborates: cursed is one who trusts in man, blessed who trusts in the LORD—one withers like desert shrub, the other flourishes like tree by water.

Historical Context

Israel repeatedly fell into trusting human alliances rather than divine protection. Isaiah condemned trusting Egypt for military help rather than YHWH (Isaiah 30:1-7, 31:1-3). Jeremiah opposed alliances with Egypt against Babylon (Jeremiah 37:5-10). Hezekiah foolishly showed Babylonian envoys his treasures, seeking alliance (2 Kings 20:12-19). Psalm 146:3 similarly warns: "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help." Yet appropriate trust in human leaders under God's authority is proper (Romans 13:1-7, Hebrews 13:17)—the issue is ultimate versus penultimate trust.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. In what areas of life are you tempted to trust human resources more than divine provision?
2. How can believers appropriately value human relationships and help without making them ultimate?
3. What painful experiences of human failure have driven you to deeper trust in God?

Interlinear Text

טוֹב	לְחַסּוֹת	בַּיהוָה	מִבְטָחַי	בְּאָדָם:
It is better	to trust	in the LORD	than to put confidence	in man
H2896	H2620	H3068	H982	H120

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 40:4 (Faith): Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.