

Psalms 118:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes. This verse parallels verse 8 (better to trust God than man) but escalates from common people to political authorities. *Tov lachasot b'YHWH mibtoach bin'divim* (better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in nobles/princes). *N'divim* (nobles/princes/rulers) represents the powerful, influential, politically connected—those who seem capable of providing security, resources, protection. Yet even princes are mortal, fallible, politically fickle. Psalm 146:3-4 warns: "Put not your trust in princes...his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish."

The contrast isn't between trusting God OR trusting humans but between ultimate versus penultimate trust. Believers may appropriately respect rulers (Romans 13:1-7), work with authorities, and benefit from just governance. But ultimate confidence, final security, foundational trust must rest in God alone. Princes die, policies shift, alliances crumble, political fortunes reverse. Only the LORD offers absolute reliability, unchanging faithfulness, eternal security. This challenges both naive cynicism (rejecting all human authority) and foolish idealism (expecting political solutions to spiritual problems).

Historical Context

Israel repeatedly learned this lesson painfully. When trusting God, they defeated overwhelming forces (Judges 7:1-25, 1 Samuel 14:1-23); when trusting princes and political alliances, they failed disastrously. Isaiah condemned trusting Egyptian

military aid rather than the LORD (Isaiah 30:1-7, 31:1-3). Jeremiah opposed alliances with Egypt against Babylon (Jeremiah 37:5-10). King Asa foolishly allied with Syria instead of trusting God (2 Chronicles 16:1-9). King Ahaz rejected God's sign, seeking Assyrian help that became Israel's oppressor (2 Kings 16:7-9, Isaiah 7:1-17). Even godly kings like Hezekiah erred by showing Babylonian envoys his treasuries, seeking alliance (2 Kings 20:12-19). Political trust consistently disappointed; divine trust never failed those who genuinely relied on Him.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. In what areas of life are you tempted to trust political solutions more than divine provision and wisdom?
2. How can believers appropriately engage in politics and governance without making political movements ultimate?
3. What is the relationship between trusting God and wisely utilizing human leaders, institutions, and authorities?

Interlinear Text

טוֹב	לְחַסֵּם	בַּיהוָה	מִבְטֹחַ	בְּנְדִיבִים:
It is better	to trust	in the LORD	than to put confidence	in princes
H2896	H2620	H3068	H982	H5081

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 31:1 (Faith): Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the LORD!

Isaiah 31:8 (Parallel theme): Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man; and the sword, not of a mean man, shall devour him: but he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be discomfited.

Ezekiel 29:7 (Parallel theme): When they took hold of thee by thy hand, thou didst break, and rend all their shoulder: and when they leaned upon thee, thou brakest, and madest all their loins to be at a stand.

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org