

Psalms 142:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.

Analysis

I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living. After describing his desperate circumstances (v.1-4), David now declares his response—crying to God and affirming two crucial truths about who God is to him: refuge and portion. This represents the turning point from lament to confident trust.

"I cried unto thee, O LORD" (אָלֵיךָ יְהוָה/za'aqti eleikha Yahweh) echoes verse 1 but with important difference. Previously David cried "unto the LORD"; now he cries "unto THEE"—more direct, more personal. The shift from third person to second person indicates intensified intimacy. In deepest crisis, relationship with God becomes most personal and direct. This is prayer's progression: from crying about circumstances to addressing God directly.

"I said" (אָמַרְתִּי/amarti) indicates definite declaration. The perfect tense suggests completed action: David has already made this confession, settled this conviction. This isn't wishful hoping but decided declaration of faith. In the cave, surrounded by limitations and threats, David declared definite truth about God's character and relationship to him.

"Thou art my refuge" (אַתָּה מְחַסֵּי/atah machsi) declares God as shelter, protection, safe place. Machaseh appears frequently in Psalms—God as refuge from danger, storms, enemies (Psalms 46:1, 62:7, 91:2). This isn't requesting that God become refuge but declaring that He already IS refuge. Present circumstances may feel

unsafe, but ultimate security rests in God Himself, not in circumstances.

"And my portion" (חֶלְקִי/chelqi) is profound theological claim. Chelek means share, portion, allotment, inheritance. When Israel entered Canaan, each tribe received a land portion except Levi. Numbers 18:20 declares to priests: "Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel." David applies Levitical language to himself—God HIMSELF is his inheritance, his portion, his ultimate possession and security.

"In the land of the living" (בְּאֶרֶץ חַיִּים/be'erez hachayim) specifies temporal scope. This isn't merely hope for afterlife but confidence that God is David's portion NOW, in present life, in the realm of the living. While many psalms express hope for vindication after death, this declares present possession of God as supreme treasure in this life.

Historical Context

The language of God as "portion" draws from Israel's land inheritance theology. When the twelve tribes divided Canaan, each received territorial allotment except Levi. Deuteronomy 10:9 explains: "Wherefore Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren; the LORD is his inheritance, according as the LORD thy God promised him." While other tribes possessed land, Levites possessed God Himself as their inheritance. They received support through tithes and offerings but owned no land—God was enough.

David, though from Judah not Levi, applies this Levitical language to himself, recognizing that knowing God is greater wealth than possessing land, property, or earthly security. This was particularly significant while hiding in a cave, dispossessed of home, property, security. In poverty and exile, David declared God is his portion—sufficient, satisfying, supreme treasure.

Psalm 73:25-26 expresses similar conviction: "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Lamentations

3:24, written during Jerusalem's destruction and exile, declares: "The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him."

Jesus taught this principle throughout His ministry. He blessed the poor in spirit and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:3, 6). He warned against storing earthly treasures rather than heavenly (Matthew 6:19-21). He asked: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). Paul counted everything loss compared to knowing Christ (Philippians 3:7-8).

For believers throughout history who have lost everything—property confiscated, families destroyed, freedoms removed, lives threatened—this declaration has sustained faith. When everything else is stripped away, God remains sufficient. He is the portion that can never be taken, the treasure that transcends all earthly loss.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What does it mean practically that God is your 'portion'—your inheritance, allotment, supreme treasure?
2. How does declaring God as refuge and portion change perspective during circumstances that feel unsafe or impoverished?
3. What might believers pursue as 'portion' instead of God—what lesser treasures compete for ultimate allegiance?
4. How does the Levites' example—possessing God rather than land—challenge contemporary materialistic values?

5. What would it look like in practical daily life to live as if God truly is your sufficient portion?

Interlinear Text

אֶל יְיָ יָצַע קוֹלִי	יְהוָה הִי	אָמַרְתִּי אֵלֶיךָ	מִחֹסֶיךָ
I cried	unto thee O LORD	I said	Thou art my refuge
H2199	H413 H3068	H559	H859 H4268
וְלִי חֵלֶק	בְּאֶרֶץ חַיִּים		
and my portion	in the land	of the living	
H2506	H776	H2416	

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 16:5 (References Lord): The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.

Psalms 119:57 (References Lord): Thou art my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words.

Lamentations 3:24 (References Lord): The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

Psalms 91:2 (References Lord): I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

Psalms 27:13 (References Lord): I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

Psalms 46:1 (Parallel theme): God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

2 Timothy 4:17 (References Lord): Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

Psalms 56:13 (Parallel theme): For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?

Psalms 73:26 (Parallel theme): My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

Psalms 46:11 (References Lord): The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

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