

Psalms 59:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Because of his strength will I wait upon thee: for God is my defence.

Analysis

Because of his strength will I wait upon thee: for God is my defence. This verse marks a crucial pivot from describing enemies' violence (v.3-8) to confessing confidence in God. "Because of his strength" (uzzo, עז) refers to the enemy's strength, might, and power. The Hebrew is literally "his strength I will watch for you" or "regarding his strength I will keep watch for you." The enemy's very power drives David to watchful dependence on God.

The translation is debated; some versions render it "O my strength" (referring to God), but the Hebrew supports "his strength" (enemy's power). Either way, the meaning is profound: confronted by overwhelming enemy strength, David doesn't despair but turns to God with heightened vigilance. The enemy's might doesn't terrify David into paralysis but motivates him toward watchful trust in divine power.

"Will I wait upon thee" (elekha eshmerah, אֶלְךָ אֲשִׁמְרָה) uses shamar, meaning to watch, guard, keep, observe—active, alert waiting, not passive resignation. This is the same word for keeping watch during military guard duty or shepherds watching flocks. David maintains vigilant expectation of divine intervention, watching for God's action as a sentinel watches for dawn.

"For God is my defence" (ki Elohim misgabbi, כִּי אֱלֹהִים מִשְׁגָּבִי) provides the reason for watchful waiting. Misgav means high tower, fortress, secure height, stronghold. This same word appears in verse 1 ("defend me" = "set me on high").

God Himself is David's elevated fortress—not a fortress God provides but God Himself functioning as impregnable defense.

The verse expresses paradoxical faith: precisely because enemies are strong, David waits on God. Human weakness and enemy strength become occasions for demonstrating divine power. Paul would later testify: "When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10). God's strength is perfected in human weakness, His power most clearly displayed when believers face overwhelming opposition with no resource but God Himself.

Historical Context

The concept of 'waiting on' God is central to Old Testament faith and worship. Isaiah 40:31 promises: 'They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles.' This isn't passive idleness but active, expectant trust—maintaining vigilant hope in God's promised intervention even when circumstances appear hopeless.

Ancient military sieges illustrate this well. When cities were besieged by superior forces, defenders watched walls day and night, vigilantly expecting either enemy attack or allied relief. Israel often found itself in such positions—surrounded by powerful enemies (Assyria, Babylon) with no earthly hope of deliverance. Waiting on God meant maintaining faith that divine intervention would come, watching expectantly for God's saving action.

The fortress imagery resonated deeply in ancient warfare. Before modern artillery, well-positioned fortresses on elevated terrain were nearly impregnable. Jerusalem's location on elevated terrain surrounded by valleys made it naturally defensible. Yet Psalm 59 emphasizes that God Himself—not stone walls or strategic location—is the believer's true defense. Human fortifications fail; divine fortress never does.

For exilic Israel, this verse provided crucial perspective. Babylon's overwhelming military strength had destroyed Jerusalem, demolished the temple, and carried Judah into captivity. Yet the faithful maintained that God remained their defense

despite the kingdom's fall. Jeremiah's counsel to settle in Babylon (Jeremiah 29:4-7) while waiting for God's promised restoration embodied this watchful waiting—living faithfully in present circumstances while expectantly watching for divine deliverance.

New Testament believers face similar call to watchful waiting. Jesus commanded: 'Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh' (Matthew 25:13). Peter urged: 'The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer' (1 Peter 4:7). Vigilant expectation of God's action characterizes faithful living in every age.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does enemy strength become a reason to 'wait upon' God rather than a reason to despair, and what does this teach about faith's response to overwhelming opposition?
2. What is the difference between passive resignation and active, watchful waiting on God, and how does the Hebrew word for 'watch' illuminate this distinction?
3. How can recognizing God as 'my defence' (my fortress, my stronghold) transform fear into confident expectation during times of threat?
4. In what ways does human weakness and enemy strength create opportunities for God's power to be displayed more clearly?
5. How can we cultivate the kind of vigilant, expectant waiting on God that David models here, watching for His intervention as a guard watches for dawn?

Interlinear Text

בְּ זֶה
Because of his strength H413
H5797

אָשָׁם בָּהּ אֲלֵיכָם
will I wait H3588
H8104

אֵלֶּה יְמֹנֶה
upon thee for God H430

מִשְׁגָּבִי
is my defence
H4869

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 9:9 (Parallel theme): The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

Psalms 62:2 (Parallel theme): He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.

Isaiah 12:2 (References God): Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.

Isaiah 40:31 (Parallel theme): But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Psalms 27:14 (Parallel theme): Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

Psalms 59:17 (References God): Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy.