

Psalms 71:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For thou art my hope, O Lord GOD: thou art my trust from my youth.

Analysis

For thou art my hope, O Lord GOD: thou art my trust from my youth. This verse personalizes hope and trust—God Himself is the object, not merely what He provides. 'My hope' (tiqvati, תִּקְוָתִי) comes from a root meaning to wait expectantly, like a cord or thread connecting present circumstance to future fulfillment. The psalmist's hope isn't wishful thinking but confident expectation based on God's character and promises. Calling God 'Lord GOD' (Adonai YHWH, אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה) combines the title of sovereign authority with the covenant name, emphasizing both God's power to fulfill hope and His commitment to do so.

'From my youth' (mineur'ai, מִנְעוּרַי) indicates lifelong trust—the psalmist has relied on God from earliest years, not just in old age. This testimony of sustained faith encourages perseverance. Proverbs 22:6 advises, 'Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.' This verse provides testimony to that principle's truth—early training in trusting God produces lifelong faithfulness, even through difficulties.

For Christians, Christ is 'our hope' (1 Timothy 1:1, Colossians 1:27). This isn't merely hope for salvation but hope that is personified—Jesus Himself is the 'blessed hope' (Titus 2:13). Those who learn to trust Christ early in life establish a foundation that sustains through later trials. However, it's never too late to begin trusting God—whether from youth or old age, today is the day to make Him your hope and trust. The thief on the cross trusted Christ in his final hours and heard, 'Today shalt thou be with me in paradise' (Luke 23:43).

Historical Context

Ancient Israel emphasized transmitting faith to the next generation. The Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) commanded parents to teach children God's commandments diligently, incorporating faith formation into daily rhythms. Festivals like Passover included explicit commands to explain their meaning to children (Exodus 12:26-27). Psalms were teaching tools—families sang them, memorized them, and passed them to children, creating multigenerational faith communities.

The phrase 'from my youth' appears throughout Psalms as testimony to early faith formation (Psalm 25:7, 88:15, 129:1). This wasn't merely nostalgia but evidence that early spiritual foundations sustained believers through later crises. Job testified, 'For inquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers' (Job 8:8)—looking to previous generations' faith sustained present trust in God.

Jewish bar/bat mitzvah traditions (though developing later) formalized this principle—at age 12/13, youth took personal responsibility for covenant faithfulness, building on parental training. Jesus' childhood visit to the temple (Luke 2:41-52) at age twelve demonstrates this pattern. The early church emphasized catechesis—systematic instruction of converts and children in Christian faith—recognizing that early formation creates lasting foundations. Augustine's *Confessions* credits his mother Monica's prayers 'from his youth' for his eventual conversion, demonstrating the long-term impact of early spiritual influence.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

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Psalms 119:166 (Hope): LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.

Jeremiah 17:13 (Hope): O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.

Jeremiah 14:8 (Hope): O the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?

Romans 15:13 (Faith): Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.

Psalms 13:5 (Faith): But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.