

Psalms 91:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

Analysis

I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. This verse shifts from third person observation (v.1) to first person declaration—personal testimony of faith. The psalmist models what dwelling in God's secret place looks like: vocal confession of trust and intimate personal relationship with God.

"I will say" (אָמַר/omar) is emphatic future: "I myself will declare, I will confess." This isn't silent, private belief but vocal, public testimony. Romans 10:9-10 connects salvation with confession: "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus...thou shalt be saved." Faith unexpressed remains untested; confession strengthens conviction and witnesses to others. In crisis, spoken truth combats fear and doubt.

"Of the LORD" (לְיְהֻדָּה/laYahweh) uses God's covenant name—the personal name revealed to Moses meaning "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14). This is Israel's covenant-keeping God who has bound Himself in faithful love to His people. Using Yahweh emphasizes relationship, not merely belief in deity generally conceived but trust in the specific God who revealed Himself through mighty acts and gracious promises.

"He is my refuge" (מְחַסֵּה/machsi) repeats the shelter imagery from verse 1, but now it's personal possession: "MY refuge." Machaseh means shelter, protection, place of safety. This moves from theological truth (God provides refuge) to personal

appropriation (He is MY refuge). Many acknowledge God's power generally while failing to trust Him personally. The possessive pronoun makes it intimate.

"And my fortress" (וְעַמְצָדָתִי/umetzudati) adds military imagery. Metzudah means stronghold, fortification, defensive position—a fortified place providing protection from enemies. While refuge suggests hiding place, fortress suggests impregnable defense. Together they present complete security: God both conceals from danger and defends against attack. David, familiar with wilderness strongholds during years fleeing Saul, understood fortresses' strategic importance.

"My God" (אֱלֹהֵי/Elohai) intensifies the personal relationship. Not just "God" but "MY God"—covenant relationship, personal possession, intimate belonging. This echoes Ruth's declaration to Naomi: "thy God shall be my God" (Ruth 1:16), and anticipates Jesus's resurrection declaration to Mary: "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:17). The God of the universe becomes MY God through covenant relationship.

"In him will I trust" (בְּאָבֹתִי/bo evtach) concludes with volitional commitment. Batach means to trust, be confident, feel secure, rely upon. The imperfect tense indicates ongoing, habitual action: "I will continually trust." This isn't one-time decision but sustained posture. Trust is the heart's response to God's character—knowing His refuge and fortress nature produces confidence to rely upon Him completely, transferring security from self-effort to divine faithfulness.

Historical Context

Psalm 91 reflects covenant theology central to Israel's identity. God repeatedly identified Himself with His people using possessive language: "I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jeremiah 31:33). This reciprocal relationship—God claiming Israel, Israel claiming God—distinguished biblical faith from pagan religion where deities remained distant, capricious, requiring manipulation through ritual.

Ancient Near Eastern cultures sought to control their gods through magic, incantations, and elaborate ceremonies. In contrast, biblical faith centered on

covenant relationship based on God's gracious initiative and faithful character. Israel trusted Yahweh not because they controlled Him but because He had proven faithful through exodus deliverance, wilderness provision, and covenant promises.

The language of refuge and fortress resonated deeply in ancient warfare. Cities required strong fortifications—thick walls, strategic positions, defensive towers. Jerusalem's location on elevated terrain with steep valleys provided natural defense, enhanced by David's fortifications. Yet the psalm emphasizes God Himself as fortress, not human engineering. When Assyria besieged Jerusalem (701 BCE), Hezekiah's fortifications seemed inadequate against Sennacherib's massive army. Yet God delivered through divine intervention, not human strength (2 Kings 19:35).

Early church fathers saw Christ fulfilling Psalm 91's promises. Augustine noted that Satan's quoting verses 11-12 to tempt Jesus demonstrated the psalm's messianic significance. Jesus, the true dwelling-in-God's-secret-place, experienced perfect divine protection through death to resurrection—protection not from suffering but through it to ultimate victory. Believers share this protection through union with Christ.

Throughout church history, persecuted Christians proclaimed "He is my refuge" when earthly security vanished. Roman martyrs, medieval saints facing plague, Reformation believers burned at the stake, modern martyrs facing execution—all testified: earthly fortresses fail, but God remains faithful refuge. Some experienced miraculous deliverance; others experienced faithful presence through death to resurrection. Either way, God proved Himself trustworthy.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. What is the significance of shifting from third person description (v.1) to first person declaration (v.2), and how does vocal confession strengthen faith?
2. How does saying 'MY God' differ from merely acknowledging that God exists, and why is personal appropriation of faith essential?
3. What does it mean that God is both 'refuge' (hiding place) and 'fortress' (defensive stronghold), and how do these images address different aspects of our need?
4. How did Jesus perfectly fulfill the role of the one who dwells in God's secret place, and how do believers share in His protection through union with Him?
5. In what ways might we try to find refuge and fortress in things other than God (career, relationships, finances, etc.), and how does this verse call us to exclusive trust in Him?

Interlinear Text

אָלָּה וּמִצְׁדָּתִ וּמִחְסָןִ וְיְהִי אָמֵן רְאֵבָתִ בָּן
I will say of the LORD He is my refuge and my fortress my God
H559 H3068 H4268 H4686 H430
בָּנָה אָבָטָח in him will I trust H982

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 18:2 (Faith): The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

Proverbs 18:10 (References Lord): The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

Isaiah 12:2 (Faith): 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.

Psalms 142:5 (References Lord): I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.

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

Psalms 71:3 (Parallel theme): Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress.

Psalms 14:6 (References Lord): Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the LORD is his refuge.

Psalms 91:9 (References Lord): Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation;

Hebrews 11:16 (References God): But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

Genesis 17:7 (References God): And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.