

# Psalm 118:8-9

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/ps/ps-118/psalm-1188-9/>

*The psalmist punctuates his poetic narrative to make the claims that it is better to refuge in the LORD than to trust in man or in princes.*

The prevailing truth of this Hallel psalm is that the LORD is good and His lovingkindness is everlasting regardless of circumstances (Psalm 118:1, 2, 3, 4, 29).

In this passage, the psalmist, likely King David, punctuates his poetic narrative (Psalm 118:5-27) about *the LORD's* deliverance from his distress with two similar claims.

In the previous verses he recalled how he called upon *the LORD* in his distress and how *the LORD* answered and rescued him (Psalm 118:5) He reasoned that because *the LORD* is for Him he has no need to fear any danger, including persecution or shame from *man* (Psalm 118:6).

And he said that because *the LORD* is among those who help and vindicate him, he does not need to take vengeance against his enemies. Instead, he can content himself and patiently look with satisfaction on those who hate him (Psalm 118:7).

The two claims that the psalmist makes are:

*It is better to take refuge in the LORD  
Than to trust in man (v 8).*

*It is better to take refuge in the LORD  
Than to trust in princes (v 9).*

Comparing these two claims side by side we see that they are really a single premise: *It is better to take refuge in the LORD*, followed by a more-general and a more-specific claim.

The general claim is: *It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.*

The implication of this claim is that *the LORD* is a *better refuge* or source of security than any *man* is. A *refuge* is a place of shelter from danger or harm. To *take refuge* means to enter into a place of protection—such as a hiding place or fortress. Persons can be a *refuge* for us. We *take refuge in* people, when we *trust* them. This could mean confiding our vulnerabilities to them, or depending upon them for our safety and wellbeing. Strong and powerful people are able to protect their friends from physical or legal danger, and are able to help them in their time of need. *The LORD* is also a *refuge* from danger (Psalm 18:2, 31:1, 46:1)

No *man* is as secure and safe a *refuge* as *the LORD*.

*It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man* because men are mortal and weak, and their favor is fickle. Their hearts are treacherous and deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9). Jesus the Messiah did not entrust Himself to *man*—not even His closest disciples (John 2:23-24, Matthew 16:23).

*It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man* because *the LORD* is all powerful and His lovingkindness is everlasting (Psalm 118:1-4, 29). Psalm 46:1 says: “God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.” Jesus the Messiah exclusively entrusted Himself to His Father alone throughout His life (John 16:32) but especially in times of trouble (Matthew 26:31-39).

Jesus the Messiah, taught His disciples to not fear *man* who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul (Matthew 10:28a). And He instructed them to fear *the LORD* “who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell [Gehenna]” (Matthew 10:28b).

In the book of Jeremiah, *the LORD* agrees with the Psalmist’s claim that *it is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man*.

*The LORD* reveals what happens to a person who trusts *in man*:

“Cursed is the man who trusts in man  
And makes flesh his strength,  
Whose heart departs from the LORD.  
For he shall be like a shrub in the desert,  
And shall not see when good comes,  
But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness,  
In a salt land which is not inhabited.”  
(Jeremiah 17:5-6)

*The LORD* also reveals what happens to a person who trusts *in the LORD*:

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord,  
And whose hope is the Lord.  
For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters,  
Which spreads out its roots by the river,  
And will not fear when heat comes;  
But its leaf will be green,  
And will not be anxious in the year of drought,  
Nor will cease from yielding fruit.”  
(Jeremiah 17:7-8)

After the general claim, that *it is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man*, the psalmist makes a specific claim: *It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes*.

A prince could refer to a political ruler or anyone with considerable wealth and authority. The term *princes* can also imply human institutions such as armies, legal or financial systems, government programs, technologies, or philosophies.

*Princes* are included in the expression...*than to trust in [any] man*. But the psalmist restates his general assertion more specifically to repeat himself, but also to make clear that the broader term includes *princes*. People are typically more likely *to trust* friendly *princes*—who have wealth, power, and/or wisdom—for *refuge* than they are inclined *to trust* other types of people who lack these talents or resources.

The psalmist is being unmistakably clear—it is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes, however powerful, rich, or wise. And if King David is the psalmist, as appears to be the case, then the king is saying to his subjects, that *it is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust him*.

For societies with free elections, Psalm 118:9 is a good verse to recall when your preferred political candidate loses. And it can be an even more important warning when your preferred political candidate wins office. We should always place our *trust in* God over *trust* of any human authority.

### **Biblical Text**

**<sup>8</sup> It is better to take refuge in the LORD  
Than to trust in man.**

**<sup>9</sup> It is better to take refuge in the LORD  
Than to trust in princes.**