

In this psalm, David is once again expressing his trust and dependence on God for protection in the face of danger. He declares that God is his shelter and refuge and that he desires to dwell eternally in God's presence. David recalls God's promises to him and expresses his confidence that God will fulfill them forever.

To the chief Musician upon Neginah, *A Psalm* of David

“To the chief Musician upon Neginah [a stringed instrument]” – The title gives instruction for its performance to the chief musician (song leader). This instruction specifies the instrument that should be playing while the psalm is being read or sung.

“A Psalm of David” – The title also gives us the author (David) of this psalm and while we are not given the occasion for the psalm's writing, some commentators speculate that David may have written it while he was fleeing from Absalom (2 Sam. 17:27-29).

1 Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer.

“Hear my cry, O God; attend [to pay attention] unto my prayer” – The Hebrew word for “cry” can refer to a cry for help or a cry of joy or celebration. The context here will show that David is crying out to the LORD for help and asking that He would pay attention to his prayer. Since the word “hear” carries the meaning of both hearing and responding, David is asking that the LORD would not ignore or forget his cry for help. David is in trouble and needs a response from the LORD.

2 From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock *that* is higher than I.

“From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed” – David has had to flee from Jerusalem and now he feels like he is at the ends of the earth, far from the LORD (the ark in Jerusalem) and from his home where he has felt safe. He feels emotionally overwhelmed because many of the people that he thought he could trust have turned against him. His circumstances have overwhelmed his resources and David doesn't know if he can fight back. It is in the midst of these circumstances that David cries out to the LORD.

“lead me to the rock *that* is higher than I” – The “rock” refers to the LORD, the stable, immovable object that David knows he can stand upon for stability and protection at a time when things/people that he has counted on have failed or turned against him. David is at a low point in his life and he pleads with the LORD to help him climb up above his circumstances to a stable, dependable place of safety. David is the king but he knows he needs help from someone (the LORD) with more wisdom and strength than he has (“that is higher than I”).

3 For thou hast been a shelter for me, *and* a strong tower from the enemy.

“A shelter and strong tower” are places of refuge and safety where you can be protected from your enemy. David remembers that the LORD has been that shelter and strong tower for him in the past and he knows if he can make it to the “the rock that is higher than I” then he will again be safe from his enemies.

4 I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Selah.

“I will abide in thy tabernacle [tent; dwelling] for ever” – The tabernacle housed the ark, where the presence of the LORD dwelt over the mercy seat. David may be referring to that tabernacle or he may be speaking of a tabernacle more generically as the place where the LORD dwelt. David wants to be led to the “rock that is higher than I” and once he's there, he will never leave. He wants to remain with the LORD forever, in fellowship with Him and protected by Him.

“I will trust in the covert [shelter; hiding place] of thy wings” – The picture is of a mother bird covering her young with her wings to protect them. David knows that as long as he is abiding in the dwelling place of God, he will be safe under the sheltering wings of the LORD.

“Selah” – Commentators speculate as to the meaning of this word, but most believe it to be a musical instruction to pause and reflect on what has just been said.

5 For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: thou hast given *me* the heritage of those that fear thy name.

“For thou, O God, hast heard my vows” – These vows are his prayers of allegiance, obedience and dependence on the LORD in his times of trouble. He did not believe that the LORD had failed him and thus turned to other gods for help. Instead, David still trusted in the LORD and looked to Him for deliverance. In response, the LORD “heard” those vows and has acted in David's behalf. We can trust that the LORD will take care of us if we remain faithful to Him in both the good times and the bad. Some people become angry with God when things go wrong in their lives, blaming Him and even turning against Him. David remained faithful to God even when times were bad.

“thou hast given *me* the heritage [possession; inheritance] of those that fear [reverence; fear] thy name” – A “heritage” is an inheritance and for the Jews it meant the inheritance of the land promised to Abraham, along with the associated blessings of prosperity and protection. God heard David's vows and in response He has given David the inheritance that God has given to all those who reverence the name of the LORD (Israel was cast out of the land when they ceased to fear the LORD). While God has not promised land to us as Christians, we are promised the blessings and protection of God because we fear His name. Our inheritance (“heritage”) is in heaven and an eternity with Jesus Christ.

6 Thou wilt prolong the king's life: *and* his years as many generations.

Even though there were people seeking to end David's life, he trusted that God would preserve his life for many years. In the Hebrew, the word "generations" occurs twice, implying the translation "for generation after generation." David seems to be referring to God's promise that his royal line would be on the throne forever. David is trusting that God will keep His promise, not only to protect him, but also to protect his descendants. This promise will eventually be fulfilled by the Messiah (Jesus Christ), Who will sit on the throne of David forever.

7 He shall abide before God for ever: O prepare mercy and truth, *which* may preserve him.

"He shall abide before God for ever" – The "he," of course, is David the king. David trusts that he will be in God's presence throughout eternity. He may also be thinking about his descendants after him who will live with the smile of God on them, including the Messiah in particular, Who will reign forever.

"O prepare [to appoint; to ordain] mercy and truth, which may preserve [to keep, guard or watch over] him" – David wants mercy to govern his life, both in the mercy that God shows him as well as enabling him to show mercy to others. He also wants truth to be present in his life. The wicked do not want truth because it exposes their evil deeds, but David welcomes it. He asks that God would ordain that His mercy and truth would be ever present in his life, guarding and keeping him from the evil intentions of his enemies as well as preserving His life.

8 So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows.

As a part of fulfilling the vows of obedience and thanksgiving that he has made to God (v. 5), David promises to make a habit of praising God every day forever. He is showing gratitude for all that God has done for him, preserving his life, prospering him and promising him that his descendants will occupy the throne forever (through Jesus Christ).