

God as a refuge

The current COVID-19 crisis exposes a cherished longing in every human heart: we desperately yearn to be in a place of safety and stability.

The Bible addresses this critical human desire in many ways. For example: in the book of Hebrews, Jesus is presented as a “sure and steadfast anchor of the soul” (Hebrew 6:19-20). How desperately we long for a sure and steady anchor in these crazy days! Ultimately, however, our hoped-for-security cannot be gained through the people and stuff found “under the sun.” It can be found in God.

The Psalms, in particular, utilize many different expressions to encourage us to seek refuge in God. For such a time as this, here are the various words, used of God, in the Psalms to convey God as a “refuge” (search done by Hebrew root words, presented in the English Standard Version).¹

The God presented here has provided refuge in each and every crisis, big and small, throughout the history of the world! May this Rock of Refuge offer you great hope and comfort during these times of uncertainty.

“Take refuge” in God (“refuge” as a verb (לָטַף, 25x)

- 2:12** Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who **take refuge** in him.
- 5:11** But let all who **take refuge** in you rejoice;
let them ever sing for joy,
and spread your protection over them,
that those who love your name may exult in you.
- 7:1** O LORD my God, in you do I **take refuge**;
save me from all my pursuers and deliver me,
lest like a lion they tear my soul apart,
rending it in pieces, with none to deliver.

¹ In addition to the verb/noun “**refuge**” (25x verb, 12x noun), twelve other expressions are used in the Psalms: God is called our “**rock**” (21x): 18:2, 31, 46; 19:14, 27:5, 28:1, 31:2, 61:2, 62:2, 6, 7; 71:3, 73:26 (“strength”), 78:15, 20, 35; 89:26, 92:15, 94:22, 95:1, 144:1; “**shield**” (16x): 3:3, 7:10, 18:2, 30, 35; 28:7, 33:20, 35:2, 59:11, 84:11, 89:18, 115:9-11, 119:114, 144:2; “**fortress**” (13x): 9:9 2x, 18:2, 46:7, 11; 48:3, 59:9, 16, 17; 62:2, 6; 94:22, 144:2; “**shelter**” (7x): 27:5, 31:20, 32:7, (“hiding place”), 61:4, 91:1, 101:5, 119:114 (“hiding place”); “**shadow**” (6x): 17:8, 36:7, 57:1, 63:7, 91:1, 121:5 (“shade”); “**stronghold**” (7x): 27:1, 28:6-8 (“saving refuge”), 31:2-4 2x (“rock of refuge,” “refuge”), 37:39, 43:2 (“in whom I take refuge”), 52:7 (“his refuge”), “**fortress**” (6x): 18:2, 31:2-3 2x, 71:3, 91:1-2, 144:1-2, “**rock**” (different Hebrew word than above 5x): 18:2, 31:3, 40:1-2, 42:8-9, 71:3; “**dwelling**” (3x): 71:3 (“to which I may continually come”), 90:1, 91:9-10; “**strong tower**” (1x) 61:1-3; “**place of safety**” (1x); 59:16 (“refuge”). This list slightly from Mark Futato’s *Interpreting the Psalms*, pgs 98-101.

- 11:1** In the LORD I **take refuge**;
 how can you say to my soul,
 "Flee like a bird to your mountain,
 for behold, the wicked bend the bow;
 they have fitted their arrow to the string
 to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart;
 if the foundations are destroyed,
 what can the righteous do?"
- 16:1-2** Preserve me, O God, for in you I **take refuge**.
 I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;
 I have no good apart from you."
- 17:7** Wondrously show your steadfast love,
 O Savior of those who **seek refuge**
 from their adversaries at your right hand.
- 18:2** The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,
 my God, my rock, in whom I **take refuge**,
 my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
- 18:30** This God—his way is perfect;
 the word of the LORD proves true;
 he is a shield for all those who **take refuge** in him.
- 25:20** Oh, guard my soul, and deliver me!
 Let me not be put to shame, for I **take refuge** in you.
- 31:1** In you, O LORD, do I **take refuge**;
 let me never be put to shame;
 in your righteousness deliver me!
 Incline your ear to me;
 rescue me speedily!
 Be a rock of refuge for me,
 a strong fortress to save me!
- 31:19** Oh, how abundant is your goodness,
 which you have stored up for those who fear you
 and worked for those who **take refuge** in you,
 in the sight of the children of mankind!
- 34:8** Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!
 Blessed is the man who **takes refuge** in him!
 Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints,
 for those who fear him have no lack!
 The young lions suffer want and hunger;
 but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

- 34:22** The LORD redeems the life of his servants;
none of those who **take refuge** in him will be condemned.
- 36:7-8** How precious is your steadfast love, O God!
The children of mankind **take refuge** in the shadow of your wings.
They feast on the abundance of your house,
and you give them drink from the river of your delights.
- 37:40** The LORD helps them and delivers them;
he delivers them from the wicked and saves them,
because they **take refuge** in him.
- 57:1** Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me,
for in you my soul **takes refuge**;
in the shadow of your wings **I will take refuge**,
till the storms of destruction pass by.
- 61:4** Let me dwell in your tent forever!
Let me **take refuge** under the shelter of your wings! *Selah*
- 64:10** Let the righteous one rejoice in the LORD
and **take refuge** in him!
Let all the upright in heart exult!
- 71:1-2** In you, O LORD, do I **take refuge**;
let me never be put to shame!
In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;
incline your ear to me, and save me!
Be to me a rock of refuge,
to which I may continually come;
you have given the command to save me,
for you are my rock and my fortress.
- 91:4-6** He will cover you with his pinions,
and under his wings you will **find refuge**;
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
You will not fear the terror of the night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,
nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.
- 118:8-9** It is better to **take refuge** in the LORD
than to trust in man.
It is better to **take refuge** in the LORD
than to trust in princes.
- 141:8-9** But my eyes are toward you, O GOD, my Lord;
in you I **seek refuge**; leave me not defenseless!

Keep me from the trap that they have laid for me
and from the snares of evildoers!

144:2 he is my steadfast love and my fortress,
my stronghold and my deliverer,
my shield and he in whom I **take refuge**,
who subdues peoples under me.

God is a “refuge” (“refuge” as a noun (מִקְוֵה), 12 x)

14:6 You would shame the plans of the poor,
but the LORD is his **refuge**.

46:1-3 God is our **refuge** and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble at its swelling. *Selah*

61:1-4 Hear my cry, O God,
listen to my prayer;
from the end of the earth I call to you
when my heart is faint.
Lead me to the rock
that is higher than I,
for you have been my **refuge**,
a strong tower against the enemy.
Let me dwell in your tent forever!
Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings! *Selah*

62:7-8 On God rests my salvation and my glory;
my mighty rock, my **refuge** is God.
Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a **refuge** for us. *Selah*

71:7 I have been as a portent to many,
but you are my strong **refuge**.

73:28 But for me it is good to be near God;
I have made the Lord GOD my **refuge**,
that I may tell of all your works.

91:1-2 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will abide in the shadow of the Almighty
I will say to the LORD, “My **refuge** and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust.”

91:9-11 Because you have made the LORD your dwelling place—
the Most High, who is my **refuge** —
no evil shall be allowed to befall you,
no plague come near your tent.
For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.

94:22 But the LORD has become my stronghold,
and my God the rock of my **refuge**.

104:18 The high mountains are for the wild goats;
the rocks are a **refuge** for the rock badgers.

142:5 I cry to you, O LORD;
I say, “You are my **refuge**,
my portion in the land of the living.”

God is a “rock” (רֶכֶס , 21x)

Ps 18:2 The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,
my God, my **rock**, in whom I take refuge,
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Ps 18:31 For who is God, but the LORD?
And who is a **rock**, except our God?—

Ps 18:46 The LORD lives, and blessed be my **rock**,
and exalted be the God of my salvation—

Ps 19:14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in your sight,
O LORD, my **rock** and my redeemer.

Ps 27:5 For he will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
he will lift me high upon a **rock**.

Ps 28:1 To you, O LORD, I call;
my **rock**, be not deaf to me,
lest, if you be silent to me,
I become like those who go down to the pit.

Ps 31:2 Incline your ear to me;
rescue me speedily!
Be a **rock** of refuge for me,
a strong fortress to save me!

- Ps 61:2** from the end of the earth I call to you
when my heart is faint.
Lead me to the **rock**
that is higher than I,
- Ps 62:2** He alone is my **rock** and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.
- Ps 62:6** He only is my **rock** and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.
- Ps 62:7** On God rests my salvation and my glory;
my mighty **rock**, my refuge is God.
- Ps 71:3** Be to me a **rock of refuge**,
to which I may continually come;
you have given the command to save me,
for you are my rock and my fortress.
- Ps 73:26** My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the **strength** of my heart and my
portion forever.
- Ps 78:35** They remembered that God was their **rock**,
the Most High God their redeemer.
- Ps 89:26** He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father,
my God, and the **Rock** of my salvation.'
- Ps 92:15** to declare that the LORD is upright;
he is my **rock**, and there is no unrighteousness in him.
- Ps 94:22** But the LORD has become my stronghold,
and my God the **rock** of my refuge.
- Ps 95:1** Oh come, let us sing to the LORD;
let us make a joyful noise to the **rock** of our salvation!
- Ps 144:1** Blessed be the LORD, my **rock**,
who trains my hands for war,
and my fingers for battle;

God is a "shield" (יָשׁוּבָה, 16x)

- 3:3** But you, O LORD, are a **shield** about me,
my glory, and the lifter of my head.

- 7:10** My **shield** is with God,
who saves the upright in heart.
- 18:2** The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,
my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my **shield**, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
- 18:30** This God—his way is perfect;
the word of the LORD proves true;
he is a **shield** for all those who take refuge in him.
- 18:35** You have given me the **shield** of your salvation,
and your right hand supported me,
and your gentleness made me great.
- 28:7** The LORD is my strength and my **shield**;
in him my heart trusts, and I am helped;
my heart exults,
and with my song I give thanks to him.
- 33:20** Our soul waits for the LORD;
he is our help and our **shield**.
- 35:2** Take hold of **shield** and buckler
and rise for my help!
- 59:11** Kill them not, lest my people forget;
make them totter by your power and bring them down,
O Lord, our **shield**!
- 84:11** For the LORD God is a sun and **shield**;
the LORD bestows favor and honor.
No good thing does he withhold
from those who walk uprightly.
- 89:18** For our **shield** belongs to the LORD,
our king to the Holy One of Israel.
- 115:9-11** O Israel, trust in the LORD!
He is their help and their **shield**.
O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD!
He is their help and their **shield**.
You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD!
He is their help and their **shield**.
- 119:114** You are my hiding place and my **shield**;
I hope in your word
- 144:2** he is my steadfast love and my fortress,

my stronghold and my deliverer,
my **shield** and he in whom I take refuge,
who subdues peoples under me.

God is a **“fortress”** (בְּצֻרָה, 13x)

- 9:9** The LORD is a **stronghold** for the oppressed,
a **stronghold** in times of trouble.
- 18:2** The LORD is my rock and my **fortress** and my deliverer,
my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
- 46:7** The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our **fortress**. *Selah*
- 46:11** The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our **fortress**. *Selah*
- 48:3** Within her citadels God
has made himself known as a **fortress**
- 59:9** O my Strength, I will watch for you,
for you, O God, are my **fortress**.
- 59:16** But I will sing of your strength;
I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning.
For you have been to me a **fortress**
and a refuge in the day of my distress.
- 59:17** O my Strength, I will sing praises to you,
for you, O God, are my **fortress**,
the God who shows me steadfast love.
- 62:2** He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my **fortress**; I shall not be greatly shaken.
- 62:6** He only is my rock and my salvation,
my **fortress**; I shall not be shaken.
- 94:22** But the LORD has become my **stronghold**,
and my God the rock of my refuge.
- 144:2** he is my steadfast love and my fortress,
my **stronghold** and my deliverer,
my shield and he in whom I take refuge,
who subdues peoples under me.

God is a “shelter” (סִתָּוּ, 7x)

- 27:5** For he will hide me in his **shelter**
in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
he will lift me high upon a rock.
- 31:20** In the cover of your presence you hide them
from the plots of men;
you store them in your **shelter**
from the strife of tongues.
- 32:7** You are a **hiding place** for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance. *Selah*
- 61:4** Let me dwell in your tent forever!
Let me take refuge under the **shelter** of your wings! *Selah*
- 91:1** Let me dwell in your tent forever!
Let me take refuge under the **shelter** of your wings! *Selah*
- 119:114** You are my **hiding place** and my shield;
I hope in your word.

God is a “shadow” (צֵל, 6x)

- 17:8** Keep me as the apple of your eye;
hide me in the **shadow** of your wings,
- 36:7** How precious is your steadfast love, O God!
The children of mankind take refuge in the **shadow** of your wings.
- 57:1** Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me,
for in you my soul takes refuge;
in the **shadow** of your wings I will take refuge,
till the storms of destruction pass by.
- 63:7** or you have been my help,
and in the **shadow** of your wings I will sing for joy
- 91:1** He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will abide in the **shadow** of the Almighty.
- 121:5** The LORD is your keeper;
the LORD is your **shade** on your right hand.

God is a “stronghold” (מְעֹזָה, 7x)

27:1 The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the **stronghold** of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?

28:6-8 Blessed be the LORD!

For he has heard the voice of my pleas for mercy.

The LORD is my strength and my shield;
in him my heart trusts, and I am helped;
my heart exults,

and with my song I give thanks to him.

The LORD is the **strength** of his people;
he is the saving refuge of his anointed.

31:2-4 Incline your ear to me;

rescue me speedily!

Be a **rock of refuge** for me,
a strong fortress to save me!

For you are my rock and my fortress;
and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me;
you take me out of the net they have hidden for me,
for you are my **refuge**.

37:39 The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD;
he is their **stronghold** in the time of trouble.

43:2 For you are the God **in whom I take refuge**;

why have you rejected me?

Why do I go about mourning
because of the oppression of the enemy?

52:7 See the man who would not make

God **his refuge**,

but trusted in the abundance of his riches
and sought refuge in his own destruction!”

God is a “fortress” (מְצֻרָה, 6x)

18:2 The LORD is my rock and my **fortress** and my deliverer,
my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

31:2-3 Incline your ear to me;
 rescue me speedily!
 Be a rock of refuge for me,
 a strong **fortress** to save me!
 For you are my rock and my **fortress**;
 and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me;

71:3 Be to me a rock of refuge,
 to which I may continually come;
 you have given the command to save me,
 for you are my rock and my **fortress**.

91:1-2 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
 will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.
 I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my **fortress**,
 my God, in whom I trust."

144:1-2 Blessed be the LORD, my rock,
 who trains my hands for war,
 and my fingers for battle;
 he is my steadfast love and my **fortress**,
 my stronghold and my deliverer,
 my shield and he in whom I take refuge,
 who subdues peoples under me.

God is a "**rock**" (סֶלֶעַ, 5x)

18:2 The LORD is my **rock** and my fortress and my deliverer,
 my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,
 my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

31:3 For you are my **rock** and my fortress;
 and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me;

40:1-2 I waited patiently for the LORD;
 he inclined to me and heard my cry.
 He drew me up from the pit of destruction,
 out of the miry bog,
 and set my feet upon a **rock**,
 making my steps secure.

42:8-9 By day the LORD commands his steadfast love,
 and at night his song is with me,
 a prayer to the God of my life.
 I say to God, my **rock**:

“Why have you forgotten me?
Why do I go mourning
because of the oppression of the enemy?”

71:3 Be to me a rock of refuge,
to which I may continually come;
you have given the command to save me,
for you are my **rock** and my fortress.

God is a “**dwelling**” (מִעוֹן, 3x)

71:3 Be to me a rock of **refuge**,
to which I may continually come;
you have given the command to save me,
for you are my rock and my fortress.

90:1 Lord, you have been our **dwelling place** in all generations.

91:9-10 Because you have made the LORD your **dwelling place**—
the Most High, who is my refuge —
no evil shall be allowed to befall you,
no plague come near your tent.

God is a “**strong tower**” (מִגְדָּל, 1x)

61:1-3 Hear my cry, O God,
listen to my prayer;
from the end of the earth I call to you
when my heart is faint.
Lead me to the rock
that is higher than I,
for you have been my refuge,
a **strong tower** against the enemy.

God is a “**place of safety**” (מִצְנוֹד, 1x)

59:16 But I will sing of your strength;
I will sing aloud of your steadfast love in the morning.
For you have been to me a fortress
and a **refuge** in the day of my distress.