QUESTION:

The Scriptures say:

> “In you, O Lord, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me” *(Psalm 31:1, ESV).*

What shame is the Psalmist asking to be spared from? And why do we sometimes still experience shame or disgrace, even though we have taken refuge in God?

ANSWER:

This cry for help appears throughout the Psalms in various forms. It is a deep, emotional appeal to God for protection not only from physical enemies but also from the ultimate shame: the failure of God’s promises, or being forsaken after putting one’s trust in Him.

Consider these supporting verses:

> - *Psalm 31:1* “In you, O Lord, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me.”
> - *Psalm 25:20* “Guard my soul, and deliver me! Let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.”
> - *Psalm 71:1* “In you, O Lord, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame!”
> - *Psalm 22:5* “To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.”

These verses reflect the heartfelt dependence of David, who was often surrounded by enemies and found himself in vulnerable positions. His honor, his calling, and even his very life were at stake. If God failed to act, David would be publicly humiliated, and worse people would question the faithfulness of God’s promises.

David was not just an ordinary believer; he was someone anointed by God, with promises made over his life including the promise that his throne would be established forever (see 2 Samuel 7:16). Yet, during trials and delays in his kingship, it looked like these promises would never be fulfilled. That’s why he

pleads with God not to let him be put to shame.

This is captured beautifully in:

> *Psalm 89:49-52 (ESV)*
> “Lord, where is your steadfast love of old, which by your faithfulness you swore to David?
> Remember, O Lord, how your servants are mocked, and how I bear in my heart the insults of all the many nations,
> with which your enemies mock, O Lord, with which they mock the footsteps of your anointed.
> Blessed be the Lord forever! Amen and Amen.”

Here, the Psalmist shows that the greatest “shame” would be the failure of God’s covenant, and the mocking of God’s servant by enemies.

In the New Testament, we see a clearer picture of the ultimate shame that believers ask to be spared from eternal separation from God. This is the shame of being rejected by God at the final judgment.

> *2 Peter 3:13-14 (NIV)*
> “But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.”

The eternal shame is not just ridicule in this life, but hearing Jesus say:

> *Matthew 7:23 (ESV)*
> “And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’”

This is echoed in the sobering words of Jesus in:

> *Matthew 25:31-34, 41 (ESV)*
> “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels

> with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.
> Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.
> And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.
> Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’
>
> Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”

This is the eternal shame to be banished from the presence of God, and to miss out on the eternal glory promised to His people.

GOD MAY ALLOW TEMPORARY SHAME, BUT NEVER ETERNAL DISGRACE

It is important to understand that as children of God, we may go through moments of public shame, rejection, or persecution for the sake of Christ. This is part of the Christian journey. But God will never allow those who trust in Him to be ultimately disgraced.

> *Romans 10:11 (NIV)*
> “As Scripture says, ‘Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.'”*1 Peter 4:16 (ESV)*
>
> Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.”

Better to endure temporary earthly shame now for following Christ, than to experience eternal shame by rejecting Him.

So when David prayed, *“Let me never be put to shame,”* he was not only thinking of earthly humiliation, but the deeper desire that God would uphold His promises both in this life and in eternity. The same is true for us today. We look to God in faith, trusting Him not only to rescue us from present trouble, but also to spare us from eternal shame and bring us into His everlasting glory.

May the Lord help us.

Let us choose momentary shame for Christ now, over eternal shame at His judgment.

> “Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.”
> *Psalm 34:5 (ESV)*

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