

Psalm 11:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.

Analysis

The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. This verse presents God's discriminating judgment, revealing that His observation (v.4) leads to evaluation and verdict. The verse employs striking parallelism: God tests the righteous, but hates the wicked—particularly those who love violence.

"The LORD trieth" (Yahweh yivhan, יְהוָה יִבְחַן) uses *bachan*, meaning to test, examine, prove, refine—the same word from verse 4. The testing imagery recalls metallurgy: precious metals refined in fire to remove impurities. God's testing of the righteous isn't vindictive but purifying, producing genuine faith. First Peter 1:6-7 develops this: trials test faith "being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire."

The verb "trieth" stands alone with "the righteous" (*tzaddik*, צַדִּיק) as object, creating interpretive challenge. Does God test the righteous alone, or also test the wicked? Context suggests God examines all (v.4: "try the children of men"), but responds differently. The righteous undergo refining testing; the wicked face damning judgment. Testing reveals what's present—genuine faith in believers, corrupt rebellion in unbelievers.

"But the wicked and him that loveth violence" (verasha ve'ohev chamas, וְרַשָּׁה וְאֹהֶב חָמָס) employs emphatic Hebrew construction. *Rasha* (wicked) describes those fundamentally opposed to God's ways. *Chamas* (violence, cruelty, injustice)

appears throughout Old Testament describing human wickedness from Cain's murder through corrupt societies God judged. Those who "love" (ahev) violence aren't merely violent occasionally but embrace it fundamentally.

"His soul hateth" (sanah nafsho, שָׁנַת נֶפֶשׁ) presents startling divine emotion. Sane means hate, utterly reject, be hostile toward. God's "soul" (nefesh) indicates His entire being, His deepest essence. This isn't casual dislike but settled, righteous opposition. God's hatred of the wicked doesn't contradict His love—He can hate sin and wickedness while loving sinners enough to provide redemption. But those who finally reject Him and love violence face His permanent opposition. Psalm 5:5 reinforces this: "thou hatest all workers of iniquity."

Historical Context

The concept of divine testing appears throughout redemptive history. God tested Abraham (Genesis 22:1), commanding him to sacrifice Isaac—not to discover what Abraham would do but to reveal and strengthen Abraham's faith. Israel's wilderness wanderings included testing: "the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart" (Deuteronomy 8:2).

Ancient metallurgy provided the testing metaphor. Refiners heated ore to extreme temperatures, causing impurities to separate from precious metal. The process was painful but purifying. Job understood his suffering through this lens: "when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). Malachi described the coming Messiah as refiner: "he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver" (Malachi 3:3).

Divine hatred of wickedness and violence runs throughout Scripture. Before the flood, "the earth was filled with violence" (Genesis 6:11-13), leading to judgment. Sodom's violence brought destruction (Genesis 19). Israel's prophets condemned violence and oppression (Isaiah 1:15, Amos 5:24, Micah 6:8). When Israel itself embraced violence and injustice, exile resulted.

The phrase "him that loveth violence" had particular relevance during David's life.

Saul's violent jealousy drove him to pursue David murderously. Absalom's violent rebellion brought civil war. Throughout Israel's history, violence-loving leaders brought destruction—from Jezebel murdering prophets to Manasseh filling Jerusalem with innocent blood. The psalm affirms that God's eyes see such violence and His soul hates it.

For Christians, this psalm clarifies that current suffering doesn't mean divine abandonment. God tests believers to refine faith, while simultaneously observing and hating wickedness that will ultimately face judgment. The righteous can endure testing confident that it produces proven faith, while the wicked should recognize that love of violence stores up divine wrath.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does understanding that God tests the righteous for refinement rather than condemnation change your perspective on trials?
2. What impurities in your life might God be refining through current testing and difficulties?
3. How can you distinguish between God's purifying testing of believers and His judgment of the wicked?
4. What forms of violence (physical, verbal, systemic) exist in modern society that God's soul hates, and how should believers respond?
5. How does God's hatred of wickedness and violence relate to His love for sinners, and how should this shape our attitude toward those who practice violence?

Interlinear Text

יְהוָה	צַדִּיק	צַדִּיק!	בָּעֵבֶר	בָּעֵבֶר!	וְאֶתְּנָא	בְּאֶתְּנָא	סְמִינָה
The LORD	the righteous	trieth	but the wicked	and him that loveth			violence
H3068	H6662	H974	H7563	H157			H2555

נִפְשָׁוֶה	שְׁתָא	הָ
hateth	his soul	
H8130	H5315	

Additional Cross-References

James 1:12 (Love): Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

Psalms 7:9 (Righteousness): Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.

Psalms 26:2 (References Lord): Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.

Genesis 22:1 (Parallel theme): And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.

1 Peter 1:7 (Parallel theme): That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

1 Peter 4:12 (Love): Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

Psalms 21:8 (Parallel theme): Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee.

Psalms 139:1 (References Lord): O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.

Psalms 10:3 (Evil): For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth.

Psalms 17:3 (Parallel theme): Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.

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