

Psalms 12:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

Analysis

Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever. The psalm concludes with confident prayer that God will keep His promises and protect His people. This verse's interpretation depends on identifying "them"—either God's words (from v.6) or God's people (the poor and needy from v.5). Both interpretations have merit and truth; likely the psalmist intends both meanings simultaneously.

"Thou shalt keep them" (attah Yahweh tishmeram, אַתָּה־יְהוָה תִּשְׁמְרֵם) uses shamar, meaning keep, guard, watch over, preserve, protect. This common Hebrew verb appears throughout Scripture describing God's protective care. Psalm 121:7-8 promises: "The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil...The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore." The emphatic "Thou...O LORD" stresses that preservation is God's work, not human achievement.

If "them" refers to God's words, the verse promises divine preservation of revelation. God will ensure His pure words aren't corrupted, lost, or forgotten. Throughout history, attempts to destroy Scripture have failed—from Roman persecution burning manuscripts to modern critical attempts to undermine biblical authority. God has preserved His Word through centuries of transmission, translation, and opposition. Jesus promised: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

If "them" refers to God's people (particularly the poor and needy from v.5), the verse promises divine protection for believers. Though surrounded by corrupt generation, though oppressed by wicked, God will preserve His faithful remnant. This doesn't promise exemption from suffering but ultimate preservation—the gates of hell will not prevail against God's people (Matthew 16:18).

"Thou shalt preserve them from this generation" (titzerennu min hador zu, תִּצְרֶנְנֻ מִן הַדּוֹר זֶה) uses natsar, another word meaning guard, watch, preserve, protect. The repetition of preservation language emphasizes certainty. "From this generation" (hador zu) refers to the corrupt, faithless generation described in verses 1-4. God will protect His words and people from contamination by, and destruction from, the wicked generation.

"For ever" (leolam, לְעוֹלָם) indicates perpetual, eternal preservation. God's keeping and preserving isn't temporary but permanent. His words remain pure forever; His people remain preserved forever. Psalm 100:5 declares: "For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."

Historical Context

The promise of divine preservation has proven true throughout redemptive history. God preserved His words through oral tradition, written manuscripts, and canonical recognition. Despite attempts to destroy Scripture—Antiochus Epiphanes burning Torah scrolls, Roman persecution targeting Christian writings, medieval restrictions on vernacular Bibles—God's Word survived and flourished. The discovery of Dead Sea Scrolls demonstrated how accurately manuscripts were preserved for over two millennia.

God likewise preserved His people. When Pharaoh attempted genocide, God preserved Israel through Moses. When Haman plotted to destroy Jews, God preserved them through Esther. When Babylon destroyed Jerusalem, God preserved a remnant to return. When Antiochus attempted to Hellenize Jews, the Maccabees resisted. When Rome destroyed the temple and scattered Jews, the people survived. Throughout church history, persecution failed to destroy believers.

Jesus promised preservation: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:27-28). Paul affirmed: "being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). Jude concluded his epistle: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24).

For early Christians facing Roman persecution, this promise provided crucial encouragement. Though "this generation" sought to destroy both God's Word and God's people, believers trusted divine preservation. Martyrs died confident that God preserved their souls, even if bodies were destroyed. Scripture manuscripts were hidden, copied, transmitted despite opposition. God proved faithful to His preservation promises.

Throughout church history, whenever corrupt generations threatened truth and believers, God preserved both His Word and His people. The Reformation recovered biblical truth after centuries of corruption. Persecuted believers survived Communist oppression. Modern attacks on Scripture fail to destroy its power. Every generation discovers afresh that God keeps His promises—He preserves His words and His people forever.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's promise to preserve His words and His people provide confidence when facing hostile cultural opposition?
2. What evidence do you see in history and your own experience that God faithfully preserves both His Word and His people?

3. How should certainty of divine preservation affect how you respond to threats against biblical authority or persecution of believers?
4. In what ways might anxiety about whether God will preserve His Word or His people reveal lack of trust in His promises?
5. How does Jesus's promise that His sheep will never perish provide security amid life's uncertainties and spiritual warfare?

Interlinear Text

אֲתָהּ H859	יְהוָה H3068	תִּשְׁמְרֶהָ H8104	תִּצְּרֶנָּה H5341	מִן H4480	דֹּד וָרֵךְ H1755
	them O LORD	Thou shalt keep	thou shalt preserve		generation
וּמֵעַתָּה H2098	לְעוֹלָם: H5769				
them from this	for ever				

Additional Cross-References

1 Samuel 2:9 (Parallel theme): He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.

Psalms 121:8 (References Lord): The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

1 Peter 1:5 (Parallel theme): Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.