

Psalms 120:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war.

Analysis

The psalm concludes with the righteous person's posture: 'I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war.' This contrast defines the fundamental divide between the godly and the ungodly. The psalmist's identity is 'for peace' - oriented toward reconciliation, harmony, and flourishing. Yet every attempt at peaceful communication ('when I speak') is met with hostility ('they are for war'). The Hebrew parallelism emphasizes the irreconcilable opposition: peace meets war, words meet weapons. This is not situational conflict but ideological - the wicked are fundamentally opposed to the peace the righteous seek. The verse captures the frustration of attempted reconciliation with those committed to conflict. It also demonstrates that righteousness cannot achieve peace through compromise with evil; only God's ultimate judgment will establish lasting peace. The psalm ends without resolution, mirroring the incomplete nature of peace in this age, and thus drives the worshiper forward on the ascent toward God's presence where peace reigns.

Historical Context

The ancient world was characterized by constant warfare, tribal conflicts, and honor-shame dynamics that perpetuated cycles of violence. The psalmist's commitment to peace would have been countercultural in contexts where strength and retaliation were valued. This tension prefigures Jesus' teaching about blessing peacemakers and loving enemies.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to be 'for peace' in one's essential identity and orientation?
2. How should believers respond when peaceful intentions are met with hostility?
3. What limits exist to human peacemaking, and how do these point to our need for divine intervention?
4. How does this verse illuminate Jesus' statement 'I came not to send peace, but a sword' (Matthew 10:34)?
5. In what ways does this psalm's unresolved ending propel us forward in our spiritual journey toward God?

Interlinear Text

אֲנִי	שָׁלוֹם	וְכִי	אֶדְבָּר	הֵם	לְמִלְחָמָה:
H589	I am for peace	H3588	but when I speak	H1992	they are for war
	H7965		H1696		H4421

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 5:9 (Peace): Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Psalms 109:4 (Parallel theme): For my love they are my adversaries: but I give myself unto prayer.

Hebrews 12:14 (Peace): Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

Psalms 34:14 (Peace): Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

Romans 12:18 (Peace): If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

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