

Psalm 139:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

Analysis

Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me—The verb tzur (צָר, 'beset') means to bind, confine, or enclose—like a city under siege. God surrounds David from all temporal directions: behind (past) and before (future). This is not hostile encirclement but protective encompassing. The laying on of God's hand (kaph, קָפַח) suggests both authority and blessing, like a hand placed on one's head in commissioning.

David cannot escape into past regrets or future anxieties; God occupies every temporal space. This divine 'besetting' means we cannot outrun our history or our destiny—both are held in God's hand. The very hand that constrains us also guides, protects, and blesses.

Historical Context

The imagery of being 'beset' would resonate deeply with David, who experienced literal siege warfare and also God's protective encirclement during his fugitive years fleeing Saul. This military metaphor transforms into a theological truth: God's sovereignty surrounds us completely.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. What 'behind' (past failures or sins) or 'before' (future fears) are you trying to escape from, forgetting that God has already 'beset' those times with His presence?
2. How does it feel to be 'confined' by God—is it oppressive restriction or liberating security?
3. Where in your life do you need to feel God's hand laid upon you—for guidance, for healing, for commissioning?

Interlinear Text

כִּפְכָּה: עַל יְתִשְׁתַּחַת אֵחֶד וְרָא
me behind and before Thou hast beset and laid H5921 thine hand H3709
H268 H6924 H6696 H7896

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 33:27 (Parallel theme): The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them.

Psalms 34:7 (Parallel theme): The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

Revelation 1:17 (Parallel theme): And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

Job 9:33 (Parallel theme): Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both.

Exodus 24:11 (Parallel theme): And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.

