

Psalms 141:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet.

Analysis

This verse contains striking imagery of judgment and vindication. The Hebrew verb "**overthrown**" (*shamat*) means to be cast down or dashed to pieces, suggesting violent divine judgment upon corrupt judges. The phrase "**in stony places**" (*yede-sela*, literally "hands of rock") evokes imagery of judges being hurled from cliffs, a known form of execution in the ancient world.

The contrast is powerful: after the wicked judges fall, people will "**hear my words**"—the psalmist's words of righteousness previously ignored. The description "**for they are sweet**" (*na'emu*) indicates pleasant, agreeable words that will finally be appreciated after justice is done.

This verse reflects the biblical theme that truth may be rejected in times of corruption but will ultimately be vindicated. The "sweetness" of righteous words stands in stark contrast to the bitterness of unjust judgment. The imagery suggests that only when corrupt authority is removed can truth be properly heard and valued.

Historical Context

David likely composed this psalm during a time of persecution, possibly when fleeing from Saul or during Absalom's rebellion. In ancient Israel, judges held tremendous power and often sat at city gates to render verdicts. Corrupt judges were a recurring problem, condemned by prophets like Isaiah and Amos.

The "stony places" reference would have resonated with an ancient audience familiar with rocky terrain and cliff-side executions. Archaeological evidence from ancient Israel shows numerous high places and rocky outcrops used for both worship and execution. The psalm reflects David's confidence that God would vindicate him and overthrow those who twisted justice. This confidence was rooted in the covenant promise that God would establish His king and judge the wicked.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does it mean for righteous words to be 'sweet' to those who previously rejected them?
2. How does God's judgment of corrupt authorities vindicate those who speak truth?
3. Why might the psalmist use such violent imagery to describe the downfall of judges?
4. In what ways can we maintain integrity when corrupt authorities reject our witness?
5. How does this verse encourage patience in waiting for God's vindication?

Interlinear Text

נִשְׁמָט וְ	בִּידֵי	סֶלַע	שֹׁפְטֵיהֶם	וְשָׁמַע וְ	אֲמָר יְיָ
are overthrown	places	in stony	When their judges	they shall hear	my words
H8058	H3027	H5553	H8199	H8085	H561
כִּי יִנְעֻמוּ:					
H3588	for they are sweet				
	H5276				

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