

Psalm 3:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me.

Analysis

This verse testifies to God's sustaining grace through the night: '**I laid me down and slept**' describes peaceful rest despite mortal danger. The Hebrew **shakab** (lay down) and **yashen** (sleep) depict normal, restful sleep—remarkable given David's circumstances. Pursued by armies, facing possible assassination, experiencing emotional turmoil from Absalom's betrayal—yet David slept.

The sequence continues: '**I awaked**' states the obvious—he survived the night. But the final clause reveals the source: '**for the LORD sustained me**'. The Hebrew **samak** (sustain/support/uphold) suggests active preservation—God maintained David's life and peace. The causal 'for' (ki) explains the possibility of sleep: divine sustenance enables rest amid danger.

This verse demonstrates faith's practical outworking. Psalm 127:2 states, 'He giveth his beloved sleep'—rest is divine gift, not natural achievement. Jesus slept during the storm (Mark 4:38), exhibiting this same trust. Believers facing anxiety, insomnia, or fear find instruction here: faith should produce peace enabling rest, trusting God's sustaining power through the night. Each morning's awakening testifies to divine preservation—we live because God sustains, not merely by natural processes.

Historical Context

David's flight included nights in the wilderness, vulnerable to attack. Ancient assassination often occurred at night when victims slept—Abner was killed treacherously (2 Samuel 3:27), Ish-bosheth murdered in bed (2 Samuel 4:5-7). David had reason for sleepless vigilance. Yet this verse testifies he slept—God provided both security and peace of mind. The guards protecting him were themselves under God's protection.

This historical moment speaks to perennial human experience: anxiety disrupting sleep, fear preventing rest, worry stealing peace. David's testimony—sleeping while endangered—became encouragement for centuries of believers facing persecution, imprisonment, or threat. Peter slept in prison awaiting execution (Acts 12:6); Paul and Silas slept after beating in Philippi jail (Acts 16:25). Church history records martyrs sleeping peacefully before execution. This psalm provided language for such faith—divine sustenance enables rest regardless of external circumstances. The historical David's experience became typological for all God's endangered servants.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does David's ability to sleep during crisis challenge contemporary Christian anxiety and worry?
2. What is the relationship between faith in God's sustaining power and practical peace/rest in daily life?

3. How can believers cultivate the kind of trust that enables peaceful sleep despite legitimate concerns or dangers?
4. In what ways does each morning's awakening serve as testimony to God's ongoing sustaining grace?
5. How does this verse inform Christian responses to insomnia, anxiety, or fear —what spiritual practices correspond to David's example?

Interlinear Text

יְשַׁׁמְּךָנִי יְהִי הַ שְׁמַמְּנִי אַתָּה שְׁכַב תָּתִי אַתָּה יָשַׁׁבָּנִי
 H589 I laid me down H7901 and slept H3462 I awaked H6974 for the LORD H3068 sustained H5564

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 4:8 (References Lord): I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.

Proverbs 3:24 (Parallel theme): When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.

Isaiah 26:3 (Parallel theme): Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

Leviticus 26:6 (Parallel theme): And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land.

Psalms 127:2 (Parallel theme): It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.

Proverbs 18:10 (References Lord): The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

Proverbs 14:26 (References Lord): In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge.

Psalms 66:9 (Parallel theme): Which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved.

