

Psalms 37:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous.

Analysis

Arms symbolize strength and accomplishment—the wicked's arms breaking depicts total incapacitation, unable to execute their schemes. The passive 'shall be broken' indicates divine action against them. Conversely, the LORD 'upholdeth' (Hebrew 'samak,' supports, sustains) the righteous—active, ongoing divine support. The contrast is comprehensive: the wicked lose all capacity while the righteous receive constant enablement. This promise sustains believers through weakness, knowing that God's strength, not theirs, produces faithfulness.

Historical Context

Arms represented ability to work, fight, and achieve. Broken arms meant utter helplessness, total dependence on others. David contrasts this with the righteous who, though weak, are upheld by omnipotence.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How have you experienced God upholding you when your own strength failed?
2. What difference does it make that God actively supports you rather than merely wishing you well?

Interlinear Text

כִּי זְרוּעַ וְתִשְׁבֵּי רָנָה וְיִסְדֵּם יִצְדִּיק יְהוָה
H3588 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken upholdeth the righteous
H2220 H7563 H7665 H5564 H6662
יְהוָה:
but the LORD
H3068

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 41:10 (Righteousness): Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Psalms 63:8 (Parallel theme): My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.

Psalms 145:14 (References Lord): The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.

Isaiah 42:1 (Parallel theme): Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

Psalms 37:24 (References Lord): Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.

Psalms 51:12 (Parallel theme): Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

Jude 1:24 (Parallel theme): 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,

Psalms 10:15 (Evil): Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man: seek out his wickedness till thou find none.

Psalms 41:12 (Parallel theme): And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever.

Job 38:15 (Evil): And from the wicked their light is withholden, and the high arm shall be broken.