

Psalms 5:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.

Analysis

For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield. This concluding verse provides theological foundation for the joy described in verse 11—God blesses the righteous with favor that surrounds them like a shield. The verse uses two powerful images: blessing/favor and encircling protection, both emphasizing God's active goodness toward those who trust Him.

"Thou, LORD, wilt bless" (ki-atah Yahweh t'varekh, פִּיאַתָּה יְהָוָה תְּבַרֵּךְ) uses the emphatic pronoun "thou"—You, Yahweh, will bless. The emphasis contrasts God's blessing with any supposed blessing from other sources. Only God's blessing matters ultimately. The verb barak (ברך) means to bless, enrich, cause to prosper. This isn't merely well-wishing but effective action—God's blessing accomplishes what it speaks. When God blesses, genuine prosperity, wellbeing, and flourishing result. Genesis 12:2-3 promised Abraham, "I will bless thee... and thou shalt be a blessing."

"The righteous" (tzaddiq, צַדִּיק) refers not to those who achieve perfect moral performance but to those in right covenant relationship with God—those who trust Him, walk in His ways, and depend on His grace. In Old Testament theology, righteousness is relational and covenantal before it is moral. Abraham "believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:6). Paul quotes this in Romans 4:3 to demonstrate that righteousness comes through faith, not works. The righteous are those who trust God and live accordingly, receiving God's

imputed righteousness through faith.

"With favour" (ratzon, רצון) means goodwill, acceptance, pleasure, delight. This describes God's disposition toward the righteous—He delights in them, accepts them, looks on them with pleasure. This isn't based on their deserving but on His grace and covenant love. Proverbs 12:2 declares, "A good man obtaineth favour of the LORD." This favor is both relational (God's pleasure) and practical (tangible blessings flowing from divine goodwill).

"Wilt thou compass him as with a shield" (ka-tzinah tatrennu, קָצֵנָה תָּצִנֵּה תָּצִנְנָה) uses vivid military imagery. Tzinah is a large shield covering the whole body, providing comprehensive protection. The verb atar means to surround, encircle, encompass, crown. God's favor surrounds the righteous person completely like a shield encircles a warrior in battle. Psalm 32:7 promises, "Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." God's protective favor creates a perimeter of safety around His people.

This isn't a promise of exemption from all difficulty but assurance of divine protection and ultimate wellbeing. The righteous still face enemies (verses 8-10 acknowledge ongoing opposition), but they face them surrounded by God's favor and protection. No weapon formed against them will prosper (Isaiah 54:17); no enemy can ultimately defeat those whom God shields with His favor.

Historical Context

The imagery of God as shield appears throughout Scripture, reflecting ancient Near Eastern warfare where shields provided essential protection. Shields ranged from small hand-held bucklers to large body-covering shields that protected soldiers in battle. A good shield could mean the difference between life and death, safety and injury. Psalm 3:3 calls God "a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head." Ephesians 6:16 describes faith as "the shield... wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

David knew shield warfare intimately from his military experience. He had faced

Goliath, fought Philistines, led armies, and survived numerous battles. His use of shield imagery wasn't metaphorical abstraction but vivid reality. Just as a physical shield protected him in battle, God's favor protected him from spiritual and physical enemies. This tangible imagery helped Israel grasp theological truth—God's protective care is real, effective, and comprehensive.

For Christians, this promise finds fulfillment in union with Christ, the perfectly Righteous One. Believers are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). We stand "accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6), surrounded by God's favor not because of our righteousness but because of Christ's. Romans 8:31-39 expounds this confidence: "If God be for us, who can be against us?... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Nothing—no enemy, circumstance, or spiritual power—can penetrate the shield of God's favor that surrounds those who are in Christ Jesus.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does understanding that God 'blesses the righteous' based on covenant relationship rather than perfect performance affect your confidence?
2. What does God's 'favor' look like practically in your daily life, and how do you recognize and acknowledge it?
3. How does the image of God's favor surrounding you 'as with a shield' change how you face opposition or spiritual attack?
4. In what ways might you be tempted to seek favor from other sources rather than resting in God's favor alone?
5. How does being 'in Christ' ensure that God's favor and blessing rest upon you despite your imperfections?

Interlinear Text

כִּי

אַתָּה

תִּבְרֶךְ

תִּבְרֶךְ

צַדִּיק

wilt bless

the righteous

H1288

יְהִי

יְהִי

לְךָ

For thou LORD

H3068

כִּי

כִּי

אֵצֶן

him as with a shield

H6793

בָּצָר

תַּעֲבֹרֶךְ

with favour

wilt thou compass

H7522

H5849

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 84:11 (References Lord): For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

Psalms 32:10 (References Lord): Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.

Psalms 115:13 (Blessing): He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great.

Psalms 112:1 (Blessing): Praise ye the LORD. Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments.

Psalms 29:11 (Blessing): The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace.

Psalms 32:7 (Parallel theme): Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.

Psalms 3:3 (References Lord): But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

Psalms 3:8 (Blessing): Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah.