

# Psalms 7:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.

## Analysis

**Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.** This verse presents David's prayer for moral order in the world—that evil be stopped and righteousness be strengthened. The parallelism is striking: wickedness should end, justice should be established. This isn't vindictive prayer but a yearning for God's character to be reflected in human society.

"Come to an end" (yigmar, יִגְמַר) means to cease, complete, or finish. David prays for evil to run its course and be terminated, not to continue perpetually. "Establish" (token, יִתְקַדֵּם) means to make firm, secure, or stable—the opposite of evil's termination. Where wickedness is transient and ultimately futile, righteousness should be permanent and unshakeable.

The theological basis for this prayer follows: **"for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins."** The word "trieth" (bochen, בּוּחַן) means to examine, test, or prove—like assaying precious metal. God doesn't judge superficially by appearances but penetrates to the core of human motivation and character. "Hearts and reins" (libboth u-kelayoth, לִבּוֹת וּכְלֵי־וּת) is a Hebrew idiom for the innermost being. The "reins" (kidneys) were considered the seat of emotions and desires, while the "heart" represented mind, will, and moral character.

This divine examination is precisely what David invites in verse 8—he knows God

sees the truth. Jeremiah 17:10 echoes this theme: "I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways." For believers, this should produce both comfort (God knows our genuine faith even when others doubt) and sobriety (we cannot hide sin from omniscient examination).

## Historical Context

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Ancient Near Eastern societies struggled with the apparent prosperity of the wicked and suffering of the righteous—a theme explored extensively in Job, several psalms (37, 73), and Ecclesiastes. Without a fully developed theology of afterlife in the early Old Testament period, the tension was acute: if God is just and rewards righteousness, why do the wicked prosper?

Psalms like this one assert confidence in eventual divine justice even when current circumstances seem unjust. The refining imagery ("trieth") was familiar to ancient audiences. Metal workers heated ore to separate pure metal from impurities—a process requiring intense heat but producing valuable results. Similarly, God's testing of hearts reveals what is genuine and purges what is false.

The Hebrew concept of God examining "hearts and reins" reflects ancient physiology's understanding of these organs as centers of personality. Modern readers might speak of God knowing our thoughts, emotions, and motivations. The point remains: God's knowledge is comprehensive and penetrating, not superficial or easily deceived.

Jesus taught extensively about God's examination of the heart. He warned against external religiosity that masks internal corruption (Matthew 23:25-28) and insisted that evil comes from within (Mark 7:20-23). The book of Revelation depicts Christ as one whose "eyes are like a flame of fire" who "searches the minds and hearts" (Revelation 2:18, 23), directly echoing Old Testament imagery.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

## Study Questions

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1. What does it mean practically to pray for 'the wickedness of the wicked to come to an end' in a fallen world where evil persists?
2. How should the knowledge that God examines our 'hearts and reins' affect what we allow ourselves to think and desire in private?
3. In what ways might God be 'testing' or 'trying' you currently, and how can you cooperate with His refining process?
4. How do you reconcile praying for the end of wickedness with Jesus's command to love enemies and pray for persecutors (Matthew 5:44)?
5. What comfort does God's omniscient examination provide when you are misunderstood or falsely judged by others?

## Interlinear Text

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וְתִכְזֹבְנִי	רְשָׁעִים	כְּעֵד	בְּאָמֵר	וְגַם
come to an end	H4994	Oh let the wickedness	of the wicked	but establish
H1584		H7451	H7563	H3559
צַדִּיקָה:	אֱלֹהִים	וְכַלְיָה	וְתַבְתַּחַת	לְבַבְךָ
for the righteous	trieth	the hearts	and reins	God
H6662	H974	H3826	H3629	H430
				for the righteous
				H6662

## Additional Cross-References

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**Jeremiah 11:20** (Righteousness): But, O LORD of hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I revealed my cause.

**Jeremiah 20:12** (Righteousness): But, O LORD of hosts, that triest the righteous, and seest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I opened my cause.

**Jeremiah 17:10** (Parallel theme): I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

**1 Chronicles 28:9** (References God): And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.

**Revelation 2:23** (Parallel theme): And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

**Psalms 11:5** (Righteousness): The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.

**Psalms 139:1** (Parallel theme): O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.

**Psalms 26:2** (Parallel theme): Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.

**Psalms 37:23** (Parallel theme): The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.

**Psalms 44:21** (References God): Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.