

Isaiah 61:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

Analysis

God explains His motivation: "For I the LORD love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering." The emphatic "I the LORD" (ani Adonai) grounds this in God's character. He loves mishpat (judgment/justice) and hates gazal be'olah (robbery in/for burnt offering)—offerings obtained through oppression or injustice. This echoes the prophetic critique of worship divorced from ethics (Isaiah 1:11-17, Amos 5:21-24, Micah 6:6-8). The verse continues: "and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them." God promises to direct their work (peulah) in truth (emeth)—faithful, reliable guidance. The "everlasting covenant" (berith olam) refers to the new covenant promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34, Ezekiel 36:25-27, realized in Christ's blood (Luke 22:20, Hebrews 8-10). From a Reformed perspective, this reveals God's covenant faithfulness grounded in His unchanging character. He loves justice, hates hypocrisy, and establishes an eternal covenant not based on human works but His faithful promise. The new covenant is everlasting because it depends on Christ's finished work, not our performance.

Historical Context

Throughout Israel's history, the prophets condemned religious hypocrisy—maintaining elaborate worship while practicing injustice (Isaiah 58:1-7, Jeremiah 7:1-11). God rejected sacrifices obtained through oppression or accompanied by unrepentant sin. The everlasting covenant promised here was inaugurated by Christ, whose sacrifice perfectly satisfied divine justice and established eternal

security for believers (Hebrews 9:12, 13:20). Unlike the Mosaic covenant that was temporary and breakable, the new covenant is eternal and unbreakable, secured by Christ's mediation (Hebrews 7:22, 8:6).

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How does God's love for justice and hatred of religious hypocrisy shape authentic worship?
2. What makes the new covenant 'everlasting' compared to previous covenants?
3. How does God 'direct our work in truth' under the new covenant?

Interlinear Text

בְּאָמֵת וְבָרֵית
H3588 H589 For I the LORD H3068 love H157 judgment H4941 I hate H8130 robbery H1498

עֹלֶם וְבָרֵית בְּאָמֵת פְּעָלָתֶם יִגְתַּחַת וְבָעֵל ה
H5930 H5414 H6468 H571 H1285 H5769 for burnt offering and I will direct their work in truth covenant an everlasting

לִקְמָה אַכְר וְת
H3772 H0 and I will make

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 11:7 (Love): For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.

Jeremiah 9:24 (Judgment): But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

Jeremiah 32:40 (Covenant): And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.

Isaiah 55:3 (Covenant): Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

Psalms 37:28 (Love): For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.

Genesis 17:7 (Covenant): And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

Psalms 99:4 (Love): The king's strength also loveth judgment; thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.

Proverbs 8:20 (Judgment): I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment:

Psalms 45:7 (Love): Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Psalms 33:5 (Love): He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.