

Jeremiah 10:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.

Analysis

This verse acknowledges human limitation: 'O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself.' The Hebrew *derek adam* (דֶּרֶךְ אָדָם, way of man) encompasses life path, destiny, choices. 'Not in himself' (lo-lo) affirms that humans do not control their destiny. 'It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.' The verb *yashar* (יָשַׁר, to make straight, direct) indicates guiding one's path. Human walking cannot determine human destination. This confession acknowledges divine sovereignty over human affairs, preparing for the prayer that follows. The prophet—or personified community—submits to God's ultimate control of history.

Historical Context

This wisdom confession resembles Proverbs 16:9, 19:21, 20:24—the heart plans, but God directs steps. During the chaos of Babylon's advance and Judah's collapse, such acknowledgment of divine sovereignty provided theological anchor. Human planning failed; political scheming produced disaster; only God remained in control. This verse theologically grounds what follows.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does acknowledging that 'the way of man is not in himself' provide peace amid chaotic circumstances?
2. What is the proper balance between human responsibility and recognition of divine sovereignty over our paths?

Interlinear Text

אֲנִי יָדָעְתִּי	יְהוָה הֵאֱמַרְתָּ	כִּי לֹא	לְאִדָּמָה	וְדֶרֶךְ אָדָם	לֹא
I know	O LORD	H3588	H3808	of man	that the way
H3045	H3068		H120	H1870	H3808
לֹא בְּאִדָּמָה	וְלֹא בְּאִדָּמָה	הֵלֵךְ	וְהָיָה	אֲתָּה	צִעְדָּיו
is not in himself	it is not in man	that walketh	to direct	H853	his steps
H376	H1980	H3559	H6806		

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 20:24 (References Lord): Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?

Proverbs 16:1 (References Lord): The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD.

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

Psalms 17:5 (Parallel theme): Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.