

Proverbs 13:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way: but wickedness overthroweth the sinner.

Analysis

This proverb presents righteousness and wickedness as protective versus destructive forces. "Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way" shows virtue as guardian. Tsedaqah (צִדְקָה, righteousness) titsor (תִּצְרָה, guards, preserves, keeps) the one who is tom-darekh (תּוֹמֵדֶךָ, blameless of way, upright in path). Righteousness acts as protective barrier, keeping the upright person on the right path and shielding from danger.

"But wickedness overthroweth the sinner" reveals the self-destructive nature of evil. Rish'ah (רִשְׁעָה, wickedness) tesallef (תְּלִפְתָּה, overthrows, perverts, subverts) the chatta'th (חַטָּאת, sinner, sin offering). Wickedness doesn't protect—it destroys. The sinner's own evil overthrows them like a city overthrown in judgment.

The proverb establishes moral physics: righteousness preserves, wickedness destroys. This isn't arbitrary divine preference but reflects reality's structure. God designed the universe so that virtue leads to flourishing and vice to ruin. Psalm 18:30 declares: "As for God, his way is perfect." Psalm 1 contrasts the righteous tree planted by water with wicked chaff blown away. Jesus taught that wise builders construct on rock, fools on sand (Matthew 7:24-27). Only Christ's imputed righteousness ultimately keeps believers—their own righteousness is filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6), but His perfect righteousness preserves eternally.

Historical Context

Ancient Israelites understood righteousness (tsedaqah) as covenant faithfulness—living according to God's commands. Such obedience brought divine protection, while wickedness brought judgment. Israel's history demonstrated this principle—righteousness preserved the nation, wickedness led to exile. The proverb applies both individually and corporately: righteous people and nations enjoy stability, wicked ones face overthrow.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. In what ways have you experienced righteousness 'keeping' you from harm or dangerous paths?
2. How does trusting in Christ's righteousness (rather than your own) provide ultimate security and preservation?
3. What sins might currently be 'overthrowing' you or undermining your stability and peace?

Interlinear Text

רִאשְׁתָּה	הַשְׁמִינִית	בְּמִזְבֵּחַ	בְּדַבְּרָה	בְּדַבְּרָה	בְּדַבְּרָה
Righteousness	keepeth	him that is upright	in the way	but wickedness	
H6666	H5341	H8537	H1870	H7564	

תַּסְלִל	תַּסְלִיל	תַּסְלִיל
overthroweth	the sinner	
H5557	H2403	

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 11:3 (Parallel theme): The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them.

Psalms 25:21 (Parallel theme): Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.

Psalms 26:1 (Parallel theme): Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide.

Psalms 140:11 (Evil): Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth: evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him.

Psalms 15:2 (Righteousness): He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

Proverbs 21:12 (Righteousness): The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked: but God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness.
