

Psalms 1:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Analysis

For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish. This concluding verse provides the theological foundation for everything preceding it. "The Lord knoweth" (yodea Yahweh, יְדֹעַת יְהָוָה) uses the Hebrew yada (יְדֹעַת), indicating intimate, experiential knowledge rather than mere awareness. God knows the righteous with personal, covenant relationship.

"The way" (derek, דֶּרֶךְ) refers to the entire course of life—choices, actions, attitudes, and direction. God's knowing the righteous person's way implies approval, guidance, and intimate involvement in their journey. This knowledge provides security and assurance that the righteous are never alone or forgotten.

The contrast "shall perish" (toved, תָּבֹדֵד) emphasizes complete destruction and loss. The way itself perishes, not just the person walking it, suggesting total futility of life lived apart from God. While the righteous are known personally by God, the ungodly's way leads nowhere and ultimately ceases to exist.

Historical Context

The concept of God "knowing" His people carries rich biblical significance, from God knowing Abraham (Genesis 18:19) to Jesus declaring He never knew false professors (Matthew 7:23). This knowing implies covenant relationship, not mere cognitive awareness. In ancient Near Eastern treaty language, knowing someone meant recognizing covenant obligations toward them.

The two ways motif appears throughout wisdom literature and is central to Deuteronomy's covenant theology, which presented Israel with choice between life and death, blessing and curse (Deuteronomy 30:15-20). This theme would later be developed in Jesus' teaching about narrow and wide gates (Matthew 7:13-14).

As introduction to the Psalter, this verse establishes the fundamental reality underlying all worship and lament—God knows and cares for His people even when circumstances suggest otherwise. This assurance sustained believers through exile, persecution, and suffering.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does God's personal 'knowing' of believers differ from His omniscient awareness of all people?
2. What practical difference should God's intimate knowledge of our 'way' make in daily life and decision-making?
3. How can believers share the warning about the perishing way of the ungodly without sounding judgmental?

Interlinear Text

יְדָעַת יְהָוָה יְדָעַת כָּרְבָּן יְדָעַת כָּרְבָּן
H3588 knoweth H3045 For the LORD H3068 but the way H1870 of the righteous H6662 but the way H1870

תַּאֲבֹד: רָשָׁע יָמִם
of the ungodly shall perish H7563 H6

Additional Cross-References

2 Timothy 2:19 (References God): Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

Proverbs 15:9 (Righteousness): The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD: but he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.

John 10:14 (Parallel theme): I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

Nahum 1:7 (References Lord): The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.

Psalms 146:9 (References Lord): The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.

Proverbs 14:12 (Parallel theme): There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

John 10:27 (Parallel theme): My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

Matthew 7:13 (Parallel theme): Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereto:

Job 23:10 (Parallel theme): But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

Psalms 142:3 (Parallel theme): When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.

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