

Psalms 101:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.

Analysis

I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. David's commitment narrows from public governance (v. 1) to personal conduct. "I will behave myself wisely" (askilah b'derek tamim, אֲשִׁילָה בְּדֶרֶךְ־תָּמִים) uses sakal (שָׁכַל), meaning to act prudently, prosper, or have insight. This isn't mere intellectual knowledge but skillful living—applying wisdom to daily conduct.

"In a perfect way" (derek tamim, דֶּרֶךְ־תָּמִים) uses tamim (תָּמִים), meaning complete, blameless, or having integrity. The same word describes Noah (Genesis 6:9) and Job (Job 1:1). It doesn't mean sinless perfection but wholehearted devotion—undivided loyalty to God without double-mindedness or hypocrisy. David pledges consistency between public profession and private practice.

"O when wilt thou come unto me?" is a cry for divine presence. David recognizes that human willpower alone cannot sustain righteousness—he needs God's empowering presence. This question may express impatience for God's arrival (perhaps when the Ark was brought to Jerusalem), or longing for God's abiding presence to strengthen moral resolve.

"I will walk within my house with a perfect heart" extends integrity to the most private sphere. "My house" (beqerev beiti, בְּקֶרֶב בֵּיתִי) refers to David's household—where public scrutiny doesn't penetrate. Lebab tamim (לִבִּי־תָמִים, "perfect heart")

pledges internal sincerity, not merely external conformity. True righteousness isn't performance for observers but character maintained in secret.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern palaces were notorious for intrigue, conspiracy, sexual immorality, and violence—as evidenced by Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and even biblical accounts (e.g., David's own failures with Bathsheba, Amnon's rape of Tamar, Absalom's rebellion). David's pledge to maintain righteousness 'within my house' was countercultural and aspirational.

The concept of 'walking with integrity' pervades wisdom literature (Proverbs 10:9, 11:3, 20:7). It represents consistent obedience to covenant stipulations regardless of external pressure or private opportunity. For kings, who wielded enormous power with minimal accountability, maintaining private integrity required extraordinary discipline.

David's emphasis on the heart reflects Israel's prophetic tradition. External ritual compliance meant nothing without inner devotion (1 Samuel 16:7, Psalm 51:16-17, Isaiah 29:13). God evaluates the heart—motives, desires, and secret thoughts—not merely visible behavior.

For Christians, this verse anticipates Jesus' teaching about secret righteousness—praying, fasting, and giving in secret where only the Father sees (Matthew 6:1-18). The Holy Spirit indwells believers, providing the divine presence David longed for, enabling obedience from renewed hearts (Ezekiel 36:26-27, Romans 8:9).

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. Why is private integrity ('within my house') often harder to maintain than public righteousness, and what strategies help sustain it?
2. How does David's cry 'when wilt thou come unto me?' inform our understanding of the relationship between divine grace and human moral effort?
3. In what ways might modern leaders compartmentalize their lives, maintaining public piety while tolerating private compromise?

Interlinear Text

אֲשֶׁכּוּ יְלֵהָ	בְּדֶרֶךְ	תָּמִיד יִם	מִיָּתִי	תָּב וְאֵ	
I will behave myself wisely	way	in a perfect	H4970	O when wilt thou come	
H7919	H1870	H8549		H935	
אֶל־יְ	אֶתְהַלֵּךְ	בְּתָם	לִבִּי	בְּקֶרֶב	בֵּיתִי
H413	unto me I will walk	with a perfect	heart	within	my house
	H1980	H8537	H3824	H7130	H1004

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 119:106 (Parallel theme): I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

1 Kings 9:4 (Parallel theme): And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments:

Psalms 119:115 (Parallel theme): Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.

Psalms 101:6 (Parallel theme): Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.

Psalms 40:17 (Parallel theme): But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.

Deuteronomy 6:7 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

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