

Psalms 11:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.

Analysis

For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright. This concluding verse provides the theological foundation for everything preceding. God's actions toward the righteous and wicked flow from His essential character—He is righteous and loves righteousness. The verse employs emphatic Hebrew construction to stress God's perfect justice and favorable regard for the upright.

"For" (ki, כִּי) indicates causation—this verse explains why verses 4-6 describe God examining all and judging differently. God's nature as righteous determines His actions. "The righteous LORD" (tzaddik Yahweh, צַדִּיק יְהוָה) places the adjective before God's name emphatically: "Righteous is the LORD." This isn't merely one attribute among many but His essential character. Everything God does flows from perfect righteousness—His judgments are just, His ways are pure, His standards are holy.

"Loveth righteousness" (tzedaqot ahev, צִדְקוֹת אָהֵב) uses the plural form tzedaqot, perhaps indicating "righteous acts" or emphasizing the manifold expressions of righteousness. The verb ahev (love) indicates passionate commitment, not cold duty. God delights in righteousness, takes pleasure in justice, loves what aligns with His perfect character. Psalm 33:5 declares: "He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD."

"His countenance doth behold" (panav yechezu, פָּנָיו יַחְזִיזוּ) uses panim (face) in the

plural (a plural of majesty or fullness). God's face represents His favorable presence and blessing. Numbers 6:24-26 blessed Israel: "The LORD make his face shine upon thee...The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee." To have God's face/countenance behold someone means divine favor, acceptance, approval. This contrasts with God hiding His face (Psalm 27:9), which indicates displeasure or judgment.

"The upright" (yashar, יָשָׁר) describes those who are straight, level, right—morally aligned with God's ways. While verse 5 mentioned "the righteous" being tested, this verse emphasizes the outcome: those proven upright receive God's favorable regard. The righteous survive testing and emerge as upright, experiencing God's blessing and presence. The psalm thus concludes with assurance: God's righteous character guarantees He will bless the upright and judge the wicked.

Historical Context

The concept of God's righteousness forms the bedrock of biblical theology. Unlike pagan deities who were capricious and morally ambiguous, Yahweh is consistently portrayed as perfectly righteous. Deuteronomy 32:4 proclaims: "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."

God's love for righteousness appears throughout redemptive history. He established righteous laws (Deuteronomy 4:8), demanded righteous living (Micah 6:8), sent prophets to call Israel back to righteousness when they strayed. The exile resulted from Israel abandoning righteousness for idolatry and injustice—God's love for righteousness required judging unrighteousness.

The imagery of God's countenance/face beholding the upright connects to priestly blessings and tabernacle theology. In the tabernacle, God's presence dwelt in the Holy of Holies, and the high priest entered annually. The goal of Israel's worship was experiencing God's favorable presence. Psalm 27:8 expresses this longing: "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek."

For David, these truths sustained him through years of unjust persecution. Though Saul hunted him, though advisors counseled fleeing, though foundations seemed destroyed, David trusted that God's righteous character guaranteed eventual vindication. The upright would experience God's favor; the wicked would face judgment. David's confidence wasn't in his own strength but in God's unchanging righteousness.

Early Christians applied this psalm christologically. Jesus is the perfectly upright one upon whom God's countenance shone fully. At His baptism and transfiguration, the Father's voice expressed divine pleasure (Matthew 3:17, 17:5). Through union with Christ, believers become "the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21), receiving the Father's favorable countenance not because of personal merit but because of Christ's perfect uprightness.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does God's essential righteousness provide security in times when earthly justice fails and wickedness seems to triumph?
2. What does it mean that God 'loves' righteousness rather than merely demanding it, and how should this affect how we view obedience?
3. How can you cultivate practical uprightness (moral alignment with God's ways) in daily decisions and relationships?
4. What does it mean experientially to have God's countenance behold you favorably, and how does this differ from God hiding His face?
5. How does Christ's perfect uprightness enable believers to stand before God's righteous gaze with confidence rather than fear?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	צִדִּיק יְיָ	יְהוָה !	צִדְקָתְךָ וְ	אֱהֵב	יְשׁוּרִים	יִבְחֲנוּ
H3588	For the righteous	LORD	righteousness	loveth	the upright	doth behold
	H6662	H3068	H6666	H157	H3477	H2372
פָּנָיו:						
his countenance						
H6440						

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 22:4 (Parallel theme): And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

Psalms 17:15 (Righteousness): As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

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.

Job 36:7 (Righteousness): He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous: but with kings are they on the throne; yea, he doth establish them for ever, and they are exalted.

1 John 3:2 (Love): Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

1 Peter 3:12 (Righteousness): For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

Psalms 34:15 (Righteousness): The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.

Psalms 33:18 (References Lord): Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy;

Psalms 21:6 (Parallel theme): For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.

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

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