

Psalms 125:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts.

Analysis

A prayer for divine favor follows: 'Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts.' The imperative 'do good' is bold yet appropriate - covenant people may appeal to God's goodness and justice. The Hebrew 'hatab' means to make well, deal bountifully, show goodness. The dual description of recipients ('those that be good' and 'those that are upright in their hearts') emphasizes both external behavior and internal character. 'Good' refers to moral excellence and covenant faithfulness. 'Upright in their hearts' addresses motivation and integrity - not merely external compliance but genuine devotion. The phrase 'in their hearts' recognizes that God judges internal reality, not just outward appearance. This prayer asks God to bless those whose lives align with His character. It's not merit-based salvation but covenant-based expectation that God rewards faithfulness.

Historical Context

The Mosaic covenant included blessings for obedience (Deuteronomy 28:1-14), establishing expectation that God rewards righteousness. However, Israelite history showed that blessing doesn't always follow immediately, creating tension between promise and experience. The prayer reflects both covenant confidence and current need.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What gives believers confidence to pray 'do good' to God as a command?
2. How does the distinction between outward goodness and heart uprightness protect against mere externalism?
3. Is this prayer based on merit (earning blessing) or covenant (expecting faithfulness)? How do these differ?
4. How does New Testament teaching about grace relate to Old Testament prayers for blessing on righteousness?
5. What does 'upright in heart' look like practically in modern Christian life?

Interlinear Text

הֵיטֵ יְבָהּ	יְהוָה !	לְטוֹב יָם	לְיֹשֵׁר יָם
Do good	O LORD	unto those that be good	and to them that are upright
H2895	H3068	H2896	H3477

בְּלִבּוֹתָם:
in their hearts
H3826

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 7:10 (Parallel theme): My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart.

Psalms 119:68 (Good): Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes.

Psalms 51:18 (Good): Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem.

Psalms 84:11 (Good): For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

Revelation 14:5 (Parallel theme): And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Hebrews 6:10 (Parallel theme): For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

Psalms 119:80 (Parallel theme): Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.

Psalms 94:15 (Parallel theme): But judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it.

Psalms 36:10 (Parallel theme): O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart.

Psalms 73:1 (Good): Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.