

Psalms 25:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way.

Analysis

Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way.

This verse provides theological foundation for David's confidence that God will answer his petitions for guidance and forgiveness. The statement about God's character (good and upright) leads logically to expectation about God's actions (teaching sinners).

"Good" (tov, טוב) encompasses moral excellence, kindness, benevolence, and beneficial nature. God's goodness is not abstract quality but active disposition toward His creation's welfare. Psalm 34:8 invites: "taste and see that the LORD is good." God's goodness means He desires human flourishing and works toward it.

"Upright" (yashar, יָשָׁר) means straight, right, just, equitable. God's character is morally straight—no crookedness, deception, or corruption. His judgments are right; His standards are just; His dealings are fair. This uprightness means God can be trusted absolutely—He won't mislead, manipulate, or deal falsely.

"Therefore will he teach sinners" (yorah chatta'im, יוֹרֵה חַטָּאִים) draws logical conclusion from God's character. Yarah (יָרָה) means to throw, shoot, direct—and by extension, to teach, instruct, point the way. The verb is used of teaching archery (directing the arrow) and becomes the root for Torah (teaching, instruction). Because God is good, He wants sinners to find the right path. Because He is upright, He can be trusted to teach truth.

The phrase "sinners in the way" (chatta'im baderek, חַטָּאִים בַּדֶּרֶךְ) is remarkable. God teaches sinners—not just the righteous or religious, but those who have missed the mark. He teaches them "in the way"—the path of righteousness, the road of life. This reveals God's redemptive heart: He doesn't abandon sinners to their lostness but actively instructs them toward life and truth.

Historical Context

The character of God as good and upright was revealed progressively through Israel's history. At Sinai, God proclaimed: "The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6). David experienced this goodness despite his sins—God forgave adultery, murder, and pride, repeatedly delivering David when he repented.

The concept that God teaches sinners challenged ancient religious assumptions. Pagan religions saw deities as capricious, requiring appeasement through ritual. Even in Israel, some assumed God related only to the righteous. But throughout Scripture, God pursues sinners: calling Abraham from paganism, choosing Jacob despite his deception, using Moses despite his murder, forgiving David's adultery, restoring Peter after denial.

This verse anticipates Jesus's ministry to sinners. Religious leaders criticized: "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" (Luke 15:2). Jesus responded: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mark 2:17). Paul wrote: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15).

The promise that God teaches sinners grounds hope for moral transformation. Sanctification isn't self-improvement but divine instruction. God, who is good and upright, actively guides believers from sin toward righteousness through His Word, Spirit, and providential circumstances.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's goodness (wanting our welfare) combined with His uprightness (moral perfection) make Him trustworthy as a teacher?
2. Why is it significant that God teaches 'sinners' rather than only relating to those who are already righteous?
3. What does it mean that God teaches sinners 'in the way'—and how does this differ from merely condemning sin without offering guidance toward righteousness?
4. How does understanding God's character as good and upright help you receive correction and instruction without defensiveness?
5. In what ways has God taught you 'the way' despite your sin and failures, and how does remembering this deepen your gratitude?

Interlinear Text

טוֹב	וְיָשָׁר	יְהוָה	עַל	כִּי	יֹכֵה	חַטָּאִים
Good	and upright	is the LORD	H5921	H3651	therefore will he teach	sinners
H2896	H3477	H3068			H3384	H2400

בְּדֶרֶךְ
in the way
H1870

Additional Cross-References

James 1:5 (Parallel theme): If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

Psalms 32:8 (Parallel theme): I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

Psalms 92:15 (References Lord): To shew that the LORD is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

Isaiah 26:7 (Parallel theme): The way of the just is uprightness: thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just.

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

Matthew 9:13 (Sin): But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

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