

Psalms 78:37

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.

Analysis

For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. This verse explains the "nevertheless" of verse 36. Lēb (לֵב, "heart") represents the control center of will, emotion, and thought—the inner person. Nāḵôn (נָכוֹן, "right") means established, firm, or prepared; their hearts were unstable, unprepared for covenant faithfulness.

’Āman (אָמֵן, "stedfast") is the root of "amen," meaning faithful, reliable, trustworthy. They were lo’ ne’ēmānîm (לֹא נֶעְמָנִים)—not faithful in His bĕrît (בְּרִית, covenant). Covenant required heart-loyalty, not just external compliance. Their unfaithfulness broke the foundational relationship established at Sinai.

This diagnosis exposes why behavioral reformation fails without heart transformation. God demands what we cannot produce naturally—a "right heart"—which only He can create (Psalm 51:10). The New Covenant solves this crisis by writing the law on hearts (Hebrews 8:10) and giving the Spirit to produce genuine faithfulness.

Historical Context

The Mosaic covenant demanded wholehearted loyalty (Deuteronomy 6:5). Israel's heart-unfaithfulness led to repeated covenant violations and eventually exile. Asaph, writing likely before the fall of the Northern Kingdom, warns that external religion without internal transformation courts disaster.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How would you assess whether your heart is "right" with God versus merely maintaining external religious practices?
2. What areas of unsteadfastness in your covenant relationship with God need the Spirit's transforming work?
3. Why is heart-level faithfulness impossible through human effort alone?

Interlinear Text

לִבָּם	!	לֹא	נָכֹחַ	וְ	עִמּוֹ	וְ	אֱלֹהִים
For their heart		was not right					
H3820		H3808	H3559		H5973		H3808

וְ	אִמָּן	וְ	בְּבְרִיתוֹ
with him neither were they stedfast		in his covenant	
H539		H1285	

Additional Cross-References

Acts 8:21 (Parallel theme): Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

Psalms 78:8 (Parallel theme): And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God.

Psalms 51:10 (Parallel theme): Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

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

Hosea 10:2 (Parallel theme): Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images.

Hosea 7:14 (Parallel theme): And they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me.

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org