

Psalms 85:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.

Analysis

Righteousness shall go before him (צֶדֶק לְפָנָיו יֵהָלֵךְ, tzedek lefanav yehalekh)—Tzedek means righteousness, justice; lefanav means before his face; halakh means walk, go. **And shall set us in the way of his steps** (וַיַּשֶּׁם לְדֶרֶךְ פְּעָמָיו, ve-yasem le-derekh pe'amav)—Yasem means set, place; derekh means way, path; pe'amav means his steps, footsteps.

Psalm 85 prays for restoration after exile. Verses 10-11 picture cosmic reconciliation: "Mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace kiss." Verse 13 continues this vision—God's righteousness doesn't just accompany him but goes before him, preparing the way. This anticipates John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus (Mark 1:2-3). God's righteous character shapes the path his people walk.

Historical Context

Written after return from Babylonian exile, Psalm 85 reflects both gratitude for restoration and longing for complete renewal. The community had rebuilt the temple but still faced opposition, poverty, and spiritual apathy. They needed God's righteousness to lead them forward.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does God's righteousness "going before" you provide security and direction for your path?
2. In what ways do you need God's righteous character to prepare the way in current circumstances?
3. How does this verse connect personal holiness with following in God's footsteps?

Interlinear Text

צְדִיקָה	לִפְנֵי י'	יְהִי לִּי	וַיֵּשֶׁב	לְדֶרֶךְ	פְּעָמָיו:
Righteousness	before	shall go	him and shall set	us in the way	of his steps
H6664	H6440	H1980	H7760	H1870	H6471

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 89:14 (Righteousness): Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

John 13:34 (Parallel theme): A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

Isaiah 58:8 (Righteousness): Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the LORD shall be thy rereward.

1 John 2:6 (Parallel theme): He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (Parallel theme): But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Galatians 2:20 (Parallel theme): I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

1 Peter 4:1 (Parallel theme): Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;

Psalms 119:35 (Parallel theme): Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.

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