

Psalm 89:30

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments;

Analysis

If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; This verse begins a conditional section within the Davidic covenant, establishing that while God's covenant with David is eternal and unconditional in its ultimate fulfillment, individual descendants face consequences for disobedience. The Hebrew *im* (אִם, "if") introduces a hypothetical condition that becomes tragically real throughout Israel's history.

"Forsake my law" uses the Hebrew *azav* (עָזַב), meaning to abandon, leave, or desert—a strong term indicating willful rejection rather than mere negligence. "My law" (*torati*, תּוֹרַתִּי) refers to God's instruction, teaching, and revealed will. "Walk not in my judgments" employs *halak* (הָלַךְ), the common Hebrew verb for walking that metaphorically describes one's manner of life and conduct. "Judgments" (*mishpatim*, מִשְׁפָטִים) denotes God's judicial decisions, ordinances, and righteous standards.

This verse addresses covenant faithfulness across generations. While God's promise to David guarantees the Messiah's eventual reign (fulfilled in Christ), individual kings and their subjects face temporal judgments for covenant violation. This tension between unconditional covenant promise and conditional covenant blessing runs throughout Scripture, finding resolution in Christ who perfectly keeps the law and bears judgment for covenant-breakers.

Historical Context

Psalm 89 was likely composed during or after the Babylonian exile (586 BCE), when the apparent failure of the Davidic monarchy raised profound theological questions. The covenant with David (2 Samuel 7) promised an eternal throne, yet Jerusalem lay in ruins and no Davidic king ruled.

The historical reality of verses 30-32 became painfully evident through Israel's monarchy. Solomon's idolatry (1 Kings 11), the kingdom's division under Rehoboam, the wickedness of kings like Ahab and Manasseh, and ultimately the Babylonian captivity demonstrated the consequences of forsaking God's law. Yet even in judgment, God preserved the Davidic line, keeping His ultimate promise.

This psalm's structure—celebrating God's covenant (vv. 1-37), then lamenting its apparent failure (vv. 38-51)—reflects Israel's wrestling with God's faithfulness amid catastrophe. For the exiled community, these verses explained their suffering while maintaining hope in God's unchanging promises. The tension would only be resolved in Jesus Christ, the ultimate Son of David who never forsook God's law.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does God's discipline of His covenant people differ from His rejection of them?
2. What does this verse teach about the relationship between God's unconditional promises and conditional blessings?

3. How does Christ fulfill the Davidic covenant despite the failures of David's historical descendants?
4. In what ways might believers today 'forsake God's law and walk not in His judgments'?
5. How should the certainty of divine discipline for disobedience affect our daily walk with God?

Interlinear Text

יְלִכּוּ לְאָם יְעַזְבֵּנִי תּוֹרַתִּי וְבִמְשֻׁפְטִי
 H518 forsake H1121 If his children H8451 my law H4941 not in my judgments H3808 H1980

Additional Cross-References

2 Samuel 7:14 (Parallel theme): I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men:

Psalms 119:53 (Word): Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law.

Proverbs 28:4 (Word): They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them.

1 Chronicles 28:9 (Parallel theme): And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.