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F. God's justice in action. v.6

“For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.” Psalm 1:6

1. *“For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous:”* - כִּי־יֹדַע יְהוָה דֶּרֶךְ צְדִיקִים -

The word for *knoweth* is *yada* and it meant to know, to care for, to watch, to watch over, to protect, to prosper, etc.. But *yada* was also used in a treaty relationship, and as such, denotes that a treaty or covenant exists between two groups, or two persons, and is an expression of *Yahweh's* covenant committal to Israel to watch over them.

Yahweh had entered into a covenant relationship with the sons of Israel thus binding himself to them and them to himself. But this covenant relationship was not some loose or emotional matter of, I love you and you love me, but a covenant based upon stipulations laid out by God which were the conditions that would determine as to whether he would bless them or curse them.

The issue of the New Covenant is living our lives according to the concept of **the faith** established for us by Jesus Christ. *“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith (literally – **the faith**); who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:2*

This is the faith that Jesus Christ originated, the one that he lived his life by personally, the one that he brought to completion; and he is the one that completes it in others. This new type of faith is characterized by six points we call the six P's:

- 1) – faith in the Father's **plan** for our lives.
- 2) – faith in the Father's **promises**.
- 3) – faith in the Father's **protection**.
- 4) – faith in the Father's **provisions**.
- 5) – faith in the Father's **power**.
- 6) – faith in the **process** that the Father uses to perfect us.

The conditions that God had in the Old Covenant with Israel reflected the righteous nature of God. *Yahweh* was and is righteous, his laws were righteous and his people were to be righteous in their daily living. “Ye shall be holy, for I am holy”. If an individual walked in obedience to God's commands, God would bless him. But if he didn't, then God would curse him.

Here we have an example of the blessing of God upon a believer's life. If any believer obeyed God's instructions in this passage he would be fulfilling God's requirements for blessing. By applying the doctrine of separation and avoiding the wrong kind of people in life, by remaining occupied with the Word of God as his first priority, and by not following after the sin trend of the flesh nature God would make him healthy, prosperous and productive.

Now if and when a believer in Israel did that, then *Yahweh* would *watch over him*, that is, give special attention to that believer to bless him and his home. He would survive the hard times of life, grow and be healthy, and be successful at what he does. Why? Because God's covenant with Israel demanded it!

2. “But the way of the ungodly shall perish.” - ודרך רשעים תאבד:

The word *way*, *derek*, referred to the path that one has taken in life. And as we have seen a path goes from one place to another place. Under the concept of the term “*the righteous*” in the passage, the term given to those who walk within the parameters of the covenant, they will be blessed, protected and prospered because *Yahweh* is watching over them on the path they are on. But not so with *the wicked*, or the ungodly as we have here.

The word *perish*, *abad*, meant to be destroyed, ruined, annihilated, to be lost, to run away. It always speaks of something bad happening to an individual. And it could cover everything from personal ruin to death: the loss of health, loss of job, finances, loss of home and property, disease, sickness, wasting diseases, mental illness, loss of mind and even death.

The piel stem intensifies all this, as if these things weren't bad enough, but probably to illustrate the severity of it all. If it was found in the hiphil stem, it would tell us that the wicked believer's ruination, or destruction would be caused to fall upon them with either God allowing it or directing it. But in the piel stem, as we have here, it's more factual looking at the condition of the whole situation. Which is to say, **they brought it upon themselves! Their ruin lies on the path that they have chosen to take!**

There's a few things that enter in here to help explain what is going on with the wicked. First is their **rejecting the guidance of God in their lives**. Instead of seeking after the counsel of the wise, or better yet, finding what God has to say about things in his Word and living by them, the wicked reject all divine counsel and take advice from reversionistic believers or the unsaved!

Second, this rejection of God's counsel, which comes through doctrinal teaching and the leading of the Holy Spirit today, **takes them down the wrong path in their lives**.

Third, now that they are on the wrong path for their lives, **they have taken themselves out of the sphere of divine protection, at least to the degree of protection**, (which is one of God's grace blessings), that the righteous have in their lives.

Fourth, there are **pitfalls and problems on this path** that they would not have had to deal with if they had chosen to take the right path that God had for them. For example, instead of following this path to the next destination, one that would be a pleasant walk through the countryside, the individual chose to take the path that somebody else told him was better, only it took him through a miserable swamp with snakes and alligators!

Fifth, **all the blessings that God had awaiting him on the path that he had picked out for the believer will never become that believer's reality!** And this is where so many believers miss out on the blessings God had for them in life, right man, right woman, right job, ministry, health, good friends, etc., because they rejected God's plan and path for their lives and followed another one. They wanted to gratify their lusts, they listened to the advice of the wrong kind of people, they followed after the way of the world, and they did their own thing. And that's where it took them...down the wrong path.

Let's say that a believer has before him two paths in life that he can take. At the trail head of one God is pointing to it saying, “This is the way (*derek*), walk ye in it”. But the believer rejects the wisdom and guidance of the Lord and so he rejects the path. He doesn't like what he thinks he sees on it, (no fun on it), or where it will go, so he goes down another path.

God gives us free will and God allows us to make our choices in life, **but know full well we will have to live with the consequences!** This is why we should also consult the Lord as to what we are to do in life and follow what he says! *“What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.” Psalm 25:12*

So now the wicked believer goes down the wrong path in life. A path that may be pleasant and fun for awhile, a path that may gratify the lusts and please the ego, but in the end will bring him ruination of body and soul, misery, despair and perhaps death. It's not God's fault, nor even God's will that all these terrible things will happen to him. It's just that they *“come with the territory”*, as we say. **These things await the believer on the path that they wanted to go down.**

It's like being in a big city and you want to go from point A to point B. Some kind stranger points out that you can safely get from here to there by taking a certain route. But it doesn't look interesting or fun to you, so you take another route. But on this route you took, contrary to the kind stranger's advice, you will be going through neighborhoods run by street gangs, with the result that you will be robbed, beat up, or shot!

So whose fault is it that your life has been ruined? The kind stranger? God? Or yourself because you wanted to take the wrong path in your life? Safety was the condition on the right street, while destruction was the condition on the wrong street.

And so it is with our lives. God has chosen a path for us to take and on this path he will be watching over us to provide for us the best, to bless us and prosper us. But on the wrong path, the path that the wicked take, will be loss, ruination, destruction, misery and death. In this case, God isn't doing it to them, they're doing it to themselves, because they willfully chose to take the wrong path in life!

It's like the mother who pleads with her son to not go into drugs or get involved in a gang. Despite all the mother's pleas to her son, he arrogantly goes and does what he wants to do. Later on down the road he ends up in prison, gets shot and dies, or ends up as a vegetable for life. So whose fault is it? His mother's? Society? Or himself? He ruined his own life because of the path that **he** chose.

Or like the parents who beg and plead for their sons and daughters not to try drugs. But they reject their parent's pleas and walk down that path. There they find only misery and despair. Loss of health, loss of dreams, loss of goals, loss of family, loss of job, loss of self respect, loss of their minds and end up on the streets wasting away looking only to more more misery and eventually death!

It isn't their parent's fault, or society's fault, or God's fault. It's theirs! What we have got to see is that **certain things await us on the right path and certain things are waiting for us on the wrong path!** And on the wrong path only misery and ruination await us. Oh it may be fun for awhile, but the party will end up in ruin. *“But the way (path) of the ungodly shall perish.”*

Blessings for the soul and the body, that God will bring in our lives, are waiting for us on the right path to take in life. But destruction, *abad*, for the soul and body (destruction – means loss of well being), which are a part of Satan's world system, are waiting for us on the wrong path. It's the path that we take which determines which one we will have, blessings or ruination! Psalm one is our instruction manual for all of this. One, we don't take the advice of unbelievers or reversionists. Two, we are not to persist in sin. Three, we are not to hang around the mockers in life. Four, we are to absorb ourselves in the Word of God. Five, follow God's Word for our lives.

Blessings await us on one path, while ruin awaits us on another path. **It's the path that is in view!** How many fathers and mothers have warned their sons to stay off the path of chasing after women and the party life? Some listen, many don't. Those who don't join the millions of others who have contracted sexually transmitted diseases, such as, herpes, syphilis, gonorrhea, AIDS or dozens of other sexually transmitted diseases and run the risk of ruining their chance at having a good marriage and children, perhaps even losing their life!

Many a young man or woman has played loose with their bodies in this area of life, (*standing in the path of sinners*), with the result that they have acquired a sexually transmitted disease and now have to live, at the least, with a painful or embarrassing condition, while others have become sterile and are childless, some go through life unmarried and some have died because of it. It's a rare individual who wants to marry someone with a communicable sexual disease.

Is it God's fault that they ruined their lives? No! Is it the fault of the people who warned them **not** to go down that road? No again! It's their own fault because they deliberately chose the wrong path. It's just all these things and more were on the path that they chose. It may not have hit them the first day they went down it, but it will sooner or later.

They listened to the suggestions, or counsel of their "*friends*", instead of listening to the sound advice of God, or their parents, and brought physical ruin to their lives, even their own bodies. **Young men, stay away from the wrong kind of woman, who will beguile you with her beauty and her words!** The very thing God warns us about in Proverbs 5:12,13 "*You will say, How I hated discipline! How my heart spurned correction! And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!*"

But in all this I want to also emphasize how God deals with us in his grace and mercy, even when we have rebelled against him. "*Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;*" Psalm 103:2-4

God can deal with us two ways. One, on the basis of **justice** where we get exactly what is coming to us. And two, on the basis of **grace** where God deals with us according to his great love for us. We can choose which it will be. Thank God he has not dealt with us as our actions deserve! "*He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*" Psalm 103:10

The reality is that many young people go down the wrong path in life. They've either listened to their "friends", or they have followed after their own lusts, and have taken the wrong path in life. And under the doctrine of free will God respects their decision to do so. He may warn them, he may instruct them, he may send people to them to dissuade them from their ways, but in the end it's their choice!

But **choices have consequences**. God gives us the freedom to make our own decisions in life as adults, but here's the hook, **we have to live with the consequences!** And unbeknownst to us the path that we took, that we thought fame, glory, money, success and fun was waiting there for us, on that path was more misery and failure than we ever imagined. We thought we were going to get so much more in our lives, **but little did we know how much we were going to lose!** Then one day on this path of emptiness and misery of soul, we had had enough, so we cried out to God. And God heard our plea and brought us back around and put us on the right path, (the one he had chosen for us long ago), and then we started to reap all of God's grace blessings he had for us all along.

When the believer learns and applies the instructions from God, that come from his Word, the *Torah* of *Yahweh*, then he will choose the right path in life. And on that path will be untold blessings that God has in store for him. *“What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he **teach** in the **way** that he shall **choose**.” Psalm 25:12* He gives us the choice in what we shall choose in life and he also gives us the doctrine on which path we should take.

But if we choose the wrong path, as so many of us have done in our lives, we will find that our lives start to go downhill. We may not be aware of it at first, but as time goes by we will. **Good decisions, good consequences. Bad decisions, bad consequences.** And in all this God respects our free will, even though the results of which end up disastrous for us.

But God still loves us and God still wants to be gracious to us, so he woos us from the wrong path we're on, if we will listen to his voice. *“He is **wooing** you from the jaws of distress to a spacious place free from restriction, to the comfort of your table laden with choice food.” Job 36:16 NIV*

The basic theme in the OT concerning this matter, (and us as well in the NT), is that God **instructed** his people on how they were to live in order that he could bless them. This instruction comes from the sound exegetical teaching of his revealed Word. Now if we listen to and apply his instruction, then he will bless us. But if we don't, if we choose the wrong path in life, as so many believers have done, then he will instruct us, (if we listen to what he has to say), on **what we need to do to get back on track** in our lives. *“Therefore tell the people: This is what the LORD Almighty says: '**Return to me,**' declares the LORD Almighty, 'and I will **return** to you,' says the LORD Almighty.” Zechariah 1:3*

If we do not heed his instruction, if we do not obey his commands, if we do not even avail ourselves of the teaching of God's Word, then his instruction takes on the form of **warning (being chewed out)**! Now he's warning of us of what will happen, if we do not return to him and start living in the righteous spiritual dynamic he has provided for all his people.

If we do not heed his warnings, then he will next send **corrective discipline** our way. Not to punish us, but to correct our ways, so that we will get back on the right track. The reason why he does this is because, if we don't listen to his Words, then surely the pain, loss and suffering we will be going through will act as a **motivator** to get us to turn back to God...hopefully.

The discipline that God will bring into our lives can and will touch every aspect of our existence here on earth: our bodies, our relationships, our social life, our financial situation, etc., even our minds! And it will go from bad to worse as God intensifies the discipline to get our attention! *“Many times I struck your gardens and vineyards, I struck them with blight and mildew. Locusts devoured your fig and olive trees, yet you have not **returned to me,**” declares the LORD.” Amos 4:9*

Throughout the Bible we find that God is full of compassion, slow to anger, merciful and longs to be gracious to us. But his grace toward us is determined by whether we will walk in his ways or not. We have the choice, but we also have to live with the consequences. In his grace God instructs us on how we are to live our lives in a manner that pleases him. God gives us doctrine on how to live a godly life. In his grace he also points out the path that we are to go down in life. And in his grace, if we have taken the wrong path, he points out the way to get back on track once again. And all the while we are on the wrong path, in his grace God woos us and disciplines us to get our attention to get back on the right path. And if all else fails, if we stubbornly refuse to listen to God in our lives and continue to go down the wrong path, then God in his grace will take us home to be with him.

The Apostle Peter dealt with this subject in 2 Peter 1, but added another element that boggles the mind. He not only covers areas of grace blessing, health and spiritual productivity in life, but he also brings in the concept that believers can actually commune with the living God, the Creator of heaven and earth!

“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 1:2-8

Peter writes this letter using the backdrop of the Greek stage with the Greek tragedy in mind. The Greek tragedy always centered around a hero who had a tragic flaw that brought about his own demise. It spoke of one who had everything going for him in life, one who had access to everything in life that could make him great and successful, but because of his tragic flaw, his life ended in tragedy!

It was acted out on stage, where the main actor was the hero of the story, who would be surrounded by a supporting cast of actors warning him of unfolding events and what would happen if he didn't listen! And, because it was a Greek tragedy, due to his own arrogance he didn't listen, and died, tragically so.

What made it all the more tragic is not because he had so much going for him in life, and not just because he was a man of greatness himself, but because he was surrounded by those who were warning him all along the way of what to do to avoid his demise, but he wouldn't listen to them! (For a fuller understanding listen to my Online series, “Listen To The Chorus”.)

The hero, Agamemnon in our study, had a tragic flaw that kept him from listening to the warnings that were going on all around him. A tragic flaw is a defect in the character of the hero that brings about his own downfall. Where the hero's death, or demise, is caused, not by things happening to him, but by his own actions! All of which could have been avoided, but because of the hero's flaw, or series of flaws, which he couldn't see in himself, (or wouldn't see), he became responsible for his own death or demise. Interestingly enough, the Greek word for the tragic flaw was *hamartia*, our word for **sin**!

The biblical hero in our study is ourselves! We are the heroes of our own play here on earth. God has placed us on the stage of this earth and we are not acting, but living our life out on stage before men and angels. Will we make the right decisions? Will we listen to the instructions of God? Will we choose the right path in life? Will we listen to the warnings that God sends our way when we don't?

The seven virtues Peter brings out in his letter; faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity are the seven supporting actors in our chorus, who are there to remind us of what we need to apply in our lives at any given time. Failure or refusal to do so would go back to some personal sin that we are hanging on to, whether out of the lusts or the emotions, and would be our tragic flaw. And even in this we see God's grace at work in our lives, not only in teaching us what we need to know, but also providing for us the spiritual concepts that we need to avoid going down the wrong path and failing in life and by using these various virtues to correct our steps to avoid being a tragic failure, if we'll listen to them.

These principles still apply for the Christian today. **We must not take the advice or counsel of unbelievers or reversionistic Christians as to what to do with our lives.** Instead we must learn Bible Doctrine and derive from it the many guiding principles that we can use in our lives. But we have something unique to us as Church Age believers and that is the indwelling, filling and the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God will lead us in the will of God for our lives!

And the same goes for us today, **we must not stand in the path of sinners.** That is, we are not to go down the pathway of gratifying the lusts of the flesh nature, we must avoid sins of the tongue, and we must not go into overt activity sinning. Living under the control of the sinful nature is common to all the unsaved, and there are Christians who get involved in it as well, but if we want God to bless our lives, we must not go that route. But God has given us something that we can employ that will keep us out of it and that is a new nature and the filling of the Holy Spirit! And when we are filled with the Holy Spirit we will not be under the control of the flesh nature.

We too must not sit in the seat of mockers. There were mockers of the things of God then, and there are mockers of the things of Christ today. Nothing has changed. But we are not to associate with them, we are not even allowed to hang out in the places that they hang out. *“Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days **scoffers**, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.”* 2 Peter 3:3,4 What they and we are to do is apply the doctrine of separation.

And our delight too is to be in the law of the Lord. That is the teaching of the Word of God is to be our highest love and priority. The Christian as well today is to live the faith rest life by faith in the promises of God and metabolizing the teaching of the Word by faith. Yes it's true that the world system, the flesh nature and the devil war against our love for and intake of the Word of God all the time, but God has made another spiritual provision for us of confessing our sins to God, prayer, and the filling of the Holy Spirit, whereby we can set aside these enemies of the spiritual life and go for the Word.

And we also are to **meditate upon the Word of God day and night.** That is, we are not only to sit under the teaching of Bible Doctrine from a Pastor-Teacher in a local church, but Bible Doctrine is to be on our minds all throughout the day. We may be doing other things, but it's always in our hearts and minds. *“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”* Isaiah 26:3

Under the New Covenant Christians are to live by faith as the Lord himself lived by faith. Jesus Christ was the originator and completer of *“the faith”*, that is, he lived his life by faith in the Father's plan, promises, provisions, protection, power and process that all believers are to live by. But to have an object for our faith to rest upon, we must have the teaching of the Word of God! For biblical faith proceeds out of the Word of God. *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* Romans 10:17

Psalm one deals with what the believer in Christ needs to be doing to have God's blessing on their life. But what can be done if they have already made bad decisions and gone down the wrong path? What can they do if they have been pursuing after their lusts, or living in their emotions and their life is a mess? What can they do if they have listened to the wrong people's advice and their lives have ended up in misery? Is it all over for them? Or is there a way back to living in the spiritual life dynamic of peace and joy and being under the grace blessing package of God? **The answer is yes and it starts with them calling out to God!**

And, as we have mentioned, when we have gone down the wrong path in life, or have become involved in sin nature activity, then the Lord will bring discipline into our life to warn us and correct the situation. This is the idea of being afflicted. *“Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.”* Psalm 119:67

And when we have gone down the wrong path in life and have made our lives and our souls a mess, because of our own arrogance and refusal to walk in God's ways, we need to know that God still loves us and he still longs to be gracious to us, but we will have to call upon the Lord to deliver us! *“Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses.”* Psalm 107:19

In faithfulness, God afflicts us with suffering. Now there is the suffering of divine discipline and there is the self induced suffering that we have brought upon ourselves due to our rebellion and bad decisions. But regardless of which one it is, **we must call out to God!** Which implies that one has had enough, not only of the suffering, but the lifestyle that they have chosen that resulted in their suffering! *“But if men are bound in chains, held fast by cords of affliction, he tells them what they have done—that they have sinned arrogantly. **He makes them listen to correction and commands them to repent of their evil.** If they obey and serve him, they will spend the rest of their days in prosperity and their years in contentment.”* Job 36:8-11

But there always those who will not listen to the Word of the Lord, nor will they heed the loving discipline that God brings in their lives to get them back on the right path. *“But if they do not listen, they will perish by the sword and die without knowledge. The godless in heart harbor resentment; even when he fetters them, **they do not cry for help.** They die in their youth, among male prostitutes of the shrines. But those who suffer he delivers in their suffering; he speaks to them in their affliction. He is wooing you from the jaws of distress to a spacious place free from restriction, to the comfort of your table laden with choice food.”* Job 36:11-16 NIV

David was not one of them. He loved the Word of the Lord and lived by it in his life. When he did sin against the Lord, or when he had lapses in his faith rest life and God disciplined him, he cried out to the Lord! *“I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. **This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.** The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.”* Psalm 34:4-8

Now when we do cry out to the Lord to deliver us (from the grief and misery that we have brought upon ourselves), then the Lord will not only hear us, but deliver us and turn things around for the good! This is the idea of Christian repentance (changing the mental attitude) and a turning back to God. *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”* Romans 8:28 The original shows that **it is God who causes all things to work together for our good.**

The unsaved have a change of mental attitude, turn to Christ and believe on him. The saved, who are pursuing down the wrong path in rebellion and reversionism, have a change of mental attitude toward the Word, turn back to the Word of God and the spiritual life, and once again start living the faith rest life. In both cases there is a turning to Christ, a change of mental attitude, a returning to the Word of God and a calling out to God for delivery. And Psalm one gives us the instruction of how we can live our lives so we can avoid the wrong path and enjoy the blessing of God. Pastor Mike