There are godly persons of which we can take an example of how to walk with Him and there are indeed some who are really special of which God Himself bears witness.

 One of them is David of whom is also said to have a heart after the heart of God.

 14But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has commanded him *to be* commander over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you.” 1 Samuel 13:14

 22And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, ‘I have found David the *son* of Jesse, a man after My *own* heart, who will do all My will.’ Acts 13:22

 These passages taken form the scripture indicate that David was called a man after God’s own heart. And this wasn’t stated from any man, but form God Himself. I mean, what a privilege and a testimony is this! There were times when I was praised by certain persons saying that I am doing well in the faith and that I have a good testimony, but how many times those persons hadn’t actually known me for real and how mistaken they might have been in that very moment by saying that I am doing well in my spiritual life. I am not saying that I am always failing, but there are times you know that not everything in you is fine in front of God and what people see is not what truly happens. How strong and how true is instead to receive a witness by God Himself that you pleased Him. This is whom we need to be praised by – by God. Then after that also people will bear witness that we are on the right way, but what comes first is the witness and praise coming from God. This is what we should aim at. We will obviously not be praised by all the people for that and we will encounter hostility, but what is really important is that He is pleased with us. Those who truly have accepted the Lord know when they please God and when not.

 Obviously, the life of faith is not a life in which you always manage to please God and most of the times He will come to deal with a specific problem and situation in us and He will show us our faults, because this is the purpose of His word – to encourage us and guide us in the truth, but above all, to correct and admonish us. But why is that David was called a man after God’s own heart? Because he was righteous and was always obeying what God was telling him to do? Yes indeed that was his intention and did manage to do that, but the truth is that there is no man who is really perfect and who observes all to the point. So was David too. Reading his story in the Bible we can conclude he wasn’t always obeying and following God, even if that was his main intention. He sinned various times and we see it described in detail in the scripture. Surely it was his desire to perform righteousness, but it wasn’t only for this that he was a man after God’s heart. Trusting in God, praising Him and obeying Him is a part of that, but what is also important and what David was doing and for what he was also called a man after God’ own heart, was that he knew how to repent and how to humble in front of God. We all know the situation he was having with Bathsheba with whom he committed adultery and the other sins he committed related to that (2 Samuel 11). Surely after he didn’t repent taking that sin as something common and the forgiveness as something granted, thinking that God will show him mercy anyway.

 No. What he did instead was to implore God and humble in front of Him saying: “Do not cast me away from Your presence,
And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.” (Psalm 51:11) He knew what he was deserving and he really meant it! He didn’t just say: “God I know that you anyway will forgive me…” He really thought of loosing what God had given him and knew what he was deserving. God is not pleased with sin and this grieves His Spirit. David knew that and was imploring the Lord, not to depart from him. I see the fear of the Lord in this prayer. It is not a question of condemning ourselves and to doubt in God’s forgiveness, but to go to God and ask Him with faith to forgive us. We need to understand that we don’t deserve Him. This is what David understood. He knew how to repent and this surely was a part of the reason to be called a man according God’s own heart. It is obvious that we need to be sensitive to God’s Spirit, because only He can make us feel in this way. Only He can convince us in our condition, so that we can see ourselves, our sin, and repent. I think that David was sensitive to this and had a genuine love for God.

 David knew what he deserved when he sinned. He knew God’s righteous judgment and maybe because of that God spared him and was merciful toward him when he sinned. There is a kind of judgment, we can say, that comes to us when we sin.

 We mustn’t get confused at this point. Obviously God is merciful and He forgives when we acknowledge our faults and repent. He doesn’t treat us according to our sin (Psalm 103:10). Those who repent though, know what they deserve for their sin. They never take it as something granted. When they receive the undeserved grace in their life they are obviously grateful. They never think that forgiveness is something easy to achieve. Maybe this is the secret and maybe that’s why God forgives those people. Because they know God’s righteousness and judgment, and because they fear Him. This applies for those who approach God for the first time and I think that applies for those who already walk with Him too. They also think of deserving something else when they sin, but then the grace comes. This should always accompany us as we don’t deserve the grace. This might be different from certain messages we might heart that God surely and always forgives you, but I am not saying this for condemnation, I am just saying what kind of attitude should accompany us when we approach the cross of Jesus. The message saying that God surely and always forgives, should be directed to those who struggle and feel the guilt, for those who somehow felt the weight of the law on their shoulders and know for sure that they have sinned. There is a message for each person in the situation in which he is found, but understanding the righteousness and the judgment of God is important. The cross was a terrible place filled with a lot of pain where something great happened. We need to understand the pain Jesus felt there even though we will never fully live it and experience it. In this way we will understand its value. There was the thief who was crucified on the side of Jesus and He said that he deserved what he was going through while Jesus was completely innocent. He knew what he was deserving and that was important. He knew what he was deserving for his sin. This is fundamental when it comes to asking forgiveness for the sin. How can someone understand it? By leaving God and His word to work in him and show him his condition. To convince him of his sin. In this way a person can really understand.

So, we conclude that David had a heart after God’s heart and one of the reasons was that he knew how to repent. There is a situation in the Old testament where we can see one of the aspects that was having to do with that.

7And God was displeased with this thing; therefore He struck Israel. 8So David said to God, “I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing; but now, I pray, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly.”

9Then the Lord spoke to Gad, David’s seer, saying, 10“Go and tell David, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord: “I offer you three *things;* choose one of them for yourself, that I may do *it* to you.”’”

11So Gad came to David and said to him, “Thus says the Lord: ‘Choose for yourself, 12either three years of famine, or three months to be defeated by your foes with the sword of your enemies overtaking *you,* or else for three days the sword of the Lord—the plague in the land, with the angel of the Lord destroying throughout all the territory of Israel.’ Now consider what answer I should take back to Him who sent me.”

13And David said to Gad, “I am in great distress. Please let me fall into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies *are* very great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man.” 1 Chronicles 21:7-13

Here we see David given a chance to choose in a way his punishment for a sin he committed. We see also that he was ready to accept it. He understood what he deserved and he was ready to accept it. We need to see something here. As we said before God doesn’t treat us according to our sin, but there in a way is a judgment that occurs here on earth, while we are in life. This usually happens to those who are His sons. To the believers. And why? Because He loves them and in this way He wants to teach them something. He works in their life. If He had to treat us according to our sin, no one then was going to be able to stand in front of God and not even to pronounce a simple prayer. In the book of Exodus it is described that the people of Israel was standing in front of mount Sinai and they were greatly scared as they were standing in front of a Holy God and were warned not even to touch the mountain. Not by cahnce we see the same passage of Exodus described in the book of Hebrews.

18For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, 19and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard *it* begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. 20(For they could not endure what was commanded: “And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.” 21And so terrifying was the sight *that* Moses said, “I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.”) Hebrews 12:18-21

This is the justice of God as it is. This passage is right after it speaks about God’s discipline in Hebrews 12. He nevertheless doesn’t treat us as it is described in this passage. Now He is approaching us and giving us possibility through His Son Jesus Christ.

These are the verses coming after this passage.

22But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23to the general assembly and church of the firstborn *who are* registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than *that of* Abel. Hebrews 12:22-24

This is the reason for which He works in our life today and is having the Father-son relationship with the believers. It is because of Jesus. While He was here on this earth as a first born among many brethren, He lived a life of example showing us how we should live and what we need to aim to. He also showed us the special relationship we were going to have with God, calling Him Father, which is something very important that He showed us along with all His teachings. He was the first to call God in this way, indicating the relationship the believers were going to have and the way for it, which He was going to open through His sacrifice.

 In the book of Hebrews, it is said that He corrects His children so that they can be partakers of His holiness. 1 Peter 4:17 says that the time has come for judgement to begin from the house God, meaning with the believers. Why does it begin with the believers and not with other people? Because the other people will be judged on the judgment day and those who believe now in this life. This also explains why some people do whatever they want to, sin and even prosper in their doings. It is because their judgment will come at the end and now God doesn’t want to force them into believing by punishing them. He is a gentlemen and doesn’t want people to believe in Him just for the fear of punishment but wants them to believe because they really had understood the reason for it and willingly love Him. There is a psalm of Asaph in which he complains for the prosperity of the wicked (Psalm73). Because he was seeing them doing evil and no consequence was coming into their life. We see this today. People doing whatever they want to with all kind of evil and they seem unpunished most of the times. This happens for the reason that one day they will receive what they deserve on the judgement day. Obviously God wants these people to repent too, because He sent His son to die for this reason, but in general the reason for which they are not punished now, is because there will judgement one day. God only and most of the time deals with His sons now and if they do something wrong they will feel the consequence. We all can feel upset by seeing the wicked man prosper now and ourselves going through though moments. We are nevertheless called to pray for those people to be saved as well. Asaph later on in the same psalm writes that he understood their end, that he understood that they are brought to desolation in a moment. The Bible says that there are two paths – a broad one, which is easy to walk on, but its end leads to perdition, and a narrow one which is hard, but its end leads to salvation. The wicked persons walk on the broad way. We will be corrected and rebuked by the Lord while walking on the narrow one, but we will receive the crown of life at the end. The fire purifies and it is a fire that many times we need to go through. The wedding garment of Christ’s bride will be completely white at the end. This is a fruit of the work of the spirit of God which purifiers as a fire. This fire is His ability to sanctify, but also the trials we go through. Trials in the Bible are also compared to a fire (1 Peter 4:12). We as a church are the bride of Christ, but also personally each believer can be seen as the Christ’s bride. The wicked persons walk on the broad way. The correction we as godly people receive is all with the purpose to teach us something. Sometimes it is in the hard way, but sometimes this is the way we can understand and we need to appreciate it. That’s why David received the punishment while on this earth, while alive. What was good, was that he knew about it and was ready to accept it. We also need to know that this is not actually a punishment, but a lesson and a chastening as it is called in Hebrews 12:7. The first verse in the same chapter of Hebrews speaks about the sin which so easily ensnares us, meaning that the chastening of which is spoken after is having to do with that. In many situations in the Old Testament we can see that when the nation of Israel was sinning, there were enemies rising against them, meaning that there was consequence for the sin. All of this was a part of the judgement too. This judgment could be manifested in different ways in today’s days such as something spiritual that is having to do with what we feel and live inside us or situations around us.

 14Now the Lord raised up an adversary against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he *was* a descendant of the king in Edom. 1 Kings 11:14

 This verse is an example of what we are talking about. This is what happened to Solomon and it happened after he strayed away from the Lord’s ways. We can see it by what v.11 in the same chapter says.

 11Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, “Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. 1 Kings 11:11

 After this situation an enemy came against him. There are consequences of sin, even of the Lord forgives us! I am saying this not to scare anyone, and neither to say that the Lord is not merciful. Obviously He just wants to teach us a lesson through this but we need to think twice before we sin. There are times when we don’t know at the very moment that we might be sinning, but there are other times in which we well know about it. Even though sin is always a sin, there are different ways in which God will judge the sin which is consciously committed and the one that we were not so aware of. Many times it is said that we are anyway sinners and we always sin, but the part of the scripture stating that is not meant to be used in this way. We need to strive to love the Lord and we show our love by our obedience to Him. Even though we might have weaknesses and we might sin, we are never to surrender to these things and we need to strive to walk in obedience and desire holiness. I don’t want to bear the consequences of sin in my life. Reading the Bible we can see how certain sins and mistakes committed by persons left permanent marks. Abraham didn’t have enough patience to wait on the Lord to bring him the son of the promise, and so he went to be with Hagar, his wife’s maid (Genesis 16:1-4). He did that without consulting with the Lord. She conceived Ismael and the Lord blessed him too as he was Abraham’s heir, but nevertheless out of him came a nation that is till today an enemy to the nation of Israel. There are also other passages in the scripture where it states that because of wrong choices and because of sin, there were enemies raising up against the nation of Israel (Judges 3:8, Judges 6:1, 2 Chronicles 12:2) . This was the way the Lord wanted to teach them that those choices and sin weren’t good.

 I also say that not all the hardships and trials we are going through are having to do with our sin, but definitely the Lord corrects those whom He loves. This is sometimes manifested in situations we will live. Sometimes there are also situations that we will live with the purpose just to strengthen our faith. Of course that these passages are from the Old Testament and some people might disagree with the fact that there is a correction we are going through after we sinned, but even the New Testament speaks about that in the same sense in Hebrews 12 and in 1 Peter 4:17 where it speaks about the judgment which must start from the house of the Lord.

 There is also the example with the thief standing on the side of Jesus while He was crucified. This is what happened:

 39Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.”

40But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? 41And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.” 42Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

43And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.” Luke 23:39-43

 One of the things he acknowledged in his conversation with the Master was that he was receiving justly the due reward for his deeds and that was something really important. We see this as a **key**. The other thief was just asking for a solution and was in a way testing the Lord saying: “If you are the Christ save yourself and us.” Many people including myself sometimes are asking God just for a solution, while one of the thieves acknowledged what he had done and understood what he deserved. In this is the difference. May God give us a receptive heart that doesn’t just ask for its own interest. Many people may be approaching God asking Him for things or even trying to repent and convert, but just with the purpose to sort out their situation.

 So, we conclude that when it comes to sin, there is a consequence to it and also a kind of a judgment that occurs. This we repeat is not because God wants to punish us, but rather to show us that sinning is not something good and even if He forgives us, there is also a pain as a consequence. This is all with the purpose to correct us. Jesus paid a high price for it on the cross and He wants us to understand at least some of it. When we sinned in complete ignorance we couldn’t and we didn’t feel anything. We didn’t have much regret about it. But when someone knows already about the sin, it is different. The Lord rebukes us as a loving Father and works in our life. The experiences we live with Him are real. God doesn’t manifest Himself or work just on Sundays or just in particular moments when we are involved in some religious meeting or activity (which of course is important). He works in each moment and manifests Himself and His judgments around us and in the situations we live. Life with faith is something real and the relationship with the Lord is always accompanying us. With its blessings, and with is corrections and chastening sometimes. We can also turn our backs and try to forget about it, try to leave behind the corrections of the Lord, but we eventually see that this is leading us to more pain and the wrong destination. It is a privilege if we can participate in the Lord’s chastisement for our life. It is wrong that we did a mistake and we sinned, but in the same time we need to understand the purpose of his correction and feel privileged knowing that this is for our good.