



1

The “Two Ways”

- Early Hebrew thought
- If you are righteous, your life will be good.
- If you are wicked, your life will be bad.

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge,
but those who hate to be rebuked are stupid.
²The good obtain favor from the LORD,
but those who devise evil he condemns.
³No one finds security by wickedness,
but the root of the righteous will never be moved.
--Proverbs 12:1-3

Blessed is the one
who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,
²but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
and who meditates on his law day and night.
³That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.
⁴Not so the wicked!
They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.
⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
⁶For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.
--Psalm 1

2

The Two Ways in Scripture

- Psalm 1 (and several others)
- Proverbs 12:1-3 (and many others)
- Much of the “D” historical outlook (Deuteronomy – Kings)
 - The exile happened because we sinned
 - If we stop sinning, things will get better
- Wisdom and the Law
 - The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. –Proverbs 1:7
 - What is righteousness? Following the law?
 - The returning exiles under Ezra emphasized obedience to Torah (law)



3

Challenges to the Two Ways

Life! (bad things happen to good people!)

Psalm 73 – *slight questioning*

Habakkuk – *questioning God*

Ecclesiastes – *frontal assault*

Job – *perhaps the most famous example*

Later prophets (Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Jonah)

4

Psalm 73:1-9

Good things happen to bad people!

Truly God is good to Israel,
to those who are pure in heart.
² But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled;
my steps had nearly slipped.
³ For I was envious of the arrogant;
I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
⁴ For they have no pain;
their bodies are sound and sleek.
⁵ They are not in trouble as others are;
they are not plagued like other people.
⁶ Therefore pride is their necklace;
violence covers them like a garment.
⁷ Their eyes swell out with fatness;
their hearts overflow with follies.
⁸ They scoff and speak with malice;
loftily they threaten oppression.
⁹ They set their mouths against heaven,
and their tongues range over the earth.



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Psalm 73:10-20

Therefore the people turn and praise them
and find no fault in them.

¹¹ And they say, "How can God know?
Is there knowledge in the Most High?"
¹² Such are the wicked;
always at ease, they increase in riches.
¹³ All in vain I have kept my heart clean
and washed my hands in innocence.
¹⁴ For all day long I have been plagued
and am punished every morning.

Bad things happen to good people (like me)!

If I had said, "I will talk on in this way,"
I would have been untrue to the circle of your
children.

¹⁶ But when I thought how to understand this,
it seemed to me a wearisome task,
¹⁷ until I went into the sanctuary of God;
then I perceived their end.
¹⁸ Truly you set them in slippery places;
you make them fall to ruin.
¹⁹ How they are destroyed in a moment,
swept away utterly by terrors!
²⁰ They are like a dream when one awakes;
on awaking you despise their phantoms.

Turning to God helped things make sense



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Psalm 73:21-28

My anger at the wicked was my problem!

When my soul was embittered,
 when I was pricked in heart,
²² I was stupid and ignorant;
 I was like a brute beast toward you.
²³ Nevertheless, I am continually with you;
 you hold my right hand.
²⁴ You guide me with your counsel,
 and afterward you will receive me with honor.
²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you?
 And there is nothing on earth that I desire other
 than you.
²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail,
 but God is the strength^[e] of my heart and my
 portion forever.

 BASE

Indeed, those who are far from you will perish;
 you put an end to those who are false to you.
²⁸ But for me it is good to be near God;
 I have made the Lord GOD my refuge,
 to tell of all your works.

God is my refuge!

Coming back to God reinforced the “two ways”

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Habakkuk

O LORD, how long shall I cry for help,
 and you will not listen?
 Or cry to you “Violence!”
 and you will not save?
³ Why do you make me see wrongdoing
 and look at trouble?
 Destruction and violence are before me;
 strife and contention arise.
⁴ So the law becomes slack,
 and justice never prevails.
 The wicked surround the righteous;
 therefore judgment comes forth perverted.
 --Habakkuk 1:2-4

 BASE

I will stand at my watchpost
 and station myself on the rampart;
 I will keep watch to see what he will say to me
 and what he will answer concerning my
 complaint.
² Then the LORD answered me and said:
 Write the vision;
 make it plain on tablets,
 so that a runner may read it.
³ For there is still a vision for the appointed time;
 it speaks of the end and does not lie.
 If it seems to tarry, wait for it;
 it will surely come; it will not delay.
⁴ Look at the proud!
 Their spirit is not right in them,
 but the righteous live by their faithfulness.
 --Habakkuk 2:1-4

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Ecclesiastes – A Direct Challenge

The words of the Teacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

²Vanity of vanities, says the Teacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

--Ecclesiastes 1:1-2

¹¹Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to the skillful, but time and chance happen to them all. ¹²For no one can anticipate one's time. Like fish taken in a cruel net or like birds caught in a snare, so mortals are snared at a time of calamity, when it suddenly falls upon them.

--Ecclesiastes 9:11-12



The wise have eyes in their head, but fools walk in darkness.

Yet I perceived that the same fate befalls all of them. ¹⁵Then I said to myself, "What happens to the fool will happen to me also; why then have I been so very wise?" And I said to myself that this also is vanity. ¹⁶For there is no enduring remembrance of the wise or of fools, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How can the wise die just like fools? ¹⁷So I hated life because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a chasing after wind.

--Ecclesiastes 2:14-17

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Ecclesiastes – Advice for Living

¹²I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; ¹³moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil. ¹⁴I know that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it nor anything taken from it; God has done this so that all should stand in awe before him.

--Ecclesiastes 3:12-14

⁷Go, eat your bread with enjoyment and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has long ago approved what you do. ⁸Let your garments always be white; do not let oil be lacking on your head. ⁹Enjoy life with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life that are given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. ¹⁰Whatever your hand finds to do, do with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.

--Ecclesiastes 9:7-10



10

Job

- A righteous man experiences tragedy and suffering
- Three “friends” offer unhelpful advice, including blaming Job
 - “You must have done something wrong!”
 - “Don’t blame God!”
 - “Examine your life. No one is perfect.”
- Job protests his innocence
- Finally, God answers Job from a whirlwind



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God’s Answer to Job

Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind:
²“Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

³Gird up your loins like a man;

I will question you, and you shall declare to me.

⁴“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
 Tell me, if you have understanding.

⁵Who determined its measurements—surely you know!
 Or who stretched the line upon it?

⁶On what were its bases sunk,
 or who laid its cornerstone

⁷when the morning stars sang together
 and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?

--Job 38:1-7

- Job and his friends debate for 35 chapters
- God’s response continues for 4 chapters
- Lengthy description of creation and the processes of nature
- Behemoth (chaos on the land)
- Leviathan (chaos in the sea)



12

Job's Response to God

Then Job answered the LORD:

- ²“I know that you can do all things
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.
³‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me that I did not know.
⁴‘Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you declare to me.’
⁵I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;
⁶therefore I despise myself
and repent in dust and ashes.”

--Job 42:1-6



13

Jonah

- God calls Jonah to prophesy in Nineveh (the capital of Assyria)
- Jonah flees on a ship in the opposite direction, to Spain!
- God causes a storm, and Jonah asks to be cast into the sea. The sea calms.
- God sends a fish to swallow Jonah and take him to land.
- God again calls Jonah to go to Nineveh.
- This time, he goes, prophesies to the city, and the entire city repents (even the cattle)!
- Jonah is offended.



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Jonah 4

But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. ²He prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning, for I knew that you are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from punishment. ³And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." ⁴And the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" ⁵Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

⁶The LORD God appointed a bush and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort, so Jonah was very happy about the bush. ⁷But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. ⁸When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, "It is better for me to die than to live."



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Jonah 4

⁹But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die." ¹⁰Then the LORD said, "You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. ¹¹And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left and also many animals?"



16

Beyond the Two Ways

Psalm 73

- The wicked prosper!

Habakkuk

- How long will you let the wicked prosper? But the righteous live by faith.

Ecclesiastes

- Both the righteous and the wicked die. So enjoy the life God gives you!

Job

- The righteous may suffer, but God is present throughout their suffering.

Jonah

- God shows compassion even to the worst sinners.