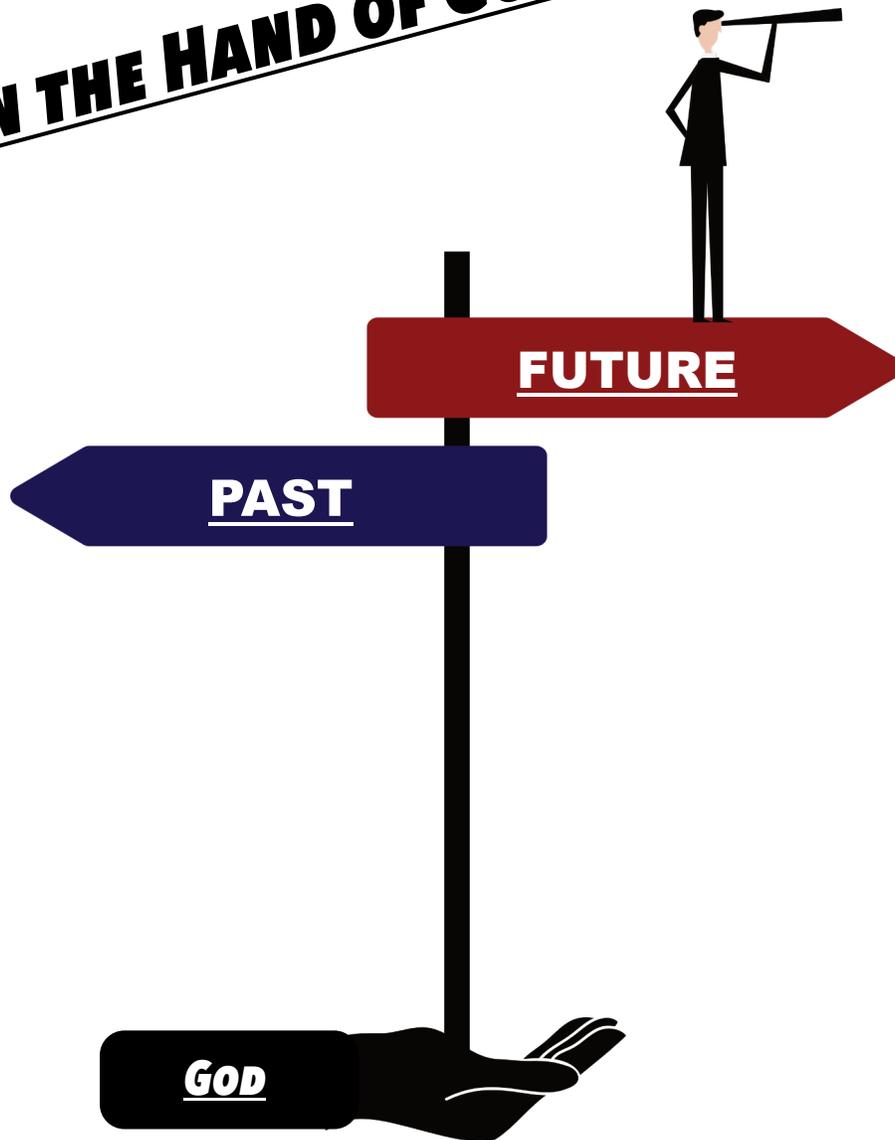


IN THE HAND OF GOD



AS I LIVE, DECLARES THE LORD GOD, SURELY WITH A MIGHTY HAND
AND AN OUTSTRETCHED ARM AND WITH WRATH POURED OUT

I WILL BE KING OVER YOU.

(EZEKIEL 20:33 ESV)

1. The righteous are in the hand of God, 9:1.

- (Ecclesiastes 9:1 ESV) But all this I laid to heart, examining it all, **how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God.** Whether it is love or hate, man does not know; both are before him.
- A. The righteous and their actions are in the hand of God.
- B. The righteous are those who have a “right” relationship with God.

EXCURSUS: SCRIPTURE IDENTIFIES THE PEOPLE OF EARTH AS BELONGING IN ONE OF TWO BIBLICAL CATEGORIES. FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION GOD DRAWS A LINE OF DISTINCTION THAT SEPARATES THE RIGHTEOUS FROM THE WICKED—THE SAVED FROM THE UNSAVED.

The righteous are those people who have a right relationship—a saving relationship—with God. The evil are those who do not. The Bible never wavers. Every person on earth is either good or evil, righteous or wicked. And the watershed is belief in or rejection of Jesus Messiah and his gospel.

In New Testament times we look back at the cross of Jesus Christ. Messiah has come and we believe in him for the forgiveness of sins. Those who lived in the OT period looked forward in belief and hope in the coming of Messiah Savior.

■ **OT REFERENCES CONTRASTING THE RIGHTEOUS WITH THE WICKED . . .**

- (Psalm 34:15-16 ESV) **The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous** and his ears toward their cry. 16 **The face of the LORD is against those who do evil**, to cut off the memory of them from the earth.
- (Psalm 37:16-17 ESV) Better is the little that **the righteous** has than the abundance of many **wicked**. 17 For the arms of **the wicked** shall be broken, but the LORD upholds **the righteous**.
- (Psalm 37:39-40 ESV) The salvation of **the righteous** is from the LORD; he is their stronghold in the time of trouble. 40 The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from **the wicked** and saves them, because they take refuge in him.
- (Psalm 112:6-8 ESV) For **the righteous** will never be moved; he will be remembered forever. 7 He is not afraid of bad news; **his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD**. 8 **His heart is steady; he will not be afraid**, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.
- (Psalm 146:8 ESV) The LORD opens the

eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; **the LORD loves the righteous**.

- (Proverbs 4:18 ESV) But **the path of the righteous** is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.
- (Malachi 3:18 ESV) **Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked**, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.

■ **NT REFERENCES CONTRASTING THE RIGHTEOUS WITH THE WICKED . . .**

- (Hebrews 11:4 ESV) **By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain**, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks.
- (1 John 3:12 ESV) **We should not be like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother**. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother’s righteous.
- ****(Matthew 13:49-50 ESV) So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and **separate the evil from the righteous** 50 and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- (Matthew 25:46 ESV) And these will go away into eternal punishment, but **the righteous into eternal life**.
- (Romans 1:17 ESV) For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, **“The righteous shall live by faith.”**
- (1 Peter 3:12 ESV) For **the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous**, and his ears are open to their prayer. But **the face of the Lord is against those who do evil**.
- (1 Corinthians 1:30 ESV) **And because of him you are in Christ Jesus**, who became to us wisdom from God, **righteousness and sanctification and redemption**.
- (Philippians 3:8b-9 ESV) In order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, **not having a righteousness of my own** that comes from the law, **but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith**.

-END EXCURSUS-

C. We don't know what our future holds under the sun—love or hate, good or evil.

It seems that we should be able to speak with more certainty about our future in eternity than about life on earth (under the sun).

D. We cannot find out what our future under the sun holds.

- (Ecclesiastes 3:11 ESV) He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, **yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.**
- (Ecclesiastes 7:14 ESV) In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, **so that man may not find out anything that will be after him.**
- (Ecclesiastes 7:27–28a ESV) Behold, this is what I found, says the Preacher, while adding one thing to another **to find the scheme of things— 28 which my soul has sought repeatedly, but I have not found.**
- (Ecclesiastes 8:17 NIV) Then I saw all that God has done. **No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun.** Despite all their efforts to search it out, **no one can discover its meaning.** Even if the wise claim they know, they cannot really comprehend it.

2. But the same thing happens to all of us—righteous and wicked—we live and then we die, 9:2.

- (Ecclesiastes 9:2 ESV) **It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked,** to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As the good one is, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath.

A. The same event—death—happens without regard to our character, lifestyle or religion.

- (Ecclesiastes 9:2 NLT) The same destiny ultimately awaits everyone, whether **righteous or wicked, good or bad, ceremonially clean or unclean, religious or irreligious.** **Good people receive the same treatment as sinners, and people who make promises to God are treated like people who don't.**

3. The same condition—depravity— affects all humans, 9:3.

- (Ecclesiastes 9:3 ESV) This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that **the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.**

It is essential to Christlike living **that we hold fast to the biblical doctrine of the depravity of humanity** and have an accurate understanding of our spiritual condition prior to being rescued by our Lord Jesus Christ from that darkness.

It is essential also to our understanding of the spiritual war as we battle against all the competing philosophies and religions that deny the fallen state of humankind.

If you do not understand and accept the biblical teaching of depravity, then you do not understand the gospel of grace—faith alone in Christ alone.

A. Our hearts are full of evil.

- (Genesis 6:5, 7 ESV) The LORD saw that **the wickedness of man was great** in the earth, and that every intention of **the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.** ... So the Lord said, **"I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens,** for I am sorry that I have made them."
- (Genesis 6:11–12 ESV) Now the earth was **corrupt** in God's sight, and the earth was filled with **violence.** 12 And God saw the earth, and behold, **it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.**
- (Genesis 8:21 ESV) And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, **"I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done."**
- (Psalm 14:1–4 ESV) The fool says in his heart, **"There is no God."** **They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is none who does good.** 2 The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. 3 They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; **there is none who does good, not even one.** 4 Have they no knowledge, all **the evildoers** who eat up my people as they eat bread and do not call upon the LORD?

- (Jeremiah 17:9 NLT) **The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?**
- (Matthew 15:18–19 ESV) But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. 19 **For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.**
- (Romans 3:10–12 ESV) As it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; 11 **no one understands; no one seeks for God.** 12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; **no one does good, not even one.**”

B. Madness is in our hearts.

- (Ecclesiastes 9:3b ESV) Also, **the hearts of the children of man are full of evil**, and **madness is in their hearts** while they live, **and after that they go to the dead.**
- (Ecclesiastes 1:17 ESV) And I applied my heart to know wisdom **and to know madness and folly.** I perceived that this also is but a striving after wind.

Madness ... literally means madness; the quality of being rash and foolish to an extreme degree.

Folly ... sikluwth /sik-looth; literally folly, foolishness; foolish or senseless behavior.

C. And then we die—we “go to the dead”.

4. The living have hope, 9:4.

- (Ecclesiastes 9:4 ESV) But he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion.

5. The dead know nothing and will be gone, 9:5-6.

- (Ecclesiastes 9:5–6 ESV) For the living know that they will die, **but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward**, for the memory of them is forgotten. 6 Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun.
- (Ecclesiastes 9:5–6 NLT) The living at least know they will die, **but the dead know nothing. They have no further reward, nor are they remembered. 6 Whatever they did in their lifetime—**

loving, hating, envying—is all long gone. They no longer play a part in anything here on earth.

A. The living know that they will die.

B. The dead know nothing.

C. The dead no longer share the reward of life “under the sun”.

- (Ecclesiastes 2:24 ESV) There is **nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God.**
- (Ecclesiastes 3:12–13 ESV) I perceived **that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful** and to do good as long as they live; 13 also that everyone should **eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God’s gift to man.**
- (Ecclesiastes 5:18–19 ESV) Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to **eat and drink and find enjoyment** in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot. 19 Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—**this is the gift of God.**
- (Ecclesiastes 8:15 ESV) And **I commend joy, for man has nothing better under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful**, for this will go with him in his toil through **the days of his life that God has given him under the sun.**

SO WHAT DO I DO NOW?

YES, I AM IN GOD’S HAND AND WILL ONE DAY BE WITH HIM IN HEAVEN. AND, YES, I HAVE BEEN RESCUED FROM THE DARKNESS, BUT I STILL CONTEND DAILY WITH THE DARKNESS. SO HOW DO I LIVE NOW IN MY REMAINING DAYS “UNDER THE SUN”?

TRUST IN THE LORD!

- (PROVERBS 3:5–7 ESV) TRUST IN THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND DO NOT LEAN ON YOUR OWN UNDERSTANDING. IN ALL YOUR WAYS ACKNOWLEDGE HIM, AND HE WILL MAKE STRAIGHT YOUR PATHS. BE NOT WISE IN YOUR OWN EYES; FEAR THE LORD, AND TURN AWAY FROM EVIL.