Pick Your Path

“Two roads diverged in a yellow wood/And sorry I could not travel both/And be one traveler, long I stood/And looked down one as far as I could/To where it bent in the undergrowth.” Though what Robert Frost was wanting to communicate in his well-known piece “The Road Not Taken” has been discussed at great length, many people have identified with the poem, especially the struggle of having to choose one path or experience over another. I believe humans tend to have an innate wistful attitude about life’s “roads not taken.” It’s as though we have a constant itch in the back of our heads asking “what if?”

In the first Psalm, we see two paths (or “ways”) laid before us. It can almost be read as a story of two men. The first man is the “blessed” man of Psalm 1:1. His path leads him to avoid the advice, company, and attitudes of the wicked (1:1). He takes joy in studying, contemplating, and doing God’s law (1:2). As a result, he is strengthened—rooted like a tree next to a river with a constant source of nourishment—bearing fruit and enduring through the seasons of life (1:3). Best of all, his efforts are known by the Lord, and he is counted among the righteous (1:5-6)

On the other hand, we have the second man. His path leads him toward the wicked. He begins by taking their advice, decides to remain in their company, and finally adopts their attitudes and lifestyles for himself: He “sits” in their “seat” (1:1). As a result, we see that his outcome is contrasted to that of the blessed man. Instead of being planted by the river, the wicked man becomes dried up and withered, blowing away at the slightest breeze like chaff (1:4). This man’s path continues to get worse. Upon judgment, the man fails to be counted with the righteous, (1:5) and his path terminates in one end: death (1:6)

The beauty of Psalm 1 is that it presents us with the only two possible paths. I mean this in the sense that there are only *two possible destinations*—two endpoints. The path of the blessed leads to life, “for the LORD knows the way of the righteous” (1:6, ESV). The path of the wicked ends in death, as “the way of the wicked will perish” (1:6, ESV). With only these two endpoints to choose from, the natural question upon reading Psalm 1 is which path will we choose? These are not two equally good paths diverging in a yellow wood where we get all wistful about missing out on the opportunities of one by taking the other. These are two drastically different eternal destinations! Isn’t the choice obvious? We should choose life! We know that we should choose life!

In order to navigate towards a destination, we need to know the map. If our desired destination is life, via the path of the blessed, then our map must be God’s Word! We need to know it and appreciate it (Psalm 1:2, ESV). We do not consider a map restrictive when it wants to keep us on the road instead of crashing through guardrails and driving through ditches. Neither should we consider the law of God restrictive when it guides our lives along “the narrow way” (Matt. 7:13-14, ESV). Each day, each minute, each moment – we get to choose. Will we navigate towards life or towards death? Let us choose carefully and consistently the path of the blessed.

Noah Diestelkamp; 3213 Heathercrest Dr. Garland, TX 75044;

email: nadiestel@gmail.com