



#Fail: Redeeming Life from Fate

What is Fate? “In classical thought fate was believed to be superior to the gods, since even they were unable to defy its all-encompassing power. Fate is not chance, which may be defined as the absence of laws, but instead a cosmic determinism that has no ultimate meaning or purpose. In classical thought as well as in Oriental religion fate is a dark, sinister power related to the tragic vision of life. It connotes not the absence of freedom but the subjection of freedom. Fate is blind, inscrutable, and inescapable.” - Evangelical Dictionary of Theology

I. What are the key scriptures that speak to the idea of “fate” in Ecclesiastes?

¹²So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly. For what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done. ¹³Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in light than in darkness. ¹⁴The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them. ¹⁵Then I said in my heart, “What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?” And I said in my heart that this also is vanity. ¹⁶For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool! ¹⁷So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind.” Eccl. 2:12-17 (ESV)

II. When we wrestle with the content of the book of Ecclesiastes, is it helpful to place its message in the perspective of a fallen world?

¹But 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. ²It 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. ³This 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. ⁴But he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. ⁵For 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. ⁶Their 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.” Eccl. 9:1-6 (ESV)

III. Is a doctrine of “fate” compatible with a Christian world view?

“¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” Romans 8:18-21 (ESV)

Small Group Questions

1. What reflections of fate can we see in our daily culture?
2. What are the consequences to viewing this as a world “governed by fate” or is such a notion wholly unacceptable?
3. Why is the doctrine of fate so contradictory from a Christian world view? Discuss the idea of “divine providence” as God’s answer to fatalism.
4. How does the cross redeem Solomon’s view of fate?
5. Why does the cross and resurrection give us such hopefulness in a world where so many seemingly random and awful things happen?