

The Divinely Appointed Contrasts of Life



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In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth (Genesis 1:1).

Cife is all about contrasts. They are everywhere and in everything. This is how we learn.

The very first verse of the Bible introduces us to *divinely appointed contrasts*. In the beginning God created two contrasting spheres: *the heaven, and the earth*. This is a key contrast that continues throughout the entire Scripture. When God makes things that are different, they are not the same.

In fact, *divinely appointed contrasts* are at the heart of understanding the Scriptures. This is addressed by Paul as he gives his final instruction to Timothy:

*Study to show yourself approved to God, a workman who needs not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the Word of Truth** (II Timothy 2:15).*

God has designed a certain way by which we are to study the Scriptures: “*rightly dividing*,” or “*correctly cutting*” (Concordant) them. Simply put, we must learn to make a difference where God makes a difference. This is the divinely approved approach to the study of His Word.

This is the goal of Philippians 1:10, “*So that you may recognize **things that are different**,*” because things that are different are not the same. This is the number one principle of Bible study, and it is introduced to us in the very first verse of Scripture.

Contrasts are God’s education tools in our divine course of instruction. God has literally filled His Word and our lives with these critical contrasts. If we can learn this, we will understand one of the most important principles of life:

God / Man	Feast / Famine	Hard / Soft	Forgiveness / Justification
Adam / Christ	Drought / Flood	Strength / Weakness	Asleep / Awake
Male / Female	Rough / Smooth	Honor / Dishonor	Bondage / Liberty
Heaven / Earth	Good / Evil	Large / Small	Spirit / Flesh
Divine / Human	Sweet / Bitter	Front / Back	Mortality / Immortality
Adult / Child	Sharp / Dull	Up / Down	Corruption / Incorruption
Day / Night	Snow / Rain	Wet / Dry	Visible / Invisible
Black / White	Joy / Sorrow	War / Peace	Terrestrial / Celestial
Sunshine / Rain	Happy / Sad	Sin / Righteousness	Life / Death
Hot / Cold	Victory / Defeat	Law / Grace	
Hungry / Full	Absolute / Relative	Peter / Paul	
Summer / Winter	Objective / Subjective	Circumcision / Uncircumcision	
Spring / Autumn	Ease / Pain	Prophecy / Mystery	
Sickness / Health	Love / Hate	Israel / Body of Christ	
Poverty / Wealth	Truth / Error		

These are all carefully designed contrasts from God's hand – and make no mistake about it: these contrasts are *all* His creation. They are His firmly established method of teaching us.

God uses contrasts to bring us to divine knowledge and to a true appreciation of Who He really is, so that we may with joy and thanksgiving appreciate all that flows from His benevolent nature. In this principle of contrasts we ultimately will find the answers to all of our questions of life.

If we can realize this principle, we can learn to take a deep breath and relax.

A.E. Knoch, in his classic work, *The Problem of Evil*, helps us understand the divine necessity for such contrasts:

Before they sinned, Adam and Eve had no knowledge of good. Good lay all about them, un-mixed with evil. Health, strength, honor and companionship with one another and with God was their constant possession and privilege. Yet they knew nothing of the blessedness of these boons [benefits]. This we learn from the name given to the tree which bore the forbidden fruit. To many minds it suggests only the knowledge of evil, rather than good. Yet, first and foremost, it was the tree of the knowledge of good.

Thus at the very forefront of revelation we have the principle suggested which is the key to unlock the great problems that most perplex us. It is this: *All knowledge is relative: it is based on contrast.* The knowledge of good is dependent upon the knowledge of evil. Hence the tree in the garden was not, as we usually think of it, merely the means of knowing evil, it was the means, primarily, of the knowledge of *good*. Adam and Eve had good, but did not realize it because they had had no experience of evil.

The perfection of Eden's garden was greatly lacking in the one element most dear to God's heart: Adam did not and could not apprehend God's goodness. There is not the slightest hint of Adam's appreciation or thanks, or worship or adoration. He received all as a matter of course and was quite incapable of discerning or responding even to that measure of divine love which

lies on the surface of His goodness. If *we* should suddenly be transformed into glorious sinless beings and transported to such scenes of sylvan perfection, we would exult and praise the Author of our bliss. Not so with Adam. He knew no joy, for he knew no misery. He knew no good, for he knew no evil.

This point is most important, and we press it because it seems to be universally ignored and misrepresented. The garden of Eden has become a symbol of perfect bliss; we are always being reminded of its delights, and the happiness of the first pair has passed into a proverb. Yet there is not the slightest reason to suppose that Adam was delighted, or enjoyed the bliss ascribed to him. The mere possession of good does not give a knowledge or realization of it. . . . Adam had perfect health, but what was that to one who never had even heard of disease? He had abundant food, but that was nothing to him who had never felt a famine. Even pleasure had no appeal to one who had known no pain.

The fatal lack in all of the perfection of Eden was the utter absence of any note of praise or thankfulness. Knowing no good, and utterly unacquainted with mercy or grace, Adam's heart was utterly incapable of love or adoration or worship. God's goodness did not receive the least response, because it was unknown. All that He had bestowed on Adam failed to kindle the affection for which He longed, and which is the goal of all of His gifts.

How could this grave defect be remedied? There was but one way, and that way was, in the wisdom of God, provided by the tree which He placed in the midst of the garden. Had Adam and Eve known good they would have treasured God's goodness and never would have forfeited it by disobeying His command. Yet, when they did eat of the tree, they set in motion the very forces which would remedy the defect which caused them to do it. What divine wisdom do we see here displayed! God's blessings being unappreciated, they offend Him by their deed and in so doing pave the way for an appreciation which satisfies both. Love is a marvelous schemer! . . .

Had Adam never sinned he would have been a neutral, a sentient clod unfit for the full companionship of his Creator. Of one thing we may be sure: He would never have known evil; and we may be equally sure that he never would have known good. He would not curse God for sin, neither would he thank Him for His beneficence nor adore Him for His grace. He would have utterly failed to fulfill the purpose of His creation. We must always remember that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil had a double function. No one forgets that it brought the knowledge of *evil*; but it was primarily the tree of the knowledge of *good*. Adam had no appreciation of the good by which he was surrounded. Having known nothing else, it was not good to him. He received it as a matter of course, without a thankful thought.

Adam could have lived on indefinitely in such an unappreciated paradise, but only with untold loss to himself and to his Creator. All that he saw was God's hand; His heart was veiled. Some means must be found to rouse Adam's affectionate response to the Divine yearnings. He must learn to appreciate good. How shall this be done?

It is a notable fact, and full of significance, that the tree of which Adam ate was no afterthought with God. Adam's ignorance of good did not lead to its planting. It was already grown and bearing fruit. Moreover, it was not hidden in some distant corner, in an impenetrable thicket, unap-

proachable and forbidding. It was in the very midst of the garden, accessible, and desirable in every way. If it was simply a question of keeping Adam from eating its fruit, it could easily have been removed. Far simpler yet, it need never have been planted.

God alone was responsible for all of the accessories in Adam's transgression. It is of still greater significance that it combined in itself two inseparable functions. Perhaps we would have preferred one tree to teach the knowledge of good, and another to initiate into the knowledge of evil; but this is impossible in the very nature of things. We may strive to conceive of light apart from darkness, but it proves impossible. Light may drive out all darkness, yet its realization depends on its opposite. So good cannot be known by human beings, apart from evil.

– *The Problem of Evil and the Judgments of God*, pages 27-28, 34-35

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