

Hebrews 3:10 in the Navajo Bible

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Éí baą éí oochúííi bich'í' doo shíł hóózhoođgóó ádíniid, Diné t'áá bí t'áá ałahjí' bijéí yee ádił nida'ílzííh, ánísh't'éii doo bił béédahózin da nít'ée'. (Hebrews 3:10)¹

"That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.'" (Hebrews 3:10)²

Introduction

At the end of our verse the Navajo says, *ánísh't'éii doo bił béédahózin da nít'ée'*, where the English has, "and they have not known my ways." The point of interest is the word *ánísh't'éii*, which does not mean "my ways." Instead it means something like "what I am." The English, on the other hand, has to do with God's way of doing things. So roughly speaking, the contrast is between "what I am" (Navajo) and "what I do" (NIV).

Discussion

There is a close relationship between who God is and what God does. His actions (His "ways") are not random or arbitrary, but follow from His inherent nature. Because "God is love" (1 John 4:6), He does loving things.

In the same way, our actions follow from our nature. This fact comes through in a number of passages. "Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit" (Matthew 7:17-18; see also Matthew 12:33; Luke 6:43).

A slightly different view of this problem is found in the following verse: "If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!" (Matthew 7:11). One Gift that God has already given is His Son, Jesus, who came and died for our sins. Another Gift He wants us to receive is the Holy Spirit (see Luke 11:13). But He is willing to give us other things as well. He knows what we need before we ask (see Matthew 6:8).

For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. (Psalm 84:11)

¹ Navajo Bible quotations are from *Diyin God Bizaad. The Holy Bible in Navajo*. Revised edition. New York: American Bible Society, 2000.

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We all know that God is good, but it's easy to forget this when He asks us to do something. The temptation then is to feel that, even though what He wants is good, but what we want is better. But how can we who are "evil" (Matthew 7:11) want something that is better than what a holy God wants for us? Such thinking is confused.

God wants our good. It is we who don't care whether the things we do will hurt us or not. When God says, Don't eat that, He wants our bodies to be strong. When He says, Don't watch that, He wants our minds to be pure. We don't care about our own wellbeing, but He does. He cares about us more than we do. So don't doubt Him. If you follow God, He will do good for you because He *is* good. His actions (His ways) follow from His nature.

Conclusion

The Navajo translation of Hebrews 3:10 captures an important insight into what the English expression "his ways" actually means. We say the words but don't think about what they mean. What the Greek says is *tous hodous mou* ("my ways"), but what is a "way"? A "way" is a road. The expression refers to what God does – the way He does things, the way He leads us – but it also refers to who God is.