

Unity, Division, and Salvation

The Line that Separates

**“For the Word of God is living and powerful,
and sharper than any two-edged sword,
piercing even to the division of soul and spirit,
and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of
the thoughts and intents of the heart.”
Hebrews 4:12**

<http://tinyurl.com/Call2Unity>

The Call to a Unifying Truth

A Call to Whom? (John 18:37)



Consider the “Cohorts” present at the Pilate inquiry.

1. **Pharisees** – lacked discernment (Matt 16 : able to predict weather, but not able to see the signs of the time). A time when both the Pharisees and Sadducees were unified.
2. **Romans** – “Might is Right” – reading the wrong signs – ignoring significance of situational context – “the end justifies the means”
3. **Jesus** – A cohort of 1 (Trinity?). Speaking to whom?

John 18:33-37

(33) So Pilate went back into the governor’s residence, summoned Jesus, and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

(34) Jesus replied, “Are you saying this on your own initiative, or have others told you about me?”

(35) Pilate answered, “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own people and your chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?”

(36) Jesus replied, “My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my servants would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish authorities. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.”

(37) Then Pilate said, “So you are a king!” Jesus replied, “You say that I am a king. **For this reason I was born, and for this reason I came into the world – to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.**”

Joh 14:6

(6) Jesus replied, “I am the way, and **the truth**, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Joh 14:23

(23) Jesus replied, “**If anyone loves me, he will obey my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and take up residence with him.**

I Cor. 2:13-16

“...but we have the mind of Christ” - i.e. His Perspective

*** This moment was also one that divided Humanity forevermore. ***

Not just a Call to Unity... Also, a Call to Separate! From Whom or What? Why?

Perspective on why God operates the way that He has in human history...

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was a Russian novelist and dissident who survived the Soviet gulag labor camps. His book *The Gulag Archipelago* (1973) exposed the massive system of political repression in the USSR, combining his own experiences with testimonies from hundreds of prisoners. It shattered illusions about Soviet communism in the West and helped erode the Soviet regime's moral authority.

A famous line from *The Gulag Archipelago* is:

“The line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being.”

Sometimes it's paraphrased as *“the line between good and evil runs through every human heart.”*

Context in *The Gulag Archipelago*

Solzhenitsyn reflects on what he learned while imprisoned in the Soviet gulag system. He expected that “evil” was only something done by cruel guards, corrupt officials, or dictators like Stalin. But in prison he realized it was more complicated:

Evil isn't just an external force embodied by villains “out there.”

Each human being has the **capacity for both good and evil** within themselves.

Even in the gulag, he observed that some prisoners betrayed others for survival, while others sacrificed for strangers.

This realization transformed his worldview. He stopped seeing history as a battle of “good people vs. bad people” and instead as a struggle **within each person**.

His Perspective

Solzhenitsyn's insight was deeply shaped by his **Christian and moral awakening** while in prison. He came to believe:

The first task of confronting evil is **self-examination**.

No ideology or revolution can “fix humanity,” because even if you topple oppressors, evil remains in the hearts of ordinary people.

True freedom and justice require **moral transformation from within**, not just political change.

Why It Resonates

This quote has endured because it challenges simplistic thinking:

It rejects the idea that evil is only in “them” (the enemy, the other side, the government).

It reminds us that the battle between good and evil is **internal and personal**.

Perspective is understanding something because you are seeing it from a larger frame of reference. It is the ability to perceive how things are interrelated and then judge their comparative importance. In a spiritual sense, it means seeing life from God's point of view. In the Bible, the words understanding, wisdom, and discernment all have to do with perspective. The opposite of perspective is hardness of heart, blindness, and cognitive dissonance.

*I have come into the world, that **I should bear witness to the truth.** Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." John 18:37*

Are you "of the truth"....?

Jer 9:23-24 The LORD says, "Wise people should not boast that they are wise. Powerful people should not boast that they are powerful. Rich people should not boast that they are rich. (24) If people want to boast, they should boast about this: They should boast that they understand and know me. They should boast that they know and understand that I, the LORD, act out of faithfulness, fairness, and justice in the earth and that I desire people to do these things," says the LORD.

The Plan of Salvation

“Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

*“...Jesus said to him, ‘**I am the way, the truth, and the life.**’ No one comes to the Father except through Me.” John 14:6*

*“This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ **Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**” Acts 4:11-12*

*“...For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through **faith**. For all of you who were **baptized** into Christ have **clothed yourselves** with Christ. **There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female – for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.** And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to the **promise**.” Galatians 3:26-29*

“Follow Me” not “study Me”

Beyond the “Salvation Recipes”

What is God’s perspective? How can we know?

Even though we must believe and have faith in Jesus, **it’s not our believing faith that saves**. It’s only by the shed **blood** of the Lamb of God, Jesus of Nazareth, that our sins will be forgiven. **And yet, without faith no man will be saved.** (*Ephesians 2:8-9*)

Even though we must repent, that is turn from our sins, **it’s not our repentance that saves us**. It’s only by the **blood** of God’s only Son, shed at Golgotha, that our sins can be forgiven. **And yet, if we do not repent we will perish.** (Luke 13:3-5)

Even though we are commanded to be baptized, **it’s not our baptism that saves us**. It’s only by the **blood** of the Messiah, who has defeated sin and death. **And yet, without baptism no one will be saved.** (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21)

- Why is there such debate about “exactly when is a person saved”?
- What is the “Biblical Plan of Salvation” and the importance that baptism plays in it?
- Did anyone in Apostolic Days ever admonish another to be “saved” by “saying a Sinner’s Prayer”?
- What is the specific reason and purpose of baptism?
- What is the significance of being baptized in the Name of Yeshua of Nazareth?
- What are certain objections to the necessity of baptism?
- Why it is that we are commanded to obey a “water” baptism and not a “spirit” baptism?

Eph 2:8-9 For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; (9) it is not from works, so that no one can boast.

Luk 13:3-5 No, I tell you! But unless you repent, you will all perish as well! (4) Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower in Siloam fell on them, do you think they were worse offenders than all the others who live in Jerusalem? (5) No, I tell you! But unless you repent you will all perish as well!”

Mar 16:16 The one who believes and is baptized will be saved, but the one who does not believe will be condemned.

Act 2:38 Peter said to them, “Repent, and each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

1Pe 3:21 And this prefigured baptism, which now saves you – not the washing off of physical dirt but the pledge of a good conscience to God – through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

The Biblical Plan of Salvation

Obvious elements as revealed, taught, and practiced

UNLESS YOU...

“Unless you repent you will perish...” Luke 13:3,5

“Unless you love Me more than your father, mother, son or daughter you are not worthy of Me...” Mathew 10:37

*“Unless you lose your life for My sake you will never see life...”
Matthew 16:25*

“Unless you take up your cross and follow after Me you are not worthy of Me...” Matthew 10:38

Not a “Works Religion”, rather a “Total Commitment Religion”

“Follow Me” not “Study Me”

What did the Early Christians know?

The two stages of Salvation

Stage 1

- We are saved by grace through faith at the time that we believe in Christ, repent of our past sins, and are baptized in water. There are no works involved in this at all.
- We are involved in the salvation process – even though salvation is a gift.
- You are born again as a new creature in Christ. You are an adopted son of God. The Holy Spirit dwells with you.
- The one who grants you salvation is Jesus himself.

Also, what doesn't happen to you at Stage 1

- You are still capable of sinning. But have a new clean slate.
- All of your future sins are not forgiven.

An example of Early Christian theology – **1 Corinthians 15; Galations 3**

An example of Early Christian theology – **the Apostles Creed**

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended to Hades, on the third day rose again from the dead, ascended to heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy universal church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.

1Co 15:1-11 *Now I want to make clear for you, brothers and sisters, the gospel that I preached to you, that you received and on which you stand, (2) and by which you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message I preached to you – unless you believed in vain. (3) For I passed on to you as of first importance what I also received – that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, (4) and that he was buried, and that he was*

raised on the third day according to the scriptures, (5) and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. (6) Then he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. (7) Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. (8) Last of all, as though to one born at the wrong time, he appeared to me also. (9) For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. (10) But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me has not been in vain. In fact, I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God with me. (11) Whether then it was I or they, this is the way we preach and this is the way you believed.

Gal 3:1-9 You foolish Galatians! Who has cast a spell on you? Before your eyes Jesus Christ was vividly portrayed as crucified! (2) The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? (3) Are you so foolish? Although you began with the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by human effort? (4) Have you suffered so many things for nothing? – if indeed it was for nothing. (5) Does God then give you the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law or by your believing what you heard? (6) Just as Abraham ***believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness***, (7) so then, understand that those who believe are the sons of Abraham. (8) And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, proclaimed the gospel to Abraham ahead of time, saying, “***All the nations will be blessed in you.***” (9) So then those who believe are blessed along with Abraham the believer.

What did the Early Christians know?

The two stages of Salvation

Stage 2

- We must maintain our saved condition by holding fast to our faith by living in obedience to Christ's commandments. We do these things to maintain (not earn) our already saved condition.
- This stage is not about sinless perfection, but about living in relationship with Christ. A Love-Faith-Obedient relationship.
- Our final salvation is not determined until death, because we can lose our faith or our love for Christ. We can deny Him.
- We demonstrate our obedient love for Christ by abiding with Him (i.e. the vine-branch metaphor) and producing fruit (if just the spiritual fruit of living a righteous life).

It is the totality of Scripture that determines correct theology.

A gift is no less a gift simply because it's conditioned on obedience. We never earn our salvation. It's always a gift from God, dependent only upon the victory over Sin and Death by the Blood of the Lamb at Calvary.

How to Endure to the End?

What God wants of every believer. Colossians 3:12-17

Fellowship : God wants me to be a member of His family.

1 Peter 1:3-9; Eph. 2:19;

Discipleship : God wants me to be a model of His character.

1 Peter 2:21; 1 Timothy 4:12

Any individual strategy to obtain spiritual growth must consider Knowledge, Perspective, Conviction, Skill, and Character... these areas are the building blocks of spiritual maturity.

Why? (Romans 12:2; Galations 5-6; Ephesians 3-6)

1 Timothy 4:12 (One's maturity is not measured by one's learning or age, but rather by one's lifestyle.)

Worship helps people focus on God;
Fellowship helps people face life's problems;
Discipleship helps fortify people's faith;
Service helps people find their talents;
Evangelism helps people fulfill their mission

Rom 12:1-2 Therefore I exhort you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice – alive, holy, and pleasing to God – which is your reasonable service. (2) Do not be conformed to this present world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may test and approve what is the will of God – what is good and well-pleasing and perfect.

Gal 5:1-15 For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not be subject again to the yoke of slavery. (2) Listen! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you at all! (3) And I testify again to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. (4) You who are trying to be declared righteous by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace! (5) For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait expectantly for the hope of righteousness. (6) For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision carries any weight – the only thing that matters is faith working through love. (7) You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth? (8) This persuasion does not come from the one who calls you! (9) A little yeast makes the whole batch of dough rise! (10) I am confident in the Lord that you will accept no other view. But the one who is

confusing you will pay the penalty, whoever he may be. (11) Now, brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. (12) I wish those agitators would go so far as to castrate themselves! (13) For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity to indulge your flesh, but through love serve one another. (14) For the whole law can be summed up in a single commandment, namely, ***“You must love your neighbor as yourself.”*** (15) However, if you continually bite and devour one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another.

Read Gal 6

Read Eph 3 – 6

Why did God plan it this way?

Reflect upon the way that God operates...

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.” Matt. 22:37-39 (Galatians 5)

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Matt. 28:18-20 (Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48)

Reflecting on the way that God operates...

1. Thru 1 man, Adam, sin entered the World.
2. Thru 1 man, Noah, God resolved to renew this World and promised to overcome the effects of sin in it.
3. Thru 1 man, Abraham, God reached a family and promised to bless all families.
4. Thru 1 man, Moses, God reached a nation and promised to bless all nations.
5. Thru 1 man, Jesus, God reached the world and promises to be with each of us to the end of the World

Does God want a specific outcome from humanity...?

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