

General Topics :: A Great Divide

A Great Divide - posted by roadsign (), on: 2017/8/23 7:13

"Left" versus "right". These two ideological sides seem to be splitting apart our world with increasing intensity. I find this unsettling. Perhaps it's because there's no actual midpoint, no fixed place where a plumb line of truth can rest and everyone can relax.

That got me thinking about the various divides described in Scripture. One kind of divide stands out: the "us" versus "them" divide. The "us" side is the justified, righteous side; the "them" side is the guilty, wrongful side. Think about that. Is that not how we instinctively categorize people in our minds? Who puts themselves on the "unrighteous" side?

Yet, Jesus said, "For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matthew 9:13b NIV)

Jesus had a knack for using parables and other tools to dislodge His listeners from their smug self-righteous positions. For us too, through His Spirit's work, we find ourselves on the "other" side - that is, among those who we view as the "guilty sinners". It's humbling to discover that we're no different: Together, we need mercy. Scripturally speaking, this is the very point where the plumb line finally comes to rest.

"There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."
(Romans 3:22b-24)

This text is found shortly after Paul's description of two irreconcilable sides: the Gentile side (Romans 1) and the Jewish side (Romans 2) - that is, the uncircumcised and the circumcised - the culturally sensitized and the religiously sensitized. The Church was birthed in the midst of this hostile divide.

I marvel at Paul's way of handling this hostile divide. Paul didn't take sides. Instead, he changed the direction of the divide - from horizontal to vertical.

The great divide, Paul claimed, was between God and humanity. The cure was the same for both sides: It was forgiveness and reconciliation through Christ.

"For he himself is our peace who had made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility."
(Eph. 2:14)

Through being united with Christ by the Spirit, our differences no longer divide us:

"There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."
(Gal. 3:28)

Human divides will continue to trouble us, alienate us, and even threaten our lives. Yet our primary focus should not be these lesser horizontal divides, but the great vertical divide - and God's ancient Covenant promise to humanity - our only solution and our hope:

"So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation."
(2 Corinthians 5:16-19 NIV)

This is encouraging news! As believers this is to be our main focus, our main purpose, and main identity. How others attempt to divide us on the horizontal plane is less important than this high calling on the vertical plane: We are called to be servants of God's merciful grace. Let us not allow worldly divides to distract us from this God-given task.

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Prayer: O Lord, unhinge us from our restless obsession over the presence of horizontal divides. May we look up to You with a fervent passion for spiritual reconciliation, and the fruit thereof: peace and unity. May Your name may be honoured. Amen.