

“The Whole World Is Binary”

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Text: 1 Cor. 1:18

Let's begin with the observation, that the entire world is binary, divided into **those who are perishing** and **those who are being saved**. This contrast is clear and, we note, that there is some flux in the mix. Some of those who are perishing are redeemable and all of those who are being saved are progressing—moving up and moving on until they attain spiritual maturity, or perfection which is expressed as **eternal life**, or **heaven**. Consequently, this observation is alerting, if not downright alarming. It is alarming for those on either side of this divide: some of those who are perishing see those who are being saved and vice versa. And some of those who are being saved see that others, people, persons that they care about are on the other track! This reality seems to fly in the face of certain truths. For example, those who are perishing are said to be **dead in their trespasses and sin**. Being “dead” would preclude them being aware of anything, especially their spiritual condition, their dire straits. Perhaps it is better phrased as hearing impaired--not totally deaf?! Some souls are insensitive to their spiritual condition and, apart from a spiritual awakening; they seem destined to remain indifferent and insensible to their trajectory. Fortunately, or mercifully, God is sovereign over both tracks and He can save whosoever He will regardless. And, praise God, he does do so; he quickens some of those who are perishing and they shift tracks! Have you shifted tracks?

How? Well, through the operations of divine grace. And, through the use of various instruments. Gospel preachers, missionaries and evangelists figure highly among those instruments who God sovereignly directs to reach those God prepares to receive salvation. God also uses circumstances and events, some tragic and some miraculous, as well. Moses' curiosity at a bush that burned but was not consumed was effectual in changing the course of Moses' life. For Joseph it was being sold into slavery by his brothers that did the trick. I am not saying that Moses and Joseph didn't believe in God prior to these life-changing developments; the evidence suggests that they did! However, these events got them moving in a new direction—they would be brought on line so to speak! Moses, disciplined in the backside of the desert, in the land of Midian, was God's chosen instrument for delivering the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt. Joseph was chosen by God to lead the Hebrew nation into Egypt to survive a severe world-wide famine. When the Hebrews became numerous, **a new king over Egypt who knew not Joseph** arose. This is significant because Joseph had saved Egypt from the famine along with the family of Israel/Jacob! And the new king feared the Hebrews who were subjected to slavery as aliens in the land. All of this is ancient history and you can read up on it in the Bible. But nothing in this history alters the binary condition of the world, the separation of **those who are perishing** and **those who are being saved**! Their situation is pertinent to our world, just as it is to first century Corinth under Paul's pastoral care.

If we consider what it means to be saved, we will position ourselves to grasp what it means to Paul for others to be perishing! Salvation, as a term, is possibly so worn out that we are in need of refreshing its meaning. Salvation means “being healed, or made whole” as well as being “rescued from danger, and made safe.” Because we use salvation in a religious framework, the idea of healing and rescue are, or tend to be overshadowed in favor of salvation as a religious experience—a conversion that is coupled with repentance and a sense of being reconciled with God. Something similar has affected the terminology of “being lost.” Being lost has more to do, in most minds, with travel and misreading our GPS—rather far from being sheep without a shepherd, or being lost in sin. In the gospel narratives, salvation is tied to the miraculous healings of our Savior *and Jesus sometimes makes the connection between sin and sickness with such expressions as **your sins are forgiven you***—as when sickness is a consequence of sin, or the result of guilt, fear or perversion. But in other cases, blindness *by the Lord* is framed as an occasion for God to be glorified in the healing. (This being a man blind from birth!) So, the diseased person is made whole *just as the danger of death is averted for those sick unto death—salvation is then either by healing, or by resurrection*.

Sickness of the soul and spiritual perils are the real stuff of life as Christians live it. ***We do ourselves in*** with facility and ease—quite frequently. We would note that the treatment of one’s physical symptoms is only part of the cure—so to speak! God ***bars the gate against a flood of evils in salvation***; and simultaneously opens another gate, through which blessings and further grace flows into the desolate heart of those being saved. God imparts divine life; he bestows gifts for a new and better life. All good is offered, and all evil is banished . . . *this is the biblical conception of Christian salvation!* Salvation brings happiness and holiness, integration and completeness—**the lame walk and leap for joy, wizened limbs are made strong and vigorous!**

This is the positive side—the side of those who are being saved. But *where people are perishing*, there is disintegration, destruction and, yes, utter ruin. There is an entire failure of one’s becoming what God meant man to be! This is dreadful. It is disease running its course. It is peril translated into destruction; it is danger doing its worst . . . and the withdrawal of all blessing and any good. Because it is progressive, we speak of a “fading away, or of a dying out” . . . a loss of all that is beautiful, sweet and gracious with a stark and barren desolation taking its place. It is ***awful, wretched!*** Death is better than this and those perishing know it full well. The whole creation is aware of this which is why Paul speaks of it as **groaning in travail . . . as with birth pangs awaiting the arrival of the sons of glory**.

Both perishing and salvation are continuous processes; they are progressive facts of life. Salvation is a continuous operation running through a life. It is a growing, enlarging and amassing thing—like church growth, or like personal

sanctification, moving from “one stage of glory to another until in heaven we take our places!” As long as life lasts we are being filled up with the Spirit. But, unfortunately, for many Christians progressive salvation is not a fact of their life! It is as if they were moving along and came to a full stop! Ten years has brought no sense of movement, maturation—there is no evidence of advance! The depths of God’s love have not been plumbed; our growth in Christlikeness appears stalled, dusty and cobwebby! Instead of pressing in and making it all our own, we live stunted lives. No growth evident here! BUT, the saddest thing is that when we are not growing up, we are likely falling down. There is no pause button—only rise, or fall . . . either integration, or disintegration, either emergent order, or chaos ensuing! We are in a backslidden state.

Alas! The deterioration, or the disintegrating decline of those who are perishing—the ruin of which we speak—seems typical of some Christians. The promise of deliverance was stronger at first than it is today! Our first love has waned, the edge and excitement of salvation has dissipated—if not disappeared entirely. The pursuit of worldly things, low and selfish things, even wicked things, have risen to the fore. We are indistinguishable from those who are perishing—we were far happier and far better when we were poorer and younger. When we trembled at the Word of God, we were better off! We sense that those things we once cherished are irretrievably lost to us! Self-doubt rises up and we fear the worst about ourselves. We know that if we are not more saved—we are actually less saved!

Well, is there nothing we can do? No way to assess where we are and, if necessary, repent against and return to God? Indeed, there is. Consider your attitude to the Cross. ***Your whole moral condition settles whether it is “foolishness” to you, or not.*** On the other hand, if you view it as the **power of God unto salvation**, your spiritual diagnosis is most hopeful—the prognosis is excellent indeed.

Those who are perishing see *nothing* in the Lord Jesus Christ—His atoning death is of no benefit to them. It’s all “foolishness¹,” unfit for any good and unnecessary to their lives. This is the condemnation of your eyes, and not of Christ, the cross, or salvation. And yet if you catch this incipient unbelief soon enough, if you are blessed with such an awareness as leads to godly sorrow and repentance, then rejoice and be very glad. Not only are the lights on, the light is shining. Trust that light, head for that light and you will be overtaken by the power of God unto salvation once more. It will deliver you out of sin, sorrow and danger until it has saved you to the uttermost!

¹ Religion is a crutch, they say, designed for the weak. It is forged out of fear and used by its creators/practitioners to imprison and enslave others—it’s all about power and control—yes, the oppressed and the oppressors. It is the same, tiresome atheistic song, with revised lyrics!

Consider then, what's it going to be? Life/salvation, or death/perishing. It cannot be both. Either or is definitely binary.

Amen.