**The Sin of Neutrality**

**Introduction**

1. When spiritual conflict arises there are only two sides that can be taken – righteousness or unrighteousness; obedience or sin; God or Satan; etc.
2. However, some attempt to find a loophole where they keep from choosing either side. They do not want to be at enmity with either people, so they remain neutral.
3. Yet, neutrality in spiritual matters is really not as neutral as some would like to believe.
   1. Edom with Israel – **Obadiah 10-11** – When Israel was attacked by enemies Edom stood by.
      1. While there was certain malice in them, the essentially took a neutral position.
      2. They ***“stood on the other side” – “On the day that you stood aloof” (NASB)*** – but were still participants in the attack by failing to come to Israel’s aid.
   2. Pharisees with God – **Matthew 12:30** – they had rejected Jesus as the Christ, but still claimed to be God’s workers.
      1. Jesus cast out a demon, but they said it was by Beelzebub (Satan).
      2. Jesus exposed the flawed logic of such a claim.
      3. Jesus showed they couldn’t be in the middle – either accept the proof that He is the Messiah, or be an enemy of God – no neutral ground.
      4. **(v. 30)** – if we aren’t for Jesus, even if were in a neutral position, then we are against Jesus.
4. Neutrality does not work with God. It is a form of being lukewarm, and those who are lukewarm are spewed out of Jesus’ mouth (**cf. Revelation 3:15-16**).
5. Reasons for Neutrality
6. Provision for Peace and Unity
   1. Some remain neutral to avoid conflict, and to promote a kind of unity.
   2. Peace must be kept – **Matthew 5:9; Romans 12:18**
   3. Unity must be provided for – **John 17:20-21; Ephesians 4:3** (done by the bond of peace)
   4. Peace for the sake of peace, and unity for the sake of unity are not what God desires.
      1. Preserving peace when conflict arises can only come by resolving conflict – **Romans 12:18** – “IF IT IS POSSIBLE” – (**v. 21** – don’t be overcome with evil)
      2. Unity in spiritual matter can only truly be achieved in the Spirit – **Ephesians 4:3** – the Spirit’s guidance through the word – **1 Corinthians 1:10**
      3. Peace and Unity through Christ – **Ephesians 2:14-16**
   5. Peace through neutrality is not peace. IT IS AVOIDED CONFLICT, WHICH IS NEVER GOOD.
   6. Unity through neutrality is not unity. IT IS IGNORED DIFFERENCES.
7. Cowardice
   1. One who remains neutral may have some excuses for why – like preserving peace and unity – but ultimately the reason is their own cowardice.
   2. It takes boldness to stand for truth without wavering. Especially when it sets you against others.
   3. We can’t shrink in the midst of adversity/conflict – **Hebrews 10:35-39** – to do so is to fall to perdition.
   4. **Revelation 21:8** – The cowardly will be condemned.
      1. Same word used to describe the disciples in the storm – **Matthew 8:26**
   5. Consider Jesus – **Hebrews 12:3** – endure, do not cower.
8. Rejection or Ignorance of the Nature of Truth
   1. Truth speaks of peace and unity, but truth demands allegiance.
   2. We are to support the truth – **1 Timothy 3:15**
   3. We are to abide in the truth – **John 8:31-32**
   4. Fundamental quality of truth that must be understood:
      1. Truth divides – **Hebrews 4:12; Matthew 10:34-39** (the sword He brings is His word) (**John 17:17** – sanctifies, or sets apart)
      2. Division is necessary to distinguish the righteous from the unrighteous – **1 Corinthians 11:19; 1 John 2:19**
      3. To remain neutral is actually to take the side opposite of Jesus – **Matthew 12:30**
   5. Christians must pursue peace and unity, but not at the expense of truth, and clarity.
9. Avoiding Neutrality
10. Sin
    1. Our approach to, and stance on any sin must be the same as the nature of sin – absolute.
       1. We know not to take the opposite side of any directly listed sin – **1 John 1:10** – make Him a liar because He specified a sin which is said not to be sin by the offender. (**1 John 3:4** – lawlessness, word not in us)
       2. However, we cannot stand in a neutral zone with any sin.
          1. This is often portrayed by silence.
          2. The Bible calls us to be vocal about sin, and vocal in a distinctive way.
    2. Call sin, sin:
       1. **Romans 7:7** – the law God gives tells us when a thing is sin.
          1. As children of God we are to make known His law – to each other and others.
       2. We cannot put a different label on the things God calls sin – **Isaiah 5:20**
          1. We do this when we admit something is sin, but attempt to minimize it by contrasting it with some other sin.
       3. We cannot restore each other without calling sin what it is – **James 5:19-20**
          1. Wonders from truth – i.e. a standard of right and wrong.
          2. Must not be neutral concerning that standard if we wish to turn them back.
    3. A neutral zone for sin proposed by brethren – **Romans 14:1-4**
       1. This indeed is a neutral zone, but not for sins.
       2. These are matters God is neutral about – or indifferent towards – liberties. (**cf. 1 Corinthians 8:8** – doesn’t make us better or worse)
       3. Cannot place sin in Romans 14 in an effort toward neutrality. SUCH IS SIN IN ITSELF.
11. Doctrine
    1. Paul exhorted Timothy for strength in the grace of God – **2 Timothy 2:1**
       1. This meant that he should hold fast to the pattern – **2 Timothy 1:13**
       2. We must do all according to the pattern – **Hebrews 8:5**
    2. Neutrality in doctrinal matters is unacceptable to Christ – **Revelation 2:14-16** (Pergamos church)
    3. When doctrine is compromised by one then conflict is demanded of another for the sake of truth – **Acts 15:1-2** – NO SMALL DISSENSION AND DISPUTE.
    4. Neutrality in doctrine looks like:
       1. Not declaring the whole counsel – **Acts 20:26-27**
       2. Some may not be teaching anything wrong, but they aren’t teaching anything distinctive.
       3. When it comes to specific questions of the work, worship, and edification of the church their teaching seems within the doctrine of Christ, but REALLY IT IS IN A NEUTRAL ZONE.
       4. When specific doctrinal matters are not frequently addressed a solid stance cannot be found. WE LEAVE PEOPLE TO WONDER WHERE WE STAND ON ISSUES.
    5. Error must be know in order to be avoided – **1 John 4:1**
    6. Example – **1 Timothy 4:1-11** – a coming apostasy with specific doctrine’s contrasted with the truth – to instruct in this is to be a good minister.
12. Sin and Doctrine in Evangelistic Efforts
    1. We need to submit to our Lord’s commission – **Mark 16:15** – to EVERY CREATURE.
    2. We need to try to make disciples – **Matthew 28:19**
    3. However, we must use the truth, and the whole truth in order to do so.
       1. **John 8:31-32** – true disciples are only those who abide in Christ’s word.
       2. If we are keeping something from a prospect of discipleship in order to win them over, then we are not making them disciples of Jesus, nor are we really winning them over.
       3. Goal – **2 Corinthians 10:4-5** – take thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ – in everything!
       4. EX: Ignoring a known unlawful marriage in a study with some who are interested in becoming Christians is taking a neutral position, and not accomplishing the Lord’s work.
    4. Making disciples requires specificity in the discussion of sin and doctrine:
       1. Need for repentance – **Acts 17:30** – requires convicting knowledge of the truth concerning sin and error.
       2. Not another gospel – **Galatians 1:6-9** – CAN’T BE TAUGHT WRONG AND CONVERTED RIGHT.
       3. Our duty is to expose darkness with light – **Ephesians 5:8-14**
          1. **(v. 14)** – Is the evangelistic side of things – Christ offers life through light **(cf. John 1:4).**
          2. We cannot pull people out of darkness by ignoring darkness, and/or being neutral about darkness.
    5. Simply, we must preach the word – **Acts 8:4** – something not all will hear.
       1. If we aren’t for Christ on a matter of sin or doctrine when trying to convert others, WE AREN’T GATHERING WITH HIM, BUT SCATTERING – **Matthew 12:30**

**Conclusion**

1. Christians are to be the very opposite of neutral. They are to be following Christ in totality – which appears extreme/radical to most.
2. We must understand that, not only are we to come out of the darkness, but we are to come into the light – not some neutral, grayness.
3. We must take this absolute approach into the world – **1 Peter 2:9** – proclaiming Christ in no neutral fashion, but in total truth.