

CAN WE BE NEUTRAL?

There is not within the pages of scared instruction even the remotest allowance for "fence-sitting." Jesus did not say, "you are either with me or against me or somewhere in between." But He did say "you are with me or against me!" (Matthew 12:30). The only time we find a hint of being neutral in things spiritual is in the Revelation when God calls the church in Laodicea "lukewarm" and thus fit for vomiting! It is impossible to "stand up, stand up for Jesus" and not "stand against . . . the devil" (Ephesians 6:11).

Neutrality generally is a sign of complacency, noncommittal, inconsistency and not being truly converted. Those who dwell in neutrality are those who are more concerned for "the voice of the people rather than God" (1 Samuel 15:24).

Jesus was not concerned about being popular; He was not governed by the flow of human thought. He was directed by truth, which to most is a sword and division, not peace and union. The apostles were not "men-pleasers" (Galatians 1:10; Ephesians 6:6; Colossians 3:22), but were concerned with God's desires (Acts 5:29).

One brother has aptly put sin in its perspective: "wrong-right, yes-no, good-bad, either-or, neither-nor, God-Satan, take your pick, there is no room in the middle and no way to have both!" To try is to succumb to the error spoken of by the Lord's brother: "Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God" (James 4.4).

THE ERROR OF THE WICKED, 2 Peter 3:17

There has always been and always shall be those whom Peter calls the wicked both within and without the Lord's body. We have the tremendous task as Christians to "be on our guard" for these characters. This is actually a part of what our brother Josh reminded us of in his Wednesday evening invitation. Paul's echo is heard in this regard when he warns, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13). None of us are not immune to the "wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11)!

Jesus told a parable about the kingdom in Matthew 13 in which He taught that tares or weeds were sown into a man's wheat field. Those weeds were permitted to grow with the wheat until harvest. Please note now verse 41: "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather *out of his kingdom* all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity". It is clear that in this verse Jesus referred to His kingdom as the whole world. This is why we must be alert to the "weeds" both within and without the church. Take the advice of Paul and "walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time" (Colossians 4:5).

What else do we learn from the verse in our title? 1-These men are in error and practice error. They walk in darkness though they claim to have fellowship with Christ. This makes them liars (1 John 1:6)! 2-We need to know this beforehand, that we might not follow them. 3-If we get carried away, we too will fall from our own steadfastness! God forbid! Let us do the right thing: "Mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them" (Romans 16:17). To mark them we must know them. To know them we must know their fruits (Matthew 7:20). Let us learn the difference between the "unfruitful works of darkness" (Ephesians 5:11), and the "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22).

Sermon Notes:

Meeting Times:

Sunday:

Bible Study: 9:30 a.m.

Worship: 10:30 a.m.

Evening: 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study: 7:30 p.m.

Preachers:

James Grayson

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Wednesday's Wisdom:

"The devil is tricky! Watch out for him and resist...he WILL flee!" Josh Haley

"Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4.7)

Steve told us a week or so back of a 13 yr old who had a heart attack. This boy is now out of his coma and is doing real well!

Cheryl has prepared an updated membership directory. Tell her if you'd like to have one.

Fellowship meal and business meeting is in two weeks, February 14.

Happy Anniversary and Birthday for February!

Several in the Wiley family: Hubert, David, and Tristen

Sermon Preview:

Tonight is question and answer night, so brother James Grayson will be preaching this morning. Please use the back of the bulletin for your notes on his study.