

THE

HARVESTER

"Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)

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TAKING A NEUTRAL STAND

The role of Switzerland during World War I and World War II has always amazed me. Switzerland is a small, mountainous, and beautiful country in Europe. It is bordered on the north by Germany, on the east by Austria, on the south by Italy, and on the west by France. Yet, in spite of its precarious and centralized location during those wars, Switzerland achieved a rare position: a status of neutrality! While her neighbors were choosing sides for the most destructive conflicts ever to embrace our world, Switzerland took a neutral stand.

Today, many people in the world are still opting for that 'middle ground' of neutrality. When a heated argument crops up, these people

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try to avoid the issue by straddling the fence. They do not want to commit themselves one way or the other. Neutral ground just seems to be the safest course to them. There is nothing dangerous with that, I suppose.

The trouble begins when we try to seek that neutral ground in the religious world. In relation to spiritual things, there is NO neutrality. It is impossible to be neutral because such a position does not really exist. Christ stated it simply in these terms: *"He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."* (Matt. 12:30) Can you find any 'middle-of-the-road' in that? Are there not two different sides on which to stand, and only two? If a person is not on the side of Christ, then he is on the wrong side, in spite of whatever other alternative or combination there may be. Though we may all agree on this particular point, let us now look at four other examples that will further illustrate this principle.

In our first example we note that there is absolutely no neutrality in WHOM we serve. We have but two choices, and all things will fall into either one of those two categories. We can serve God or we can serve something else. Some will argue, however, that there are other choices available to whom we can serve: Allah, Buddha, money, sports, self, etc. These still fall into the second category of 'something else'. We either serve God or we don't serve God. That is how the Bible lays it out.

Therefore, it is impossible to serve God while also being a servant to another "god." Our Lord demands total service. *"No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot*

serve God and mammon." (Lk. 16:13) It is foolish to think a person of the world can be pleasing to God by serving another master. But this is exactly the view a neutral-minded person takes when he wants to do as he pleases. He does not want to obey God's commands completely, yet he expects to be saved. So he serves God a little bit and serves the world the rest of the time. But the scriptures make it very plain on which side a person really stands when it comes to service. There just isn't any neutrality.

Our second example deals with faith. Contrary to popular belief, there are not many faiths: there are only two! The faith that God's people possessed was a living (Rom. 1:17), working (Jas. 2:22), and righteous (Phil. 3:9) faith. That describes the 'saving faith' found in the Bible. Any other kind of faith is a DEAD faith. The 'faith only' faith is a dead faith. *"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."* (Jas. 2:26) Weak faith, faith in another god, blind faith, no faith: these are all examples of DEAD faith. Now, which kind of faith do we have? There are only two types of faith. If ours does not lead us to works of obedience, then it must be the DEAD faith (Jas. 2:20).

Those in search of neutrality will not find it in the music that is designated for worshipping God. Again, there are only two kinds of music: vocal or mechanical. In Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, it specifically states that we are to "sing." This automatically rules out the use of mechanical instruments in praise to God. There is no middle ground here! Either we obey God by singing and singing only, or we don't! Singing and playing a musical instrument does not constitute obedience to God's commands. "Oh, but what's wrong with it?

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Where's the harm?" people cry. It may seem to be a safe and neutral stand to some, but to God, this is an outright act of disobedience!

In our fourth example, we want to examine the arrangement employed by God in teaching his people. Only two arrangements are possible: an undivided assembly or an assembly divided into classified groups. I Corinthians 14:31 shows that in the early days of the church, the assembly remained together so that *"all may learn, and all may be comforted."* This arrangement of teaching was used in order that ALL would be edified and to keep peace *"in all churches of the saints"* (I Cor. 14:26,33). Obviously, then, any other form of arrangement can not be scriptural. 'Assembling together' necessarily excludes dividing into classes. Just as playing a musical instrument violates God's command to sing, the division of the congregation into groups violates God's command to 'assemble together' (Heb. 10:25). Some think it is okay, and perhaps neutral, to divide into classes and to regulate those classes as if they were undivided assemblies, but it is still not the arrangement for teaching as found in the New Testament.

That feeling of neutrality is perhaps the most dangerous position in the spiritual realm because true neutrality does not exist. It is folly to think we can stand on both sides of an issue, one foot here and the other foot there.

That only gives one a false sense of security (I Cor. 10:12). Did not Pilate think he was 'in the clear' concerning the death of Christ? *"When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it."* (Matt. 27:24) We all know Pilate was just as guilty as everyone else involved.

As God's children, we must seek the way of absolute truth. It would be too presumptuous on our part to follow that which is not found in the scriptures. If we will stick to the Bible pattern, then we will be assured of heaven's blessings. We know we must serve the Lord God and Him only; we must have the faith that leads to works of obedience; we are commanded to 'sing', not play; and when we gather together to teach, we must arrange ourselves in an undivided assembly. Anything less or different is sinful.

RAY McMANUS

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES!

1. Which of Naomi's daughters-in-law remained in Moab?
2. According to Exodus, how many times each year were the Israelite men supposed to appear before the Lord?
3. Which apostle was guilty of hypocrisy?
4. Where is the thought, "like mother like daughter" found?
5. What was Moses to do in order for the Israelites to win the battle against Amalek?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH ...

and remember last month's questions?

1. In Isaiah, who does God include in His plan of salvation? FOREIGNERS (Isa. 56:1-7)
2. What protest did the chief priests make about the note on the cross? IT SAID "HE WAS KING OF THE JEWS" INSTEAD OF "HE SAID HE WAS KING OF THE JEWS" (John 19:21)
3. What kind of person is like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes? THE SLUGGARD (Prov. 10:26)
4. What is the only book in the Bible with seven chapters? MICAH
5. What did Aaron use to make the idol for the Israelites? GOLDEN EARRINGS (Exo. 32:2)

AS THE MANNER OF SOME IS

(A Series to Promote Church Attendance)

In 1 Chronicles 29, David announced to the congregation that his son, Solomon, was chosen by God to build the temple. *"Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, which I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house ..."*(v.3). Truly, David loved the house of his Lord!

It was David's intention to construct an appropriate house for God to dwell in (1 Chr. 17). But he was denied permission because of his association with bloodshed (1 Chr. 28:3). This did not, however, stop the king from assisting in that great work. He was so zealous that he procured and prepared the materials which would be needed. Truly, David loved the house of his Lord!

This is never more evident than when we read the book of Psalms. In the most famous chapter of all Holy Writ, David states: *"I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."* (Psa. 23:6) Later, he expresses his love for God's house because it is a sacred place. *"Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth."* (Psa. 26:8)

To be in the house of God was such a beautiful feeling that David wanted a permanent spot there. *"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple."* (Psa. 27:4) Would it not be wonderful if today people also shared the same love for God's house, *"which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth"* (1 Tim. 3:15)?

In yet another psalm, David claims that those who dwell in the house of God are blessed. *"Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple."* (Psa. 65:4) Brethren, there is still goodness in God's house today! And if we would only come, we would find true satisfaction in that goodness.

The Psalmist further demonstrates his love in the 84th chapter. In particular, we note the often-mentioned verse 10. *"For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."* There is nothing in this world that can compare to spending ONE day in the Lord's house. Name any sporting event, any social gala, any historic
[continued next page]

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
Oct. 1-7	Athens Church near Liberty, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Oct. 7-8	Marrowbone, KY	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
Oct. 15-20	Rich Hill Church near Liberty, KY	V. W. Boland (Gadsden, AL)
Oct. 16-20	Lily Church near London, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Oct. 23-28	Oak Grove Church near Liberty, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

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occurrence, any special moment and these will all fall significantly short of the edification and spirituality that can be found in just ONE day of the Lord's presence.

Finally, David shares his deepest gratification in Psalms 122:1, *"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."* Are we glad when we are invited to the house of God? Is it a joy to "go to church"? Do we really love the house of the Lord? I hope our response will be like the Psalmist's.

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"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger forever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him." (Psalms 103:8-11)