



Prayergram



Challenging Christians to Pray — June/July, 2014



Matthew Skariah

The Neutral Christian

Today many Christians live in the neutral zone. Our Lord said, **“He that is not with me is against me...”** (Matthew 12:30) As we study the life and ministry of our Savior, He produced three (3) effects—Hatred—Terror and Adoration. When it comes to living the Christian life, there is no mild approval. One cannot be a moderate Christian; he must accept the Lordship of Christ in its entirety or reject it. The neutral Christian is like a “turtle.” When it sees someone coming, it pulls itself inside its own shell, just like the unsaved church member. When they are asked if they belong to Christ they will at once crawl under their own religious shell and say, **“I belong to a Church, I am all right.”** Today it seems that many of our institutions are led by consensus and popularity rather than biblical precepts and loyalty to Jesus Christ. Ergun Mehmet Caner was profound when he said, **“If we ever choose popularity and cultural relevance over biblical fidelity, God will take His hand off of us. We are called to preach and God does not ask our advice.”** I believe in some cases, God has removed His presence from many of our places of worship. Too many people get the idea that they can charm their way into the heart of God with no commitment to the Lordship of Christ.

Christ did not come to solve our unsolved mysteries. There are some who think that God

merely exists to satisfy our liberal curiosity. ***In Christ there are no “Christian problems.”*** The world’s problems are not Christian problems; they are problems created by the rejection of the Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus Christ. In this world, there is so much hate, prejudice, darkness, loneliness; it is infested with evil things and evil doers; but beloved, remember we do not pitch our tent here. Vance Havner said, **“We are travelers, not settlers.”**

Today, we have all these isms and groups—but they are not substitutes for Christianity. Religions of the world speak about pleasantries, cordiality, utopias, goodness of man, cultural diversity, the celebration of man’s ingenuity, the collage of human wisdom, but only Christianity can speak about the Cross, redemption, forgiveness, mercy and salvation through the blood of Christ. We do not become Christians by psycho-analyses; but looking unto Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith. Christians are admonished by the spirit of God to “live and witness” with complete absence of fear because God is the indisputable preserver of life.

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Do not give into religious compromisers. In modern America, if you take a biblical stand on sacred issues, you will be caricatured as judgmental. Christians are forced to accept a lot

of things contrary to the teaching of the sacred Scriptures; we should not be “self-loathing” and don’t have an option when it comes to the cross.

We know very little in Christendom today about perseverance, bearing the cross, and remaining true to our core values. It seems we are too eager to 'give or explain away' sacred biblical principles for the sake of appeasing a culture that's hostile to Christianity. All through the Scriptures we are admonished to be steadfast, unmovable and always abounding in the love of God. The immortal words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer come to mind, **"When we tolerate impudence for the sake of material comforts then we abandon our self-respect."**

You say Jesus was a great man—but so there were many other great men in the time of our Lord. But Jesus is God in the flesh! God did not become a whimsical idea, or a universally held philosophical belief; He became human, was crucified, and risen; and manifests Himself to us in our common humanity. Redemption is made possible by the atonement of Christ on the cross; if we preach about the cross, the Lord will bless us, but if not, we are our own. If you're attending a church where the preacher is quiescent and squeamish in talking about the cross and redemption—you need to get out of that church as fast as you can. A crowd pleaser can never be a God-pleaser!

Those who refuse to take a precise stand on sacred biblical issues are the ones who promote neutrality. When asked why they would prefer neutrality over preciseness; they shrug their shoulders and walk away for reasons unknown. The profound words of Martin Luther King come to mind, **"Those who have not found something to die for are not fit to live."** There is a general consensus among some Christians that our present culture may overwhelm us, and Jesus may lose out in the process, and that seems to be somewhat an overriding reason for non-involvement. It is amazing how people try to make themselves bigger than what they are and that's not very healthy. The old adage is now proven to be true that **"when small men cast long shadows, the sun is about to set."**

Imagine what would have happened if the early martyrs of the faith had taken a neutral position as a safety nest. Today's Christians lack 'iron

and fire' and have no clue as to what the early Christians endured and suffered. When I think about the early Christians and how they stood before their persecutors, my heart overflows with joy unspeakable. For example, in A.D. 156,

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As servants of Jehovah God, it is not our job to create a neutral zone or to introduce some new teaching or methodology, but to remind people the simple truth which we are so anxious to forget and ready to jump on the band-wagon of some nuances. The immortal words of C. S. Lewis are worth remembering: **"People need to be reminded more often than they need to be instructed."** When we are at the mercy of the world and overwhelmed by all its crude enticements, it would be very hard to see the "reality" and the blessedness of walking with Jesus in unfettered harmony. If we do not walk within the realm of God, everything spiritual and godly seems to be irrelevant and foolish to us.

Tertullian, a Roman converted to Christianity in A.D. 192, said, **"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church; the more you mow us down, the more numerous we**

grow." When a Christian loses his conviction he is of no use to anyone. Beloved, we preach a gospel of conviction and power, not a gospel of convenience and neutrality. David Hume was a notorious English atheist who once went to hear

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the famous evangelist Dr. George Whitefield. In the audience, someone spotted Mr. Hume and was surprised and asked him why he was there since he did not believe in God. He replied, **“I don’t but he (Whitefield) does.”** As Christians, we rest upon an absolute, unshaken, unchangeable certainty. Why should we pursue goals which we never bother to examine critically? Let’s ask poignant questions by puncturing pretentious facades and passing fancies! Remember, as followers of Jesus of Nazareth, we are to be a peculiar people, with a distinctive lifestyle, punctuated by wholesome motives and priorities. Let’s be ready to confess Christ before men of all persuasion! Gaining Christ is the greatest of all blessings in this life and the life to come.

In writing about the early Church, historian Will Durant said, **“Christ met Caesar in the arena—and Christ won.”** He is still with us today and changing one life at a time. Once we experience the power of God, it is impossible to be in a neutral zone. As G. Campbell Morgan, succinctly put it, **“If ever I am tempted to think that religion is almost dead today, it is when I listen to the wailing of some Christian people: ‘Everything is wrong,’ or ‘Everything is going wrong.’ Oh, be quiet! Think again, judge not by the circumstances of the passing hour but by the infinite things of the Gospel and our God.”** Has Calvary failed? Of course not!

The neutral Christians always put out their moistened finger in the air to see which way the

wind blows before they take a precise stand on spiritual issues pertaining to life. There are many dangerous precedences in the life of a Christian more than unbelief, doubts and sinful tendencies and they are **“faithless vacillation, endless deliberation without action and refusals to take any risk.”** Man justifies behaviors that compromise his walk with God, and hopes God will content with a “wink and a nod” in His direction. Beloved, let’s never forget that what we have in Christ is so sacred, divine and so regal.

Today more than ever we need Christian soldiers—men and women of great spiritual strength, moral fortitude and noble stature who would become trailblazers for the glory of His kingdom. He who would preach the gospel of power should make his whole life a pageantry of such power. Christians must have the courage to defy the politically correct taboos and social nihilism of the day. Why should we compromise and go along with the world’s bipartisan and pompous posturing conformity? Every disciple of Christ is a potential martyr, who is willing to lay down his life for the cause of Christ; his assignment is the cross and heaven is his destination. As I am reminded of the immortal words of Thomas Carlyle, an 18th century Scottish born essayist, historian and philosopher, **“The real hero is the spiritual leader who ‘conquers heaven for us!’”** It’s very fitting to conclude this article with the poignant words of Robert Raines, **“Lord, give me the courage of my convictions. Make me put up or shut up.”**

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A prayerful warning to Christians

It is virtually impossible to receive a favorable ruling from our judicial system in America for a pro-Bible Christian. But on the other hand, if you are a member of some other religion, you’re highly favored. Christians are becoming minorities in America where our puritan forefathers once fought and died for Christian liberty and freedom. Beloved, watch out, persecution is coming to American Christians, if we are not strong in the Lord, we will falter when such trials come. If we go to church for entertainment and social purpose, we will not stand the test of time. It is time to take a precise stand for Jesus and put everything on the line for the cause of our beloved Savior. **“To go against one’s conscience is neither safe nor right,”** wrote Martin Luther. Beloved, if we walk with Jesus and take His point of view, men will hate us as they hated Him. When we are persecuted for being Christians, we do not run to the government for help, we go to the cross—that is our home—our resting place and our refuge.

One can never be a neutral Christian. Your neutrality will destroy your Christian witness or your Christian witness will destroy your neutrality.

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Thinking, Critical and Relevant

SLAVERY OF THE MIND

By Matthew Skariah

Man cannot live without masters. Everyone kneels before someone or something. There is always a master in whom he pays homage. Someone has wisely pointed out that men either live in glad obedience to the master they believe in, or they live in fictional opposition to the master they wish to undermine. Today more than ever, man is under slavery. Yes, physical slavery was abolished through the relentless efforts of people like President Abraham Lincoln, William Wilberforce, William Lloyd Garrison, and many others. But slavery still goes on—people are slaves to drugs, alcohol, politics, pornography, materialism and the list goes on. There will always be masters who attempt to control our mind. How easily we are fooled? Man has an inbred capacity for self-destruction.

The average person is not as innocent as he appears. He is been duped by a culture because of his lack of **“perceptive insight”** into spiritual matters. The immortal words of Ralph Waldo Emerson come to mind: **“Intelligence defies fate. So long as a man can think, he is free.”** But the question is, are we thinking or just blindly following someone who sounds good on television? People need to think for themselves, and not let others do their thinking. May God deliver us from the tyranny of keeping our mind in bondage! Henry Ford was right when he said, **“Thinking is the hardest thing there is and that’s why few are engaged in it.”** Every misconception, every fatal thinking, every bad idea and error in doctrine emanate from not having a proper understanding of the sovereignty of God.

It is not because people are not educated—

but they are educated badly. As Fredrick William Robertson pointed out, **“The true aim of everyone who aspires to be a teacher should be, not to impart his own opinion, but to kindle minds.”** It is fitting to say that we (Americans) are the most polled people on earth. Man has become hostage to his environment, such as money, position and technology. Someone has said that technology has become the world’s newest religion and no wonder many worship at the altar of technology.

It seems that man has struggled from the beginning of time to comprehend the incomprehensible God. The greatest fallacy of man has been his conceited doggedness and ever-increasing desire to assimilate the designs and purposes of the Almighty God into the absurdly faulty framework of his egotistical mind-set. Is it any wonder that he is constantly appealing to his pride and being drawn into the canard, that he is much more refined and sophisticated than the average Christian who humbly trusts the issues of life to God?

Beloved, may I ask you, **“Is there deliverance from spiritual slavery? Can we experience emancipation? Must this spiritual malady ever remain in our bosom?”** Yes, God has provided a way of deliverance from spiritual slavery by way of His Son’s death on the Cross of Calvary. Thank God, finally, we are free from the power and penalty of sin through the redemptive work of Christ on the cross.

The immortal words of an anonymous writer come to mind, **“God ‘dipped’ me in His grace and ‘clipped’ the sin out of my heart. I have never been the same since Jesus came into my heart.”**

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