

Neutral

TEXT: Obadiah 1:11a & 11d: The day that thou stoodest on the other side . . . even thou wast as one of them.

The prophet Obadiah blames the children of Esau for their heartless neutrality in the hour of Israel's bitter calamity. They had not joined with the spoilers of the land, nor had they taken part with Jerusalem's foes. They did nothing to help them, and acted as if they had forgotten they were their brothers. They had acted like Esau did toward Jacob — the part of cold indifference. They stood by and smiled while houses and windows were burned and destroyed. This indifference, says the Prophet Obadiah, in being neutral made them, in God's sight, with the open foes.

My subject is being neutral in the cause of the Lord.

I know there are some places where it is safe to be neutral; but not toward Christ's cause. One day I saw two folks fighting, and the man was tearing the woman's clothes off her body. She was screaming, fighting, and tearing his to shreds. I tried to intervene and took the part of the woman to help her against this man — and both turned on me! Later on I found out they were man and wife, and they told me to keep my nose out of family troubles.

One day the Jews wanted to persecute the early Christians, but Gamaliel protected them by a counsel of neutrality.

Acts 5:38-39:

³⁸ “And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: For if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought.

³⁹ But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.”

He told them to submit to the test of time. Time will tell, but in the meantime, be neutral. Sometimes it pays to be neutral — like when we are trying to bring a broken home together. The trouble is, so many are too often in neutral gear, spiritually.

You would get nowhere in your car if it stayed in neutral. Race the motor all you want. All parts of the car can be properly assembled and working, but it is in neutral gear and you will go nowhere, fast. To be in neutral is like being a baggage car or caboose — the only time it moves is when something pushes them around. Many people are just like that. They are people without convictions or direction — without

purpose; they are merely in neutral gear, going nowhere.

These remind me of the poem entitled, “*The Man without an Enemy!*” as follows:

*A mind that every trifler leads,
Whose thoughts, however good the seeds,
Cannot ripen into deeds.*

*The first that stops him in the street
Convinces him, until he meet
A second, whose reversals spell straight defeat.*

*To the third, and so he walks among
Men's thoughts until every change be wrung
Within the compass of the tongue.*

*A mental mush of meek concessions,
A blotting paper - half impressions
Sum up the creature's brain possessions.*

*Ramsack the man from top to toe,
His whole anatomy will show
No certainty of yes, or no.*

*Survey him round and round about,
Look him through and turn him inside out.
There is nothing there but rags of doubt.*

*And even these change with the wind,
Not one thought strong enough to bind
The floating masses of his mind*

*He stands a-gaze upon life's brink
But dare not enter - can but think
And wonder what the world would think.*

*But there amid his coward fancies,
Whilst he is balancing his lost chances,
We must leave him - time advances.*

There are times when neutrality in life is no longer possible: when there are but two choices, and the one is right and the other wrong. Jesus sets forth the straight way,

on the one hand, and on the other the broad way. The straight way leads to life eternal and the broad way leads to eternal death and separation. If we take the attitude of neutrality towards sin, God will judge us as amongst His foes at the end.

There is no place for neutrality toward worldly pleasures, nor fleshly habits. Peter was inspired to write:

1 Peter 2:11b: Abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul.

Some say, "I can take this or do that, or leave either alone." This neutrality is the purpose of our text.

Obadiah 1:11a & 11d: The day that thou stoodest on the other side . . . even thou wast as one of them.

We cannot have a feeling of neutrality in relationship to the poor and hungry. There are many who are physically and spiritually starving — both saints and sinners. Jesus told us that in:

Luke 10:30:

And Jesus answering said, "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead."

Once there were two men walking down a lonely road. It was a dangerous road. They had been to church that morning and were full of pious thoughts. As they came to the worst part of the way, they found a man, half dead, lying by the roadside. He had been robbed, clubbed, and left to die. They were filled with pity and thought it a disgrace. Whoever perpetrated such a crime should be hanged; but beyond that they could not go. If they stayed too long, they might meet with the same fate. What is more, men so useful as they must not endanger their valuable lives. They had their families to think about; so, with the best intentions in the world, they passed on the other side.

This is an old story from the Bible, but has it no meaning for us? Have we played the part of the Good Samaritan? Or, are we neutral? There is no middle ground — it is either the right or the wrong side.

The same is true of the Christian when he remains silent when he ought to speak out for Christ. **The man who listens, with laughter, to the filthy story is not as bad as the one telling it — but he is not free from the responsibility. The man who keeps his mouth shut in the presence of the ungodly so they will not know what side he is on by trying to be neutral is ashamed of Christ and has taken the side of the ungodly.**

“The day that thou stoodest on the other side . . . even thou wast as one of them.” God told Obadiah to tell this to his congregation.

We cannot be neutral concerning Christ as the only Saviour of all mankind. "What think ye of Christ?" — is the positive question demanding an answer which Jesus puts to all the world. It is not what we think of Christ as a teacher, a moral yardstick, or a human ideal — but what do you think of God's dear Son, Jesus Christ, the only Saviour from sin?

You cannot stand on neutral ground and say: "I am not prepared to take sides." If you are not for Him, you are against Him and enrolled yourself as His foe. Christ is the only character the world does not know what to do with.

They do not want to accept Him, and yet they cannot reject Him. Our whole future destiny is bound up in our relationship to Christ. One may not be hanged for his thoughts, but he can be damned for them. We have never known anyone who thought little of Christ, or was on neutral grounds, or who was on neutral grounds with sin or thought little of it.

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Where do you stand? We must either come up to the help of the Lord, or stand on the other side with God's enemies. There is no neutral ground on sin, salvation, holiness, or the baptism of the Spirit without seriously jeopardizing our hopes of Heaven.

Elijah, with a soul of fire for God, rebuked the Israelites for being neutral, or trying to ride the fence. If the Lord be God, follow Him, and if Baal be God, then follow him. No man can serve two masters. Elijah must have felt as I do. I would like to get a pitchfork and go up and down this land and make people get on one side of the fence or the other — be wholly and solely for Jesus and His Word, for His separated ones, or take to the bushes. Indifference or neutrality at such an hour as this is a tragedy.

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Matthew 27:22: The words of Pilate
"What shall I do then with Jesus Who is called Christ?"

Fair and square, demanding an immediate answer, this question was hung suspended in mid air. The sea of angry faces accused Jesus of blasphemy as He stood there with a calm and sweet spirit. Friendless, betrayed by one of His very own, Jesus made no attempt to resist. He awaits their verdict. There are but two answers to give — and only two courses of action open — there is ***no neutral***

ground.

Either you trust in Him as the only Saviour from sin, as the Son of God manifest in the flesh to take away the sin of the world, or you reject Him and consent to His death.

That day, cruel hands unmercifully tore His garments and opened His back with the smiter's whip until His precious Blood ran down His body to the floor. Following those stinging blows, He was led to Calvary where He fulfilled the purpose of His coming into the world, as recorded in

John 1:11-12 :

¹¹ ***He came unto His Own, and His Own received Him not.***

¹² ***But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name:***

They knew **not** Whom the one they crucified.

1 Corinthians 2:8:

Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.

Notice it was the educated — the higher ups. Nor do all of you know who you are rejecting from being your Lord and Master. Did you ever stop to think that the boundaries of Pilate's Judgment Hall have enlarged, and the walls widened, until today the whole world is the judgment hall and Jesus is on trial. The Holy Spirit is echoing the question Pilate asked: ***“What will you do with Jesus Who is called Christ?”***

Every living soul, regardless of color or creed, must take sides — either for or against Jesus. *“Oh, but we would never crucify Him as those Romans did.”* Consider for a moment, dear one: if you have not trusted in and accepted Jesus as your Saviour and His Blood to cleanse you from all unrighteousness, ***if you have not come to Him in repentance and had your sins washed away in His Blood, then your heart is at enmity against Him,*** because satan lives within; and he who caused the unquenchable tempest to rise against Christ then, is still stirring it up today.

You who do not know Christ as your Saviour are also crucifying Him and putting Him to an open shame, for there is no neutral ground. You are acting like those who shouted, *“Away with Him”*, though you are not saying it with your mouth.

If you have not unconditionally surrendered your heart and life to Him and permitted Him to come into your soul, you are as lost now as though you defied God and

slipped out into a Christ-less eternity already. Oh, unsaved soul, can you not realize that every day that you live without Christ is one more day of sin for which you will have to give an account, and one less day in which to do it? Each day of sinning will harden your heart and drive you away from accepting Christ as your personal Saviour. The day will come when you will boldly declare that you will have nothing to do with Him, and you will reject Him forever.

Now tonight there is a piercing thorn with which you are steadily torturing Jesus. Many are living lives of hypocrisy, are mockers and pretenders, and are putting upon Jesus the purple robe of outside formality. They go to church and sing, "*When we all get to Heaven*", but their lives smite Him, and mockery is the description of their service.

Then, nailing His hands and feet with spikes, they crucified Him. The hands of the One that in tenderness touched the aching bodies and fevered brows, that brought deliverance and peace to all, regardless of color or state of heart, those feet that travelled many weary miles to bless the lives of fallen humanity, these hands are knocking at your heart's door just now as you read these very words.

It was your sin and mine that nailed Him there. Are you still pushing His hands away from your life and piercing them with unbelief, or scorn, or pride?

What will you do with Jesus today? Perhaps tomorrow's events will hurry in another direction and Jesus will mount the Judgment Seat to Judge the nations. The graves will be opened and the sea will give up its dead; and all that are dead — both small and great — shall stand before Him Whom they have rejected. Then shall those fearful words be uttered by the Judge of all mankind:

**What will
you do with
Jesus
today?**

Matthew 7:23: And then will I profess unto them, "I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."

Matthew 25:41: Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:"

You see, you just don't have any lease on life. Do you know when your last hour will come? It is wise, and it is safe, to **PREPARE TO MEET THY GOD NOW.**