

ALL THE WAY CHRISTIANITY

Matthew 12:30

As convicts approach the time of their parole, they are sometimes put in a halfway house. There they are allowed increased freedom, but not total freedom.

The purpose of a halfway house is to provide monitoring and support for convicts so they can reintegrate into society. This is generally believed to reduce the risk of recidivism or relapse when compared to a release directly into society.

They can go work at a job, and return to the house at night. In this way they can slowly be assimilated back into society.

The convict is being given the opportunity to decide whether to return to a life of crime or choose to be a law-abiding citizen.

There are no halfway houses for Christians. In all things pertaining to God, you must choose your side. Jesus once asked the disciples who the crowds thought Jesus was.

“John the Baptist, Elijah, a prophet,” was their answer. Then Jesus pointedly asked, “But what about you? Who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “The Christ, of God.” (Lk. 9:20).

Jesus then said to them all, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” (9:23).

If you want to be a follower of Jesus you must make a radical decision to deny yourself for Him. This simply means that as a Christian you will not set your desires and will against the right Jesus Christ has on your life.

One day Jesus cured a man who was blind and mute. Now he could both talk and see. The people were astounded, and wondered, “Could this be the Son of David?” Could this be that long promised and expected Savior, Messiah, and Liberator? Let’s read the story in Matt. 12:22-30 (on outline).

The Messiah was standing right there with them but they did not recognize Him. He was so unlike what they had been led to expect.

Jesus didn't look like a glorious prince. He didn't carry a sword or lead an army or call men to war. He was an ordinary looking man, a carpenter from Galilee. Yet His words were full of gentleness and wisdom.

In His eyes was compassion. Mysterious power flowed from His hands. Would you recognize the Savior today? He doesn't call to material wealth and health, as so many have bought into. He calls us to spiritual joy and service in the family of God.

The religious leaders, the Pharisees, were quick to make judgment: "Of course this man isn't the Son of David. If he has any power at all, which we doubt, it comes from Beelzebub, the prince of demons."

What a stupid thing to say. Jesus quickly showed the absurdity of that thinking. "If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself" (v. 26). In effect Satan would be destroying his own work.

Then Jesus said, 29"Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house."

Everything Jesus said and did was opposed to Satan: His miracles—raising the dead, healing the sick, casting out demons, even forgiving sins—were in obvious opposition to Satan's work.

If He did His work by the Spirit of God, then His miracles were of God and He had to be the Messiah. John MacArthur writes:

Jesus' point was this: "Haven't I demonstrated before you and all of Israel My power over Satan and his kingdom of evil, darkness and destruction? Haven't I demonstrated beyond all doubt that My authority is higher than Satan's? Haven't I cleansed people of every kind of disease and freed them from every kind of demonic control and oppression? Haven't I demonstrated My authority over both sin and death? Haven't I rescued souls from hell? Who could have such power and authority but God Himself. I have shown you that I can defeat Satan with a legion of his demonic hosts at will. How could I be any other than your divine Messiah?"

Then Jesus got down to the heart of the matter in v.30, "He who is not with me is against me . . ."

Speaking to those who should have been the first to embrace Him, Jesus says, “Here I am, the Messiah. I am here in fulfillment of the prophecies . . . you know what the holy words say. If you are not with me you are against me.”

With this one statement Jesus lays down the impossibility of neutrality when it comes to following Him. There is no halfway with Him. With this one statement He divides all people into two distinct and separate classes:

You are either with Him or against Him. You belong to one of those two classes. You are either for Christ or against Christ.

It is not necessary to oppose Christ in order to be against Him; it is only necessary not to be with Him. It is not necessary to actively interfere with His work in order to be one who scatters; it is only necessary to not gather with Him.

Every person who does not side with Jesus is against Jesus. And if you are not with Jesus, you are for Satan. The question is, where do you fit in—for or against?

There are no halfway houses in Christianity. There cannot be any riding the fence when it comes to Christ.

Yet, many people (you may be one of those) believe they can be neutral when it comes to Christ. Most believe in God or something about God.

Many even claim to be a Christian yet carry on as usual in the world. Let me share a couple of reasons I believe we try to be neutral:

1. I’m comfortable—don’t bother me.

For some of you, you have just become too comfortable in your religion. You may think or even say aloud, “My religion is my business.

I’m not going to bother anybody else with it and I don’t want to be bothered. Leave me alone and I’ll leave you alone.”

Someone said the reason for the apparent ineffectiveness of Christianity today is that no one is willing to die for it. But I think it is more true that there are so few who are willing to live for it.

Christianity has become an imposition on our busy lives. Think of the many different activities that take place at the times that in years past were traditionally reserved for church activities.

When you support and go to those things you are saying, not only to the Lord but to others, this thing is more important to me than God is, than my church is.

Some of you are so comfortable that if the preacher steps on your toes or hits too close to home, you are going to start looking for a church to be comfortable in.

The late Jerry Farwell was proud of what he called the “Silent Majority.” Forget the Silent Majority.

It is silent, comfortable, so-called Christians who have let our nation slide to where it is at today. Don’t blame the government; don’t blame the schools for the morality of our nation today.

The blame lies squarely at the feet of those who have forgotten that Jesus said, “He who is not with me is against me.”

It is not necessary to oppose Christ in order to be against Him. It is only necessary not to be with Him. All that is necessary to be against Him is to be silent. Jesus says you are working for the enemy. He is looking for “All the Way Christians.”

2. I’m a coward—don’t ask me.

I don’t know what else to call it. Some of us are just plain cowards. We are afraid to take the stand Christianity demands. We are more afraid of what a neighbor or co-worker might say, than what God says.

We hope to maintain a low profile and to slide in on the goodness of God. We are like I used to be on some of my tests, “I hope the teacher grades on a curve so that those of us less than perfect can still pass.”

Folks, God doesn’t grade on a curve. You can be the best, nicest person in the whole world, yet it doesn’t mean a thing without Jesus. God demands perfection and perfection is only found in Jesus Christ.

First you must confess or acknowledge that Jesus is your Savior and Lord. Then you make the decision to live the Christian life wherever you are.

Jesus said, “He who is not with Me is against Me.” Jesus also said, “If you are going to belong to Me, every day you must take up your cross and follow me.”

Here's the wonderful thing—Jesus also promises, “If you belong to Me, truly belong to Me, then I'll work in your life and I'll give you the strength and the courage to live a Christian life for Me.”

2 Cor. 5:17 says, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.” All Christians are either progressing or regressing spiritually. No one can remain static in their relationship to God.

God's Word says, “If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” That means you are lost. You cannot remain static.

You cannot be a Christian and ignore the Bible and the church. You simply cannot because the clear teaching of Scripture is that God enters in and changes our natures.

A little boy, onetime, after hearing his daddy describe what a Christian was, and what a real believer was to be and do, reached up and tugged at his daddy's coat and asked, “Daddy, have I ever seen a real one?”

Application:

God's word clearly shows it is impossible to be a believer and remain neutral. How you live your life and your allegiance to your church will demonstrate to your family, friends, and neighbors your faith in Christ.

If you are a believer then you have trusted and committed yourself to follow Jesus Christ. The question you must answer this morning is, “Do the people I am around every day know I'm a Christian?” What about you?