

## Balance

Mat 10:16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore **wise** as serpents, and **harmless** (*Gk.185- innocent*) as doves. (*Emp. added*)

Isn't it interesting that Jesus would use a serpent as an example for His followers to imitate. In Mat 12:34 He called the Pharisees a "generation of vipers" but here in Mat 10:16 He uses the example of a serpent's characteristic to make a different point. This is where balance comes in. If we're going to be in the world, obviously not living like the world, we need to understand the thinking of it, knowing how to shield ourselves against Satan's darts, so we can win the lost. But at the same time, remain innocent as doves.

1Co 5:9 I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: 10 Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world.

The saying "*too much of a good thing can kill you*" is like too much salt can lead to high blood pressure. Too much involvement with the world can cause even the most steadfast of Christians to be affected by its charms. That's where prayerful consideration is necessary when making any decisions concerning our involvement with the lost.

Php 4:5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. 6 Be careful (*Gk.3309- anxious*) for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

## Conservative (*sound*) vs. Liberal

Tagging a person conservative or liberal when it comes to doctrinal matters is necessary in order to understand which side of the vital principles they are standing on. Concerning the world, almost every political party tries to lay claim to Jesus as one of their own. Democrats think He would more apt to be one of them if He was here today, whereas the Republican party feels otherwise and that He would better fit their political views. Of course Moderates believe He would be one of them because they feel they are in the middle where all things should be politically. So which one is correct? **Neither!** Jesus was a-political back then and since He does not change He would be the same today (*Heb 13:8*). He could neither be considered left or right or in the middle politically because He is "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (*Rev 22:13*). Therefore He is **above** politics. The more liberal group claims ownership of Jesus because of His attitude toward the poor. The more conservative group lays claim to Him because of His moral stance on the issues of His day. Both are right in **that** sense but **neither** can confine Him into **either's** world view. As the church of Christ we are to be neither left nor right nor in between but are to strive to be the **pre-denominational** body of Christ that He died for and let that define where we stand on the issues of the day. Going off in either direction is where the denominating begins. Therefore our search for truth begins when we seek Jesus, not to satisfy our own ideas of what His church should be, but after what He has decided she should be.

Joh 6:26 Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. 27 Labour not for the meat (*food*) which perisheth, but for that meat (*food*) which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for Him hath God the Father sealed.

Jesus wasn't saying we aren't to work for a living. In the context, our working for the physical should not, with regard to the spiritual, be our main focus in life. We are to work to sustain ourselves in this life but not to the point of excluding the "meat (*food*) which endureth unto everlasting life". He would later, through Holy Spirit, inspire the apostle Paul to write concerning those who felt they could be lazy and sponge off of the generosity of their Christian brethren while trying to satisfy their own ideas of what His church should be.

2Th 3:10 For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that **if any would not work, neither should he eat**. 11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. 12 Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. (*Emp. added*)

Hunger is a great motivator when it comes to physical labor. Even under the O. T. welfare system there was a necessity for the shedding of sweat if the poor didn't wish to go hungry.

Lev 19:9 And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. 10 And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather *every* grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I *am* the LORD your God.

As Ruth took care of her widowed mother-in-law Naomi, so it is that we are to take care of those among us who "are widows indeed" (1 Tim 5:3-6), those who can't take care of themselves without some aid from the church.

Ruth 2:1 And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name *was* Boaz. 2 And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after *him* in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. 3 And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field *belonging* unto Boaz, who *was* of the kindred of Elimelech.

There are no passages that state where it's a sin to be wealthy, in and of itself. Boaz was a wealthy man. Wealth isn't sinful but the "love of money" when "coveted after" can be responsible for causing "many sorrows" (1 Tim 6:10). But in part of his letter to Timothy Paul warned of those who weren't taking care of their own but were passing their responsibilities to the church when they had the wherewithal to aid them themselves. That too is coveting by being greedy and not sharing with even a family member, who in this case would have been an elderly mother or aunt.

1Ti 5:3 Honour widows that are **widows indeed**. 4 But if any widow have children or nephews, let **them** learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite (*repay*) their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. 5 Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. (*Emp. added*)

It seems the retirement system back then had to do with having children who grew up to be able to take care of their parents in turn. This is done today by either taking in our parents/grandparents or by placing them in a nursing home that would better meet their medical needs. Not everyone can take care of an elderly parent in their own home.

1Ti 5:8 But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

A staunch liberal would feed anyone who was hungry without checking whether or not they were truly in need which is why the welfare system in this country is in such a shambles. There's no real oversight. If there was they wouldn't be so quick to raise taxes on the working class. They claim to be the "working man's friend" by burdening the wealthy with a higher rate of taxation but we all know that wealthy people don't absorb the higher rate. They have accountants who just pass those higher rates on to those of the middle class through higher prices, rent and other necessities. For welfare recipients living in New York and California the government in those states make it difficult to leave the system since they are being rewarded with an income, HUD, food stamps, etc., that is higher than the average working taxpayer there. On the other hand, the far right conservative wouldn't feed anyone before that person would have to go to great lengths to prove he was desperately in need. On their side no tax increase would fix anything. But according to Paul in Romans 13:6-7 taxation is necessary to keep the government in operation. Our streets are clean, our highways get us to where we are going and we are, for the most part, protected by forces that are paid for by funding through taxation, whether our local police departments or the military. Of course these are the far ends of the spectrum concerning both ideals. There has to be a balance somewhere between the two.

Ecc 3:13 And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all **his labour**, it is the gift of God. (*Emp. added*) (*Our jobs are gifts from God which should be understood as such. To refuse to do any kind of work to sustain us is akin to refusing a gift from God.*)

#### Balancing Love & Truth

Mat 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the **weightier** matters of the law, judgment (*Gk.2920-Thayer: justice*), mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. (*Emp. added*)

Theirs was only an outward show of their religion. They were more concerned with their own truth and had no regard for love. The more personal matters they avoided because they were too difficult for them to bear. And "weightier" doesn't mean these "matters of the law" were burdensome for all to bear. The Pharisees were going through the motions (*even to the point of going beyond them*) that indeed were necessary but by themselves were worthless. Just as the opposite is true. A person can be so into Jesus that they go so far in the **opposite** direction that they overlook what He **in fact** stood for. Yes Jesus is about love because He is God and God is love. But He is also about judgment (*Mat 7:2*) and condemnation as well (*Jn 3:19*). Christians go through the motions when we come here on Sundays and Wednesdays or any other time we meet because that's what we understand is **necessary** in order to be involved in the more **intimate** aspect of the faith. **Being here is good** but if we're only going through the motions we need to ask ourselves why, because we don't want to be labeled as heartless as a Pharisee.

Joh 14:15 If ye love Me, keep My commandments.

1Jn 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous.

There are those who feel Christ's commandments are burdensome because they are not willing to love as Christ loved. On the other hand there are those who find His commandments heavy to bear because they aren't willing to obey every one of them, even the ones He inspired His apostles to write via Holy Spirit.

There is also a need for balance in word and deed.

Col 3:17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name (*Gk.3686- authority, character*) of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.

Whatever we say, whatever we do, needs to be done while emulating the character of our Lord. Again, balance is key.

Ecc 3:1 To *everything there is* a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

Ecc 3:7 ... a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

Let the Bible decide!

Here is where we are to have a firm grasp of understanding when it comes to Scripture. There are those who try to make a name for themselves by introducing "some new thing" (*Acts 17:21*) which can be false to the core, but are only seeking "the praise of men more than the praise of God" (*Jn 12:43*). That's the time when they should just remain silent but when they do speak their minds it should be a time for us, as Christians, to be able to speak as the Bible speaks. How often have we seen in the paper or on television where the so called "Bible experts" from any denomination who have, what seems to be, an alphabet after their names and they don't even understand the "simplicity that is in Christ" (*2 Cor 11:3*)? The world looks at the person's status and schooling and often refer to their "**expertise**" when citing things they know nothing about. The local newspaper has a habit of seeking spiritual advice from a local, highly regarded, denominational minister because he has so many titles, one in particular that only belongs to God, "Reverend" (*Ps 111:9*). Yet he doesn't even understand Bible basics when it comes to salvation. Even a New Testament, new-born babe in Christ knows more than someone with a denominational doctorate in theology.

1Pe 4:11 If any man speak (*Gk.2980- preach*), *let him speak* as the oracles (*Gk.3051- utterance*) of God; if any man minister, *let him do it* as of the ability which God giveth: that **God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ**, to Whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (*Emp. added*)

Hot, Cold vs. Lukewarm: where balance would be a mistake.

Rev 3:15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of My mouth.

If Jesus desired that the Laodiceans be either hot or cold why would "cold" mean it's a good thing to be cold toward the faith? Think of water as being hot or cold. Both have positive uses so these examples were both meant here to describe a Christian's positive attitude toward the faith. Lukewarm water is used when a person, who is full of impurities, has a desire to expel such in order to be healthy again. Jesus' use of this was to show there were those who had a so-so attitude toward the faith and He would have to vomit them out to remove the impurities from

within His own body, the church. We are either useful or indifferent. This is where balance would be a mistake. We don't want to be half useful and half indifferent. We wouldn't want Christ to spew us out.

### Left vs. Right, Hard vs. Soft

I'm sure we all can remember the fairy tale story of Goldilocks and the three bears. Papa Bear's bed was too hard, Mama Bear's bed was too soft, but Baby Bear's bed was just right. We as Christians can be too hard, too soft or we can be just right.

#### Too hard

Mat 23:15 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make **one proselyte**, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. (*Emp. added*)

There are those who try so hard to convert the lost they have forgotten that compassion and patience are necessary. We cannot be like the charismatic who pounds the pulpit or tries to force feed the Bible down the throats of the lost. The denomination that I came out of taught the necessity of doing such by trying to scare someone into converting. Even after the Lord added me to His church I was of **that** mindset for quite some time.

#### Too soft

Pro 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Sometimes parents go the opposite direction by being too soft on their children. These are the ones who are so permissive with their kids by thinking they need to "experience" the world around them, that they need to "sow their wild oats". Letting them decide later in life to choose whether or not to be a Christian can turn out to be quite disastrous. They allow them to go out on dates without escorts and even give them some sort of birth control "*just in case they give in to their **natural** desires*". They are only telling their kids to "**go ahead**". Even the clothing, if you want to call it such because it doesn't really "clothe" much to begin with, no matter how provocative, is considered "*the style*" of the day. Obviously, this is the other end of the scale.

#### Just right

Jas 1:27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to **keep himself unspotted from the world**. (*Emp. added*)

In order to stand before God without blemish we first need to be clothed with His Son through having our sins washed away in obedience to His word. The Bible is our guide in accomplishing this. We are to do things by the book, whatever it says. Why is that so hard for so many to do?

Mat 11:29 Take My **yoke** upon you, and **learn of Me**; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For My yoke *is* easy, and My burden is light. (*Emp. added*)

A yoke in this sense is a coupling (*Gk.2218*) by which we are connected to others who have taken on the same load. It is to be a joint servitude as the weight is shared equally among the

brethren. Jesus doesn't make the burden so heavy that it would be difficult for any one Christian to bear. As we then learn of Him we begin to understand the true meaning of balance. As Moses was told to advise the Israelites of his day, so true does it apply to us today.

Deu 5:31 But as for thee, stand thou here by Me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do *them* in the land which I give them to possess it. 32 Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the **right** hand or to the **left**. 33 Ye shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and *that it may be* well with you, and *that* ye may prolong *your* days in the land which ye shall possess. (*Emp. added*)

The promised land that we Christians, the New Covenant Israel, hope to possess has also the requirements to be obeyed to get there.

#1. Have you heard?

Eph 1:13 In Whom ye also *trusted*, **after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation:** in Whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, (*Emp. added*)

#2. Do you believe?

1Th 2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, **when ye received** the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that **believe**. (*Emp. added*)

#3. Have you repented?

Mar 2:17 ...They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Rom 3:10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

Rom 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

#4. Have you acknowledged Christ as the Son of God, Who alone can save you?

Act 8:37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

#5. Have your sins been washed away?

Mar 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

#6. If you've done all these things, have you remained faithful?

Romans 6:4 "...we also should walk in newness of life."

#7. Are you growing?

2Pe 3:18 But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him *be* glory both now and forever. Amen.

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