



Achieving Spiritual Balance

By D. Paul Clark

Reverend Paul Clark has been in the ministry for over 68 years. His ministry has had a tremendous effect on my life both emotionally and spiritually. Brother Paul's ministry has taken him to as many as 16 states and 8 countries. His zeal and love for the Word of God is as evident today as it was in his early years of ministry. I count D. Paul Clark as a dear friend and as servant of God in whom I can trust with my life. The following study is an example of his fervor to teach the truth, live the truth, and provide balance to the Christian faith.

As Joshua is about to enter Canaan, God said to Him: *“Don't look to the right--and don't look to the left (look straight ahead); if you will do that, you will succeed wherever you go!”*

God says to us: *“Don't get OFF-CENTER! Stay on course! Keep to the middle of the road! DON'T GET UNBALANCED! Don't go to EXTREMES in any direction.”*

It is the nature of RELIGION to be DOGMATIC, even FANATIC--not just with Islam, Scientology, Moonies, etc. *Most religions--even TRUE RELIGION (Christianity) is a thing of EXTREMES. For example:*

- John says: *“God is light, and in Him is NO DARKNESS at all!”*
NONE!
- James says (with God): *“NO shadow of turning...”* Not the slightest deviation.
- Some verses that drive people crazy: *“I am THE way...”* *“There is NO OTHER NAME...”*

God is a God of ABSOLUTES. His Word to us is: *Thou **SHALT**...thou **SHALT NOT!*** Doesn't say "*You OUGHT TO; it would be NICE if you would!*" **Young Preacher:** "**Except ye repent...**" But there are no "gray" areas with God. If we think there is, it is our "understanding" that is "gray."

For instance, **Jonathan Edwards opposed what was called the *Half-way Covenant.*** *Half-way Covenant = a practice among the Congregational churches of New England, between 1657 and 1662, of permitting baptized persons of moral life and orthodox faith to enjoy all the privileges of church membership, save the partaking of the Lord's Supper. They were also allowed to present their children for baptism without having a conversion experience.*

Edwards held to the authority of God's Word...not man's response to what cultural changes are being introduced into the church (No Gray areas).

SO--I believe in the ABSOLUTENESS OF GOD & WORD. I believe there is no room for *compromise* or *accommodation.* Paul asks the Corinthians: "*What agreement hath light with darkness...*" We are SAVED or UNSAVED; in the KINGDOM or NOT; headed for HEAVEN or HELL. There is NO IN BETWEEN!

!!!BUT--this orientation toward EXTREMES found in religion CAN BE DANGEROUS. One of the things we need most (and is most often lacking) in our spiritual lives is a thing called **BALANCE** (not *compromise; don't confuse the two*): **BALANCE**

So let me talk to you about some areas that need BALANCE. Let me suggest first that we need the balance of:

I. SENSITIVITY WITHOUT MORBIDITY

There are two extremes which need to be avoided: ***INDIFFERENCE***

(callousness) to sin on the one hand, and **MORBID SELF-INTROSPECTION & CONDEMNATION** on the other.

The devil encourages both these extremes (and he had some help from some people: Religion, Churches, Preachers).

He encourages us either:

- **To feel that NOTHING is wrong** (to have no conscience about anything), or
- **To feel that EVERYTHING is wrong** (to have a conscience that works overtime; to feel condemned about everything we do, say, or think).

Where is the BALANCE? (Between conviction & condemnation).

How can we avoid the extremes?

(1) **By knowing the Word of God.** The conscience is *God-given* and *universal*--but it is not by itself a safe guide! ONLY a clear understanding of God's Word will steer us clear of both extremes. It will CONVICT us when we are GUILTY and CLEAR us when we are NOT! It is the ONLY SAFE GUIDE.

- I John 3:2: "*If our heart condemn us GOD IS GREATER...*" (You are not merely to trust your FEELINGS).
- I Cor. 4:3 (Paul): "*I Judge not my own self. For I know nothing by (against) myself; yet I am not hereby justified.*" **Living Bible states:** "*...I don't even trust my own judgment... my conscience is clear, but EVEN THAT ISN'T FINAL PROOF!*" (So what IS? God's Word! You may FEEL WRONG and be RIGHT; you may feel RIGHT and be WRONG).

(2) **By knowing the VOICE OF THE SPIRIT.** We can (with practice) acquire a SENSITIVITY TO THE VOICE OF THE SPIRIT. One thing that will help us, is to know that while the Spirit

CONVICTS, He never CONDEMNNS (fosters a sense of hopelessness & despair). Instead, **He seeks to lead us out of condemnation by pointing us to the BLOOD.**

This is a prayer I have often prayed: “Give me a *SENSITIVITY* without *MOBILITY* (condemnation). I want a TENDER HEART without a TROUBLED HEART. THAT is the balance we need!

II. LOVE WITHOUT SOFT SENTIMENTALITY

I have observed a great change in preaching through the years. There is very little preaching any more that deals with areas of personal failure. There is very little of what we call “Evangelistic Preaching” in today’s world (especially on the great Bible themes of Repentance, Heaven, Hell, Judgment). When I read the preaching of 100 years ago--the change of emphasis is even more dramatic.

Now--SOME of this change is GOOD! There is a great deal of emphasis on God’s Love, Patience, Mercy, Grace. There is an emphasis on Encouragement, Hope, Positive thinking--AND THAT’S GOOD! I LIKE that--to a point!

But I am also concerned about it--because I see an IMBALANCE DEVELOPING. *I see a SENTIMENTALITY that is mistaken for LOVE.* The idea that is being advanced is: *If you LOVE people you will never tell them anything unpleasant.* But if I love you so much I won’t tell you something that you desperately need to hear, IS THAT REALLY LOVE??? That is a mistaken notion about love.

- **Love cares enough to speak the truth.** Paul speaks about “*Speaking the truth in love...*”
- **When true love sees spiritual danger it is willing to warn the ones we love--even if it makes them uncomfortable! Even if it makes US uncomfortable!**

- **God’s LOVE never overlooks sin. Nor should ours!** (I think one of the reasons for this particular imbalance is that it behooves people who live in *glass houses* not to *throw stones*).

III. SACRIFICE WITHOUT SELF-PITY or SELF-PRAISE

Jesus: “When ye *FAST* be not as the hypocrites, of a *SAD COUNTENANCE*, for they disfigure their faces that they may *APPEAR UNTO MEN* to fast.”

- AMP: “*Gloomy, sour, dreary...so apparent to men...*”
- LB: “*...Look wan, disheveled so people feel sorry.*”

He said: “When you *GIVE*, don’t sound trumpet. Do it in secret....”

- I Cor. 10:31, “Do all to the glory of God.”
- Col. 3:17, “Do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus” (For His praise and honor).

In our service to the Lord there are TWO DITCHES to avoid (one on either side of road):

- **On the one side there is SELF-PITY:** “*Nobody knows how hard I work, what sacrifices I make. No one appreciates all I have done.*” I call this the *Martha Syndrome*. Church leaders are particularly vulnerable to this attitude.
- **On the other side there is SELF-PRAISE (pride):** “*How fortunate the Lord/Church are to have me. I give more, work harder than anyone else. ‘I thank the Lord I am not as other men...’*”

The BALANCE is a TRUE SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE that does all to the Glory of God. Parable of Servant (Luke 17:9). It is the spirit that recognizes that all we can do is never enough even to saying “Thank You” for His goodness and grace. It is the spirit that knows that His “Well done” will be more than adequate reward.

IV. HOLINESS WITHOUT HARDNESS

The word “HOLINESS” has fallen on bad times (not *holiness* but the *word*). It has a tarnished reputation. Throughout the Bible it is a very honorable word--one of the MOST HONORABLE words. It is a word which describes THE VERY CHARACTER OF GOD (that has to be something good!)

There was a day in the Church when holiness was an honorable word. But in the minds of some, that isn't true anymore (check your own reaction). There was a day when people wore the label “Holiness” and wore it proudly.

What has brought about this change?

(1) **A Loss of Spirituality.** A loss of a desire for godliness. A loss of appetite for true righteousness. Some of this comes from a hungering for the world. Some from self-righteousness, some from a misguided belief that *imputed righteousness* makes *imparted righteousness* unnecessary (because we are saved by grace, we can live as we please).

(2) **Another thing is this EXTREME, this IMBALANCE we have been talking about.** Some “holiness” people have EARNED THE DISFAVOR of others (believers and unbelievers alike). They have earned it by:

- + Pharisaical attitudes: Nobody is pleasing God but US!
- + Unscriptural emphasis on externals--while neglecting INNER HOLINESS of heart and life. That, again, is what the Pharisees did: washed outside, platter, etc. When our lives don't match our profession we invite the scorn of others. When our FORMS OF HOLINESS are not supported by a POSITIVE INNER SPIRITUALITY it will appear as a meaningless shell (“*sounding brass*”).
- + A HARD, JUDGMENTAL SPIRIT. Some HOLINESS people have been the *most critical, uncaring* people we

could possibly know.

Jesus said: “*Why beholdest the MOTE, etc...*” Did he mean the Pharisees were worse sinners than others? Maybe some were. Most were not. I think he meant: “*Your spirit of criticism is worse than the thing you are criticizing.*”

You say, “But, we NEED to contend for holiness; we NEED to maintain a STANDARD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. I say, “Indeed we DO!” You say, “The Church is being invaded by the world; there is a wide-spread disregard to Biblical Holiness.” And I say, “Indeed there IS!”

BUT--the way to counteract that is not to cast out everybody who violates our concepts of holiness; tighten the screws of legalism. The way to counteract this is to have AN INVASION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT in our hearts that will demonstrate true righteousness, thus exposing the false!

V. BEING HEAVENLY MINDED WITHOUT LOSING TOUCH WITH THIS WORLD

Actually that isn't a problem for a lot of people. We don't have too much trouble staying in touch with this world. But it IS a problem. And always has been.

- Even before (during) Christ's day there were those (Essenes, etc.) who separated themselves and went out to live by themselves.
- During the Christian era there were MONASTARIES/CONVENTS.

But that is not the only way we fall into this extreme:

- **When Jesus took Peter, James, and John to the Mountain to see His glory, they liked it so much they wanted to stay: But Jesus didn't let them stay. He wasn't headed for seclusion; He was headed for the Cross.** When He came down from the Mt, He found

a CROWD OF NEEDY PEOPLE (demonic boy).

We NEED to go to the mountain! We NEED to go to CHURCH, worship, sing, and be refreshed. But the BALANCING NEED is to GO OUT and touch the world. We NEED to get into the Word/Pray every day. But THEN we need to GET OUT of the closet and rub shoulders with the hurting world and share...God's plan for man.

If our religion is all private and professional, we are OUT OF BALANCE.