

The Prison Epistles 08 Balanced chr.life

by David Clifford

David Clifford emphasizes the importance of a balanced Christian life through prayer, walk, and witness based on teachings from Colossians 4.

Duration: 51:49

Scripture: Colossians 4:2-3, Colossians 4:5-8, Colossians 4:17

Topics: "Christian Living", "Spiritual Balance"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on Colossians chapter 4 and highlights three exhortations: prayer, walk, and speech. The first exhortation is about prayer, emphasizing the importance of continuing in prayer and being thankful. The second exhortation is about the believer's walk, urging them to walk wisely and carefully for the sake of their testimony and to make the most of opportunities. The third exhortation is about speech, encouraging believers to speak in a way that is sound and edifying. The speaker emphasizes the need for balance in these three areas to become a perfectly balanced Christian.

Transcript

Well, I think some of you people are very fortunate being able to stay on here and listen to Brother Mackay. What I wanted to meet him and to hear him for a long time now, and I'm only too sorry I shan't be able to do either, but I know he had a great ministry. It's wonderful how the Lord has spared him since his recent very serious operation, and that's for some special purpose, and maybe amongst that, in that purpose it included some special blessing for you through his ministry in the next two weeks, I'm quite sure of that.

I've been quoting my good friend, I was going to say the Bishop of Durham once or twice, and he used to say some very interesting and remarkable things. Not only the one I quoted, he used to say, a saviour who is not quite God is a bridge broken at the father end. He always used to say that, he said, in my division, he said, I have clergymen of three different types.

He said, those who've gone round the bend, those who are going round the bend, those who haven't yet learned that the bend to go round. Oh, I don't really know what it means. No, well, going round the bend means, you know, getting to an end of yourself, and well, you know what he means.

I'll tell you one other thing he said at an ordination class when he was telling his young men to never use affectation in the service of Christ, you know, never put on anything, be yourself, you see. He said to them,

I would much rather have a young man get up into the pulpit and announce the hymn, the hymn which starts, Praise my soul, the King of Heaven. Do you know the hymn? To his feet thy tribute bring.

There's one verse that goes, Praise him for his grace and favour to our fathers in distress. Praise him still the same as ever, slow to chide and swift to bless. Well, he said, I'd much rather a young man get up and announce the hymn like this, Praise him for his grace and favour, than for him to get up and say, Praise him for his grace and favour.

And, of course, the correct English Oxford accent is in between the two. Now, coming from Birmingham in England, I'm the Praise him for his grace and favour type of person, but I think you've been able to understand some of the things I've been able to say to you during the last week. Now, I think we ought to read God's Word together, seriously and solemnly, from Colossians chapter four.

So, you probably know by now that it will be three messages on Colossians. This is the third, and then tonight, God willing, I shall deal with the final prison letter, which is the letter to Philemon about Onesimus. Chapter four and verse two, because that's where the chapter starts.

You know that the verses are not inspired, nor the chapters, I mean the numbering of them, because verse one really belongs to chapter three, because they're talking about wives and husbands and children and fathers and servants and masters. Now, continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving, with all praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ to which I am also in bond, that I may make it manifest that I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.

Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how you ought to answer every man. All my state shall Titicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother or the beloved brother and a faithful minister and fellow servant in the law, whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your state and comfort your hearts. With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother who is one of you, one of you Colossians, they shall make known unto you all things which are done here.

Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, saluteeth you, and Marcus, this is the son to Barnabas, touching whom you receive commandments, if he come unto you receive him, and Jesus who is called justice, who are of the circumcision. So those were three Jewish converts. These also are my fellow workers unto the kingdom of God who have been a comfort unto me.

Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteeth you, always laboring fervently for you that you might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him record that he hath a great zeal for you, and for them in Laodicea and them in Hierapolis. Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you.

Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and the nymphs from the church which is in her house. When this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodicean. Likewise, read the epistle from, or the epistle which I am sending to Laodicea, which will come from then to you.

And say to Archippus, take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it. The salutation by the hand of me, Paul, remember my bonds, grace be with you. Amen.

May the Lord bless to us his precious word. I think while we have our Bibles open, we will turn to two more brief scriptures. First of all in Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 10.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. And then 2 Corinthians 3 and verse 3. For as much as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. I want to speak to you this morning from Colossians chapter 4 in particular, about the balanced Christian life.

Because if it is true that you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God, and Christ is your life and mine, the result will be perfect symmetry, perfect balance in our Christian thinking and living and witnessing. In my Bible, the beginning of Colossians chapter 4 verse 2, I have one big word, and it's the word balance. Because to my mind, the whole of the chapter is about this kind of spiritual symmetry that I'm talking about.

It is very easy to get religiously lopsided in our Christian life and witness. Easy to lose our spiritual symmetry. And Aristotle used to say, if I can mention him here, that the virtuous life is one of perfect balance between excess and defect.

As I go around the world, various countries, and fellowship with various of the Lord's people, I can see how very easy it is for people to get taken up with one idea, and to get a one-track mind, and to get unbalanced. Personally, and in my personal opinion, I don't like to see a young fellow go to college and university, and just studying one subject, and then go on to get more degrees into one subject, and he's got PhD, BSc, and a whole string of degrees after his name, and all that he's studied in his lifetime is one subject. I think the man is unbalanced.

I think he wants a bit of study on some other subjects, and a bit of experience in other ways. And at Moreland, we never used to take students who hadn't been out in the world in some profession, or trade or other, earning their living, and seeing what the world is like, and maintaining a good testimony in the ordinary affairs of life. We found that these were much more balanced students when they came to us at Moreland.

Now, of course, it is because we have two natures. The old nature, which is still with us, which has to be subdued by the new nature which is in us, implanted to us by the Holy Spirit at faith, at regeneration, when we believe in Christ, trust him as our own personal saviour. This is why there are so many exhortations to lean towards the new nature, to walk in the light, to walk in the Spirit, to walk by the Spirit, to walk by the new life, walk in newness of life, because we have a tendency to go the old way.

We have a tendency to go after the flesh, to follow the impulses of the old nature, which has never been eradicated, and never will until our nature is changed, and mortality shall put on immortality at the coming again of Christ. So, we have to make allowances for the old nature, and we must always lean to the right. We must always go to the right, and walk after the Spirit.

Now, when I say that, I'm thinking of the fact that some years ago, when I started out in the Lord's work, well it's a long time ago now, I didn't tell you how long, you might start calculating my age, and English people never give away their age. You know I'm over 32 anyway, but many years ago, when I was a young evangelist, I found it a bit difficult getting around, so my brother said to me, you'll have to use my Austin 7. Now, an Austin 7 was a little car, about this big, it was a four-seater, got an engine about that big, seven horsepower engine. They were marvellous little things, you know, and this was the year when they threatened to reduce the size of the Austin 7 by about 10 inches, so you could wash it in a hand basin.

Anyway, he said, you'd better use my Austin 7, and you know I was nearly six foot two, and to get in this thing I found it a bit difficult. I used to have to kind of wrap my legs around my neck, my neck somehow or other, but it was very useful to me. The only trouble with this Austin 7 was that the steering was very loose, you know, you have to give a sort of half turn that way to get it to click and turn right, not a half turn that way to get it to click and turn left, you know, it's very loose.

And when, you know, there's a camber on the roads in Britain, some of the smaller roads, there's quite a camber, and I found that the only thing to do, because this thing was forever going to the left, I was having to keep, I had to keep in the middle of the road, and indeed we drive to the left of course in Britain, you know that, don't forget when you come and hire a car, we drive on the left hand side of the road there, and I had to find that I had to keep pulling the thing to the right to keep it in the middle of the road. I always get people complaining that my driving is terrible, that I always drive in the middle of the road, and that's how I learned to do it. I had to keep in the middle of the road and keep pulling to the right, because it had a tendency to the left.

And you and I, you see, have a tendency to the left, and it's wonderful if we can walk after the spirit, bear to the right, and make quite sure that the bias of our natural tendency is not taking us the wrong way. Well now, you see, in the scriptures we have read this morning, first of all in Colossians 4, there are two sections in the chapter. From verses 2 to 6, exhortations for balanced Christian practice, and then 7 to 18, salutations from chosen personalities.

Or, if you like, the preeminence of Christ in the balanced life and labours of some of his servants. Verses 7 to 18. And in the other scriptures we read, we notice two things I trust.

In Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 10, that we are God's poems, and in 2 Corinthians 3.3 that we are Christ's prose. Now, in these two ideas you get what I mean, the suggestion of a balanced Christian life. We are God's poems and Christ's prose.

I better explain that to you. In Ephesians 2.10, the apostle says we are God's workmanship, God's handiwork, more literally, and the word is in the Greek, a dear brother will check on me here, the word is *poina*, from which we get our English word poems. And so, to be very literal, the word is we are God's poems.

And to be very literal, in 2 Corinthians 3.3, we are Christ's prose, we are Christ's epistles, written and known of all men. Not written with ink, but written in the lives of those who belong to Christ. Now, you know what I mean by our bias to evil, and the necessity to create balance in our Christian life, to lean to the right, allow for dependency.

And I cannot overstress this too much because of our natural inclinations. Now, in England we don't play shuffleboard so much as you do, but we have played that on board a ship coming across the Atlantic once or twice, and we find it's a very nice game, and delighted to see how you enjoy it here. And I only wish that I had time to play it a little bit.

But I tell you what, in England we do play sometimes a game called bowls. Not bowling, but bowls. And you play this on a very finely cut lawn, and the lawn itself is a joy to see.

The finest grass cut at the very, very lowest, so that these balls go very smoothly, without the slightest ripple or bounce over the lawn. The idea is that they throw a white bowl about so big, which is called the

jack, way to one corner of the lawn. It's a square lawn, you see, about as big as this chapel here.

And then that, you can put that more or less anywhere, or throw it almost anywhere. But the idea is you're given about six of these big black bowls, you know, not so big as your bowling bowls, they're half that size, but they're just as heavy. And you have to throw these to the white jack, and get as near as you can, you see.

Then the other man comes with his, and he knocks you out of the way, just as you do in shuffle boards, you know, with the blacks and the reds. But the point is this, if you throw through your bowl straight at the white jack, it would never go anywhere near it. It would go right round to the left somewhere, or right round to the right, because, you see, there is a weighted part on one side of this bowl, and it's got lead in it, and you have to allow for the tendency that is in it to go around, you see.

So, if you threw it to the right, and your, the weighted part was on the, if you threw it straight, the white, the weighted part was on the right, it would go right hand to the right, you see. So, to get there, you have to throw it to the left, and it comes right round to the white jack. Or, if you put it the other way around, you have to throw it that way, and it comes right round to the left.

You have to allow for the tendency, because it's weighted on one side. And in our Christian lives, that's what we have to do in a very practical way. We have a tendency to evil.

You can't get away from it. It's in our nature. We were born in sin, and shape, and in iniquity.

We have that in nature with us still, and we have to allow for that. And we're going to have a balanced Christian life when we allow for that tendency. Well now, God writes his poems through our works.

We are God's workmanship. We were created in Christ Jesus by God unto good works, and Christ writes his prose in human lives. You know, he never wrote a book, but he writes his will and his word through his own.

So, in Titus 2, the word is from the apostle, adorn, we should adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things, in a balanced way, by life and by lip. Remember, I told you the other day of the two Dr. Browns, the one who preached, and the one who practiced. Now, we should preach and practice by life and lip, because we are both God's poems and Christ's prose, we should declare his name.

Now, David, you see, was very good at the poems, but he failed at the prose. David was the sweet psalmist of Israel. He was not the only sweet psalmist of Israel.

I'm very fond myself of Asaph's psalms, and I'd like to talk to you about some of those at the written time. But, David was very good at the poems, you remember? He saw a woman, and he fell. He was bad at the prose at that time.

Miriam, similarly. Miriam, she got the ladies together, and they danced, and they sang, and they said, sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. And then, she was smitten with leprosy, for backbiting and scandal at the tent door.

Good at the poems, bad at the prose. We read, the disciples sang a hymn, and went out, and forsook him, and fled. Good at the poem, and bad at the prose.

But, what a wonderful example we have of perfect balance and spiritual symmetry in our Lord Jesus himself. Our Lord, we read in Acts chapter 1, began to do and to teach. There you've got the balance, to do and to teach.

He said in John 17, in high priestly prayer, for their sake I sanctify myself. And then, he said in the same prayer, the words which thou hast given me, I have given them. May God teach us to so be balanced that what we preach to others, we seek by the grace of God to live in our personal experiences.

In Exodus 28, we read of the high priest of old, whose garment, you remember, had oil on it, the anointing oil, down to the skirts of the garment, and up the bottom skirt, I hope, the skirts of the garment when he was anointed with oil upon his head. And, you know, around the skirts of his garment at the rear, at the bottom, were bells and pomegranates. Not six bells and one pomegranate, and six bells and one pomegranate, or three pomegranates and two bells, three pomegranates and two bells, but one pomegranate and one bell, one of each, all the way around.

Now, the pomegranate speaks of the night, and the bell speaks of the testimony. So we, in life and lift, by our Christian living and by our witness, should glorify God through our bodies and spirits which are his. Now, let us make a little study in the next few moments of Colossians chapter 4 in this same respect.

There are three exhortations in these first few verses, verses two to six. The first is about prayer, verse two. The second is about walk, or the life of the believer, in verse five, and the third is about speech or witness in verse six.

And I'm going to suggest to you the exhortation is about balance in waiting upon God, balance in walking before God, and balance in witnessing for God. And when the three are put together, perfect balance in prayer, perfect balance in walk, perfect balance in speech, then the three together make a perfectly balanced Christian night. Now, you notice the first is praiseful praying, the second is wise walking, and the third is sound speaking.

In relation to the first, praiseful praying, this is what he says. Continue in prayer, watch in the same with thanksgiving, with all praying for us. So, you see, not only are these three things together creating balance, but each one individually has to be balanced.

Our prayer life has to be balanced in these three ways. They have to be continuous, and praiseful, or thankful, and unselfish. Continue in prayer.

Continuity is the proof of reality. Remember the second friend I was talking about the other night, who kept knocking at the door of Mr Lord at the big house, atop of the drive, you remember, because he wanted something not just for himself, but for the first friend, the third friend, who was out of the way. He said, let your prayers be continuous, and let your prayers be thankful, praiseful, full of gratitude, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving.

Let your requests be made known unto God, and thirdly, he says, let your prayers be unselfish, praying also for us. He says, when you are praying, and continuing in prayer, and you're praising the Lord in your prayers, in an attitude of worship, he said, always think of others, and if you want others to think of, well, let me suggest that, first of all, you think of me, because I'm in special need, and I'd like to get out of this jail so that I could preach the gospel as I want to preach it. So, there you have balance in prayer life, continuous, thankful, and unselfish.

But not only so, there is the exhortation to balance in the Christian life, and walk, in verse 5. And this itself is balanced in two ways, carefully and zealously. So, it's not only praiseful praying, but wise walking, walking wisdom toward them that are without, verse 5, redeeming the time, and walk carefully, says the apostle, for a testimony's sake, and walk zealously for time's sake. Now, when our Christian walk is balanced like that, there is spiritual symmetry which God will bless anew.

Some people walk so zealously they forget their testimony, and other people try to walk so carefully they forget to take up the opportunity. So, both are needed, carefully for a testimony's sake, and zealously for time's sake. That is, buying up the opportunity.

Napoleon used to say, opportunities are born and die the same day. You have time to win a victory before the sun goes down. That's what he says.

He has to be very careful how you walk, walk wisely, but not so careful that you miss the opportunities that God gives you to maintain a good witness and speak for him. So, redeeming the time, zealously for time's sake, buying up the opportunity. But not only must our life be balanced with praiseful praying and wise walking, but praiseful praying, wise walking, and sound speaking.

And our witness, our speaking, will be sound if it is balanced in the way that he suggests here in verse 6. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye might also know how you should answer every man. So, it is let your speech be soundly balanced in these two ways, with grace and with knowledge. Now, some people try to witness without knowing what they're talking about.

They try to witness to the word, and they don't know the word. The word to Timothy was, preach the word. And three things are necessary if we're going to preach the word.

We must, first of all, know the word to preach it, and secondly, we must know how to preach it. That's where homiletics comes in, nothing to do with him. And thirdly, we must be filled with the Holy Ghost, that God will do the work through us, you see.

So, some people are so keen to witness for the Lord, but I'm afraid they don't know the word as they should. So, he said, know the word, so that you might know how you ought to answer every man. Not by your own particular ideals or personal philosophy, but based on the word of God.

Your spiritual knowledge should be to be correctly balanced, but not only with knowledge, with grace as well. Some people in their Christian life and witness are full of grace, but they just don't know. And some people are full of knowledge, and they have no grace.

You see how necessary balance is, so that we shall avoid this religious lopsidedness. You see, grace without knowledge is silly, and knowledge without grace is hard, and both are ineffective. But when both are balanced, they're seen together, God is glorified through our witness.

Well, as our witness and our walk and our waiting upon God, and when each of the three are balanced in the ways I've suggested from the word, and they're balanced together, one with the other, there you get perfect spiritual symmetry for the Christian night, and prayer night, and witness for the Lord. Well then, what about the rest of the chapter? I think you will see that in this chapter there are, in these chosen personalities, there are examples of balance, and one or two examples of imbalance, where there were one or two who were unbalanced, and this is what I mean. I think you'll see and understand what I mean as you follow it through with me in your Bible.

He says in verse 7 therefore, all my state shall titulus declare unto you. He is the beloved brother and a faithful minister, a fellow servant of the Lord. I've sent him unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your state and comfort your heart.

And in the verse 8, it isn't a state, the word really is state. It's the same word in the Greek that is used at the beginning of verse 7, all my state and all your state. I don't know what they call estate, therefore, in verse 8. It's to make a change, I suppose, to create a bit of balance, perhaps.

Well now, titicus is declared to be here, the, with a definite article, the beloved brother and a faithful minister. Now, there are other ways in which he was balanced. Notice he was a comforter of the Brethren at the end of verse 8. He was the, put himself at the disposal of the apostle Paul.

He was also the amanuensis. He took down the letter at the dictation of Paul the apostle. But, just two things to mention balance for titicus.

The beloved brother and a faithful minister. Now, he was so beloved with titicus, whenever he got back to Colossae with this letter, for he was not only the amanuensis, he was the postman, as you say, the mailman as well. When he got there, you know, the church wouldn't be half empty like it is here this morning, ever before.

Well, he was the beloved brother. I'm not the beloved brother, and that's why the place is two thirds empty. But, he was the, everybody loved titicus, the beloved brother, and if they knew he was coming, they'd all be there with their boots blackened, their hearts open, and their minds alert to receive what the Lord had for them through him, the beloved brother.

But, he didn't manifest the grace of Christ at the expense of faithfulness to God in his ministry. He was not only the beloved brother, he was a faithful minister of the Lord. He spoke the truth.

But, the point was this with him. He spoke the truth in love, and there you get perfect balance. He declared the truth of God.

He knew. What a wonderful example is titicus of the balance that is suggested and exhorted in verse six, that your speech be with grace that you might know. And, I've never seen that before until this moment as I'm speaking to you, that verse seven, titicus, is a marvelous example of verse six.

Here is a man who was filled with grace, he was the beloved brother, and here was a man who knew how to answer every man, because he was a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. So, he was done. Now, what about the next man, Onesimus, verse nine? Well, Onesimus was a faithful and beloved brother who is one of you, that is, one of your city Colossae.

Well now, how was Onesimus balanced? He was the runaway slave that we're going to talk about tonight, so I'm not going into detail about this young man. He ran all the way from, I don't know where he ran, but he went all the way from Colossae to Rome after he gave up his job with his boss Ailemon. Probably he got a post, a job, a menial task in the prison in Rome, and he heard the gospel preached by Paul, and he opened his heart to the Lord.

He got right with God, and not long afterwards he made a very definite decision, now that he was a Christian, to make restitution for his past wrongs, and he wanted to get right with men as well. So, he decided to go back and put it right with his old master. He'd not only been unfaithful and ran away, but he'd

stolen something as well for the journey, and slaves always did that.

So, you see, he got right with God, did Onesimus, through faith in Christ, repenting of his sin, earning Jesus as his saviour, and then he got right with men. He made restitution, went back and put it right with his old boss. And there, I think, is balance, if you like.

Getting your heart right with God, and your life right with men. The second being outward, and outward evidence, that there's the sure sign of the working of the Holy Ghost in the human heart in real new birth and regeneration. Well, so much for Onesimus.

What about Aristarchus? In verse 10, was he balanced? I should say he was. Aristarchus is called here, my fellow prisoner Aristarchus saluted you. Well, you see, you'll find as you look up Philemon, verse 23, that Aristarchus was Paul's companion in travel.

He was one of the thieves who used to go round with the Apostle Paul, carrying his bag, or his case, or his whatever you call it in this country, I don't know, or his trunk, or whatever you call it, and he was Paul's companion in travel. He had a great time with the Apostle Paul, going round to the churches, and listening to all Paul's ministry, and being the friend of Paul in fellowship with him, but now Paul was locked up in prison. Where is Aristarchus? Going round on his own, visiting the churches again, having a wonderful time of blessing? No sir, he is there with the Apostle Paul in prison, willingly incarcerated in that room in the prison in Rome, sharing imprisonment, voluntary of his own volition with the Apostle Paul.

Now, I see balance here. The Lord Jesus said not only, the scripture is, not only rejoice with those that do rejoice, but weep with those that weep. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ, and Aristarchus was balanced in this.

Now, what about Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, touching whom you received commandment to come unto you, receive him? Now, John Mark this is, and at first he was most unbalanced. He went off with Paul's preaching team, you remember, and he was a nephew to Barnabas, as it says here, and he was a bit homesick maybe, or perhaps he missed his girlfriend, or might have been on the other hand, that it was his mother that he missed, and at Pamphylia was it, he left the team and went back home. Think of that! God called him to the work, and halfway around on the tour, on the missionary journey, he gave up, got cold feet, and went home.

Now, that often happens. Some of our missionaries go to the field, and there's not a very big percentage who go back up the second time after the first furlough. Did you know that? I think it's 75% never return after their first visit to the mission field, and that's very bad.

And, you know, pressures come in from this side and that, homesickness comes in, and the call of God to some special ministry is a very, very important thing, and should be obeyed, of course, but obeyed in all solemnity, and utter an absolute dedication for it's a high holy calling to be called by God to some special ministry, and John Mark was. And then later on, when they wanted to go on another tour, and Barnabas wanted to take John Mark again with them, Paul said, no sir, not on your life, boy. And Barnabas said, oh yes, we must take John Mark, he's a relation of mine anyway, and he came with us the first part of the last tour, so he said, no we're not taking him.

The contention was rather sharp between Barnabas and Paul, and they separated over this, and Paul would not at any price at that time have John Mark on the team. He proved to be an unbalanced

character. It was only semi-dedication, unbalanced, but later on he recovered himself by the grace of God, and Paul was the first to recognize this.

And he says, take John Mark, and bring him with you to me. He is profitable to me for the ministry. He said, I know that he's recovered, and he's got a great gift, and I know him now.

He's completely dedicated, and really properly balanced in the service of Christ. And he says, here, you have received commandments from me about him. If he comes to you, you receive him, because I want you to know that I have received him now, although at first I would not receive him because of his imbalance.

So, there you see there's a message for you and for me. If in the past in any way we have inclined to be half-hearted or imbalanced, we can recover by the grace of God as John Mark did, and God can call us again, not through Paul as God called Mark through Paul, but God could call us again through this means and that means to some special service for him, and how thankful we are that many of you have put yourselves at the Lord's disposal for his service in this part of his vineyard. And then, in verse 11, Jesus, who is called Justice, he is the third of three converts from the Jewish fraternity who are of the circumcision.

Aristarchus, Marcus and Justice were three Jewish converts, and this is what Paul says about Justice, and the others of course, he is my fellow worker unto the kingdom of God who has been a comfort unto me. So, Justice was a well-balanced brother. His work was a comfort, was effective, and a very great comfort to the heart of Paul and his presence.

Fellowship in the work and fellowship in suffering was Justice's ideal and proved to be a balanced character in that. He was Paul's fellow worker, and he was Paul's fellow prisoner, and a comfort unto him in both. I mentioned the other day about Hephaestus in another connection when I was, yesterday morning I think, giving an introduction to the letter to the Colossians, how that not only Paul was praying that the Colossians might know the will of God, but Hephaestus was praying that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God, as he says here in verse 12.

But you'll notice here how balanced Hephaestus was. He had founded the church in Colossae by the enabling of the Holy Spirit. He had labored fervently in evangelism to win these souls to Christ, although Paul had won a few of them when they were in a distant town.

But now, in balance, he was laboring fervently for them in prayer, continuing the good work as an under-shepherd, as a pastor teacher in the flock, praying for them that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. There is no spiritual maturity, there is no spiritual completeness outside the will of God, and he was laboring fervently in prayer for them while he was away from them. This is a message to those of us particularly who are the servants of the Lord.

Not only are we to labor fervently in the gospel and win souls to Christ, we are to labor fervently and lead them on with Christ as he prophesied, and labor fervently in prayer for them when we are away from them. That is why each day I have, by the grace of God, sought to pray earnestly for the Christians at Seacliff, to whom I go tomorrow, God willing, that while I am away from them, I spend about 60 percent of my time with them, they may be blessed of the Lord and stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. Not that I'm putting myself up as an example of balance here this morning.

God forbid! The Lord knows how weak I am in many respects. In verse 14 he speaks of Luke next, and notice in verse 13 that this man Epaphras was not just a self-centred and only willing to be a help to his own assembly at Colossae, but also to the Christians at Laodicea, the neighbouring assembly, and the next one, a little triangle in Phrygia in Asia Minor in Hierapolis. So, he had a big open heart for all the Lord's people in the area, and in verse 14 Luke was called the Beloved Physician.

Notice how Paul says Luke the Beloved Physician, how he and they all loved Dr Luke. You see, Dr Luke gave his heart to the Lord in all probability while the Apostle Paul was in Galatia, because that's where Luke lived, and that's where he was working professionally as a doctor. It seems to me that Paul was ill while he was in Galatia.

We know he was, because in writing to the Galatians he reminds them of his illness while he was amongst them. So, it may be that while he was ill there, Dr Luke was called in professionally to look after Paul, and it may be while Dr Luke poured some drops in the eyes of the Apostle, the Apostle poured the gospel into the heart of the doctor. No doubt at all about it that his heart was open, he became a Christian, and not only did he give his heart to the Lord, but he gave his profession to the Lord as well.

So, you see balance in the life of Dr Luke, because you see it was from this particular point that Luke in Galatia joined the gospel party, the gospel team, and he said to Paul, I'm coming with you. He wrote the Acts of the Apostles, as you know, under the direction and control of God's Holy Spirit, and it is from this particular point in Luke in Acts 16 that the wording is, instead of they went here and they went there and they did that, we went there and we went to the next place, and Luke is writing he joined the party there. So, it seems he was converted, he opened his heart, gave his heart to the Lord while Paul was there in Galatia.

Maybe while Paul was getting some treatment, medication from him, but he not only gave his heart to the Lord, but he gave his gifts, his profession and ability to the Lord as well. Have you done that? Maybe some of you are retired now, and you think there's nothing you can do with your profession. You've used it all your life, all your living.

I suggest you give it to the Lord, and it's amazing how the Lord will take your profession. You might be a doctor like Luke, you might be an accountant, you might be whatever you might be. The Lord will use whatever is given to him in his holy service, I'm quite sure.

But, what about Demas in the last part of verse 14? And Demas greets you. Now, he didn't say beloved Demas, he didn't say faithful Demas greets you. I would think by this time the true character of Demas was beginning to show itself, wouldn't you think so? Because in another part we read, Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present evil world.

Here is a man who was unbalanced, he wasn't able to say beloved Demas, just Demas, that's all. His true character was beginning to show itself, and he was beginning to show how unbalanced he was, because he was now leaning toward the world, leaning toward the old nature, forgetting that he had to allow for his tendency to evil. He was not walking after the light and walking in the Spirit, was Demas.

So, all that Paul could say was, Demas greets you. And then look at verse 15, stood at the brethren which are in lady fear, but not only the brethren, salute Nymphus, and she was a lady. You know, they always say, and it's quite right, the best brethren are the sisters.

And here is a sister who was very well balanced. You see, Nymphus and the church which is in her house, never have I been saying all the week about your old. Here is a lady who was balanced.

She not only opened her heart to the Lord, but opened her home to the Lord's people as well. Isn't that nice? And how delighted I've been to have fellowship with you in your home, as just one of the Lord's little ones. I know I'm big, but in the correct sense of the term, I'm one of the Lord's little ones.

Inasmuch you have done it unto the least, the little one, the least of mine, you've done it unto me, said the Lord Jesus. And some of you have invited us, and we would like to come and have fellowship with you all, but we just haven't got enough time to come around you all. But nevertheless, remember this, it's all the same with God.

If you had it in your heart, well that's enough for the Lord. It was good, said the Lord to David, that you had it in your heart. And that was about a house as well.

So he says, send my greetings to Nymphus. Nymphus was a very balanced sister in the meeting. She not only opened her heart to the Lord, but opened her home to the Lord's people, and they had their meetings there.

All right, now what about Archippus in verse 17? He's the last one, and this isn't a greeting from him, but it is a greeting to Archippus. And I would imagine that Archippus was Paul's, or rather Philemon's son. And some seem to think that he had a ministry for the Lord in the church at Laodicea, but I don't think that can be proved.

But Archippus, you see, was a little bit unbalanced, and Paul was concerned about this. He said, say to Archippus, take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it. And there's the word phleroma again, that you complete it, make it full.

Now as Archippus was in the Lord, he was in the ministry, and it's exactly the same for you and to me. If you're in Christ, then you're in Christ's service. If you're in the Lord, you're in the ministry, because we're all saved to serve.

But there was something, you see, Archippus was a fellow prisoner, or rather a fellow fighter, what do you say? Fellow soldier, it says in Philemon about him, Archippus. He was fighting the good fight, but apparently there was something that needed to be done to be rounded off in his ministry, and Archippus, with us all, could complete and fulfil his ministry by prayerful praising, verse 2, and wise walking, verse 5, and sound speaking in verse 6. May God bless to us his word this morning, and make us spiritually symmetrical, make us well balanced, deliver us from religious lopsidedness. Some people have a blessing along the line of the Holy Spirit, and they see nothing in the word but the Holy Spirit, forgetting that the Holy Spirit is to lead us to Christ, and to form Christ in us, and reveal Christ to us, you see, and they get overbalanced, and they become extreme Pentecostals because of this.

Other people get a blessing along the line of Kettick ministry, and on every page of the scripture they see Kettick ministry. It isn't there, but they put it in to get it out. Some people get overbalanced in relation to assembly principles, and the doctrine of church gathering, and they see it on every page of the scripture, and it isn't there.

They have to put it in to get it out. Well now, you see, all these things are good and right. Thank God for the ministry of the Holy Spirit, thank God for Kettick ministry, which is New Testament ministry about

Christ who is our life, and thank God for assembly principles, church ministry as it is, church doctrine as it is in the New Testament.

Let's get the whole word of God, the apostasy that I have not shunned and declared unto you, the whole counsel of God. He said, I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, and how balanced was he, and how balanced can we be by the same grace, in the same Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Father and our God, we pray that every one of us may be spiritual symmetrical in our life and witness by the grace of Christ, by the love of God, by the fellowship, power and enabling of the Holy Spirit, in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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