

# Balanced Christianity

by G.H. Lang

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*The sermon explores the necessity of balancing the inner spiritual life with the objective truths of Jesus Christ to achieve true peace and order.*

**Scripture:** John 1:2

**Topics:** "Inner Transformation", "Christ's Authority"

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## Description

G.H. Lang preaches about the consciousness of two worlds within man, the disorder in both the outer and inner worlds, and the inability of man to bring order to his life. He contrasts the unique life of Jesus Christ, who lived a completely disorder-free life and had authority over physical, moral, and spiritual realms. Lang emphasizes the importance of turning to Christ for victory, order, and peace, as He is the only one who can save sinners and bring light to the darkness.

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## Transcript

I

Man is conscious of two worlds, an outer and an inner, a public and a private, an objective and a subjective. He is conscious also that these two worlds act and react upon each other; he is influenced by that world around and he in turn influences it.

He is further conscious that his own inner and private world is a triple realm, each of the three elements of which interact upon one another. In the one realm work THOUGHTS, ideas, reasonings, plans. Though these thoughts upon various subjects arouse FEELINGS, of love or hatred, likes or dislikes, affection or aversion. In the third realm of his inner life which man can distinguish, he observes the WILL at work; he makes decisions for or against a proposed action or course.

This triple and interacting world is termed the HEART, because it is the center of man's whole life, and out of it flow the issues of life, as the blood flows from the physical heart to all parts of man's body.

Man is further and painfully conscious that both the world around and the world within are in disorder. Something is radically wrong with both. The physical world and its forces now help him, now hurt him. The moral influences, also, of the beings he touches are now a blessing, now a bane; now they purify him, now corrupt him. And he influences others similarly.

Moreover, the uniform experience of all mankind, continued through thousands of years, has proved man's personal and complete inability to reduce to order either the world without or the world within. The confusion and corruption of both are more awful today than ever.

Each man knows that his THOUGHTS are never absolutely right, true, correct, pure. He thinks wrongly, forms opinions that usually need correcting, has ideas that he knows are foul, or cruel, or unworthy. These he can never wholly exclude, or dismiss, or purify. He knows, too, that his FEELINGS are more or less selfish, prejudiced, deceitful, and are all too likely to hurry him into actions he knows to be unwise or wrong. He is also aware that his WILL is inconstant, unreliable, too easily swayed by his desires or dislikes, and too often divided, distracted, that is, dragged in opposite directions.

To right-minded persons all this is a cause of grief and deep solicitude: but what can be done? In his soberer moments man responds sadly to the cry of an old writer, "Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?" (Rom. 7:24).

II

Now it is a momentous fact that once, and only once since this disorder entered man's nature, there lived on earth a man whose inner world was completely and continuously free from disorder. He never had thoughts that he needed to correct or regret; He never felt feelings that were unloving; His will was single, undistracted, always directed to truth, right, purity.

Moreover, He manifested also a notable power of control over the world around Him. He reduced tempests to quietness; He walked serenely on storm-tossed water; His word of command caused food to multiply, diseases to disappear, health and vigor to revive; the very dead were restored to life, showing that His authority extended to that region of the universe also.

But more notable was His influence upon the moral world around. He read the thoughts of men's hearts; the wicked slunk from His presence convicted and ashamed; the repentant were pardoned and granted peace as to the guilty past; the fainthearted were cheered, the sad comforted, the perplexed guided: there was no sincere heart but was the better for contact with Jesus of Nazareth.

Even yet more noteworthy was His authority over demons, those invisible aggravators of human discord and disorder. They trembled before Him, fled at His command, and their victims became gloriously free from their debasing influence.

Ample proof of all this is found in the four accounts of His life known as the Gospels.

The advent of such a Man in this disordered universe was of the highest possible importance and significance. It showed that there is a life-energy superior to all forces of disorder, though lived under truly human conditions. "Our Savior, Christ Jesus, abolished death and brought life and incorruption to light" (II Tim. 1:10). Before His life on earth it had not here been demonstrated conclusively that there exists a life that corruption cannot reach, for in fact all other life had decayed.

But WHAT life had this Man? It was human life, showing all the normal, ideal marks of this. But why, then, did His life prevail in the battle against sin while all other human beings fail in this battle? One who lived with Him three and a half years and watched Him closely, by night as well as by day, has left on record the result of his scrutiny of Jesus. He tells us that he came to see that working through the human life of Christ there was another and higher life, one that had the impress and marks of eternity, for it showed no trace of

that variableness, frailty, and transitoriness that the life of earth displays. It was, indeed, that ETERNAL life, that DIVINE life, which had always existed with God the Father and was now in Jesus being manifested unto men on earth (I John 1:2). Unaided human life, even when originally sinless, had always succumbed to the forces of disorder: human life conjoined with, suffused with, reinforced by eternal life was superior thereto. The Son of Mary, the Son of man, was the eternal Son of God, God manifest in human nature.

"O loving wisdom of our God! When all was sin and shame, A second Adam to the fight And to the rescue came.

"O wisest love! that flesh and blood Which did in Adam fall, Should strive afresh against the foe, Should strive and should prevail.

"And that a higher gift than grace Should flesh and blood refine, God's presence, and His very self, And essence all-divine."

### III

This uniqueness of Jesus Christ involves, as a necessary consequence, that to Him all other men must resort if they would find the secret and power of victory, order and peace; for He stands forth the solitary Man who ever held that secret, secured that victory, enjoyed that peace. There never has been any other person who has saved sinners from their sins, or was entitled to say: I am the Light upon all your problems; come unto Me and I will give you rest from disorder and disaster.

God sent forth His Son to be the Savior of the world, and there is none other. Man must fix his attention upon Christ, as an Object outside of himself, if order is ever to reign within himself. To such as will not turn to Christ there must of simple necessity apply His words: "Ye will not come to Me that ye may have life" (John 5:40); for none other of the sons of men has ever possessed that life or could impart it to another.

This indicates a fundamental principle of the true life of a Christian: it is a result of occupation of heart with Christ as a historical Person, the facts concerning whom are learned, believed, weighed, and remembered. It is therefore no marvel that the Prince of darkness and disorder has ever striven to obscure and pervert the facts as to the Person of Jesus Christ, for thus he hinders his blinded dupes from trusting Christ (II Cor. 4:3,4).

In the second place this involves meditation upon the Bible as the message from God through which alone those facts can be ascertained. For it is evident that God has seen fit that the knowledge of the facts, dispensed at first through persons who had known Jesus, has been preserved for later generations solely in the Bible. Again, therefore, it is no marvel that the Father of lies has striven ceaselessly to spread doubts and denials as to the trustworthiness of these records, so that his victims should not, through them, come to the knowledge of Christ.

### IV

Christ is God's appointed Head of a new order of mankind. Adam, the first head of the human race, disobeyed God, and dragged his whole kingdom into disorder and darkness. Christ reverses this for all who enter HIS kingdom. The Son of God was manifested on earth that He might annul the works of the Devil (I John 3:8), and set free all of Satan's slaves who long for freedom (Heb. 2:14,15). The first man, Adam, is of the earth, as are all his sons: his being and life were of and for the earth, and partook of the

weakness of things created. The second Man is of heaven, and, by becoming a man, He brought into human nature the authority, energy, liberty, and security of the heavenly, the eternal life (John 8:23; I Cor. 15:47). This life He imparts to them that obey Him.

Being thus appointed by God as the Head of a heavenly order of men, He is their acting Representative. It is as such that He acts as Man, and it is ONLY THAT but ALL THAT which their Head has suffered, done, or received which is available for them, or properly belongs to their heavenly life. The major experiences of their Head, made possible to them by faith and obedience, are:

(a) He was born into humanity by the act of the Spirit of God (Luke 1:35):

By the act of that same Spirit they are born anew into the new, heavenly race of men (John 3).

(b) He by the Spirit and by faith lived in holiness of heart and practice:

They are called to holiness, of spirit and of flesh, in the inner life and the outer life, and to them the same Spirit is granted that by faith they may so even as Christ walked.

(c) He died unto sin once for all. On the cross He took its heavy burden upon Himself as if it had been His own. By His atoning death He put sin away as from before God, so being no more responsible for it, seeing that He discharged its full penalty, death (ROM 6):

They who rest on this His work are given by grace the benefit of it; they are deemed in law to have discharged their penalty by the act of their Surety. Thus they have peace with God, and are called to regard themselves as having died with their Representative (ROM 6; Col. 2 and 3).

(d) He was raised from the dead and was removed in Manhood to that heavenly world whence He had come:

They are seen by God as being where their Representative is, on the same principle that a party to a suit is deemed to have appeared in court in the person of his advocate. The Spirit of Christ is imparted to His people to make this effective in their present experience of heart. Thus do they know and feel themselves citizens of THAT world (Eph. 1:15-2:10; Phil. 3:20).

(e) He lived and lives in the full consciousness of His eternal Sonship to God:

They are given the spirit of adoption that they also may know God as their Father, and may feel and act harmoniously with this their high calling (ROM 8:12-17; Gal. 3:23-4:7).

(f) He was the Light of this world, as He had ever been of that world above; and therefore the Prince of darkness hated, persecuted, and slew Him:

They, in His absence, are called and enabled to be the light of the world, and as such are granted the privilege to suffer with Him (John 8:12; Matt. 5:14-16; Phil. 2:14-18; 1:27-30).

(g) He is to be the Sovereign of heaven and earth, actually, visibly, in glory:

They who share His cross shall share His throne; if we suffer with Him we shall be glorified together with Him (ROM 8:17; II Tim. 2:11-13).

V

Two great principles are involved in the Christian life, referred to above as objective and subjective.

The objective outlook is that which dwells upon what Christ Himself is: what He is to the Father, what He did for us in His great work of redemption, and our eternal security as brought through Him into the family of God. The danger here is not of an over-appreciation of Christ, for this is impossible. It lies in our resting in our standing or our faith, satisfied that all is well because we are told that none can snatch us out of His hand.

The fault here is that the heart is not engrossed with the person of Christ, that He is not the Object of affection. It is to be feared that in many cases (most particularly in children brought up in Christian homes) there has not been deep exercise of heart as to sin, and consequently there is little true appreciation of the magnitude of the salvation effected by the Lord and no saying in heart, "I will arise and go to MY FATHER." Thus there is no real enjoyment of the Father's home as the sweet present abode of the soul, and there is lacking the normal reaction of walking with God in glad and humble subjection to His holy will, with the happiness of heart which this brings. Is not this why many souls are spiritually at a standstill, accompanied often by much worldliness and a marred testimony to Christ?

The subjective aspect deals with our actual present state, as distinct from our standing in Christ. Its importance lies in its effects upon our actions. It is introduced in such exhortations as "Abide in Me and I in you ... Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit ... I exercise myself always to have a conscience void of offense ... The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

The danger is not in over-stressing such passages of Scripture but in building a theory of sanctification on isolated texts, especially when the mind is occupied to largely with oneself, looking inward, emphasizing a daily dying. Such souls do not realize that a dead person cannot die. The Word says "YE DIED, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). Our part is to reckon one IS dead, and then, by the power of the Spirit, TO MAKE TO DIE the sinful DOINGS formerly done through the body, and which the old nature would gladly continue (ROM 8:13).

Regarding the experimental realization of our possible privileges, so as to enjoy them in one's own soul, there are two chief perils:

- (a) There are such as rest content with assent to the objective historical facts as to Christ, and receive little or no corresponding subjective inward experience.
- (b) There are others so engrossed with their inward subjective condition that they give too little regard to the facts about Christ.

For example:

- (a) Some acknowledge Jesus to be the Son of God and to have made by His death atonement for sin, and here they leave the matter. They neither know nor seek peace with God.
- (b) Others moan and groan because of their sins, fear the wrath of God, long for peace of conscience, strive to be good and to do good, diligently practice religious ceremonies, pray perpetually for pardon as "miserable offenders," but make no spiritual progress. Nor will they ever do so until they turn the mind from self to rest upon the objective facts concerning Christ, and what God, in His Word of truth, states as to those facts. Upon doing this they will have assured peace. The subjective state must rest upon the objective facts. Otherwise any sense of peace, if any be reached, will prove baseless and deceptive.

(c) Others are satisfied with theoretical acceptance of their presumed position and blessing in Christ, and pay too little attention to their inward state and their practice. Assent to the objective facts contents them, if contentment it can be called; they are not much distressed that their inward experience is earthly, worldly, unheavenly, or they take the dope that this cannot be bettered till they "get to heaven." They may even deserve the rebuke: "Thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked" (Rev. 3:17). Thus may the soul beguile itself by saying it has all in Christ. As if holding title deeds dispensed with obtaining possession.

(d) Yet others think they have made much progress in inward holiness and are IN THEMSELVES free from sin. To themselves their subjective state is satisfactory. They have not weighed that God does NOT say that our "old man" IS crucified in US, but that it WAS crucified IN CHRIST at the cross. (ROM 6:6. The "is" of the A.V. is wholly indefensible and very misleading. It is the past tense, as in the A.S.V.) Because they think they stand, these are ever liable to fall; and many do fall, sometimes to a lower moral depth than in their unregenerate days, and into despair. The objective did not underpin the subjective, and the latter collapsed.

(e) Some will speak (not to say SING) with complacency about being children of God the Father yet, as if orphans cast upon this cruel world, they worry daily as to food, clothes, and the possible troubles of tomorrow. The subjective condition of mind is not yet rectified by the relationship avowed.

(f) Others talk of sitting in the heavenlies in Christ, but experimentally know nothing of His authority over the powers of darkness, those wicked spirits that Christ has defeated, but who still defeat these easygoing Christians by inducing absorption in this earth and conduct very unheavenly. Happy is he of whom that can be said which one said of R. C. Chapman: "We talk about the heavenly places, but HE LIVES IN THEM."

(g) But others are dreadfully and rightly alarmed at defeat, and they muster all their own energies for the daily conflict; yet unavailingly, because they do not see that WE can get NOTHING except what our Head has gained, and that we come to share in His victory and authority by resting upon and appropriating Him as revealed and offered in God's Word.

These instances suffice to illuminate spiritual life. They all reveal the fundamental principles:

(a) That only what the Head is, has done, and is doing is available for man; furthermore, that ALL that the Head is OUGHT to be the personal experience of His members.

(b) That the Holy Spirit of power makes experimental what faith accepts, and no more than faith accepts, upon the basis of the promises of God, the obedience of faith proving it to be genuine faith. "Arise and walk," said Christ to a man who could not walk. Faith at once obeyed, and strength to walk was instantly granted.

It is balance that is needed. The mystic dwells disproportionately upon inward experience. His tendency is to be ever regarding God within. This advances easily to a pantheistic identifying of God and self, and may lead on to the virtual worship of "the divine in man," which is self worship, a phase of the bait offered in Eden, "Ye shall become as God."

On the other hand, the believer may be a creedal formalist, accepting all the facts declared by the Father concerning the Son, agreeing to all the derived doctrines, but experiencing little of their living power to cleanse the heart from sin and to cause Christ to well there to be your life, displacing the old self-life.

It is balance that is indispensable. There must be the conscious, persistent, unconditional acceptance of, dependence upon, and expectation from Christ, the historic Christ. He must be the Object of confidence and affection; the Satisfier of the soul; its Savior from disorder, corruption, unregulated desires; the One sanctified in the heart as LORD. Then the Spirit of Christ can cause the thoughts, feelings, and decisions to be derived from and to center in Christ, the Man who in person is at the right hand of God, but who is thus developed morally in the believer on earth by His moral features growing progressively in the Christian's character and walk.

Christ is God's Deliverer for the world: This is God's method of deliverance. He gives us in Christ a new center, and the wheel of life runs truly and smoothly because it is truly centered. But because Christ is the center of the whole kingdom of God, in heaven and on earth, the life that is centered in Him is thereby in harmony with God and all His kingdom, the world of order, harmony, peace, and joy, the world where one will alone prevails, the will of God -- and being such, is therefore eternal (I John 2:17).

But for the same reason which a life is eccentric, out of center, with that portion of the universe, heavenly and earthly, which is not centered in Christ. If two sets of powerful machinery were at work in the same space, there would arise friction, clash, damage. In this age, this situation induces conflict of spirit and practical trouble for the Christ-centered man. But he can endure with patience and confidence, seeing that he knows that Christ has conquered this world, and that His world, the heavenly, will prevail finally.

Christ is God's Savior for the individual and for the world: association with Him, by faith and obedience, is God's method of salvation. There is no other, nor can there be (John 3:35, 36).

"Christ! I am Christ's! and let the name suffice you; Ay, for me, too, He greatly hath sufficed. Lo, with no wining words I would entice you; Paul has no honor and no friend but Christ."

The all-inclusive doctrine and power of the true life is: "Ye died with Christ ... ye were raised with Christ ... Christ is our life ... Seek the things that are above, where Christ is" (Col. 3:1-4).

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