

# Being Balanced in the Christian Life

by Zac Poonen

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*The Gospel is not just about forgiveness of sins, but about filling us with the glory of Christ, which is seen in our character and is achieved through the balance of scripture and the power of the Holy Spirit.*

**Duration:** 1:15:11

**Scripture:** Mark 13:34, Acts 13:2, Acts 20:28, Romans 11:22, Ephesians 6:4, Hebrews 12:7

**Topics:** "Christian Living", "Spiritual Balance"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of balance in various aspects of the Christian life, highlighting the need for both kindness and severity, individual connection with Christ and submission to church leadership, evangelism and discipleship, and other key areas. It stresses the beauty that comes from maintaining a balanced approach in all areas of life, drawing examples from Scripture to illustrate the significance of finding harmony in different aspects of Christian living.

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## Transcript

There are different ways in which the Gospel, the Good News, is described. One we know it as the Gospel of forgiveness of our sins. There is a verse in 2 Corinthians 4, which says the God of this world, that is Satan, has blinded the minds of the unbelieving.

2 Corinthians 4, verse 4. So Satan's one job is to blind people from seeing the Gospel, the Good News. So here the Gospel is described not as a Gospel of forgiveness of sins. That's just the beginning.

Like you've heard me say, when you clean a cup, that's not the end of it. You clean a cup in order to fill it with something. We don't just spend our time cleaning cups at home.

The purpose of having a cup at home is to fill it with something. If it's dirty, we clean it, but that's not the end of it. But there are many, many Christians, the Gospel begins and ends with their heart being cleaned.

That's it. It's like a cup being cleaned. They spend all their life with an empty, clean cup.

That's where the Gospel, the devil's blinded their eyes. Here the Gospel is described as the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, which is more than just cleaning the cup. It's filling it up with something.

So, let me show you another verse in 2 Thessalonians 2. Remember 2 Thessalonians 4. The devil blinds our eyes from seeing the Gospel of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. That's described in verse 6. He blinds the glory of God in the face of Christ. That's what he wants to prevent us from seeing.

In 2 Thessalonians 2, it says here, verse 14. This is why God called you. 2 Corinthians 2, verse 14.

He called you through our Gospel, not just that you might have forgiveness of sins, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So, why did God call me through the Gospel? That I might gain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that doesn't happen all in a moment.

And it doesn't happen without pursuing after it. When Paul says in Philippians 3, in verse 12, there's a beautiful expression. He says, I want to lay... Philippians 3, 12, the latter part of it says, I want to lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus laid hold of me.

Think of that. Jesus laid hold of me with a purpose, and I want to lay hold of that. So, that purpose we just read, was that I might gain the glory of Jesus Christ.

So, when Paul realized that, he says, I want to lay hold of that. And he says, I haven't fully laid hold of it yet. Let me paraphrase Philippians 3, 12.

I'm not yet perfect means, I haven't fully got all of it. If I got all of it, I'd be perfect. But, I press on, that I might gain it more and more.

And, therefore, again he says, I haven't laid hold of it all yet. Verse 13, Philippians 3, 13. But there's only one thing I do in my life.

What a wonderful thing it is. Every Christian could say, there's only one thing I do in my life. Everything else is secondary.

There are many things we do. We eat, and drink, and sleep, and go to work, and earn money, and take care of our families, and bring up our children. But, it's all subservient to this one paramount goal.

Gaining the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then, all these other things fall into place. And a lot of our problems, when we get occupied with all these other things, is because we haven't got the central thing in place.

So, there's one thing I do. I forget what lies behind. That means, I forget how much of the glory of Jesus Christ I've already got.

Now, many Christians, when they read that verse, forgetting the things that are behind, they're thinking, Oh, well, I'm glad I can forget all the sins I've committed in my life. That's not what Paul is saying. You read in the context.

He's saying, I want to lay hold of everything that Jesus laid hold of me. I've already, I haven't got it fully yet. I've got part of it.

But I forget how much I've got. In other words, I'm forgetting how much of this mountain I've climbed. I'm always thinking how much more I have to climb.

That's what he's meaning here. I'm not keeping on congratulating myself that I've come so far. I forget it.

If I keep congratulating myself how much I've come and how much better I am than other believers or how much better, what a wonderful church I'm in compared to others, I'll never make progress. It's exactly what the devil wants me to keep meditating on, how far I've come. So Paul was aware of the schemes of the devil.

He says, I forget what's behind. I don't even think about how far I've come or how much God has done in me already or how much he's done through me. All these things I forget because I'm pressing towards a goal of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus to possess all of that glory.

My dear brothers and sisters, we must never lose that vision. If we keep that vision before us, many of our other problems are solved. Really, I'm telling you from experience.

That's why the Bible says we must run the race looking unto Jesus. There's only one way we can run this race in the way God wants us to, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, the one who began a good work in us and who will do it. When we realize that Jesus lived his entire life on earth, not as God but as man, it's very important.

I know my whole life was revolutionized when I realized one truth, that though Jesus was fully God and fully man, he did not live on earth using his power as God. He lived on earth using his power and lived on earth as a man, depending on the power of the Holy Spirit day by day. That changed my whole life completely.

You see, two things happened when I realized that. One, I had no more excuse for my sins. Till then I could always say, oh, well, I'm only human, so I sin.

But Jesus was human too. But the devil doesn't want us to see it. Because the moment I see it, I have no more excuse for my sin.

We're always trying to find some excuse for our sin. I'm only human. But when I saw that Jesus was human too, I had no more excuse for my sin.

That's number one. The second thing was, I saw that if Jesus, as a human, could live such a life by the power of the Spirit, the same Holy Spirit, exactly the same third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit that dwelt in Jesus Christ, is the same person that comes and dwells in me. Without him, it's impossible.

That's why I say, every Christian needs to be filled with the Holy Spirit all the time. Otherwise it's impossible to live this life. Otherwise, what can happen is, we can come to church and listen to some wonderful exhortations, and church can become a way of improving the quality of our life.

That means we behave better, we talk better, we relate to one another better, and the church becomes a nice club where we meet one another and help one another in so many ways. And in our personal life, we may be defeated, frustrated, and far, far removed from the way Jesus lived. So, it's very important to recognize that Jesus lived his entire life by dependence on the Holy Spirit.

And Jesus told his disciples, if you evil fathers know how to give good gifts to your children, you think your Heavenly Father will not give you the Holy Spirit? If you ask him, of course he will. It's unbelief to think that God is very reluctant to give us the Holy Spirit. Let me repeat the definition of faith that I probably have mentioned here before.

Faith is to believe that God is more eager to give me what he has promised than I am eager to receive it. I'm not talking about things God has not promised. There are many things in the world we want.

Well, let's leave that aside. But think of what God has promised in his word, that sin will not rule over me, that I can walk as Jesus walked, that my life can be useful to God, that I can be an effective member in the body of Christ. Will God not do this for me? That's unbelief.

Am I so eager to be filled with the Spirit to overcome sin? If God's not eager, that's unbelief. Faith is to believe God is more eager than I am to help me to overcome sin. God is more eager than I am to fill me with the Holy Spirit every day.

When I realize that, I say, hey, that's wonderful. So when you think of this glory of Jesus Christ that we ought to gain in our life, that more and more in our life, the glory of Jesus must be seen more and more. It's not talking about some light or brightness in our face.

It's character. Man looks on the outward appearance, and God looks at the heart. It's not just being cultured and civilized and kind on the outside.

It's a glory that's within, that's changed our character inward. That means I don't have to act in a certain way. I am that person.

As long as I have to act in a certain way, it's outward. I've got to keep reminding myself, hey, I've got to act nice. I'm a Christian.

That's not Christianity. That's acting. But it's because God does that in my heart that I am to be that way.

Under the old covenant, it was different. The old covenant, God didn't do anything in people's hearts. It was all on the outside.

So they had to realize, hey, I'm not supposed to murder anybody. I'm not supposed to commit adultery. I'm tempted to steal.

I'm not supposed to steal because the law says I'm not supposed to steal. It's external. And you can get a good testimony.

But the wonderful thing in the new covenant is it's inward. The Holy Spirit changes us inwardly and makes us like Christ. You know that chorus we sing? Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.

All his wondrous compassion and purity. There's a balance. Compassion and purity.

Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me. All his wondrous compassion and purity. And the original chorus goes like this.

I never sing it like that. O thou spirit divine, all my nature refine. My nature can't be refined.

It's corrupt. It's got to be crucified. That's what the Bible says because most people don't understand.

Being crucified with Christ, they think my nature has got to be refined. No. O thou spirit divine, make all thy nature mine.

That's the way I sing it. O thou spirit divine, make all thy nature mine so that the beauty of Jesus may be seen in me. All his wondrous compassion and purity.

The beauty of Jesus has got a balance about it. You see that in John 1.14. In John 1.14 it says, The word of God became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory. The glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

You see the balance there? Grace and truth. His wondrous compassion and purity. So I want to share with you something about that in the glory of Jesus there's a balance.

And where there's no balance there's ugliness. And God wants to make us balanced in our life. And as we gain the glory of Jesus in our life we'll be more and more balanced in our life.

It's like a human body. There's a beauty in the balance there is in our human body. If you draw a line down the middle it's exactly the same this side and that side.

Think if one ear were much bigger or an eye was much bigger. You can still have two eyes but it's ugly. So in the same way you can have certain qualities.

But if they are not balanced with other qualities or if one eye is missing. There's grace but no truth or truth but no grace. It's ugly.

We can think of our there are many ways we can think of growing in to the likeness of Christ. One is growing up from a childhood to maturity. But think of a child growing in a mother's womb.

In the beginning he doesn't have proper shape. Head is too big. If you see pictures of these embryos they take inside a mother's womb.

They look more like tadpoles than human beings. Completely disproportionate the parts of the body. And if it were born like that it would be horrible it would be ugly.

But when a baby is born it's so beautiful because everything has come in to proper proportion. It's got a head long before it's born. But when it's three months the head is completely disproportionate to the body.

It's not fit to be born. But by the time after nine months is over and the baby is born everything is in right proportion. So I've thought of that in relation to our becoming like Christ.

In the beginning there's certain things out of proportion. Some things are more and some things are less. But if you're really allowing the Holy Spirit to work in us like the processes in the body work on that little baby gradually everything comes in to proper proportion.

And the head is not half the size of the body. The head is proportion to the rest of the body. So it's God's will that we look at the beauty of Jesus and the truths in scripture and find this balance in our life because it comes in many many areas of our life.

Grace and truth is just one. In Jesus' life we see how he could speak with compassion to a woman caught in adultery and say I don't condemn you. Or put his arms around lepers and to a five times divorced woman like a Samaritan woman and encourage her and use her to bless many Samaritans.

At the same time we see Jesus calling the Pharisees a generation of vipers. It's the same Jesus, the same meek and mild Jesus. He hasn't changed.

He's always consistent. He's never more holy at some times or less holy, more loving at some times. He was just as holy when he told a woman I don't condemn you and he was just as loving when he whipped the money changers out of the temple.

It's not that he lost something there at that time. No. He didn't lose his temper.

He never lost his temper. He was perfectly balanced. He was full of grace and truth and that truth made him expose the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the truth made him not just tell those money changers will you gentlemen please move your tables out from here.

No. He turned the tables and whipped the sheep and opened the cages and let the doves out. We can't understand that.

We think that if you saw some servant of God doing that you'd think he'd lost his temper. That's because we don't know Jesus. When you see preaching that's very hard that denounces people we think oh that guy doesn't have grace.

That shows how ignorant we are of Jesus Christ. You know there's Jesus who said if you offend a little child tie a millstone around your neck and go and drown in the lake. If you heard preaching like that what would you think? If you heard Jesus saying you'd go to him and say Lord you've got to be more Christ like.

Yeah. That's exactly how we think. You know you ask yourself when you think of a preacher who's Christ like what are you thinking of? I think 99% of Christians think of someone who says oh I don't condemn you.

You're okay. Be encouraged. Everything's okay.

We think that person's Christ like. It's true. It's one side of it.

It's like a man whose I picture sometimes a man whose one side is muscular and the other side is skin and bones. Imagine a man like that how ugly he looks. So this is the Christ that many people see.

And if you think of a Christ like that you'll be like that. One side whichever side is muscular and the other side skin and bones. Or you know you may be the other way around and see the other side muscular on this side skin and bones.

So remember the beauty of Jesus is seen full of grace and truth. And none of us perfectly balanced. Paul said I've not attained it but I'm pressing on.

He says I'm longing to be like him completely. Our destination as we have often said God has predestined us to be conformed to the image of his Son. And there's a balance there.

Let me show you another verse in Ephesians chapter 2 where we see this balance again. Verse 8. What place does works have in our salvation? Many people would say no. None.

That's why we need to see the balance of scripture. By grace are you saved. Ephesians 2 8-10.

By grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God. Not of works.

Not as a result of any works. That means I can't get forgiveness of sins with any amount of work I do. It's got to be free.

Because how can I atone for my sins with a million good works? No way to do it. So that no one should boast. My forgiveness is free.

But once I'm forgiven. Then it says in verse 10. God has made us, created us in Christ Jesus to do good works.

Good works which God long beforehand planned that we should do them or walk in them. So do you see the balance there? No works but plenty of works. No works for the forgiveness of our sins for justification.

But plenty of works for sanctification. Justification is one thing. Sanctification is another.

Justification means declared righteous. The righteousness of Christ clothing me. I'm standing complete before God the day I'm born again.

The day I receive Christ. Christ's righteousness clothes me. And I stand before God not only with my sin forgiven.

But clothed with the righteousness of Christ. That's one side of truth. The other side of truth is that the righteousness of Christ must now be imparted to me.

First it's imputed to me. Put to my account. Imparted to me.

That's verse 10. Where by the power of the Spirit now I do hundreds of works. Thousands of works.

That's like saying when you lay a foundation you don't have doors and windows in the foundation. The crazy man who puts doors and windows in a foundation. Zero.

But in the superstructure plenty of doors and windows. That's an example. No works in the foundation of the Christian life.

It's entirely free. Forgiveness through Christ's justification. But thousands of works in sanctification as we build a skyscraper called walking as Jesus walked.

That's balance. No works, but works. And you find in Christian, you know, there's a lot of controversies in Christian theology.

And very often I'll tell you the controversy is that people don't understand this balance. Some people emphasize no works. Some people emphasize works.

I say it's like saying should we have doors or windows? I say it depends what you're talking about. Are you talking about the foundation? Definitely no doors and windows. Are you talking about the superstructure? Plenty of doors and windows.

So you're talking about when you talk about works, no works. In forgiveness of sins, agreed, no works. But in sanctification, thousands.

A lot of the controversy is there in many, many areas of Christendom because they don't realize it's not a question of this or that. It's a question of both in its proper place. And let me show you another scripture

where in Matthew chapter 22.

See, these are intensely practical in our daily life. We need to understand because a lot of people, for example, the lazy type of person, the lazy Christian who doesn't want to press on to perfection. He always finds comfort in the fact, oh, Jesus has done everything for me.

I don't know how to do any works. That's like saying the left side of my body has been built and muscular, but what about the right side of your body, all skin and bones? That's ugly. That's a problem.

So Matthew 22, someone, people came to Jesus. The Pharisees heard Matthew 22, 34. Pharisees heard the Sadducees and they put to silence.

So one of them, a lawyer, came to him questioning him. Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? The great commandment, number one. And if you see the answer, Jesus said, I can't give you just one.

You ask for one, but I can't give you one. Because it's like a coin. How can you have a coin with only one side? Like someone said, however thin you may slice it, there are still two sides.

Yeah. And there are two sides. One, love God with all your heart, soul, and mind.

And the second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself. You can't get one side.

If you got only one side, it's a false gospel. You know, John says, so there's a balance there. Love God and love your neighbor.

But the first is not love your neighbor. That's also important. Which is first and which is second? Jesus said, the first and the foremost is love God with all your heart.

And the second, it's important, but it's not the first. So the coin, one side is more important than the other. 1 John chapter 4, if a man says, verse 20, I love God, I keep the first, greatest part of the commandment, but he hates his brother, he's a liar.

The way to call him is not believer, but liar. He may call himself a believer, but God calls him a liar. Because he says he loves God, but he can't love somebody who's a believer.

He can't love his brother. He hates his brother. Maybe his brother hurt him in some way.

Or offended him in some way. There could be 101 reasons, but if you hate him, you're a liar. It's not a question of what he did to you.

He may have hurt you, he may have stolen from you, he may have cheated you, but if you hate him, you're a liar. That's what the Bible says. Because if you cannot love your brother whom you can see, this is the logic.

It is impossible to love a God whom you cannot see. See the logic of the Holy Spirit. If you can't love someone you can see, you're fooling yourself when you say you love God whom you cannot see.

So the test of my love for God is my love for my fellow believers. See the balance there. But love for God must come first.

Remember that. The first is not both are equal. Love for God, because one is dependent on the other, flows from the other, which means that I serve God first, and thus serve man.

This is where I don't believe in the social gospel. The social gospel is, Jesus has taught us to care for the poor, help them, you know, heal the sick, establish hospitals, educate the uneducated. All that is good, but it's the second commandment.

Don't forget that. I appreciate the work of godly women like Mother Teresa and all who've done such a lot of work helping the poor and caring for them and dying people on the streets, picking them up and caring for them. I appreciate them very highly, but I say it's the second commandment.

And if that's all that we do, we can educate a person, heal the person in a hospital, take care of him and finally send him to hell. What have we accomplished? That doesn't mean we shouldn't care for them. Remember, which is the first commandment, which is the second.

So the first commandment is that I must love God with all my heart. Now you can go to the other extreme too, like a monk in a monastery who has no time to do other things. He's spending all his time pretending he's loving God, but he doesn't do anything for his neighbor.

Well, it's like the Levite and the priest who saw this man beaten up on the roadside, and they were going to Jerusalem. They wanted to go to the service and the meeting on time, and they ignored their brother. He was their brother because he was the son of Abraham.

And the other person who is not even a Levite, he was a Samaritan. He cares for him. So Jesus is answering that question, how do you love your neighbor? So there is a balance here again in our life.

Turn with me to Matthew 4 and verse 10. Matthew 4.10, Jesus said, this is the answer of Jesus to the devil, the third temptation in the wilderness. Be gone, Satan, for it's written you shall... You see the balance here again? You see this many... If you look carefully, you'll see the balance all over the New Testament.

You shall worship the Lord your God, and you shall serve Him. It's worship and service is a balance. If you worship only, you're imbalanced.

If you serve only, you're imbalanced. And if you serve before you worship, it's wrong. You have to worship first and then serve.

And I want to explain to you, worship is not singing a few songs on Sunday morning. The right New Testament word for that is thanksgiving and praise. Actually, we sing a lot of songs which are not even thanksgiving and praise, but prayer.

You need to distinguish between prayer, number one, thanksgiving, number two, praise, number three, and worship, number four. And my experience, I'll tell you honestly, 99% of believers don't have a clue what worship is. There are hardly any people I have heard of who know much about worship.

I mean, Tozer was one of those rare men who knew what worship was, and a few others whom I've read of who lived in different centuries, but most people don't know what worship is. They know what prayer is. They know what thanksgiving is.

Some go a little beyond to point number three, praise, but worship is almost unknown. They don't even know what it is. It's important.

See, does terminology matter? Yes, it does. If you go to buy, say, a Cadillac car, and somebody gives you a motorcycle and says, this is a Cadillac car, and he's fooled you, and you imagine that you've got a Cadillac car, all you've got is a motorcycle, don't you think somebody's cheated you? And if the devil has fooled you that what you call worship is only praise or thanksgiving, he's really cheated you of something which you're supposed to have. See, prayer is not praise.

It's not thanksgiving. Prayer is asking God for something. Sometime when you get time, look through the hymns you sing.

Slowly. Forget the tune now. Read the words and ask yourself, is this prayer? A lot of it is prayer.

Yeah, good. Lord, do this for me. Do that for me.

A lot of it is exhortation to others. Trust and obey, for there's no other way. Good.

You're exhorting people to do something. Many songs are like that. The other is, a lot of things is comfort.

You know, God will take care of you, my brother, and God will take care of me. A lot of songs are like that, you know, because a lot of Christians are in a pretty baby level. They always want to be comforted.

The only reason they come to church very often is to be comforted. I'm always having problems, and I need some comfort, and the church is a place on Sunday morning where I get some comfort. We've got to go beyond all that.

And then you look through some of the songs we sing, it's thanksgiving. Thank you, Lord, for what you've done for me. We need to say that.

There was 10 lepers who were cleansed, and only one came back to thank him. And if you look at your own life, you'll find the proportion of thanksgiving to prayer in your life is also probably one is to 10. We pray 10 times for something, and maybe thank God once for something he did.

Praise is something beyond that. Now I'm not thinking of what God did for me, not even thinking of asking God to do something for me. That's prayer and thanksgiving.

That's over. I'm thinking now of who he is. I'm admiring him for, praising him for who he is, almighty God, my father, how holy and pure.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty. All earth is full of your glory. It's praise.

It's not prayer or thanksgiving. Finally, you come to worship. In scripture, throughout scripture, whether it's Abraham or Job or the Apostle John and Patmos, you always see them falling down on their face with their head down to the ground, worshipping God.

It says they bowed down and worshipped God, bowed down, bowed down and worshipped John. When he saw Jesus in the Isle of Patmos, he falls at his feet like a dead man, even though he's been a believer 65 years. He was 95 years old then.

And so I see worship as, you know, bowing down before Jesus in our spirit and literally saying, Lord, I desire nothing but you on earth or in heaven. You are everything to me. Like the Psalmist said in Psalm 73, 25, Whom have I in heaven but you? That means I'm not interested in the golden streets or the pearly gates or the mansions or, oh, I'm going to be free from all sorrow and trial and sickness there.

That's not what I'm thinking of. I'll tell you honestly, I'm prepared to live with sickness for all eternity if I can live with Jesus. No problem.

I really mean that. I'm prepared to have aches and pains in my body for all eternity if I can be with Jesus. To me, heaven is not freedom from aches and pains and people troubling me.

I don't mind people troubling me for all eternity if I can be with Jesus. To me, heaven is Jesus, not freedom from trials and problems and sorrows and difficulties. You're going to be very disappointed if you go to heaven with that goal.

I'm not going to be disappointed because I want to be with Jesus. That's what I told him once. I said, Lord, I'm prepared to be in hell if you're there.

It won't be hell anymore. It'll be heaven. Heaven is not physical comfort.

It's a very immature, baby, Christian attitude to think, oh, thank God, there'll be no tears there, no sorrow. It's good. We are all babies at a certain stage.

I'm not saying that's wrong. All I say is, grow up. How long are you going to be a baby? It's cute to see a baby, two years old, running around.

It's cute to hear people say, I'll be so free from sorrow. I'll be so free from all problems and all these difficult people who trouble me won't be there. Good.

Well, I hope you'll grow up and get fascinated with Jesus and say, whom am I in heaven but you? And on earth, I desire nothing but you. And I desire no one but you. That is worship, where Jesus becomes everything.

Then we can serve. The only person who can serve God effectively is the one who is worshipped first. Thou shalt worship and thou shalt serve.

Balance. It's not only worship. It's service.

My fervent devotion to Christ must lead me to sacrificial, lowly service for the poorest of the poor on earth without distinction. Yeah. If I'm not serving others and thinking of how I can be a blessing to others, then I'm imbalanced.

I must not always be so occupied with God that I don't think of my neighbor. So, when we seek to serve God, again, there's a balance. You know, the Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit filling us.

And when the Holy Spirit fills us, He gives us, first of all, the fruit of the Spirit. The things mentioned in Galatians 5, 22, 23. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

All these things make me a much better person. The blessing of the Spirit filling me makes me a much better person. The fruit of the Spirit.

This is the beauty of Jesus being seen in me, in my character. There again, there has to be a balance. Because the Bible also says the Spirit of God gives us gifts as well.

And in 1 Corinthians 14, verse 1, we are told to earnestly desire spiritual gifts. Just like I earnestly desire to be a totally loving person. Just like I earnestly desire that my heart is always filled with the joy of the Lord, no grumbling, no bad moods, no complaining.

Like, I want my heart to always have the peace of God in me. That's the fruit of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace, etc.

I must also earnestly desire the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We can say the fruit of the Spirit is for myself. The gifts of the Spirit are for others.

So if I'm thinking only of myself, and only of how wonderful a testimony I'll have, if I'm full of love, and full of joy, and full of peace, it's a pretty selfish Christian life. I must also seek the gifts of the Spirit, which are none of which are for me. If God gives me the gift of prophecy, it's not for myself, it's to bless other people.

If God gives me the gift of healing, it's to bless other people. If God gives me any gift, it's for others. See the example of Jesus.

It's not that one is more important the other is not. Both are required. Of course, we would say that the fruit of the Spirit is much more important than the gifts of the Spirit.

Now the reason why I say that is because Jesus said, in the last days many will come, the last day many will come to me and say, Lord, we exercised all these gifts of the Spirit. That's in Matthew chapter 7, verse 22 and 23. We cast out demons, we healed the sick, we did many miracles, we prophesied.

Look at all the gifts of the Spirit we did in your name. And I will say to them, Matthew 7, verse 23, get away from me. Paraphrase it, you didn't have the fruit of the Spirit.

You lived in sin. You didn't live in love. You're always grumbling and complaining.

You never had any joy in your life. It's a sin to keep on grumbling and complaining. That's not God's will for a Christian.

God's will for a Christian, Philippians 2, verse 14, is to get rid of all grumbling and complaining. Make it zero in my life. It may take time, but I've got to get to zero.

It's like asking how many, if my house is full of snakes, how many of them should I get rid of? I'd say all of them. Even if it takes time, make sure you finally get rid of all of them. All grumbling and complaining.

If I see grumbling and complaining is a snake, I don't want even one in my house. Never. I want to be completely free from it.

Think of, your home will be a little bit of heaven when you eliminate these snakes of grumbling and complaining. I'll tell you this. Because you found your contentment in Jesus Christ.

So, depart from me you who practice lawlessness. So when you look at Jesus, what did he have? Did he have fruit or did he have gifts? You find in Christendom, there's so many people who emphasize, oh the fruit of the spirit brother, we must be holy, we must be holy. All these guys who talk about gifts, they're all

fanatics.

Then there are other people who look at these people and say these guys are always talking about holiness, holiness, holiness. We need the gifts of the spirit. I say let's look at Jesus.

There was fruit and gifts. Can you imagine what Jesus' life would have been like if he had no gifts? Think of the gospels. He had zero gifts.

I mean he was very loving, very compassionate, full of joy, full of peace. You admire him. What a peaceful, calm, joyful life, but no gifts.

He couldn't preach. That's a gift. Couldn't heal a sick person.

Couldn't do any miracles. Couldn't help anybody because he didn't have any gifts. What would be left in the gospels? You know that many Christians are like that? They're good people.

They're pretty useless in the church and in society because they haven't sought for gifts. Because their life, thinking I must be Christ-like, I must get everybody to admire me, I'm a nice Christian. But we must passionately desire spiritual gifts.

I remember when I was a young Christian I was just 22 or something, 21 when I was baptized, and I read in the Bible in 1 Corinthians 14, earnestly desire spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. I said, okay, I'm going to do that. I don't know, I had a tale of all that it means.

I couldn't explain it then like I can today. But I said, Lord, I'm going to seek you for the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially that I can preach God's word in a way that will challenge and comfort and build up. That's what it says in 1 Corinthians 14.

Prophecy is. You know, God gave it to me. God gave it to me by the time I was 23 years old.

I don't think I'd ever have got it if I hadn't sought it. You know what the Bible says? You don't have because you don't ask. It says that in James 4. You don't have because you don't ask.

You ask and don't receive because you ask with wrong motives. You ask so that you might be known as a great man of God. Again, you don't get it.

But if you ask for the glory of God, Lord, for your glory, I want this power. Turn with me to Luke chapter 3. We read here that Jesus, when he was being baptized, he was praying. Have you noticed that? Luke 3.21. Maybe you didn't notice it.

It says in Luke 3.21 that when he was baptized, as John the Baptist was dipping in the water, he was in prayer. Hardly anybody was praised when they were being baptized. But Jesus was.

As he was... While he was being baptized, he was praying. What was he praying for? I know what he was praying for, even though it's not written there. Because whatever Jesus prayed for, he got immediately.

That's why I know. He prayed and the heaven was open. And the Holy Spirit descended on him.

That's what he was praying for. Father, now I'm beginning my ministry. Anoint me! Even Jesus needed.

You don't have because you don't ask. And so, he was anointed with the power of the Spirit. And when he was anointed, he went into Nazareth.

It says in the next chapter, chapter 4, verse 16. He went to Nazareth and he opened the book and began to read, preach. And now he says... He got the answer to the prayer.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. Now, this is not talking about... You know, the Spirit of God was always within Jesus from birth, giving him love, joy, peace, the fruit of the Spirit. But now he came upon him, anointed him to serve others.

And if you read Luke 4, 18-19, not one thing is for himself. That's the thing I want you to notice. Gifts are not for yourself.

They're for others. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, what for? He's anointed me for what? To preach the Gospel to others, the poor. To proclaim release to others, the captives.

The recovery of sight to others, the blind. To set free others who are downtrodden. To proclaim the favor of the ear of the Lord to others.

So fruit is for myself and gifts are for others. And I need both. There's a balance.

If I find myself lacking in one, I need to develop that part which is lacking. There's beauty in balance. So Jesus had fruit and gifts.

And all of us, my brothers and sisters, God doesn't give us all the same gifts. He gives us different. 1 Corinthians 12 says he gives one to one and one to another just like the little finger does one thing and the heart does something else and the kidneys do something else and the ears do something else, the eye does something else.

Different functions. There are many, many functions in the body and all of us have got different functions but every part of the body has got some function. There are two things.

My hand needs power and health. At the same time, the ability to function as a hand. So it can't do what the eye does because it's a different function.

But it needs life. So it needs life and function. That's what all of us need.

We need to say, Lord, what is the gift you've given me? It may take time to discover it. For me, it took many years to discover what exactly was the gift God's given me but I sought earnestly for spiritual gifts. So there is another area of balance.

And coming to that, when you think of the body, here's another area where we need to be balanced. We need to know what it is to function individually, connected to the head, and cooperatively connected with the body of Christ. It's balance.

It's like, you see, this little finger, it can move on its own, all these fingers, because they're connected to the head. This one's connected to the head. The head says move, it moves.

But then it also has to function along with this right hand. It doesn't have to function with the left hand, but it has to function with the right hand because it's a part of the right hand. So God wants each of us to have

an individual connection with him, Jesus Christ, who's the head.

At the same time, to work together with that particular local church with whom he has put us. I mean, the other local church is also part of the body of Christ, but this finger happens to be here, not there. So when this hand moves, this finger moves.

But when this hand moves, this finger doesn't have to move. That's a picture of how God puts me in a local church, where I have to work together with people in that local church. Now, a lot of Christians are just floaters.

They never function together with any local church. They don't want to, because they don't like being subject to anybody. They say, I'm only subject to Christ.

It's like this little finger saying, I couldn't care less about this hand or anything, I'm just subject to the head. What about when the hand is moving here, and the little finger says, no, I don't care about the hand, I want to be here. How can that be? The little finger stays here, while the rest of the hand moves there? It's not possible.

I have seen such deception in all these individualistic Christians who say, I'm a member of the worldwide body of Christ. Wonderful. But what about the local body? Are you a part of that? That is the balance.

An individual connection with Christ as a head is important. I mustn't be such a slave that I don't know what to do except what my elders tell me. I have no individual connection with Christ.

That's wrong. Equally it's wrong to say, well, I'm connected with Christ, there's nobody else. I'm not part of any local fellowship, I'm not going to be subject to any local leadership.

But there was never any Christian like that in the first century. They were all part of local churches, they were elders over them, whom they were subject to. They were subject to Christ, and they were also subject to local elders.

We read in Hebrews 13, and verse 17, Hebrews 13 and verse 17, Obey your leaders, those are your elders, and submit to them, because they keep watch over your soul, as those who will give an account one day to the Lord. So let them do this with joy. Of course I have to be subject to the Lord as an individual, but then I'm also, God puts me in a local church to work together with them.

Now I know this has been abused in a lot of places, cults for example, cult groups, the leaders are virtual dictators. They control every part of your life, they tell you how to spend your money, whom to marry, where to live, that's dictatorship. We're talking submission to an elder is in matters related to the church, not in related to your personal life.

Whom you marry, and what house you're going to take, what job you're going to take, is your own business. You can consult an elder if you want, but he's not the one to tell you whom you're going to marry, where you're going to live, what job you're going to take, or as ridiculous as telling you what shirt you should wear. There's an individual connection with Christ in most areas of your life, but God has also called us to be corporately in a local church where in church matters we've got to submit to the authorities in the church.

That's what it says, obey your leaders. There again there's a balance, my individual connection with Christ and my submission to the elders. If one of these is missing, think of yourself as a man whose one side of his body is muscular and the other side is skin and bones.

Discover which side is skin and bones in your case. There are some people who are such slaves to their elders and pastors and prophets that they can hardly do anything without their elder telling what to do, where to go. Shall I take this job? Shall I not take this job? Shall I go here? Shall I go there? They've got the other side of the body muscular and one side skin and bones.

So there's balance. You find Christians of emphasizing one side or the other side, the beauty is in balance. So that's another area.

And we can think of many, many areas like this where when I'm not balanced, I become ugly. Think of our home life. Ephesians 6 and verse 4 says fathers, bring up your children.

Again see the balance? In the discipline and instruction of the Lord. It's beautiful to me. Since I read scripture carefully, I find scripture so perfectly balanced.

It's not only instruction. It's not only discipline. There are a lot of godless worldly fathers who keep on disciplining their children but they don't teach them one thing about God's word.

Then there are others who instruct their children in the Bible and all that but don't discipline them. How are you going to bring up your children? Instruction and discipline. In our own life, our heavenly father instructs us through the Holy Spirit, through his word, but disciplines us.

Hebrews 12 says if you are without discipline, you're not even a proper child. You're an illegitimate child. I've never in my life disciplined other people's children.

I disciplined my own children and I did discipline every one of my children and that's what Hebrews 12 says. If you're really a child of God, he will discipline you and if you've never experienced discipline in your life, you've got to check up whether you're really born again. That's what Hebrews 12 says.

You're not really a child then. You start complaining when you're disciplined. Why should I complain? That just proves I'm a child of God.

God disciplines me when I do something wrong and he pulls me up. Disciplines me in some way. So, a father must take time to instruct his children in godly ways, get them to know the Bible and get them to know the principles of godly living.

Not leave that to Sunday school. It's never in the Bible that it says Sunday school teachers teach the children God's Word. It's the fathers, primarily.

And if the father is a dead loss and useless, then the mother has to do it. It's like if a father is paralyzed and lying in bed, then the mother has to go to work. So, if the father is a useless person, then the mother has to bring up the children in the disciplined instruction of the Lord.

But there must be this balance. We need to teach our children God's ways and discipline them because it says without discipline they'll go astray. Very, very important.

There's no child that can ever grow up without discipline because it says in Hebrews 12 which child is there whom his father does not discipline. Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 7. What son is there whom his father does not discipline? To me, the answer to that question, Lord, I'll show you thousands like that today, unfortunately. That's what the Holy Spirit says.

Is there a son whose father doesn't discipline? It's interesting. So there's a balance here that's required. And it's not just discipline, discipline, discipline.

It's encouragement and instruction. You ask yourself, how much do you correct your children when they do something wrong? And how much do you encourage them? There must be a balance. A lot of parents quick to correct, but they don't encourage.

Hey, that was great. God's really going to do something with you. Things like this, you know, to encourage our children.

Very important. Very, very important. God himself is like that.

See Romans chapter 11. God is our example as a father. And it says in Romans 11, verse 22, Romans 11, 22, Behold the kindness and the severity of God.

Behold means look carefully at the kindness and the severity of God. These are like opposites. Kind, severe.

God is kind and God is severe. There's a balance in him. And if I'm a father like God, I must be both kind and severe with my children.

I don't want a reputation as a kind father. I don't want a reputation as a severe father. I want to be a father like God.

Kind and severe. Strict and kind. As an elder in a church, I'm like a spiritual father.

So many elders are useless elders. I'll tell you from 40 years of observing elders in many parts of the world, because they want a reputation for kindness. Brother, forget about being an elder if you want a reputation for kindness.

An elder must be like a spiritual father, kind and strict. And it's because many elders are not strict that the devil gets in. In Mark chapter 13, see, that's why God puts more than one in leadership in a church.

This one-man leadership like a pastor is never found in the New Testament. It's like having a family with only one, father or mother. You know, you talk about single fathers, single mothers.

That's not God's perfect will. God's perfect will in a family is a father and mother in which there'll be grace and truth, in which there'll be kindness and severity. One is strict and one is kind, so there's a balance.

And in a church, there'll be a balance in the elders where not every elder is perfectly balanced. None of us are. But within the eldership, there'll be a balance of grace and truth.

Within the eldership, there'll be a balance of kindness and severity. In Mark chapter 13, it says verse 34, like a man going away on a long journey, this is speaking about Christ, leaving his house, that is his church, Mark 13, 34, and putting his slaves in charge, those are the elders, in charge. Picture it like this.

Jesus gone away on a long journey to heaven and he's left his house with the elders in charge and assigning to each elder his task and commanded among the elders the one doorkeeper, especially to be on the alert. So one of the elders in every church must be a doorkeeper. He's the one who decides, hey, you're not coming in.

Sorry. Have you read this verse in Jude, in verse 4? Certain persons, Jude, verse 4, certain persons have crept into the church unnoticed. How did that guy creep in unnoticed? Because the doorkeeper was asleep.

That's how wolves get in. You don't need more than one, you don't need everybody to be a strict person, but one person must be strict. I've seen in the different churches that we've had the opportunity to plant that wherever there's a church where all the elders are sort of kind, it goes to the dogs.

You must have at least one doorkeeper. Otherwise all types of people creep in unnoticed. That's why God gives us dual and multiple elders.

Turn to Acts chapter 20. In Acts chapter 20, Paul is telling the elders in Ephesus, and Ephesus, by the way, was one of the finest churches that Paul planted. And the elders among there were some very good people.

Paul tells them, verse 28, be on guard for yourself and for the flock, because I'll tell you why I'm warning you like that. After my departure, verse 29, savage wolves will come in through the door. But remember verse 31, for three years, I kept on warning you, admonishing you with tears.

Admonishing is strictness, tears speaks of his kindness. You see the balance in Paul. He admonished, but with tears.

And he says, I know what's going to happen when I go, you five elders, let's assume there were five elders there, none of you is a doorkeeper. So the wolves will come in? Why couldn't the wolves come in during the three years I was here, Paul says. The wolves were just waiting.

We can't get in as long as Paul is there. He's not going to be there forever. Once he goes, we'll get in and destroy this church.

And that's exactly what happened. Have you read the second letter to the Ephesians? Know where that is? Revelation chapter 2. There you read how that that wonderful church was ruined because the doorkeeper didn't do his job. There are many other areas like this where balance is what brings beauty.

When Paul, when the Lord wanted to trust out the first missionary work in the early church was in Acts 13. And the Lord said, Separate me, Acts 13 to Barnabas and Saul. You see how always two by two.

In the Old Testament, it was just Isaiah, just Jeremiah, just John the Baptist, one man Abraham, one man Noah. That was okay for Old Covenant. But in the New Covenant, it's never like that.

It's never one man. At least two. Leaders are important.

Think in any church that you can think of, any church in the world that you can think of. You just take away the leaders. There are two leaders or three leaders.

Tell me what's left of that church. It's like think of any family that you can think of with growing children. You take away the father and mother.

What's going to happen? Father and mother not as equally important as the children. Father and mother are more important. In a church, it doesn't matter if some of the others drop out, but if all the elders disappear, that's the end of a church really.

They're a very important function. And so he says, separate me, not any Tom, Dick, and Harry, Barnabas and Saul for my work. Because in Paul, you see a very strict person, ruthless.

You know, he's the type of person who would turn around to people and say like this in verse 10, you full of deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, enemy of all righteousness. Will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord? He spoke that to a magician who was trying to turn somebody away from the Lord. Barnabas would never speak like that.

This is Paul. And it says here in verse 9, just in case you think it was his own opinion, filled with the Holy Spirit, so that you don't have any feeling that it was Paul sort of getting angry. Paul filled with the Holy Spirit.

Do you believe a man filled with the Holy Spirit can speak like this to somebody? You full of deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all unrighteousness, enemy of all righteousness. If you heard somebody speak like that, you'd say that guy's not filled with the Spirit. He was.

We need to see what fullness of the Holy Spirit is. Barnabas, on the other hand, was... Do you know that Barnabas was not his name? It's a very interesting story. His name was Joseph.

And they renamed him Barnabas, you read in Acts 4.36. He was a Levite. Acts 4.36, his name was Joseph. And the apostles said, hey, you are such an encourager.

We've got to change your name to encourager. That's what Barnabas meant. Imagine that there are some brothers like that.

They have tremendous gift of encouragement. Barnabas was like that. Anybody he met, he'd just encourage them.

But he couldn't build a church. He needed a Paul. Paul couldn't build a church without Barnabas.

It had to be truth plus grace. And that's the best church, which has got the balance of a Paul and a Barnabas. And that's why the devil tried his best to split them up, and he did.

It's a sad thing, the history of Christianity. People who should be working together, and they had a disagreement on John Mark. Paul, the strict man, says, we're never going to take that fellow again.

He came with us and halfway he dropped out. We don't want such people who are not willing to face toughness in serving the Lord. Barnabas says, hang on, man.

Give them another chance. Who was right? I said, both were right. They needed to work out some solution.

The devil succeeded in splitting them and separating them. We need encouragement, and we need strictness, and many other areas like that. When we go out and do evangelism, we must bring them disciples.

Evangelism and discipleship, both are important. It's not enough just to sit here and say, we're going to make disciples. We must also be evangelists.

We must seek to witness to others in our place of work, neighbors, relatives. Maybe if you're the shy type, maybe you can give them a book or a tract or a DVD. There are many ways of witnessing evangelism, seeking to reach out.

We mustn't just sit and say, oh, well, somebody will come along to the church. We are the ones to do evangelism, to bring others, to invite them, to hear the gospel, share with them, and not just bring them to Christ, but make them disciples. There's another balance, evangelism and discipleship.

And you find some churches emphasizing evangelism, some churches emphasizing discipleship, which is right, both. There are other areas like this, like family and church. How much time do I spend in home, church? There must be a balance there.

Home and work. You know, the wonderful thing about being filled with the Holy Spirit is God will give us a balance in all these areas so that I'm a balanced Christian. That's the wonderful thing about being led by the Holy Spirit.

There are no rules that can do this job, but the Holy Spirit can. So let's bow our heads in prayer. Heavenly Father, as we bow before you, we pray you will give us grace to see the areas.

We come short so that we can concentrate on those areas and really seek to see the glory of Jesus, the part of the glory of Jesus we are missing out on. We don't want to see what other people are missing out on. We want to see what we're missing out on.

And we want to earnestly pursue that. We haven't attained, like Paul, we say we haven't attained, but we forget how far we have attained, pressed towards the future, to lay hold of all that you laid hold of us for, the glory of Jesus fully to be ours. Help everyone here, Lord.

We believe you have a tremendous purpose for every single person here. You want everyone here to be an overcomer. You want everyone here to be a balanced Christian.

You want everyone here to be a functioning member of the body of Jesus Christ. Give us that faith to believe that you're eager to help each one of us to fulfill our function. We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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