

Balanced Doctrine – Sorrow and Joy

Acts 20:27 (ESV)

²⁷for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

- *Paul summarizes his ministry by saying that he presented to them the whole plan of God and he did not withhold anything from them because of the fear of being criticized or rejected.*
- *Sometimes Christians can feel pressured to not share the whole counsel of God because of social pressures or seeking to win the favour of even fellow Christians.*
- **2 Timothy 4:3 (NKJV)**
- ³*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;*
- *Paul warns that the time will come when Christians will not strive to hold onto healthy doctrine but instead will seek teachers who will teach them those things that suit their own fancy or validate their own ungodly lifestyle.*
- *Our lives are to conform to the Word of God and we are not to try to conform the Word of God to justify our lifestyle.*
- *The worst type of wrong doctrines are the ones that are the nearest to the truth.*
- *The doctrines that are blatantly in error are easily spotted.*
- *The worst type of wrong doctrines are the ones that are not wrong in what they say but in what they fail to say.*
- *If we teach only about Heaven and never address the issue of Hell and eternal damnation then we leave open the door for the error of universalism – everyone will be saved.*
- *If we teach only about God's love and never about God's holiness and purity then we leave open the door for the error of sexual and moral impurity and even depravity.*
- *If we teach only about the responsibility of man then it will lead to self-effort, anxiety and an inability to trust God.*
- *If we teach only about the sovereignty of God then it will lead to irresponsibility.*
- **Matthew 11:28–30 (NKJV)**
- ²⁸*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

- ²⁹Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

- ²⁸Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

- *Christ is inviting us to be freed from a life that is filled with hardship and heavy burdens and to experience His rest.*

- ³⁰For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

- **“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me” – The way we find rest is by taking on Jesus’ yoke and learning from Him.**

- **The Greek word for “yoke” is ζυγός zygos and it means a yoke that connects two animals together but it also has the meaning of a scale or balance used to weigh objects.**

- *When Christ says, “take My yoke upon you”, it can refer to two things that are essential for us to find a rest that will sustain us through our entire lives:*

1. We need to be complete yoked with Christ and totally submitted to Him and keep pace with Him in every way.

2. We need to submit to Him and learn from Him so that our doctrine and understanding is perfectly balanced.

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- **Balanced doctrine is healthy doctrine.**

- **An over emphasis in one area produces imbalance.**

- *The key for us to have balanced doctrine is the centrality of Christ.*

Colossians 1:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

Any doctrine, no matter how Biblically based, that does not have the central focus on Jesus Christ is some how unbalanced and will result in a loss of rest and peace.

Proverbs 11:1 (ESV)

¹A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight.

- *A false balance in terms of doctrine is where people try to correct unbalanced doctrine by overcompensating for it and actually producing unbalanced doctrine in the opposite direction.*

Two principles that need to go hand in hand for us to have balanced doctrine are sorrow and joy.

- *Doctrine that majors on prosperity and God's blessings will lead to self-centeredness and selfishness.*
- *Doctrine that majors on suffering and trials leads to passive Christians who do not step out in faith to expect great things from God.*

Matthew 6:31–33 (NKJV)

³¹“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’

³²For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

³³But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

- *“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” – The central theme of our theology should always be about seeking God and glorifying Christ and not being self-seeking nor self-centered.*
- *“and all these things shall be added to you” - However even though our lives are not to be centered around ourselves but Christ, God is not unaware of our needs and He delights to meet our needs and to bless us.*
- *God did not save us to give us wonderful lives but He saved us to glorify His Name.*

- *However, if we live lives whose central goal is to glorify Christ it will result in us having wonderful lives.*
- *The unbelievers seek to please themselves and therefore to pursue the prosperity of this world but we, as believers are to first seek to glorify Christ then the things we need in this life.*

Philippians 3:8 (NKJV)

⁸Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

- *Paul says he counts all his worldly success as rubbish so that He may pursue Christ with His entire being.*

Romans 15:3 (NKJV)

³For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me."

- *If Christ sought to please Himself He would never have gone to the cross and die the most painful, horrible, cursed death.*
- *However, Jesus sought to please the Father and also sought to do this for our benefit so we could be saved.*
- *Are we willing to follow Christ's example and not seek to please ourselves but to please God?*
- *Why is the Gospel so maligned by non-believers?*
- *Because so many Christians are self-seeking.*

2 Timothy 2:4 (NKJV)

⁴No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

- *We are not to seek to please ourselves but the One who has redeemed us.*

Philippians 3:10–11 (NKJV)

¹⁰that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

¹¹if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

- *“the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” - Paul understood that his goal was not prosperity but Jesus.*
- *“if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” - Paul knew that the key to a wonderful overcoming life is not to shun suffering but to walk with Jesus through times of sufferings.*

“The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10) - A theology without joy lacks strength.

Romans 5:3–4 (NKJV)

³And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;

⁴and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

- *A theology without sufferings lacks depth.*
- *A theology that majors on prosperity leads to disappointment.*
- *A theology that majors on suffering leads to lack of expectation and passivity.*

Psalm 30:5 (NKJV)

⁵For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; Weeping may endure for a night, But joy comes in the morning.

Psalm 126:5 (NKJV)

⁵Those who sow in tears Shall reap in joy.

- *Sorrow and suffering actually produces an enduring joy.*
- *If we try to cut out the suffering we will end up cutting out the joy.*

Luke 10:19–20 (NKJV)

¹⁹Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

²⁰Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”

- *Walking through sorrow teaches us to find joy in the Lord and not in the external things.*
- *If our joy is based on the external things it will result in a joy that is as fleeting and as unreliable as the winds of our circumstances.*
- *If our joy is based on the eternal things then our joy will be as stable and reliable as the unchangeableness of God Himself.*

Mark 4:33–41 (NKJV)

³³And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it.

³⁴But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.

³⁵On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, “Let us cross over to the other side.”

³⁶Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him.

³⁷And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling.

³⁸But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?”

³⁹Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, “Peace, be still!” And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.

⁴⁰But He said to them, “Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?”

⁴¹And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, “Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!”

Mark 4:33–41 (NKJV)

³³And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it.

- *Jesus spoke to the people in parables but not in plain speech.*
- *Why does God many times speak to us in parables and not in plain speech?*

³⁴But without a parable He did not speak to them. And when they were alone, He explained all things to His disciples.

- *“and when they were alone He explained all things to His disciples” – For us to understand what God is really saying requires two things:*

1. A willingness and commitment to spend time with Him alone and learn to hear His voice.

2. A willingness to not be self-willed but surrender our wills to Him and become His disciple.

The disciples were now going to experience a storm and even though this was an actual event it also was a parable from which we all can learn something about God and how we are to relate to Him.

³⁵On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, “Let us cross over to the other side.”

- *“Let us cross over to the other side.” – God has a plan for our lives that He intends to fulfill if we are willing to trust and obey Him.*

³⁶Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him.

³⁷And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling.

- *A storm arose even though the disciples had been fully obeying Jesus’ commands and were travelling to the place Jesus had set for them.*

John 16:33 (NKJV)

³³These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

- *Jesus never promised we would not have storms in this life.*
- *Jesus, in fact, assured us that there would be times that we would face great storms, however He said we could have peace and inner joy even through the storms if we kept in mind that He has overcome the world and He is the resurrected Saviour.*
- *There are many reasons we can experience trials, sufferings, illnesses and set backs in life.*

- *Sometimes it can be through our own wrong choices and self-will.*
- *However, we see many examples in the Bible where godly men and women who were following the leading of God experienced trials and sufferings even though they were being led by the Spirit.*
- *Jesus Himself was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by Satan for forty days. (Matthew 4:1)*
- *Jesus was not tempted because He had missed God but it was part of His spiritual journey to fulfilling the will of the Father and become the Saviour of all mankind.*

³⁸But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, “Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?”

- *“But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow” – The stern is the part of the boat from which one steers.*
- *Even though there may be times we feel God is not with us or life is out of control we need to know that He is the One that is steering our boat.*
- *“But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow”*
- *The Greek word for “asleep” means literally “to lie down to rest” and therefore by implication means to fall asleep.*
- *The Greek word for “pillow” literally means “something for the head”.*
- *“Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?”*
- *Looking at the Greek we can grasp why the disciples questioned if Jesus cared for them.*
- *It was not that Jesus was fast asleep and then the storm arose and He was unaware of it, but in the middle of a storm, Jesus stretches out in the back of the boat takes a pillow lays His head on it and is preparing to go to sleep.*
- *As Jesus was lying down in the back of the boat with His head resting on a pillow, in the midst of the storm, He was actually acting out a parable.*

- *Jesus was showing them how they need to come to a place of fully trusting God even in the most difficult and chaotic circumstances.*
- *The scriptures do not say simply that Jesus was asleep in the back of the boat but that His head was resting on a pillow.*
- *We need to come to such a place of rest and confidence in God that no matter how great the storms around us; we don't need to have a storm within us.*
- *"Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"*
- *The disciples misunderstood what Jesus was trying to teach them.*
- *The disciples thought that Jesus' apparent inaction reflected a lack of care and concern for their well-being.*
- *Jesus was trying to teach them, by His example, to have total confidence in the perfect love and power of the Father.*
- *³⁹Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.*
- *The Greek word for "peace" means "silence, muteness, involuntary stillness, inability to speak rather than a voluntary refusal to speak."*
- *The Greek word for "be still" means "to muzzle".*
- *The Greek word for "calm" means "tranquility."*
- *Jesus stood up against the storm and rebuked the wind and the sea so that it was forced into silence and tranquility resulted.*
- *This is also a parable on how we are to deal with the inner turmoil that can arise in our hearts.*

- *We are to stand up against the storms within and silence them, whether they are caused by spiritual attacks of the enemy (the winds) or the circumstances of life (the seas).*

⁴⁰But He said to them, “Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?”

- *Jesus did not rebuke them because they did not have faith to silence the storm without but because they did not believe in the goodness of God and failed to silence the storm within.*
- *Jesus was not teaching them that they should have enough faith to quiet the winds and the sea every time external circumstances become difficult.*
- *Jesus was teaching them that they could cultivate such a faith and confidence in God that they can have peace within their own hearts independent of the external circumstance.*

The apostles eventually learned to be men of great faith and to walk with God in total peace through whatever circumstance they would face.

- *Jesus didn't teach them that they could quiet every storm without.*
- *All the apostles except for John died a martyr's death.*
- *They didn't have the wrong theology that if they had enough faith they would never encounter suffering and hardship.*

However, each one of them believed they were going to “the other side of the lake” and that God's perfect will for their lives could be fulfilled and no man could thwart it if they were willing to fully trust Him and obey.

- *The disciples had such faith that they were willing to pray for the sick and see them healed.*
- *The disciples had such faith that they were able to see God perform great miracles through them.*
- *The disciples had such faith that they were willing to preach the gospel and see the power of God released even if it meant imprisonment, torture and even martyrdom.*

⁴¹And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, “Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!”

- *However, before the disciples could be those great men of faith they needed freedom from their superstitions and distorted views of God.*

If we teach only that God wants to bless us and that we will never face sickness, financial challenges, persecution and even possibly martyrdom we are painting a rosy picture of life that is not Biblical and will lead to disappointment.

If we teach only that life is filled with sorrow and pain and only in Heaven will we live in victory and experience the power and glory of God then we are creating passive Christians that will never pray for the sick, believe for great miracles and see the Church fulfill the Great Commission.

- *Pray that God would change our hearts if we have been seeking to live selfish lives and begin to live lives to please Christ.*
- *Pray that God would change our hearts if we have become passive Christians and begin to step out in faith and pray for the sick, pray for the miraculous, pray for God to transform lives and nations.*
- *Pray we would develop the spiritual discipline to daily spend time with Him to hear His quiet voice among all the noise of this life.*