

Remaining Biblically Balanced

by James Jennings

This sermon emphasizes the importance of maintaining biblical balance in various aspects of Christian life and ministry. Using the example of Apollos, who needed correction to be more accurate in his teaching, the sermon highlights the dangers of imbalances such as overemphasis on certain truths, neglecting essential aspects of doctrine, and the need for humility and correction from others. It stresses the significance of being accurate and balanced in teaching, having zeal and love, understanding God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, and avoiding extremes in various areas like legalism, lawlessness, and views on healing. The sermon encourages self-examination, interpreting Scripture with Scripture, and seeking the faithful guidance of God to stay balanced and address imbalances within the church.

Scripture: Proverbs 11:1, Ephesians 4:15, Colossians 2:6, 1 Corinthians 14:40, 2 Timothy 2:15, Galatians 5:1, James 3:17, 1 Peter 5:5

Topics: "Biblical Balance", "Humility in Teaching"

Description

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Transcript

Acts 18:24 Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. Or mighty in the Scriptures.

He had been instructed in the way of the Lord and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus. Though he knew only the baptism of John, he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

And when he wished to cross to Ionia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed. For he powerfully refuted

the Jews in public showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

Let's pray. Father, I just ask, Lord, for Your help that You would guard the door of my lips and give grace right now in this message to Your people. And Lord, we just pray You'd be with all the churches everywhere this morning.

Lord, help us. Meet with us here today. We have longed for more of Yourself.

We long to be more like Jesus Christ. Lord, please help us. Amen.

I want to start in Acts 18. I'm not going to be expositing these verses here, but this is where I want to start. Here was Apollos.

He was a man who had a gift. Clearly, it says he was an eloquent man, competent, mighty in the Scriptures. So he knew the Scriptures.

He could speak. Secondly, he had been taught. Verse 25 says he'd been instructed in the way of the Lord.

So he had teaching. He had been taught. He was not ignorant.

Third, he had zeal. It says he was fervent in spirit in verse 25. Fervent in spirit.

This man had zeal. He had a passion for the Lord. That's a good thing.

Fourthly, it says he taught accurately the things concerning Jesus. So this man, he taught truth in an accurate way. He was accurate.

He wasn't teaching heresy. He taught accurately. Yet, despite all of that being true of Apollos, there was truth he did not know.

Truth he did not know. His message was lacking a proper emphasis. He was not biblically balanced, you could say.

Priscilla and Aquila heard him leaving something out. They took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. You hear that? More.

More accuracy. More precision according to what the Scriptures teach. They sought to expose to him that he was not seeing something more fully as he should.

Now what specific area? It says in our verses here, it says he only knew in v. 25 near the end, he only knew the baptism of John. And you could say, well, what's that? Well, you look at v. 19, v. 4. Paul said, John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the One who was to come after him. That is Jesus.

So, Apollos was telling men to repent and look to Christ. That's good. But it says he only knew of John's baptism.

Which implies he didn't know of Christ. What does that mean? When you look at Matthew 3, don't turn there, it records John saying this. John says, I baptize you with water for repentance.

But He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. So one possibility of what was happening here as they're teaching Apollos is that they're emphasizing to him that Christ sends the Holy Spirit for you to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Baptized in the Spirit. So maybe they told him about the person in the office of God, the Holy Spirit. He didn't really have all that truth yet.

He didn't know all of that. He wasn't as biblically balanced as he should be. He had some emphasis that were not entirely right.

But the point is, Apollos didn't know it all. There were things he did not know. And a couple of observations on this.

First, we see here that such a man as Apollos didn't have it all figured out. And I say such a man because this was a gifted man. This was a man who God was using and even he didn't have it all figured out.

He had areas he was lacking in. It says right here, he knew only. And you ask yourself, what areas do I only know this aspect of the truth? And I don't know this aspect of the truth.

I'm not balanced. Secondly, we also see here the importance of others correcting and explaining to us things in which we need to understand more accurately. The Proverbs say, iron sharpens iron, and we are to help one another as another man sharpens another man.

And Priscilla and Aquila saw that even though he lacked understanding, he was still doing much good, and they brought him aside and they graciously dealt with him to help him have greater accuracy of what the truth is. The third observation right here is this. We see the importance of humility.

This man who was eloquent in speech was able to actually listen to this couple's correction. Listen to what they had to share with him. He wanted to be more accurate, more precise, more balanced.

Fourthly, after having explained away more accurately to Apollos, he desired to go to Ikea, and verse 28 says this, for he powerfully refuted the Jews. So here, Apollos had faced some correction, something being exposed that he wasn't seeing, and he more accurately understood the truth. And then he wants to go somewhere and they encourage him to go to Ikea.

And when he gets there, it says he more powerfully refuted the Jews in public. Powerfully. I would ask this, could this imply that after having gained a greater knowledge about the Holy Spirit being sent to baptize us to be filled with the Spirit, could this imply that it led to more power? Especially when it seems that's the truth he came face to face with.

Whether powerfully implies that or not, this is my point, we are all better off if our accuracy increases. It says, Apollos greatly helped those who through grace had believed. The more balanced in truth we become, the more helpful to others we are.

And in the reverse, the more imbalanced we are, the more inaccurate we are with the truth, guess what? The more harm we do to others, and we're not that helpful. So, you could say that after this encounter, Apollos is more biblically balanced in doctrine which affects how one lives. He understood the way of God more accurately, as it says.

More exactly or perfectly. He now had a clearer understanding of truth. There was something he was leaving out and not teaching on, but now he could teach on that.

He was more balanced. So that was kind of an introduction. I want to speak this morning on the need to maintain a biblical balance.

And this word balance, since 2013, has constantly been in my mind as a Christian. Just feeling like, Lord, am I balanced? I asked my four-year-old daughter how to define balance and Selah did this. She goes like that.

I said, yeah, that's right. You don't go too far to the right, what happens? Splat. You don't go too far to the left, what happens? Splat.

Balance is maintaining this upright position where all my emphases are proper according to the Scriptures. Even right before this message, I was in the bathroom line talking to someone and he was mentioning how we always need to be looking to Christ. He's our example.

But then it's like we have to counter it with the truth that Paul says, look to those who imitate Christ and follow their example. So I look to Christ and I look to those who are looking to Christ. Both things are true.

I can't have one and get rid of the other. I've got to have both. I'm looking for balance biblically.

So, when you're out of balance, you're no longer accurate. You're not precise. You're not correct in your presentation of biblical truth.

When we talk about balance, we often think of a pendulum, a weight that is hung from a fixed point and it swings back and forth like a pendulum in an older clock. And we don't want it to swing too far to the left, too far to the right, one extreme to the other. We want it to remain at a center point where it accurately tells time.

To be biblically balanced is to not fall into over-emphasizing something to the degree that the Bible does not. For Apollos, it seems Priscilla and Aquila heard him not emphasizing Christ baptized in His Father from the Holy Spirit. This is due to lack of knowledge and understanding.

Yet often, our issue is not a lack of knowledge on a matter, but we just flat-out neglect that which we know and we put too much emphasis on something the Bible does not. The imbalanced person falls into just emphasizing one aspect of something and they leave out the other side. And you know this, sometimes you hear a sermon and you say afterwards that sermon was imbalanced.

Now, it might not have been. The real issue might be with you. But there's times we hear a message and we say it felt like it was imbalanced.

Well, what do we mean by that? We mean there was not enough emphasis on a certain aspect of that truth. It was too focused on something and it left certain things out. As believers, there are multiple ways we can turn away from the Bible to the left hand or to the right if we're not careful to do all that the Lord has written.

Unlike Apollos, we have a complete Bible, so I think you could say that we have less excuses in our mistakes. So is being balanced a big deal? Imbalances can crash you spiritually or it could crash others. Our imbalances can wrongly portray how our Lord Jesus Christ is to the world.

It can do damage. Our imbalances can possibly hurt people and lead them astray. You know, one question we should always be asking ourselves, well, not always, I should be balanced there.

Sometimes. We don't want to be overly introspective, but we should ask ourselves, am I in any way by how I live telling people they can go further in a direction than the Bible allows? We must ask ourselves, where is an imbalance in my life? Or maybe not ask ourselves, ask others. Because often, we're the ones with the speck in our eye and we can't see.

And they can see clearly to help us. Then when we find that imbalance, guess what? We need to not counteract and react and swing to the opposite side and go too far in the wrong direction. A.W. Tozer said, truth out of balance is heresy.

Now, I read that and I thought, is that a balanced quote? Well, some may say it's not. I don't know entirely where he said that in context and what he was referring to. But in many ways, truth in many areas, when you lose balance, it does become heresy.

It does become damnable. Iain Murray said of Lloyd-Jones, volume 2 of the biography, page 422, for ministers as well as other Christians, Lloyd-Jones regarded a lack of balance as one of the main dangers. Preachers need to know themselves and to counter every tendency to lopsidedness in character or interest.

Lloyd-Jones is also known to have said, it doesn't matter what extreme you're on, the devil is always on the other end of it. What does he mean? Meaning if you go too far to the left, Satan is there. Too far to the right, Satan is there.

Satan wants to lure us away from a biblically accurate, balanced position on what the Bible teaches. He wants us to major on one thing too much and then distort the Scriptures as a whole. Henry Frost said, Satan in seeking to destroy the peace and usefulness of the children of God has many methods of attack, and none is more effective than when he attempts to lead them into unbalanced and extravagant positions.

This last is particularly true when he is able to approach them along the line of self-interest, where he may tempt them to take up with given theories because it's personally profitable for them to do so. I think Frost is right. He hits on one of the subtle motives that leads to imbalances.

That is taking up positions that personally profit. For example, it could profit someone to hold to an overly authoritarian view of leadership in a church. Why? So as to allow them to control people and their consciences.

And that benefits self. They like that power. So they go to an extreme where the Bible doesn't because it personally benefits them.

Now, maybe a couple other comments. I'm clarifying, trying to balance a sermon. This may not be a balanced sermon on being biblically balanced.

It's difficult. Number one, now to clarify, this doesn't mean we need balance in all areas of our lives. The Bible doesn't qualify everything and add another side to it.

The Bible says to love God with all your heart. It doesn't qualify that statement. So to be balanced on that truth is to emphasize it as much as the Bible emphasizes it, and that is to be balanced.

However, in some areas, people are calling for balance. They're actually calling for compromise. There's no balance needed when it comes to killing sin in our lives.

Many overact to the doctrine of eternal hell and come up with unbiblical views all the while saying they're wanting to be balanced. They're compromising. They're not being balanced.

Second point of clarification. Now, we all recognize the Bible is not as clear as we would like on different matters. And we have to draw principles in order to discern certain things.

We need to take Scripture as a whole. If there's one text that adds another aspect to something, you cannot ignore it. That text is there to balance out the overall take on that subject.

Thirdly, when we speak of balance, we recognize that depending upon a situation and a person that you're dealing with, a certain emphasis is needed. Meaning, the counsel you give to one person might be perfectly balanced for them, but if you gave it to another person, it would not be balanced or fit the occasion. You think about Job's counselor.

There was truth in different things they shared, but it definitely was not balanced counsel for him for the situation. Their words were not fit for the occasion. Most of them.

Fourth point of clarity. We don't just need to be accurately balanced at one time. You see, as Christians, it's not like you get saved and you're fighting to become balanced and you finally get that perfect balance and it's just like, good, I don't have to worry about that the rest of my life.

I figured that out. The Bible doesn't speak that way. We don't effortlessly remain the same all the way to the end.

We have to maintain balance. We have to maintain a life of going through all of the Scriptures and having a correct overall perspective of truth and not be too narrowly focused in one area. So, ask yourself this.

Number one, is there an area you're going too far? Maybe ask yourself first, do you even recognize that you have imbalances in your life? Maybe you don't see them. But acknowledging that we've not reached perfection implies I acknowledge there's areas in my life where I'm maybe not in perfectly balance. Is there something you put too much emphasis on that the Bible doesn't? Is there truth that you're being too one-sided on and you're not giving balance to the other side? Where are my inaccuracies? Because I have them.

I want to know where they're at. Because if imbalances and inaccuracies can hurt people, I don't want to hurt people. If imbalances and inaccuracies can misrepresent God to people, I don't want to do that either.

So thank God we're in a church where iron sharpens iron and we're all becoming more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I've got a list of 17 areas that we need to be balanced in that have come up to me. So it looks like I have two minutes for each.

Now, Charles said nine points at the conference, but I can't do a series. Because I wouldn't be able to do a balanced series. This list no doubt could be greatly added upon, and I'm sure it could be balanced out itself.

And I lack time to dive into each one of these. I'm not going to say the point and then dive into it and run to all these Scriptures and just show that. I don't have time to do that.

If anything's going to be imbalanced as I go through this list, you might feel like I'm quoting too many different quotes from men. Now, the reason is I've read through these biographies in these last two years, I've marked down any place where someone brings up this issue. And it's been interesting to me to see through church history where different imbalances came.

Because we can go to the Bible and say, well, there's this imbalance here with circumcision. People trying to add circumcision, distorting the Gospel. But what's been going on through church history, that matters to us.

So in trying to quickly deal with these, I'm going to be quoting different things. So first, number one, we need to be accurate and balanced in our teaching on all aspects of salvation. Very basic.

What do I mean by that? Think about Paul. After teaching on the glories of justification in Romans 5, he balances out that truth by coming and emphasizing in Romans 6 that our old man has been crucified with Christ. And we are a new man who is now obedient from the heart.

Paul doesn't just focus on justification. He brings in truth that deals with regeneration. He deals with both doctrines here.

He shows that both are true. And he needed to do that because as he says, what do we say? Do we continue in sin that grace may abound? He recognized if he just shows one aspect, people have this question, so he's had to answer that question by showing another aspect. Sadly, too many teach justification only and leave out regeneration and the new birth.

How many of you heard justification that you're legally declared righteous based on the righteousness of Christ being imputed to your account? How many of us knew that in our former churches? Most of us did. But many of us did not hear about regeneration, the new birth, that we are new in Christ. Their imbalanced teaching of the Gospel has led to millions of people who profess faith in Christ but have no transformation in their life.

This often happens as people overreact to error. You think of the Catholics teaching work salvation, people overreact. Focus too much on faith.

Think about Martin Luther. It's said that he made an attempt to remove the book of James from the canon of Scripture because he perceived it to go against us being saved by faith alone. That is an example of a wrong overreaction that can happen due to prominent false teaching that someone is facing.

You see the error? You go to the other side. But like my daughter, you've got to keep it in the middle. You've got to be balanced.

You don't want to fall in either direction. Number two, we need to be balanced and have both knowledge and love. I realize that's basic.

I realize Brother Jesse just dealt with that at the conference to some degree. But if you think about 1 Corinthians, in one way, it really deals with balance in a certain way. Paul says, if I have prophetic powers, I understand all mysteries, I have all faiths so as to remove mountains, but I have not love.

I'm nothing. So I can have all these good ingredients, but lack this ingredient, and I ultimately have nothing. J.O. Frazier, missionary to the Lisu in China in the 1900s, said it is possible to overemphasize almost anything, however good it may be, that the Apostle Paul believed it possible to overemphasize knowledge.

His first letter to the Corinthian church shows in more than one passage, they say that knowledge is power. But this, I feel, needs to be qualified. In the spiritual realm, it is clearly not true that knowledge always imparts power to keep a man from falling away.

Look, there's a lot of people out there. Knowledge has puffed them up. They have no love.

They have all this truth, and truth is good. But that doesn't make you a Christian. Martyn Lloyd-Jones fell into this in his own life.

Volume 1 of his biography, page 219. He admitted to this danger of being imbalanced. He says in 1949, I think was a real turning point.

That's when I got my true balance. I had become too intellectual, too doctrinal and theological, because when I came to London, I suddenly found I was the teacher. The theologian.

And it tended to make me lose my balance. And then Lloyd-Jones says this, although that had started in Sanfields by reading Warfield. So he acknowledged when he started reading B.B. Warfield, guess what? He got imbalanced.

Was there good truth in those readings? Yes. But he recognized he got too much emphasis in this. So we can become off balance by the books we read.

Not this book. Not our Bibles. Now, if you just focus on certain areas and you don't take all the truth as a whole and examine these different verses, you can definitely become imbalanced.

People may say, well, what I'm saying is biblical. Again, you can't leave out certain verses, certain truths. You've got to put those in the equation and rightly interpret them and interpret Scripture with Scripture.

Another place I was thinking this whole issue of love and knowledge, I was thinking of Paul's prayer in Philippians 1. In a way, he was praying for balance. It is my prayer for you that your love may abound more and more. But he didn't just pray for that.

He says, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you might approve what is excellent and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ. So Paul recognized that they need this ingredient, this ingredient, and that ingredient. You can't just have love.

You can't just have knowledge. They need all of this. As George Whitfield said, I want to have a proper mixture of the lion and the lamb, of the serpent and the dove.

Some of us have too much lamb and not enough lion, and others are all lion and not much lamb. But to have the right balance, that's what we're talking about. Thirdly, we need to be balanced in the area of the truth of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility.

This is an area new Christians often become imbalanced in what they emphasize. They find out about the truths of the sovereignty of God and they overemphasize that. John 3 does say, a man is supernaturally

born again and it happens as the wind blows where it wishes.

But we've got to balance that out. If you read further in the text, Jesus looks at Nicodemus and He says to him to believe and he will not perish. So Jesus gave no place for hyper-Calvinism.

The idea that men have no responsibility to believe because they're dead in their sins. Jesus made it clear men must believe. Now, again, to use Lloyd-Jones, he fell in this too.

Hear Lloyd-Jones' people love him. He had his own inconsistencies. In his early years, Lloyd-Jones was imbalanced in this area.

Page 191 in volume 1. After preaching once, an older minister came up to Lloyd-Jones and said this, I can't make up my mind what you are. I can't decide whether you're a hyper-Calvinist or a Quaker. Lloyd-Jones assured him, I'm not a hyper-Calvinist, and inquired, why did you make such a statement? He replied, because you talk of God's action and God's sovereignty like a hyper-Calvinist and a spiritual experience like a Quaker, but the cross and the work of Christ have little place in your preaching.

Biographer Ian Murray records, there was a shrewd element of truth in this observation. And Jones preached so strongly, Ian Murray says, that spiritual change is sovereignly given, not dependent upon man's own efforts, that while his message gave hope to the convicted, it did not direct them with sufficient clarity. That's the issue with balance.

Am I sufficiently clear? It didn't direct them with sufficient clarity to faith in Christ as the God-appointed means of relief. The result was that the note of appeal which closed many of Lloyd-Jones' sermons was not fully orb'd. It included such commands as pray for the rebirth.

Pray for it without ceasing. Pray until you've experienced it. But in stressing human inability, he did not give equal emphasis to man's responsibility to believe on Christ for justification, nor show with sufficient clarity how that justification flows from the acceptance of Christ's atoning death.

And that was a long quote. But the point is, Lloyd-Jones. Men respect him.

He had imbalances. You read him, you could actually end up following some of his imbalances. Should we read good books? Yes, but we better be careful.

These men weren't perfect just like us. We need to make sure, examine things with Scripture. So Lloyd-Jones, in his early years, he grew.

Just like Priscilla and Aquila came to Apollos, this person went to Lloyd-Jones. It sounded like he was kind of shocked. Hyper-Calvinist or Quaker? What? What are you saying? But he had the humility to see there was truth in that.

Fourthly, in missions, you need balance. Too many ministries are all compassion-based. They neglect preaching.

Others preach, preach, but show no concern to clothe the naked and the hungry. And you think about our brother over in China. I remember how he said here he was going to preach somewhere and his wife saw a lady fall on the ground and people were walking by ignoring the lady and his wife said, let me out of the car so I can go and help the lady.

And her husband is saying, no, I've got to go preach. And she went to grab the door. And he says he hit the automatic lock and locked his wife in the car.

So she couldn't go help that lady. He was imbalanced. And he says when God got him out of the picture, now his wife could actually go love people.

So in missions, you need compassion. You need preaching. You need all of these aspects to come together to have proper emphasis.

And then when you get it, you've got to maintain it. Fifthly, in counseling someone on overcoming sexual sin, we need balance. There's so much that can be said here.

Does 1 Corinthians 7 talk about getting married and can help you? Yes. But some emphasize that too much, but that's not a cure-all. You need to mention both sides and not neglect the heart of the matter.

Or, too many emphasize, get an Internet filter. That's going to be the answer. They totally neglect the root of the heart.

They totally neglect why did Joseph... If anything, the Bible doesn't emphasize Internet filters. It actually emphasizes Joseph fearing God and that's why he flees. And it emphasizes Job made a covenant with who? An accountability partner? No.

Job made a covenant with God that he would not look upon a woman with lust. He lived in the fear of God. So is my counsel for someone struggling with a sin, is it biblically emphasizing it? And even there, when I made that statement, does that condemn Internet filters? Well, no.

There could be a place for it. But you've got to get all these things there together where you're emphasizing it in a balanced way for that person whom you're dealing with. And my counsel will vary depending on who the person is.

And my counsel was balanced based upon what they said. Sixly, some go, they get imbalanced when they're in a big mega church. Easy believism.

You know, it's got a carousel in the building like a church in San Antonio has. And they look at that and they get saved and they say this is crazy. We need to only meet in houses.

So they go from being in a mega church to being in the house church only movement. Again, that's overreacting. That's not being biblically balanced.

Seventh, some are too introspective. Some are not introspective enough. Some, they're always examining themselves or looking at their feelings.

Well, there's a place to examine yourself and test yourself. But you don't want to do that too much. You don't want to do that too little.

Eighth, some are too loose on their doctrine of assurance of salvation and some are too strict. When you say to someone, how do I know if I'm a Christian? Someone might say things that are definitely not getting the full picture of the Bible on assurance. And some might say things that are taking it to an extreme because of error.

Lloyd-Jones, near the end of his life, this isn't something he was mistaken on. He comments on another man's imbalance. Page 741, volume 2. Near the end of his life, he's reading this book by John Owen on the glory of Christ.

And Jones said this, It's done me great good and been a great blessing to my soul. I feel at times he tends to go a bit too far. We're not saved by our love to Christ.

At times, Owen almost says, unless you are longing to be with Christ, I doubt if you're a Christian. And Lloyd-Jones says that's going too far. Now, you know, I read that quote and I think of Hebrews 9. He'll come to save those who are eagerly awaiting for Him.

So is it true that true Christians eagerly longing for Christ? Yeah, there's truth there. Owens, he says, was so concerned about those who taught you don't seek evidence of salvation. And Ian Murray says this, The comment by Lloyd-Jones was characteristic of his balance.

He longed for more of the felt presence of Christ, yet he always insisted that our feelings play no part in the basis of peace with God. You hear that? Lloyd-Jones is trying to be balanced. Feelings, yes.

Basis for salvation, no. Owens kind of makes it sound like it is the basis for salvation. So he's trying to be balanced.

Proper emphasis. What is this? Ninth thing. We need a balanced view of the Holy Spirit's presence and power.

We have two extremes, even today. The extreme of extreme charismatics who will go into cemeteries and lay on graves and believe there's going to be power from the dead person coming into them. You've got all crazy stuff out there.

And then you've got dead orthodoxy. You've got men who have crusades to have people come up and heal them. And then you've got those who go to the other extreme and say, you know what? God's not going to heal anymore.

But we need to find a biblical balance on these issues. Lloyd-Jones commented on this and he said the new Pentecostal movement, he said the danger of it was its tendency to excess and fanaticism. And then the danger of, you could say, orthodoxy was the danger of the second to defend the attitude which saw no need for any major change.

We don't need more of the Spirit's power. Everything's okay, they would say. And he said deadness is more common than excitement.

You see, in one generation, a certain error may be that which people are more prone to due to the prominent errors that are abounding. So we always have to be guarding against these things. A tenth thing, some churches put too much weight on church confessions.

They put them on par with Scripture. Okay, then you've got another extreme. People who have no structure on what they believe at all.

So some, it seems, idolize confessions, and others, they don't have anything. They're just kind of, well, we believe the Bible, but why not sit down and try to say what we believe the Bible says using verses to some degree. Rolfe Bernard declared this.

He said, any time a man subscribes himself to a human system of theology, human, he is a dead man. He is no longer able to think and he can no longer study the Word of God with a free mind. He is boxed in his system and can go no further.

Is that quote balanced? It is indeed true. If your confession is held too highly and you put it on par with Scripture to where you're quoting that instead of Bible, then obviously, yeah, you're getting to a point where you're not going to see your blind spots based upon the confession. An 11th thing, some are too judgmental and some are cowards and don't correct anyone.

The Bible talks about severely reproofing, right? The Bible talks about gently correcting. The Bible talks about using a rod. The Bible talks about all sorts of speech.

I mean, being balanced in speech. Wow, what a need! Am I being gracious enough? Am I being strong enough? Even as parents, we struggle with that. Did I respond rightly to my kid based upon what they did? Was I too strong? Was I too soft? Where's the right balance? What right emphasis should I have in this situation? Lord, help me.

Christ was perfectly balanced. In 2013, Chuck Volo came and did a sermon called The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. And in part, it dealt with this issue of balance.

And the Lord Jesus was the One who was perfectly balanced in grace and in truth. As you look at His life, you never see an inconsistency where He emphasized something too much. Or was a coward and emphasized something too little.

A 12th thing, we need balance to not fall into the extreme of legalism or lawlessness. Legalism or lawlessness. I think this is a big one.

We shouldn't take our liberties too far and cause others to stumble. Or, we shouldn't take our convictions too far and set them up as laws for others' consciences. Because that will cause them to stumble too.

I like what Conrad Murrell said on this. I think it was an article called Legalist or Libertine. Conrad said, it's not Christian liberty that is threatened by today's decline.

And I think that's still true 30 years later since he wrote that. I don't think Christian liberty is the big threat today. Our issue is not our Christian liberty is being threatened by the watered-down theology.

Conrad says, rather, it is Christian holiness that is under assault. The real threat comes from liberalism's zeal to obscure truth and error. Good and evil sin from righteousness to absorb Christendom into the Puritan, putrid leaven of this world so that no distinction may be made between believer and unbeliever.

And he goes on to say this, I can wholeheartedly sympathize with reaction against a gnat-straining, nitpicking brand of legalism among modern fundamentalists. I speak of a sort of external righteousness which is authenticated by meticulous Sabbath-keeping, penny-splitting tithing, public praying performances, rigid specifications on hair, where and how long it grows in clothing. We had one of these well-meaning zealots, a pastor in one of our summer Bible camps, confess the Holy Spirit had convicted him of nakedness because he wore a short-sleeved shirt.

If the bare forearm provokes evil lust, how much more pretty women's bare face? And Conrad says, put a sack over your wife's head. Then he balances it out. But these quasi-legalists have a point.

What godly person can attend a church service and not be in some degree outraged by a number of seductive-looking females flaunting themselves? You've got to have a balance. Do we want legalism in the church? No. Do we want stumbling blocks in the church and immorality and temptations? No, we don't want either.

And right there is where balance is even key. I don't want to go outside of the Bible. You need to get people enforcing dress codes.

The Bible, when it deals with these things, it doesn't do that. You don't get some strict thing. To do that is to emphasize it to a point.

The Bible doesn't. And it is to become legalistic, as he said. So, often legalism happens when you overreact with how to deal with sin.

Men create a list of rules to deal with the problem. They turn people's eyes upon law, law, law, law, and not Christ, Christ, Christ. The more we're overwhelmed with the love of Christ, the more we want to obey Him.

Thirteenth thing, when it comes to unity, some are too broad with the ministries they approve of and co-labor with. Others are too narrow. They isolate themselves.

They view everyone as compromising and divisive. And you say, well, why don't you recommend that brother? Well, he said this. Wait, that's not that big of a deal.

But then you have others who they recommend people and you say, why are you recommending him? He teaches this heresy. And they say it's no big of a deal. So again, there's a balance there.

You feel it. I want unity. I want to be together for the Gospel.

But I don't want to be together for the Gospel if the group of people who are saying they're doing that or having heirs come in that are of such weight that it actually really could damage the essentials of the Gospel. Fourteenth thing, what about humor and laughter? What does the Bible say on that? Some partake in humor and laughter at times. It makes you cringe.

It feels kind of... it wasn't appropriate. But then others, they won't even grin at the most basic comment. That was a basic comment and you guys were laughing, so that must have... Jesus was a man of sorrows.

I loved Tim's Bible study years ago on Christ being a man of sorrows. Because again, that's really not our issue today is we need more sorrow. Now I realize in focusing on that, we could go too far.

But you know what? If that's really the issue, there's not enough sorrow, there's just too much happy-dappy, then we need to preach on that. And if it gets too far, we need to focus over here. Tony Sargent wrote a book examining Lloyd-Jones' preaching on page 139.

He said this, when Lloyd-Jones preached, just when you think there's no hope of ever being able to laugh, and at the same time being spiritual, Lloyd-Jones checks your premature conclusion and he attends to the other balance. He proceeds to do full justice to the Lord's teaching. And that's how we stay balanced.

We do full justice to the Lord's teachings. And he said the Scriptures and the development of a sanctified personality. Now, I was trying to think.

Maybe someone who maybe became imbalanced in this area. And Conrad Murrell wrote an article called The True Place of Christian Laughter. In Granted Ministries, a website we appreciate, they posted the article.

But on everything they post, they have their take. And sometimes they'll critique what they post. This is what they said.

This is the only article we've encountered which directly confronts Western culture's obsession with comedic entertainment and related sins. And which seeks to develop a biblical doctrine of laughter and joy. On the one hand, we think Conrad's approach restricts laughter too narrowly in some ways.

You see, they're saying they felt like he took it too far. But, we also think he raises many strong points which never receive any attention and for that reason, we commend that you read and consider this article. So again, we can restrict something too much, especially when it's being overly abused.

You know how we need God's grace. Fifteen paying views on healing. Are we balanced? Are we not? Henry Frost wrote a book on miraculous healing.

I so appreciated what he said. He said, it is my impression that often those persons who've considered the subject of miraculous healing have been extremist opposing it as a whole or extremist on endorsing it as a whole. When neither the one nor the other is justifiable.

It is my hope and prayer to avoid any extreme which may go beyond what is God's revealed truth. Sixteenth thing, what about views on the family? Boy, that's a big imbalance today. You know, you have the whole movement, the patriarchal movement out there, and one of their beliefs is the unmarried woman should always be living or working in the home of their father, husband, or guardian.

They think it's sin if you let your daughter leave that home. Do they have Bible for that? Is this biblical? They run to the patriarchs in the Old Testament. That's what's called the patriarchal movement.

One of these men, Bill Gothard, Conrad Murrell remarked of him, and he said, in making the husband the woman's sole covering, the offspring unconditionally submit to his parents' will and the unmarried state whatever his age. He creates a sort of patriarchal potpourri that is alien to the New Testament. In light of the rampant spirit of the rebellion today, and especially in the view of Gothard's initial crusade for young people, this is an overreaction that is understandable.

But we have hardly improved the situation when we swing error from one side of the ditch to the other. That's one thing we've got to do as parents. I hear some parents say they grew up in a certain movement where there was all this immorality, and they get saved.

And then they go to the other extreme where we're going to shelter, shelter, shelter, and get a farm and hide out there and keep our kids concealed. Does the Bible do that? Ryan Fullerton's sermon years ago at the conference on bringing the prostitute and these people into your home and loving them and serving them, and people got offended at that because they felt like, oh, we shouldn't do that. Well, Jesus ate with sinners.

Again, there's a balance. There's so many factors. Who is this person? What is the situation? But we can overreact as parents and do something that ultimately is harmful to our children.

Seventeenth thing, I guess the last thing that I had, I know you could have a list of a hundred things. And it was just what about seminary for pastors? To go or not to go? Different views. Different people say, well, the disciples were uneducated men.

They had been with Jesus. Yeah, and you better be with Christ if you're really called to the ministry. But they discredit seminary entirely.

Well, there's bad things about seminary and there's good things about it. I can't cover it all, but we need a balanced view. What good can come from this? What bad can come from this? What are the dangers? Why are people even writing articles called How to Stay Saved while you go to seminary? Well, clearly, because people will go there.

They get too focused on intellectual truth. They lose a heart that loves Christ. And they start to drift.

So, Ichabod Spencer wrote about that. He said in his day, the church must have no ministers but seminary ministers. And he said that exclusive preference is wrong.

And eventually, balance came further as the years went by. He said these two hobbies of the age will get old and worn out by and by. You know what's not going to get old and worn out? The cross of Christ, the Gospel, Jesus Christ advancing the Gospel.

So we need to be warned, and balances destroy churches and movements. In Father of Faith Missions, Anthony Northgroves ran into a Moravian settlement. The Moravians! The zealous missionaries! What were they like now? There's 1,200 of them.

Northgroves was disappointed. He said the settlement was no longer a missionary station, but simply a colony of craftsmen. The experience of such Moravian communities led Northgroves to wonder if they had laid too much emphasis on external order and regularity, and their religious disciplines took the place of a personal relationship with God.

And now you have those 1,200 Moravians sitting in their little colony making their woodcraft things and not sending people to go and die for Christ. So entire movements can derail because of an imbalance. It may not affect the first generation as much as the next, but eventually, the exclusive preference that some group has gets taken further and further along.

Where are imbalances? As a church. What are they? We need balance. We should feel it.

We should feel it. Just like some of you are feeling, I keep quoting too many men. I know.

I want balance. I'm going to quote one more. Ian Murray in his biography.

Again, this is church history. It's kind of looking at some of that. Murray says this of Ryle.

Page 135 of the New Biography. There is much to be learned from Ryle's teaching with respect to keeping a right proportion in the presentation of the truth. It's no small thing to both state biblical truth and to keep it in a right relationship with other collateral truths.

One doctrine magnified out of proportion to the others will limit the usefulness of any ministry. Similarly, a secondary truth consistently delivered as though it was a main truth will produce unbalanced Christians. Truth needs to be stated with the right degree of emphasis in relation to other biblical teaching.

No teacher is perfect in this area. Murray says, but Ryle is a valuable example. A young Christian taken up Ryle is not going to be diverted into any hobby horse.

Ryle will not be found pressing a subject which was only of special interest and significance at that date. Now, I appreciate that quote, but when I read Ryle's biography, I kept feeling like I was screaming as I read it, leave the church of England! So, was it true? To some degree it was. So in closing, five minutes, so let's just ram through this really quick.

First, how do you remain balanced? First, recognize when you hear balance, you should inwardly feel the reality, Lord, help me. Secondly, to be balanced, you must make sure your balancer is in balance. You won't be balanced if your balancer is not in balance.

You know, they make drones, and with drones, you have to balance your propellers. Well, they sell a balancer. Well, the first thing when you get the balancer, it says you need to make sure your balancer is balanced, or else you won't balance the propeller's weight properly and it will lead to a crash.

And Jesus is our ultimate balancer. John 1.14, as Chuck Volo hit on, Jesus is full of grace and truth. It's a glorious sermon.

He was not too hard. He was not too ungracious. He was not fearful of saying hard truth.

He was perfectly balanced. He was the perfect example which causes us to worship and causes us to want to imitate Him. A third thing, how do I remain balanced? Is this truth I believe the Bible teaches in any way undermining another truth that the Bible teaches? Am I testing, interpreting Scripture with Scripture? Fourthly, you should ask yourself this.

According to the Scriptures, is this thing non-negotiable? That is not open to discussion or modification. If it's not, then this thought over in this verse, it's not going to modify this thing. If it's pretty clear, it shouldn't be modified here.

Fifthly, you must have humility. You won't be balanced by having an unnecessary, proud, knee-jerk overreaction which dismisses every aspect of some certain position without thinking it through. Defensiveness will not lead to being balanced.

Evidently, Apollos heard the couple's counsel and he grew. Iron sharpens iron. The sixth thing you need in order to stay balanced is you need to have a faithful God.

And we do have a faithful God. Thank God. Before the conference, I had interviewed Kevin Williams.

He's seated right there. And we were talking about this issue of imbalances and Kevin said, the Lord's always shown me and been faithful to me when I have got off balance. And normally, by seeing people who are obviously Christians, godly men, who have a different opinion than me and are not off balance like me.

And you begin to realize, hang on a minute, there's maybe something wrong with me here and we've got to have that humility. The seventh thing, you must not overcompensate. We often counteract our own imbalances and go further to the other side.

So, where are you imbalanced? Where am I imbalanced? Where am I emphasizing things wrongly? Where are you emphasizing things wrongly? These are questions you should ask. Where is the church?

Could we be off? It takes effort to push a heavy pendulum that has become stuck back to its normal position, someone said, and that's true. And lastly, one way to grieve the Lord is not just by being imbalanced yourself, but by not dealing with imbalances that you see at large.

As O'Nettleton, page 350, in his memoirs, he said this, during revival, irregularities are prevailing so fast and assuming such a character in our churches as infinitely to overbalance the good that is left. These evils sooner or later must be corrected. Think of the evil of taking liberty too far or going in the legalistic route.

You've got to correct it. Somebody must speak, or silence will prove our ruin. Fire is an excellent thing in its place, and I'm not afraid to see it blaze among briars and thorns.

But when I see it kindling where it will ruin fences and gardens and houses and burn up my friends, I cannot be silent. Let's pray. Father, I just pray, would You please help us as a church, help us as individual believers to maintain biblical balance, to have right emphasis, to have a right focus.

Lord, help us to know Your Word even on these 17 things. Lord, every one of them, we could go to the Bible and try to look at all different angles of Scriptures and come and say, this is what I believe the Bible teaches on this specific truth, and I'm hoping this is a balanced view of that. Lord, we could say that.

And so, Lord, would You please help us to rightly divide Your Word. Keep us from error. Keep us from our blind spots.

Keep us humble. Lord, help us as a church even to counter the imbalances and the errors of our day, that they would not burn up good that is out there like Nettleton said. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/RVprisUaHqM.mp4>

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