



Home : Sermons : May 6, 2007

Living in the Balance of Scripture

Colossians 2:20-23

May 6th, 2007

Luke 11:37-43 - ³⁷ And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat. ³⁸ When the Pharisee saw *it*, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner. ³⁹ Then the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. ⁴⁰ Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? ⁴¹ But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you. ⁴² “But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. ⁴³ Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces.[NKJV]

Introduction

If you have been a Christian for any length of time, you will know that just about anything can be taken too far, or given too much emphasis, or not given enough. This problem of balance has been around since Adam and it will continue until all thoughts are brought into obedience to Jesus Christ.

Problems In Finding the Balance

Everybody Thinks They Are in Balance. It is virtually impossible to escape the fact that we all see the world through our own eyes and we sometimes struggle to understand why everybody else doesn't see things exactly the same way that we do. We tend to assume that our position, our understanding is the place of balance and that others, over there... and over *there*... surely, they are the ones who are unbalanced. But the truth is that if truth is found only in the eyes of the beholder, then we are left with a hopeless relativism. Instead we turn to the Word of God, which describes itself like a mirror and when we examine ourselves in light of the Word, we see ourselves more clearly. This is true not because we are wise in our assessment, but because the Word of God is something that *He wields*.

Balance Does Not Mean a Lack of True Zeal. In our modern thinking, we frequently associate zeal with extremism. If someone is zealous, they must be unbalanced. Although there are unending examples of where this might be true, you cannot condemn Godly zeal by those who have abandoned it. Titus 2:11-15 says that God has made us to be zealous but our zeal must be constrained by the Scriptures— *all* of the Scriptures.

Colossians 2:20-23

- “ The Bible clearly teaches us that the creation of a set of rules for manifesting our righteousness is of no value in restraining the indulgence of the flesh. This is because the creation of a set of rules *is an indulgence of the flesh*. Although we may not think of this first when considering what kinds of things are indulgences of the flesh, nevertheless, adding to the Word of God or subtracting from the Word of God is a fleshly activity.
- “ Notice that the Scripture teaches that these things have an *appearance* of wisdom but in fact are not wise. From the outside it looks like these things surely must please God. And the thinking goes that if God has command this...then surely He will be even more pleased when we do this... Or we will devise new ways of appearing humble but at the heart of this behavior we still have arrogance or pride. One with true humility does not look at himself, instead he looks to Christ. If you are looking at yourself and whether you see a worm or superstar, the problem is that the mind is consumed with ourselves—but true humility looks to Christ for all things.
- “ This does not mean though that God has done away with any requirements from His law. The problem is not specific commands of God because by His grace, His commands are not burdensome and we are obligated to submit to these laws by faith. The problem is when we attempt to establish our own righteousness and then impose these new standards upon others. We should be looking to the whole of the Scriptures where we do find that God has an expectation of strict obedience but later we will see that this is not always as tidy as we want it to be.

Strict Obedience

Deuteronomy 12:29-32 – God expressly forbids imitative innovations in worship.

Leviticus 10:1-2 – God struck down Nadab and Abihu for offering strange incense.

1 Samuel 15:22-23 – Saul is rejected as king and loses the kingdom because of his rebellion in taking Samuel’s place.

1 Chronicles 15:12-13 –Uzza was struck down for touching the ark when the oxen stumbled.

2 Chronicles 26:17-18 – King Uzziah attempted to burn incense before the Lord contrary to the law and was struck with leprosy

2 Kings 18:4 – Hezekiah destroyed the bronze serpent.

These are just a sampling, but they reflect the point that God expects zealous obedience to His commands and many times His commands are very specific and we are not to re-interpret what He has commanded. However, when we are talking about balance or moderation it must be Biblical or obedient balance not just something of our own devising.

The Bible is the Word of God and as such is absolute. But it is not a ready list of do’s and don’ts that we turn to and apply without wisdom. Yes, there are things that God has told us to do and not to do, and naturally we must honor Him as God and obey His commands zealously. But we cannot come to the Word of God as though it was a wooden book of lists—it is much more. It is full of everything that we need for living our lives in a manner pleasing to God by faith. While all things in the Scriptures are equally true, not everything is *equally important*, nor are all truths *equally obvious*. Some things require diligent study, prayer and

wisdom.

Perfection, Not *Perfectionism*

John 11:51 – Caiaphas is the high priest even though he does not have the lineage required by the law.

2 Chronicles 30: 17-19 – Hezekiah asks God to receive certain defiled Israelites coming to the reconstituted Passover

2 Kings 5:17-18 – Namaan received permission to escort his master in the house of Rimmon, and there to help him bow.

Matthew 12:4 – David unlawfully ate the showbread but is praised by Christ

1 Corinthians 8:4 – Christians should have no problem eating meat that had been offered up to an idol.

What Does the Balance of Scripture Look Like?

Matthew 4:4 - ⁴ But He answered and said, “It is written, ‘*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*’”[NKJV]

We should never obey just a *portion* of the Word of God. We must not subtract from the Word

We should never grant extra-biblical authorities the authority of Scripture. We must not add to the Word.

We should never obey the Word with only our mouths when yet our hearts are far from the Lord.

We should never assume interpretive authority over the Word, as though we had a right to our own opinions.

Preached by Brett Baker