

KEEPING OUR SPIRITUAL BALANCE

Intro: Several years ago I was looking through the library of a good friend of mine when I found written in the front of a book a phrase that caught my attention. Some time before he had the opportunity while at school to talk with a man that is highly respected for his knowledge of the Bible and his insight in applying it to life. On that occasion he asked this brother based on his years of experience to relate what he thought was the most important principle a Christian or preacher could remember in his life or work. And he gave the phrase that my friend had written down in his book, "Balance Is The Key".

As time has gone by I have come to appreciate the value of that statement again and again. That's true in the physical world. I believe that a key to a proper spiritual life involves a balance of two key ingredients. Talk about them for a few minutes. The need for each, their relationship to each other and the dangers associated with a lack of either.

THE NEED FOR DOCTRINAL INTEGRITY--"FACTS"

Our relationship with God is based on the revelation of truth!

Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32)

This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:3-4)

And doctrinal truth is inseparable from practice. We cannot believe and do the right things, unless we know the right things! Our goal ought to be to know the meaning of everything God says!

We cannot be too concerned with being doctrinally "right". Jesus never condemned anyone for following the law of God too closely.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. (Matthew 23:23)

Jesus supported the idea that not all truth has the same "weight"; but equally supported the idea that the less "weighty" truths be obeyed as the most important

THE NEED FOR EMOTIONAL GENUINENESS--"EMOTIONS"

Our relationship with God is equally based on a proper emotional response to His revelation.

And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." "This is the great and foremost commandment. "The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' (Matthew 22:37-39)

The condition of the heart is central to the requirements of the gospel.

Cf. the Sermon on the Mount. It is a manifesto of kingdom attitudes! It forbids anger, lust, dishonesty, hatred, ostentation, materialism, hypocrisy! It commands self-control, love, truthfulness, sincerity and liberality, complete trust in God, and genuineness of heart.

We cannot be too concerned with having proper spiritual emotion!

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF FACTS TO EMOTIONS

Emotions do not establish facts.

Jacob in Gen. 37:29-36. The pain in Jacob’s heart was real; but his conclusions were mistaken. People have said, “I would not exchange a stack of Bible for what I feel in my heart!” Beware!

Facts that are truly believed produce genuine emotions.

We love, because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

The fact of God's love produces in us a love for God and others. In fact, in one sense the platform of my sermon is a dichotomy. The issues of doctrine and emotions intertwine; one cannot really exist without the other.

A part of doctrine is teaching about emotional genuineness. To truly love God is to seek out His will made known through His truth!

THE NEED FOR BALANCE OF THE TWO

Adequate fact but little or no emotion

A religion merely of "facts" leads to stagnation and lifelessness.

If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1-2)

If we have no passion, then we are not pleasing to the Lord.

‘So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. (Revelation 3:16)

This kind of religion is unlikely to attract those searching for "meaning" in their lives.

Adequate emotion but little or no fact.

This leads to doctrinal corruption and disobedience. A dangerous theological position thrives on this principle, viz., the inner leading concept. This leads to self-deception and subjectivism. Cf. our encounters with the Mormons.

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness, (2 Peter 3:17)

but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. (Romans 2:8)

This kind of religion will attract those who are looking for substance rather than shallow sentimentality.

FINDING BALANCE IN OUR OWN LIVES

Three factors may affect the balance in our lives:

I suspect that we are all to some degree set up for an inclination one way or another. Some are more naturally emotional; other more cerebral. We gravitate toward the part of the gospel easiest to live and most comfortable for

us.

Our experience in churches tends to make us yearn for the missing element. Many people raised in the church have had decades of lifeless Bible study and are often set up for emotionalism.

Being righteous outside is easier than being righteous inside.

Recognize the need for both facts and emotions. It is not an either or proposition.

Be challenged by doctrinal debate. Persist in knowing what is "right" on what really are reoccurring issues.

Let the gospel affect your heart. Don't substitute the approval of others for God's approval. Others will judge us by our conformity to external standards; God will judge us by what we are on the inside as well as the outside. Pray for God's truth to penetrate to make you feel what you ought to feel.

Conclusion: Let's all continue the quest to be spiritual whole!