

## The Unbalanced Mind

Over the last three months I've sent out some pretty hard-hitting sermons dealing with the importance of not being connected to a church organization that has lost its way, especially those of you who are still attending a church like that. And so today I want to lighten things up a bit and share something with you that is just as important, but in a different vein. But before we get into it, I want to share the latest from our Bible worker in the Philippines.

A few days ago, I received an email from Robin and rather than tell you what he said, I'll just read his email to you. He says, "I'm so happy and quite excited to let you know that I received our ordered literature today! It took almost two months to get here but it's worth the wait. And also, about two days ago, I received our customized self-inking stamp with our ministry name, my contact number, and our web address. I'm almost ready to get out and have them distributed. Since we're still in the midst of the pandemic, and community services are springing up like mushrooms everywhere, I was impressed with the idea of giving away free disposable face masks or face shields together with our literature. This way, we're not just reaching them with the Bible truth but also helping them at least to fight the quick spread of the virus. I know that we'll need some extra funding for this project for purchase of the needed supplies, but as always, let's take this to the Lord in prayer and by faith claim the promise that He will provide."

I responded to Robin by saying that giving away face masks might be a good idea as a way to introduce the literature, and they're rather inexpensive, but face masks, in my opinion, are a control device government officials are using and are pretty much worthless to help stop the spread as is evidenced by those states that have mandates, but are no better off. But if it helps as an entering wedge to get the truth in people's hands, maybe it's a good idea, and I told him I'd have to think and pray about it, and I would ask those of you listening to do the same, and if you have an opinion about it, you might want to let me know what you think. And speaking of prayer, let's do that before we open God's holy book.

The inspiration for today's topic is taken from **2 Corinthians 3:18**, where the apostle Paul writes, "But we all, with open face (**or an unveiled face**) beholding as in a glass (**or mirror**) the glory of the Lord, are changed (**or transformed**) into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Now we're told in a periodical titled *The Present Truth, December 29, 1892* that God's glory is His character, and if we can be changed or transformed in character from one stage to another until the very image of God is replicated in us, then who wouldn't want that? As a Christian, isn't that our goal?

Commenting on the verse we just read, the Spirit of Prophecy says this in *Patriarchs and Prophets, page 91*, "It is a law of the mind that by beholding we become changed." Now let me ask you something, do any of God's laws ever change? No! In other words, this law of the mind cannot be defied. We will become like that which we focus our attention upon. And of course, this truth can have a positive or a negative influence upon our characters depending on what we choose to behold.

In *The Great Controversy, page 555* it says, "The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence." The

key word here is “Gradually.” A Christlike character doesn’t happen overnight but takes some time to develop as we behold the One who is perfect in character.

Also, *Testimonies for the Church, volume 2, page 478* says, “The mind of a man or woman does not come down in a moment from purity and holiness to depravity, corruption, and crime. It takes time to transform the human to the divine, or to degrade those formed in the image of God to the brutal or the satanic.”

And so, it’s clear that the human mind can go either way, and it takes some time for the process to develop, regardless of which way it goes. And we should know also that we cannot put it in neutral and set the parking brake. *Testimonies for the Church, volume 4, page 344* says, “Indecision (or trying to take a neutral position) soon becomes decision in the wrong direction.” In other words, if we don’t make a conscious choice to follow God, we will by default choose to follow Satan, because that’s the inclination of our fallen nature.

No one has to teach us to do wrong, because it comes to us naturally. Yes, we can learn evil from others, but you don’t have to twist the arm of our fallen human nature to get it to take a downward course, because it naturally travels downward like water on a hill. We are born with the seed of sin within us, it’s part of our central nervous system, and we’re not going to be rid of it anytime during this life. We are all naturally selfish. All you have to do is look at a child who has not yet learned how to disguise it like we as adults can do. And so, we will have a battle to fight until this mortal puts on immortality, but the good news is, we don’t have to fight this battle alone. We have a helper that has been through every trial we face, and He has given us of His Spirit that we might choose the upward path.

Sometimes the best way to find out what we’re supposed to be like, is to have a knowledge of what we’re not supposed to be like. And that’s the angle from which I’d like to approach this subject for the next few minutes. This is the same principle God uses with the Ten Commandments. All Ten Commandments are negatives, “Thou shalt not”, “Thou shalt not”, “Thou shalt not”, but if obeyed, they will benefit us positively.

What I’d like to do is look at statements found in the Spirit of Prophecy and from the Bible about how an unbalanced mind is developed and how it acts out, and by doing that we will also discover how to be balanced Christians. Does that make sense? And balance, or the lack thereof, has everything to do with being changed into one or the other of the two images.

*Manuscript Releases, volume 21, page 147* says the following, “The enemy always works through those of unbalanced minds and imperfect characters.” That also makes sense, doesn’t it? That being true, then the enemy cannot work through one who is balanced and is developing character in the right direction. And so that’s our goal, because when an unbalanced mind is joined to religion, it’s always followed by fanaticism and/or persecution. This has been the problem all through history. Therefore, it’s important to know which of the two powers is working in and through us. Is it the prince of this world, or is it the prince of heaven? So, with that in mind, let’s take a look at what the messenger to the remnant had to say about the unbalanced mind.

Notice what this next statement says about how an unbalanced mind develops. This one may surprise you. *Sons and Daughters of God, page 73*. “Flattery is an art by which Satan lieth in wait to deceive and

to puff up the human agent with high thoughts of himself. **(And when you think about it, isn't that the way the serpent worked upon Eve who committed the very first sin here on earth?)** . . . Praise, flattery, and indulgence have done more toward leading precious souls into false paths, than any other art that Satan has devised. **(Any other)** Flattery is a part of the world's policy, but it is no part of Christ's policy. Through flattery poor human beings, full of frailty and infirmities, come to think that they are efficient and worthy, and become puffed up in their fleshly mind. They become intoxicated with the idea that they possess ability beyond what they do have, and their religious experience becomes **(you guessed it)** unbalanced. Unless in the providence of God they shall be turned from these deceptions, and become converted, and learn the a-b-c of religion in the school of Christ, they will lose their souls."

Seems to me this praise and flattery starts in childhood many times. Today, so called child experts are telling parents to praise their children even when they don't deserve it, so they don't develop low self-esteem, and this false praise continues all through their school years, and when they reach adulthood and start looking for a job, they expect their employer to treat them the same way, and when it doesn't happen, they become unhappy and bad things happen. In the book *Education, page 237* it says, "Children need appreciation, sympathy, and encouragement, but care should be taken not to foster in them a love of praise."

Nothing wrong with telling a child "good job" when they have done a good job, but false praise leads to pride rather than a humble spirit, and so we need to be careful about that as parents and grandparents. And by the way, ministers are not immune to flattery any more than anyone else. And so, be careful not to flatter a minister, because if the devil can unbalance the mind of one who has been called to the ministry, many others will end up becoming unbalanced as well.

A verse of scripture that would go along with this thought is **Colossians 2:8** where it says, "Beware lest any man spoil you **(or seduce you)** through philosophy **(or sinful man's sophistry)** and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments **(or the principles)** of the world, and not after Christ." And just a minute ago we read that flattery is a part of the world's policy. And so, we must be aware of "this art by which Satan lieth in wait to deceive and to puff up the human agent with high thoughts of himself."

This next quote you might more readily expect to be something that leads to an unbalanced mind. *Counsels on Diet and Foods, page 151*, "Satan has overcome his millions by tempting them to the indulgence of appetite. Through the gratification of the taste, the nervous system becomes excited and the brain power enfeebled, making it impossible to think calmly or rationally. The mind is unbalanced. Its higher, nobler faculties are perverted to serve animal lust, and the sacred, eternal interests are not regarded."

Same book, *page 177*, "Brother H, your health is greatly injured by over-eating, and eating at improper times. This causes a determination **(which is a decreased blood flow)** This causes a determination of blood to the brain. The mind becomes confused, and you have not the proper control of yourself. You appear like a man whose mind is unbalanced. You make strong moves, are easily irritated, and view things in an exaggerated and perverted light. Plenty of exercise in the open air, and an abstemious **(meager)** diet, are essential to your health." I don't know about you, but I need as much blood flowing to my brain as possible, because with manifold temptations and all the winds of false doctrine blowing around, I want a clear balanced mind to deal with all of it.

What do you suppose happens at a church business meeting when you have people who don't have a handle on appetite? You have unbalanced minds making decisions that are out of harmony with God's will, don't you? How can it be otherwise? And this same thing is the reason for the mess we are in as a country today. We have government leaders with unbalanced minds who were voted into office by other people with unbalanced minds. The current administration in power have unbalanced minds that lean toward liberalism, it's very plain, and what I think is soon to take place is that the pendulum is going to swing as far to the right as it is now swinging to the left, and as a result there will be those with unbalanced minds making laws in an effort to correct what they see as destroying our Christian heritage, and they would not be wrong for thinking that, because that's what's happening, but they're going to go about it in the wrong way, because only false religion uses force. Wouldn't a Sunday law fit this scenario in order to force America to become a Christian Nation again? It's pretty much impossible to predict how it's all going to fall out, and I could be totally wrong, but that's the way I see it as I look at what's happening today.

Here's another quote from *Counsels on Diet and Foods, page 191*. This was written to Joseph Bates in the last year of his life, and it warns against the opposite extreme of eating too much. She writes, "I have been informed that you have taken but one meal a day for a period of time; but I know it to be wrong in your case, for I have been shown that you needed a nutritious diet, and that you were in danger of being too abstemious. . . I think that you have erred in fasting two days. God did not require it of you. I beg of you to be cautious and eat freely good, wholesome food twice a day. You will surely decrease in strength and your mind become unbalanced unless you change your course of abstemious diet." Whether or not brother Bates followed this advice we're not told, but he did die that very year. So, if you want a balanced mind, you have to eat a balanced diet of wholesome food! Not too little, and not too much. And it varies from person to person depending upon lifestyle.

*Counsels on Diet and Foods, pages 422, 423*, "Through the use of stimulants (**speaking specifically of coffee and tea here**), the whole system suffers. The nerves are unbalanced, the liver is morbid (**or susceptible to disease**) is morbid in its action, the quality and circulation of the blood are affected, and the skin becomes inactive and sallow (**or has a deathlike appearance**). The mind, too, is injured. The immediate influence of these stimulants is to excite the brain to undue activity, only to leave it weaker and less capable of exertion. The aftereffect is prostration, not only mental and physical, but moral. (**You see, it affects the whole person, body, soul, and spirit**) As a result we see nervous men and women, of unsound judgment and unbalanced mind. They often manifest a hasty, impatient, accusing spirit, viewing the faults of others as through a magnifying glass, and utterly unable to discern their own defects."

What a condition to be in, just because of the widely accepted use of tea and coffee. If a person can't discern their own defects, how in the world are they ever going to find a remedy to their problem, because it's very difficult to get through to a person in this condition. The only way I know of is through the prayer of others in their behalf. Sometimes the only thing you can do for a person is lift them up in prayer, and many times it takes years, so don't give up. The other problem is that we may not have years and years left before human probation closes, so if you want a friend or loved one to have their eyes opened, don't delay, and be persistent in your prayers like the importunate woman.

One more from *Counsels on Diet and Foods, page 434*, “Some are never really drunk, but are always under the influence of cider or fermented wine. They are feverish, unbalanced in mind, not really delirious, but in fully as bad a condition; for all the noble powers of the mind are perverted.”

Oh, how many Adventists there are today who think a little wine in the evening isn't so bad, it helps them sleep, and besides there are now so-called experts who say there's evidence that a little wine is beneficial for your heart. But what does God say? He says, “Wine is a mocker, . . . and whoever is deceived thereby is not wise.”

*Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene, pages 79, 80*, “Satan sees that he cannot have so great power over minds when the appetite is kept under control as when it is indulged, and he is constantly working to lead men to indulgence. Under the influence of unhealthful food, the conscience becomes stupefied, the mind is darkened, and its susceptibility to impressions is impaired (**that is, the impressions of the Holy Spirit**). . . Since a healthy state of mind depends upon the normal condition of the vital forces, what care should be exercised that neither stimulants nor narcotics (**that is, mind altering drugs**) be used! Tea and coffee are fostering the appetite for stronger stimulants.”

We are living during a time when mind altering drugs like marijuana are now legalized in many States for the soul purpose of raising tax revenue without considering the fact that it's a gateway drug to stronger narcotics. Very few people get hooked on heroin, or cocaine, or methamphetamines, or fentanyl without first trying so called less harmful drugs like marijuana or alcohol, and even tea and coffee as we just read. So, I appeal to the young people this morning to be very careful that you do not experiment with the so called less harmful drugs, because one wrong step leads to another and can change the entire course of your life, and before you know it you can become hooked on a substance that will rob you of your happiness in this life and more importantly, the life to come.

Now, the implications of this next statement might more directly hit home when we think of it in terms of modern technology. *Messages to Young People, page 209*, “That mind is ruined which is allowed to be absorbed in story-reading. The imagination becomes diseased, sentimentalism (**which deals with our feelings and emotions**) takes possession of the mind, and there is a vague unrest (**or an uneasy feeling and you don't know why**), a strange appetite for unwholesome mental food, which is constantly unbalancing the mind.”

What do you suppose she would say about television and movies and the Internet where you can find every corrupt and disgusting thing imaginable? Remember what it says in **Philippians 4:8, 9**? “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”

But what if we think on the false, the fictitious, the dishonest, the unjust, the impure, the unlovely, the evil report and the immoral? Will the God of peace be with us? Obviously not! These are things that unbalance the mind and unfit us as representatives of the Most High and steal away our eternal life.

Now here's one that we could spend the rest of our time together talking about, but there are other things we need to touch upon as well. *Education, page 209*, “By pursuing one line of thought exclusively,

the mind often becomes unbalanced. But every faculty may be safely exercised if the mental and physical powers are equally taxed and the subjects of thought are varied.”

There are several statements in the Spirit of Prophecy that speak of “one idea men”, which leads to fanaticism, and we have more than we need in Adventism today, don’t we? and one of the most simple definitions of fanaticism is, “going beyond what God says.” By pursuing one line of thought exclusively, even if it’s a good thing, is not spiritually healthy, because it leads to fanaticism and an unbalanced mind.

Let me tell on myself for a minute here. When I first got involved in ministry back in the mid-90s, I was studying deep into a certain subject, and my son Andy, who was in his mid-teens at the time, said, referring to me, “some people are so heavenly minded, that they’re no earthly good.” And boy, did that hit me right between the eyes. And as I thought about it, he was right, and I had to change pursuing one line of thought exclusively, because I was becoming unbalanced, and he could see it when I couldn’t.

And I want you to notice something else in the quote we just read where it says, “every faculty may be safely exercised if the mental and physical powers are equally taxed.” Before I was ordained to the ministry I spent many years in the carpet cleaning and carpet laying industry, which is very physical work, and I still have all the equipment to do those things, and over the past 25 years I’ve had to rely upon my trade from time to time to keep the ministry afloat, and that hasn’t been all bad, because physical exercise, which I need, is a very good thing and tends to a balanced mind. We all, self included, need to exercise our physical and mental powers equally and not just sit around and study all the time, or just be a couch potato.

My father-in-law, as he got older, like a lot of men, developed somewhat of a protruding stomach. Some call it a beer-belly, but it wasn’t from drinking beer, and he used to call it “his conference front”, because that’s what most of the conference ministers looked like. And here’s the point: because the physical and mental power have not been exercised equally in the ministry, as we have read, is it any wonder that we have seen the alpha/omega apostasy increasing and waxing stronger in the church like the prophet said would happen, and will continue to do so until the Lord shouts from heaven? You can read that in ***Special Testimonies, series B, page 57.***

Now back to the one idea men for a minute. In ***Testimonies for the church, volume 3, pages 33, 34*** it says, “We see monomaniacs all over the country. **(And this seems to be especially true in the independent movement for some reason)** They are frequently sane upon every subject but one. . . There are some who concentrate their minds upon one subject to the exclusion of others which may be of equal importance. They are one-idea men.”

Then there’s this next statement that explains that there is one idea we can dwell upon without any fear that we will become monomaniacs, and that is, to keep our eyes fixed on Christ. The world may think we’re a little crazy or fanatical, but not so with God. Remember what the apostle Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 2:2**? He wrote, “For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” Did the general public in Corinth think Paul was a monomaniac? probably, but those in the church who belonged to Christ didn’t think so.

**Signs of the Times, May 8, 1884**, “If you allow your mind to dwell upon the imperfections and moral deformities of others (**rather than Christ**), you will be changed into the same image. You will become deformed in character, and mentally one-sided and unbalanced. (**Now listen to the remedy**) Let the mind dwell upon the perfect life of Christ. If the thoughts are centered upon Him, and the conversation is on heavenly themes, you will be ‘changed into the same image from glory to glory.’” That’s where we started this morning, and it’s a wonderful truth that must be understood. Little by little we are becoming like Christ as we spend time with Him, or like the adversary as we spend time doing the things of his invention. Which will it be? Only we can determine if this law of the mind will go one way or the other, and it’s directly connected to our own choice.

Now here’s one for those of you who are always burning the candle at both ends. If you do that too much, the life of your candle will be cut short. **Review and Herald, November 25, 1884**, “Body and mind need rest, (**that’s one of the eight laws of health**) that the mind may not become unbalanced and excited from being subjected to a constant strain, . . . good and regular sleep should be secured, that the mind may be clear, and in the best condition possible to weigh the arguments presented and to decide between truth and error.”

You see, that’s the whole point of having a balanced mind, so we might be able to decide between truth and error. In other words, we need proper rest in order to have spiritual discernment, and what can be more important than that, especially in this day and age when the devil is walking about as a roaring lion?

Writing to someone who was burning the candle at both ends, **Manuscript Releases, volume 17, page 257** says, “You have all the responsibilities you can bear and at the same time preserve physical soundness and a calm, restful spirit. Unless you have seasons of rest, you will become unbalanced of mind, and this would cause the enemy to rejoice.”

Why do you think sleep deprivation works so well in police interrogations? It’s because when the mind becomes unbalanced by lack of rest, they can gain information that would otherwise be unavailable to them.

This next quote was written to Dr. Kellogg in **Manuscript Releases, volume 4, page 422**. “I have been shown that you are in danger, in great peril, of becoming just what the enemy desire you to be— unbalanced in mind. . . Light has been given me that you have carried so-called medical missionary work altogether too far. For a long time warnings and cautions have been sent to you. You have made this work not the arm, but the body.”

I have known this to be true of more than one person I’ve known over the years. Medical missionary work is important, but it’s the smaller part of the message, just as the right arm is the smaller part of the body, and yet quite necessary. Just try to function without your right arm sometime and you’ll see that God knew what He was doing when He gave you one. Doctor Kellogg wanted to separate the medical missionary work from the ministry and make that the body and the ministry the arm, but the prophet let him know that that wasn’t God’s plan. From what I’ve read about Doctor Kellogg’s past, he didn’t listen very well, and he will probably pay an eternal cost as a result, but God is the judge, and aren’t we thankful for that? But talk about someone who had an unbalanced mind because of his pantheistic

theories, he was the one. For whatever reason he lost the ability to be a balanced Christian, and as a result he stepped off the platform of truth and became a medium of the devil for the promotion of the new theology teaching that has now turned into the omega apostasy; that God lives in the sinner when in reality it's the enemy who abides there. You can read all about that in ***Sermons and Talks, volume 1, page 343.***

This next statement I've seen at work more than once also. The ***1888 Materials, page 519***, "Never can the heart be stirred up with envy, with evil-surmising, with evil reports, but the intellect becomes unbalanced, and cannot decide correctly any controverted point."

When you have people you thought were grounded in the truth coming up with new teachings that undermine the pillars of our faith, you can know that it's because their intellect has become unbalanced. I've seen it happen! When you have people who can't be reasoned with no matter how clear the weight of evidence, you can be certain that it's because the intellect has become unbalanced as a result of violating one of God's spiritual or natural laws, because that's the only way it can happen.

This next statement is kind of a no-brainer, but some people need to hear it nonetheless. ***Youth Instructor, January 31, 1895***, "Learned men have given lectures in which have been mingled truth and error; but they have unbalanced the minds of those who leaned toward error instead of toward truth."

Isn't it much easier to totally unbalance someone who is already a little off balance? Much easier than someone who has both feet planted firmly on the ground. That's why we need to be settled into the truth so we can't be moved.

***Early Writings, pages 124, 125*** and this will be our last Spirit of Prophecy statement. It's a little long, but one of the most important statements I'll be reading this morning that deals with the unbalanced mind and of the consequences that will surely follow. "I was shown the necessity of those who believe that we are having the last message of mercy, being separate from those who are daily imbibing new errors. I saw that neither young nor old should attend their meetings; for it is wrong to thus encourage them while they teach error that is a deadly poison to the soul and teach for doctrines the commandments of men. The influence of such gatherings is not good. If God has delivered us from such darkness and error, we should stand fast in the liberty wherewith He has set us free and rejoice in the truth. God is displeased with us when we go to listen to error, without being obliged to go; for unless He sends us to those meetings where error is forced home to the people by the power of the will, He will not keep us. The angels cease their watchful care over us, and we are left to the buffetings of the enemy, to be darkened and weakened by him and the power of his evil angels; and the light around us becomes contaminated with the darkness. I saw that we have no time to throw away in listening to fables. Our minds should not be thus diverted, but should be occupied with the present truth, and seeking wisdom that we may obtain a more thorough knowledge of our position, that with meekness we may be able to give a reason of our hope from the Scriptures. While false doctrines and dangerous errors are pressed upon the mind, it cannot be dwelling upon the truth which is to fit and prepare the house of Israel to stand in the day of the Lord."

I don't think this needs much explanation except to say, it's impossible to willingly listen to false doctrines and dangerous errors without becoming unbalanced in mind.



Really, what we've been talking about this morning is that the unbalanced mind is caused by sin, or willful disobedience. **James 4:17** says, "To him that knows to do good and doesn't do it, to him it is sin." Sin is always the reason for an unbalance mind. Whether it's a violation of spiritual or natural law, it always causes an unbalanced mind. And if our mind is unbalanced, especially in these last days when every wind of doctrine is blowing, do you think that we will be among the 144,000? Let's not fool ourselves.

Our Heavenly Father wants to write "His name in our foreheads." He wants us to be able to "sing a new song" before His throne. He wants us to be "redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb." And He wants to be able to "present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

And I can tell you one thing for sure. If we're going to be there, we're going to be balanced, and that balance has to be developed here before we get there. Jesus said, "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." In other words, we must be balanced Christians, when nearly the whole world is out of balance. That's the way it was in Noah's day. In the Spirit of Prophecy, we're told that the people of his time thought he was a crazy fanatic, but was he really? Absolutely not! He preached the same message for 120 years, and yet it was a balanced message coming from a balanced man, one of the only ones out of the millions upon the earth at that time, and Jesus said it would be the same way when He comes.

With open face, as we behold the glory, or the character of the Lord, may we be "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."