

## "EMOTION VS. EMOTIONALISM"

(I am not sure of the author, if you know let me know please)

Reading: Rom. 15:13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

### INTRODUCTION

1. Much is said today about emotions.
  - a. Many complain about the lack of emotion in the worship and lives of others
  - b. Others warn against emotionalism as they look down on any display of emotion
2. Can we have emotion without succumbing to emotionalism? I believe we must!
  - a. Emotions have a scriptural role in the life of the Christian
  - b. Yet when emotions become emotionalism, there is a grave danger

How can we have emotion without emotionalism?

I. TWO EXTREMES TO AVOID (as there is with most things) Emotionalism-Formalism

#### A. EMOTIONALISM.

1. That "better felt than told" sort of religion
  - a. Where what people feel in their heart is the main guiding force.
  - b. What they read in their Bible is secondary at best.
2. This type of worship is characterized by unrestrained outbreaks of emotion
  - a. E.g., rolling in the aisles
  - b. Bursting out in unintelligible words
  - c. Raising hands and swaying back and forth, etc.
3. Such emotionalism:
  - a. Disobeys the scriptural admonition for worship in a decent and orderly fashion - cf. 1 Co 14:40 Let all things be done decently and in order.
  - b. Overlooks the warning: "Pro 28:26 He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But whoever walks wisely will be delivered.

## B. FORMALISM.

1. In formalism there is a complete lack of emotion in worship and service.
  - a. In many cases this is reacting against emotionalism
  - b. It results a "dead pan" attitude (cold, lifeless, going through the motions)
  - c. Songs are sung and sermons preached with little reaction by those engaged
2. Such lack of "heartfelt" religion is contrary to what Jesus taught
  - a. Jesus condemned a religion in which one's heart is far removed from Him - Mt 15:7-8 7 "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.
  - b. Rather Jesus said a love for God involves the whole heart – Mt 22:37-38 Jesus said to him, " `You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment.

The tendency is to go from one extreme to another. Formalism can be avoided by remembering:

## II. EMOTION HAS A PROPER PLACE

### A. EMOTION IS NECESSARY

1. There is to be the emotion of love –
  - a. 1- Pet. 4:8, And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins.
  - b. 1 Cor. 16:22 If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!
  - c. 1 Cor. 13:1-3 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

2. There is to be the emotion of hope - Ro 12:12 2 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer.
3. There is to be the emotion of joy – Phil. 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!
4. There is to be the emotion of sorrow - 2 Co 7:10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.
5. There is to be the emotion of hate - Pro 8:13 The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate.
6. There is to be the emotion of fear - Mt 10:28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.
7. There is a place for emotion in the life of the Christian!

#### B. EMOTION MUST BE ROOTED IN THE WORD.

1. Scriptural emotions must be rooted in faith.
  - a. Such faith comes by hearing the Word of God Rom. 10:17 **So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**
  - b. This requires the use of our intellectual faculties. (must use our mind)
2. Notice how the Word of God is designed to stimulate emotion:
  - a. Reading of God's love, we should be moved to love - 1 Jn 4:9-11 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.
  - b. Told of promises awaiting us, we are motivated to hope 1 Pe 1:3-4, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, V.13 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

- c. Informed of Jesus' reconciling work, we are should be moved to rejoice – Rom. 5:10-11 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.
- d. Rebuked by the Word, it produces sorrow - 2 Co 7:8 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.
- e. Filled with knowledge, we come to hate certain things - Pro 1:7; The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction. 8:13 The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate.
- f. Reading of the warnings in Scriptures, we are moved to fear Heb. 10:25-27 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. See also: Heb. 10:31
- g. Scriptural emotions are based upon the Word of God

### C. EMOTION MUST PRODUCE THE PROPER FRUIT.

- 1. Scriptural emotions must bear fruit
  - a. The emotions evoked by Scripture are there for a purpose
  - b. Unless the proper fruit is borne, it is simply emotionalism
- 2. Notice the kind of fruit borne by scriptural emotions:
  - a. The emotion of love bears fruit in obedience –
    - 1. Jn 14:15, If you love Me, keep My commandments.
    - 2. 1 Jn 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.
  - b. The emotion of hope bears fruit in patience - Ro 8:24-25 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

- c. The emotion of joy bears fruit in sacrifice - 2 Cor. 8:2-5 that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.
- d. The emotion of sorrow bears fruit in repentance - 2 Co 7:10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.
- e. The emotion of hate bears fruit in rejecting error – Psa. 119:127 Therefore I love Your commandments More than gold, yes, than fine gold! Therefore all Your precepts concerning all things I consider to be right; I hate every false way.
- f. The emotion of fear bears fruit in departing from evil – Pro. 16:6 In mercy and truth Atonement is provided for iniquity; And by the fear of the Lord one departs from evil.
- g. Scriptural emotions will produce fruit in the life of the Christian!

Formalism can be avoided by understanding that emotions are necessary and proper in the life of the Christian. How does one avoid emotionalism? We must remember:.

### III. EMOTION BECOMES EMOTIONALISM

#### A. WHEN EMOTION BECOMES AN END TO ITSELF.

- 1. When people stress emotion for emotion's sake.
- 2. When people forget that emotions are a means to an end (not the end itself).
  - a. Emotions should motivate us to produce the proper fruit
  - b. The goal is not the emotions, but the fruit they are intended to produce
- 3. Much of what is being done in worship (even in the Lord's church) is being done to produce emotions.

If all we display is emotion, not bearing the proper fruit, we are guilty of emotionalism!

#### B. WHEN EMOTION IS NOT BASED ON GOD'S WORD.

1. One is led by the thoughts and intents of one's heart
  - a. Remember the warning of Pro 28:26 He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But whoever walks wisely will be delivered.
  - b. Consider also these warnings –
    1. Jer 17:9; "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?"
    2. Mk 7:21-23 "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man."
2. Our emotions must be rooted in God's Word - cf. Pro 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;
3. If our emotions are based upon anything other than the Word of God, we are guilty of emotionalism!

#### C. WHEN EMOTION IS THE BASIS FOR YOUR FAITH.

1. We are allowing feelings to dictate what we believe.
2. Examples: Such as when a person
  - a. Refuses to obey what we read in the Scriptures, because he "feels" it should be different.
  - b. Tries to change the meaning of a passage to support what he "feels" is right

If our faith is based upon emotions, we are guilty of emotionalism!

#### CONCLUSION

1. The capacity to feel and express emotions is a wonderful gift from God.
  - a. It allows us to respond to the wonderful truths found in God's Word
  - b. It motivates to higher levels of service in response to God's Will
  - c. But like all good things, the capacity of emotion must be properly used
2. To avoid both extremes of emotionalism and formalism...
  - a. Let our hearts be deeply moved by the Word of God.

- b. Let such emotion provoke us to bear the proper fruit God desires Rom. 15:13  
Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.