
Emotion is not Devotion

Radio Message by Dwight Porter, D.D.

HOW ARE YOU FEELING TODAY?

This common greeting exposes one of the most dominant factors in our life. To most people the height of accomplishment is to feel good. The advertisers are getting wealthy by catering to this driving passion. Young people are being led down a road of shame, being victimized by their emotions. The most popular TV program is the one that can arouse a response of fear, hate, love, or joy. America is racing-headlong toward the goal of escape from reality. It is evident in the entertainment world, the make-believe reading materials, drugs, alcohol, and the glamorized human body.

This emphasis on FEELING has crept into nearly all religious circles. The sensual beat of the night club is now heard from the platforms of our churches, Bible colleges, and supposedly Christian radio stations. (None of my money shall support any of them.) How unscriptural to use such fleshly appeal to attract others to the Savior! Such depraved methods reveal frustrated feelings and a demonstration that they are victims of a pleasure-mad, feeling-oriented philosophy in which one worships at the altar of pleasure and sacrifices everything to it as they become the servants and not masters of their emotions.

The most popular religious radio and TV programs in America today are based on this mad craze for excited feelings. Their programs contain thimbles of Scripture and barrels of experience and emotions. If one should remove "the healing attraction" from their ministry, the interest and support would diminish immediately. They are endeavoring to entertain a fellowship of sick immature people. Of course they, too, have the "beat of Hollywood" in music, method, and appearance.

The standard dictionary states that emotion is a stirring perturbation, or excitement of the mind; the power of feeling, sensibility, and sentiment. The root word means, "move out." It lists feeling as a synonym. The same dictionary states that feeling is any mental stirring, sentiment, or emotion. One of the synonyms used is passion.

Not only are people of the world becoming victimized by their emotions, but it becomes more pathetic when professing Christians live in his same realm. Their spiritual level is determined by how they feel. Their service and zeal is completely dominated by their emotions. The more tears shed, the greater the consecration. They follow the preacher who has the tear in his voice, and the congregation that shouts. To them such attraction is of greater importance than the presentation of the Word of God.

I FEEL LIKE IT

So many times, when asking a person for the assurance of their Salvation, I have heard the familiar sound, "O, I feel like it." Seldom do I hear a scripture verse or the testimony of a changed life, visible by conduct and appetite. Occasionally, there is one honest heart who says he is not saved because he does not feel like it. He heard someone state how different he felt when trusting the Savior; so the struggle and labor for a certain feeling continues with a question if he will recognize it at the proper time.

Many churches have adopted the standards and methods of contemporary society rather than those of the Word of God. The current appeal is for more interesting approaches and content, which is a plea for entertainment, rather than solid Bible study. Since when is personal happiness our prime concern? We seem to be egocentric rather than theocentric. Today's professing Christian is pursuing his own personal goal on a higher religious plane. Numbers and noise satisfies this crowd. They declare their methods as examples for all to follow.

Many people in our day are caught up in the frantic pursuit of a satisfying experience. Remember the men who turned the world upside down did not tell people about their exciting experience, nor was their burden to show how to discover the emotional experience of the spirit-filled life. Not one apostle or Bible preacher, including Paul, told of such an experience. They did not present themselves as spirit-filled men or boast of a superior spiritual attainment. The Holy Spirit (within the pages of the Bible) simply declared them as spirit-filled men. They had no preoccupation with inward experiences that produced emotional reactions in their lives. There was no programming to overwhelm emotions to produce an inward hysteria of intoxication.

Men today take the spotlight from Christ to the glorification of a religious experience under the pretext of honoring the Holy Spirit in the glorification of man by the effect upon his emotions. In so doing, they cast TRUTH down and exalt the creature rather than the creator.

BACK TO THE BIBLE

We must stop allowing feelings to dominate our being and discover what the Word of God says. Can we find one scripture verse that gives us assurance of heaven on the basis of our feelings? I would not walk across the street to hear an experience but I would walk miles to hear refreshing news from the Bible. Go ahead and beg and weep all you want; but as for me and my house, we are going to take God at His Word and get busy doing what He has told us (in His Word).

What does the Bible say about feeling? The word is found only twice in the entire Bible. The first time is in Ephesians 4:19. "Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." The word 'feeling' actually means 'senseless' resulting of a long process of hardening as shown in the 18th verse. This word can properly be translated "being past hope." The only other scripture that uses this word is Hebrews 4:15. "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Again, this word is not the same as our present day understanding. The Greek can be translated: "Cannot sympathize with our infirmities." The root meaning is sympathy.

In only seven places in the Bible will you find the word 'feel.' In four places it is talking of the sense of touch. In one place it is the lack of satisfaction. In another it does not refer to humans and in the other it is denoting experience.

Feeling and emotions are not involved when it comes to the necessary steps of Salvation. Do not misunderstand me. We are emotional creatures and God has created us with a capacity to react and respond to approaches received through our five senses. But the Bible is clear and plain that we are not brought into personal relationship with God's Son through our emotions. We do not have assurance on the basis of our fluctuating feelings.

DECEIVED THROUGH EMOTIONS

In the Garden of Eden, Eve was deceived upon responding emotionally to Satan. She allowed her five senses to dominate all other faculties. We know the horrible consequences. Her failure to obey God was the result of Satan succeeding to make her self-conscious. Notice her five senses in action in the third chapter of Genesis:

- Hear - YEA HATH GOD SAID, vs.3**
- Taste - WE MAY EAT, v.2,3**
- Touch - NEITHER SHALL YE TOUCH IT, v.3**
- Sight - THE WOMAN SAW-PLEASANT TO THE EYES, v. 6**
- Taste - GOOD FOR FOOD, v.6**

When emotions rule, pride always shows itself because of self-consciousness. "... And a tree to be desired to make one wise." (Genesis 3:6)

God gave a commandment that required obedience. The devil appealed to her desire, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. His method remains unchanged; as we see its demonstration throughout the Bible. Living according to feeling is the greatest hindrance to Godliness that we face. (Listen for it as many preachers and laymen use this unscriptural word.) "I feel." Godly living, by God's commandments, results from a Biblical structure and personal discipline. The Bible clearly indicates that God deals with our heart, mind, and spirit. "The spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Romans 8:15) To live according to feeling reflects a foreign religion and morality not found in the Bible

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-10)

These and many other verses settle forever the issue of our part in Salvation. God's glorious provision in His Son made available to us is the result of His Grace. We are not saved upon the basis of our faith. It was God who loved us and gave His only begotten Son that we might not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

Notice that it is through faith that we that we have access to this grace. "By whom (Christ) also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Romans 5:2) We are not saved by what we do, it is a matter of believing in what Christ has done for us. You cannot be faithful in order to get to heaven. Christ alone was faithful and we must believe in His work.

"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: For there is no difference." (Romans 3:22) We possess God's righteousness on the basis of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. This righteousness is unto us and upon us when we believe in Christ's righteousness. (See Galatians 2:16, 3:22) Will you take God at His Word and believe Him to do as He has promised or will you try to feel this which can only be received by faith?

HE REJOICED

Notice the result of believing in Christ! The jailer who ordered the stripes upon Paul's back now washes him and is baptized by him. (Acts 16:33) In the next verse we find them in fellowship around the table in the jailer's house. The Bible informs us that HE REJOICED. Why not? Was he not now a child of God? Had not God forgiven him of all sins? Did not God keep his promise? The jailor gave praises to God as Paul did in prison.

Here is genuine emotion that results from contact with the cleansing Blood of Christ. I want you to notice the timing. He rejoiced after he believed, for the 34th verse implies that he rejoiced because he had believed. You, too, will be happy when you believe God to do what he promised. For God cannot lie. The Bible tells us that He will remember my sins and iniquities no more forever. (Hebrews 10:17) "As far as the east is from the west has He removed my transgressions." (Psalms 103:12) Praise the Lord! I believe it! For these and many other reasons this preacher is full and overflowing with joy, thrill, and delight.

The steps are simple. First, the grace of God has already been manifested. Second, Christ was faithful on the Cross satisfying God's just judgment upon sin and meeting His righteous standards that demand perfection. Third, you can now believe God's promise and receive Christ's provision to take away your sin. Fourth, it is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to inform your spirit of his transaction. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Romans 8:16)

It is not your labor that imparts this witness. It is God's work to do exactly that which he promised. Will you, the best way you know how, believe God's Word? Will you let God take care of the witness of His Spirit? Remember, you rest upon the finished work of Christ in your eternal behalf. Faith is provided for you through the Word of God after His Spirit reveals sin through Biblical Truth. Believe God, independent of feeling, seeking, and begging. God wants to save your soul far more than you will ever desire Him to. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (II Peter 3:9)

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