

EMOTIONS

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Bracketed comments following some scriptures assist the reader in understanding the intended meaning of these verses

We acknowledge the additional works of the various Scholars and Bible Commentaries used in conjunction with the College material. This is not to say that we agree with all their theology, but we certainly value their contribution to the Body of Christ.

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EMOTIONS

EMOTIONS – DO THEY DEFINE WHO WE ARE ?

Society, infested with human psychology, has taught man to own his emotional thoughts because our emotions, it is said, reflect and even define, who we are.

Many are bewildered, hurting or a little confused, having not quite worked out their reason for living. Our modern society has a mechanism in place that deals with those we have just mentioned. The answer is to send the hurting and confused to a therapist, psychologist or counsellor, etc., so that they can help such people make sense of their scattered negative emotions. Like a painter, the professional will try to piece together from the palette of emotions they are presented with, a picture of the real person, the “real you.”

However if one bothers to look at the Book of Life, to seek the opinion of the Creator, a different picture emerges. If you turn to Isaiah 55:8 and 9, you can see what the Creator says about these counsellors and even our own thoughts in the absence of the saving, energizing Light of truth in our minds and hearts.

ISAIAH 55:8 “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,” says the Lord.

The distinction, as revealed by the next verse, is great indeed!

ISAIAH 55:9 “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

All the wrongs of this world are a direct result of the Fall which introduced sin into the world and the power thereof. This would include such mental problems as confusion, for man remains in a confused state in regard to righteousness and his place in the world until God enters his life in a relational sense. Only through Christ and the power of the Spirit can this take place.

Man deals with sin and its consequences in a totally different way than he should. Sin and its consequences should not be dealt with at an intellectual level or an emotional level, but rather at a

spiritual level. In this the Blood of Jesus Christ must be applied to man's sin in order that forgiveness from the One Who matters will come. Many also need to forgive others in order to be released from hurt and bondage. Some people who harbour sins of resentment and unforgiveness need God's power to help them forgive so they can be liberated from the effects of the past. To find himself, however, and get right with himself and his fellowman, a man must first get right with his Creator. It is his vertical relationship that must first be restored before he can properly deal with his horizontal relationships.

“. . . To find himself, however, and get right with himself and his fellowman, a man must first get right with his Creator. . . ”

Even as Christians, with our vertical relationship intact at a legal positional level, because of ignorance or doubt and unbelief, and through listening to our emotions, we often prevent heaven's power (that the Cross has afforded us) from coming to our rescue. Allowing our emotions to rule us will cause us to operate in the flesh, at best, and certainly prevent the Spirit from doing His wonderful work of leading and empowering (Romans 8:1).

Many people connect their emotions to, or even equate the full range of their emotions with, their real self. If that were true, why then when we Christians leave this physical world will nothing negative follow us, including any negative emotions? This is clear from the following description found in the Word:

REVELATION 21:3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, “Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. (This speaks about the time of the regenerated earth, when God the Father comes to dwell on the earth. These two verses also describe conditions in heaven.)

REVELATION 21:4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes (actually says in the Greek, “every teardrop,” and refers to tears of sorrow); and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain (addresses sin and all its results): for the former things are passed away (refers to the entire effect of the Fall). (E.S.B.)

Certainly we are emotional beings and are meant to be this way, otherwise we could never love or have passion. So the question is not as a person whether we should have an emotional response regarding certain issues and people. The question is whether we allow negative emotions to rule the day and to govern our behaviour. For instance, if we have a bad day full of negative emotions, we should not own these emotions, or define ourselves in terms of fear, anger or grief etc. We should not connect them to our real self. And we should know that in time they will dissipate. Sure they are connected to us - but that temporary part of us will one day dissolve and disappear. For example, in heaven we will never experience negative fear. Therefore the particular aspect of our human thinking that causes negative emotions, and indeed the emotions themselves, do not depict the real person!

“ . . . Allowing our emotions to rule us will cause us to operate in the flesh, at best, and certainly prevent the Spirit from doing His wonderful work of leading and empowering. . . ”

On the other hand, we can never think that we have immunity in regard to actions that we undertake based on an emotional state that has dictated to us how to respond - and we have succumbed to these emotions. We are always responsible for our actions. For example, in a fit of anger or rage, a Christian may attack someone verbally. Obviously they will have invited this emotion into their daily life at that time, having meditated on particular thoughts and then accepted them. The result is accepted thinking that has produced anger in that person's life - and they will live with the consequences of it. While

this unrighteous anger is not a part of the Christian's real self, and will not go to heaven with them, they are still responsible for the wrong they have done through allowing the emotion to dictate their response.

Even the physical realm can cause an impact on our emotional stability. Doctors have found that when some people take certain physical substances, let's say certain drugs, they lose the ability to resist their heightened irrational emotions, and they act on them. This is to have a low threshold of control over one's impulses, which creates many problems with resultant irresponsible and even criminal behaviour. Diet has even been known to affect some people's emotional stability, depending on their genetic flaws and predispositions. Indeed all the external and internal factors that relate to physical life in our physical body can cause an impact on our thinking and therefore our emotional responses.

When we look more closely at this subject it thus becomes obvious that while we are on this earth, our emotions are not true indicators of our true self.

Man was never designed to be where he is today - expelled from the Garden, and living on a cursed planet in a cursed body (for it will die). We still need to be separated from the effects of the curse, effects that man faces every day - but only death will bring that promise to complete fulfillment. However God has not left us without hope or power. We can deal with the issues and complexities of life if we would but trust in His Word and so lean not on our understanding, but rather on God's reasoning and wisdom. As we have seen, the Word exhorts us to:

PROVERBS 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding (your own ideas, thoughts, opinions, plans, etc.).

PROVERBS 3:6 In all your ways acknowledge Him (seek His face), and He shall direct your paths.

PROVERBS 3:7 Be not wise in your own eyes (and therefore self-sufficient): fear (reverence so as to obey) the Lord, and depart from evil.

“ . . . When we look more closely at this subject it thus becomes obvious that while we are on this earth, our emotions are not true indicators of our true self. . . ”

EMOTIONAL STABILITY

Let's get back to our original statement that emotions do not define who we are. If emotions do not define who we are, then what does?

Emotions can be a response to what you believe. And if your belief is faulty and dark, then your emotions will be faulty and dark. Therefore we can conclude that emotional stability is based on proper beliefs, and proper belief is holy, empowered belief. One can have holy faith and negative emotion. But to hold this faith, one will not accept and thus own such negative and destructive emotions.

Therefore it is not emotions but what you believe in completely and therefore trust in completely that will determine the real you - who you are and to what or to whom you are connected.

Faith at a holy level will transform and so change a person, and develop them into the person they were always meant to be. Indeed the potential of every human is to be Christlike - without the loss of one's own individual personality.

Therefore to release our true and proper personality is not about changing our personality but rather our character. When a person's character is evil and corrupt, then their personality is affected. When a person's character is more Christlike, then by God's power the potential they always had to develop into the person they were meant to be can be realized.

It is important when discussing these issues to distinguish between character and personality. Character relates to moral excellence, so that a person of poor character lacks the moral fibre and righteous principles needed to live a productive, responsible life where a concern for others is clearly apparent. The word "character" can also be used to describe the complexity of mental and ethical traits which make up an individual, or else the essential nature of a

person. The word “personality” relates more to an individual’s temperament, or their personal and social traits, in other words, how they present to others. The concept of personality is not related to morality but more to the way in which an individual interacts socially.

“ . . . Therefore to release our true and proper personality is not about changing our personality but rather our character. . . ”

A person’s character development can be very minimal, but they will still have a distinct personality, i.e. unique individual traits. However if their character changes to become more Christlike, their personality will also change to become more realized, which is to become more what they were created by God to be like.

Character revolves around morality - which is defined by God. Personality is the expression of one’s own individual personal traits.

Character can be developed and changed by God’s power at work within us, engendering Christlikeness. God’s power will then also help release a person’s proper personality, i.e. their realized self.

Psychologists deal with emotions which are not part of the real person. They think that man can be changed and his problems solved by addressing those aspects which are not related to his essential makeup. This, of course, constitutes a bandaid approach to any “psychological” problem. Man is not just a conglomeration of emotions but a spiritual being with a soul whose needs must be dealt with spiritually. This means that what needs to be worked on is character - and this is a spiritual issue, for character relates to God and morality. Therefore the first thing needing to be addressed is not feelings but sin. This involves us acknowledging sin as sin, and identifying with Christ on the Cross so that our sin may be dealt with. The answer for the spiritual issue of character is repentance, the Blood of Christ and forgiveness. Then must come the teaching from God’s Word about His will and His principles.

Personal development is not about changing our personality but rather about stripping away the layers of bandages that we have allowed life and our own thinking to entomb us in. This happens one

bandage, one bondage, at a time - if we allow God to strip them away. This process will gradually expose the real, realized you.

Dark emotions are something man was never meant to partake of. But in the Garden, man did. Through the Cross, Christ has brought us back to the Garden to walk with God in the cool of the evening. In this we are able to return to good, holy, proper emotions. But only when we seek, find and embrace the Master will the truth of any matter that matters be revealed, and the power needed to walk in this truth be supplied.

Fallen man, even if located in a perfect environment (without evil and darkness), would sin and fail, for God says that man's heart is evil and that he is a sinner from birth (Romans 3:23; Isaiah 64:6). So the environment is not the answer for man's plight. Rather it is his heart that must, by the Holy Spirit, be regenerated and changed. Only by the Blood of the Cross, applied to man's sin, can this happen. (And don't think even then that a Christian has immunity from sin for it lurks in the darkness, waiting to pounce on the unsuspecting and the careless) (1 Peter 5:8).

In the beginning, Adam, as man's federal head, was placed, with a perfect heart, into a perfect environment. Even given these "laboratory" conditions, Adam, because he did not truly trust and rely on God, still managed to sin. In reality this means that it would not have mattered who God placed in the Garden - they would have failed. If the finest man God could have created failed, so would have we! The answer for Adam is the same answer that exists for every person today - that is a relationship with God at both a positional and an experiential level. We must, as Christians, continually rely on the Holy Spirit for direction and the power to live in God's will. Only in Christ can man gain both (Philippians 2:13).

“ . . . Man is not just a conglomeration of emotions but a spiritual being with a soul whose needs must be dealt with spiritually. . . ”

Let's return to the Garden. Shortly after Adam sinned, God came in the cool of the day and called out, "Where are you Adam?"

What was Adam's response? On hearing God's voice, Adam hid because he felt naked and afraid. Prior to this day, Adam had had no such feelings or response. Experiencing fear and shame had been completely foreign to Adam, but his sin had connected him to spiritual darkness. He had decided alone, apart from God's influence, to act. By this means the sin nature flooded his life and he entered into spiritual darkness (Romans Ch.6). His emotional responses after this would never be the same. He would never again experience the stable, positive, spiritually-enriched emotions that he had had before the Fall.

Positive or negative emotions are, for us today, a result of our connection with our environment, internal and external, and the legacy of the Fall. Even the world for us as Christians is not perfect. While sin was defeated at the Cross, the sin nature that has been dethroned seeks to roar back into life when the lusts of the flesh are yielded to - for the sin nature roars back into action to bring forth that which the lusts of the flesh desire.

Also, encompassing us all around is the sin of the world, with sinners tempting us to backslide into the dark pit from whence we came. All this seeks to impact on us and our emotions, day after day. But God has given us the only way of escape and this is through Christ Jesus, and allowing the power of the Holy Spirit to strengthen us to overcome. In other words, only by His grace are we saved, and only by His grace at work in our hearts and minds can we walk in "*newness of life*" (Romans 6:4).

There are people passing from this life daily, and most, sad to say, are going to hell. Many die in sickness and pain. There are wars all over the globe, along with murders, rapes and every unspeakable horror. Yes the world is an evil place, but to this same place the Saviour came - to release us from our bondages, and in fact to save us from our sin. He came to reconnect us to heaven and the Father's love and grace.

Emotional stability now as Christians can be restored to us - as we become rooted and grounded in God's Word and God's will. From this foundation, the empowerment needed to live the Christian life will come - as the Divine Nature energizes the human nature of man. But for this to happen, men must seek, find and embrace the things of God - the truths of the Kingdom. The Christian cannot simply be passive, waiting for these things to fall upon him. Rather he must be active in seeking that which God has already given to him

through the Cross. Emotional stability will come from a life that is lived in this way, as the Christian seeks God and His will, and lays aside the lusts and desires of the flesh and self. Indeed the Word admonishes us to seek God and His will, but also gives us the reassurance that the power and grace to both seek and then act is readily available to us:

PHILIPPIANS 2:12 *Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling (this means to progress towards spiritual maturity, which is Christlikeness).*

PHILIPPIANS 2:13 *For it is God Who works in you (through the energies and graces of the Divine Nature) both to will and to do of His good pleasure (God's will).*

“ . . . Positive or negative emotions are, for us today, a result of our connection with our environment, internal and external, and the legacy of the Fall. . . ”

DEALING WITH THE DEMANDS OF EMOTIONS

Even as Christians, on any given day, we can and do have many emotions bidding for our attention. Some of these emotions will be positive, and even constructive, while others will be negative and, as a result, destructive and debilitating. If a Christian has emotional stability, this means he will be leaning on God's way of dealing with whatever issues arise, whatever life throws up at him, no matter how he feels emotionally (Proverbs 3:5, 6; Psalm 25:5). Remember that emotions ebb and flow, being based on that to which we are indirectly or directly connected. Examples of this are the corrupt world in which we live, our mind (conscious and sub-conscious), the power of darkness and the power of Light. This being the case, and whether it be logical or not, quite often willpower is not enough to change our focus (our thinking) from that which our emotions are based on to something more positive. Try as we might, the focus (our

thinking about a situation, person or circumstance) and hence the emotion associated with that focus will keep cropping up. Once again, the grace and power of God is needed to help us break the cycle of destructive thinking and negative emotions.

As we have said, as Christians we will have certain thoughts and emotions that may arise which try to grab our attention and time and if entertained, could really defocus us. But for the Christian who is emotionally stable, these emotions, no matter how “real” in the experience of this Christian, will not change their belief in God and His Word. They will not change their absolute trust in God. In other words, a Christian can have, seemingly, at the same time, two conflicting emotions. In this case, the stable Christian is ruled by the Divine Nature of which he is a partaker, and this causes an emotional response to many things in one’s life that may be contrary to other emotions that one may have.

It is not whether or not you have emotional thoughts, positive and negative, for you will have both. It is a matter of whether you take notice of one or the other, and so allow that emotion to direct you accordingly.

In a general sense, the power to follow a positive course in one’s life can sometimes come from willpower. But when a person is gripped and held by the power of sin, only the power of righteousness can compete against the powers of darkness. So in this case, God’s power is needed to set us on the right pathway - our own willpower will not be sufficient. Light, when we allow it to enter our darkened mind, will liberate us and empower us to walk in righteousness, the Light of God’s Word.

“. . . It is not whether or not you have emotional thoughts, positive and negative, for you will have both. It is a matter of whether you take notice of one or the other, and so allow that emotion to direct you accordingly. . . ”

To sum up we can say that emotional stability comes as a result of not partaking of (listening to) the negative thoughts and emotions

that we may experience from time to time. Now emotions include both the positive and the negative. To be stable, however, one must not listen to the negatives which come from this world or the spiritual world or indeed ourselves. If we are actively connected (i.e. in an experiential sense) to the Light of truth concerning a certain area, then if there had been any darkness, God's Light would have been the power that abolished it from our lives. In other words, if we are walking in the Light of truth, then any darkness that would come against this truth must stay out in the cold.

Some Christians, however, have much darkness in their lives, even though God's provision has been made available to them to remove this darkness and live in the Light. Indeed God has called us all to walk in the Light of His truth by His power (grace) at work in us. Then, as the Word says, we shall know the truth (based on Calvary) and the truth shall set us free (John 8:31,32). Amen.

Just to briefly summarize what we have taught here in terms of emotions: You are what you believe. You are not what your vacillating, erratic and unpredictable negative emotions would try to tell you about yourself. Such emotions, for those in Christ, are temporary. They will pass away, but the real you will not.

May you have the victory in Christ. Amen!

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