

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Slaves To Emotions

“People don’t ask for facts in making up their minds. They would rather have one good, soul-satisfying emotion than a dozen facts.” (Robert Leavitt)

Without a doubt, emotions do motivate the masses. Whatever their cause and whether they be good or bad these strong personal feelings are intensely powerful movers of men. Emotions have influenced all; dominated many. As strength is measured by its conquests, we see impressive evidence of just how strong emotions can be when such things as truth, right, justice, and good judgment are often made subordinate to their prompting. But perhaps nowhere is the narcotic- like effect of emotionalism more prominent or persuasive than in the spiritual realm. Even those who escape its inordinate influence elsewhere succumb to it here — and with the worst possible consequences. Truly, emotionalism is a popular and compelling power in religion; one that needs to be recognized and reckoned with.

But this is not to say that all emotion is wrong, or even that it is wrong in religion. What sincere person can read of the crucifixion of Christ and not be moved? Is not the Godly sorrow associated with repentance a strong feeling of remorse for having sinned against God? (2 Cor. 7: 10) Are we not to rejoice and weep with one another? (Rom. 12:15) This sort of emotion is altogether right and appropriate, being expressible within the bounds of Divine truth.

But there is a subtle and dangerous kind of emotionalism which leads many in the broad way that seems right (Prov. 14:12). These are the feelings that men come to trust and rely on, even above the word of God. This attitude is well-exemplified in the oft heard expression, *“I wouldn’t trade the feeling in my heart for all the Bibles in the world!”* — which is just another way of saying that one has more confidence in his feelings than in the word of God. The man who trusts **anything** more than what God says insults the veracity of God!

However, others honor their feelings in less obvious ways. While God promises to save only those who do His will (Matt. 7:21), many persist in **feeling** that sincerity and good intentions are sufficient. With many, the matter of eternal torment becomes another emotional issue in which the word of God is made subordinate to feelings. Questions dealing with the religion of parents, whether one is judging another, whether everyone is going to hell except your bunch, whether one church is as good as another, or whether the Lords church can scripturally support an orphans home can easily become more emotional than scriptural issues — and the big problem with this is that not **everyone appreciates scriptural answers to emotional arguments.**

All important decisions, especially those affecting ones standing with God, ought to be based on something more substantial than emotions. Feelings of the moment, no matter how strong, can never be more trustworthy than Gods word which will judge all. The slave to emotion cannot be the servant of Christ.

- Dan S. Shipley, via *Plain Talk*, February, 1972

Is it Still a Mystery?

Some people read the Bible every day. Others read it once in a while, and there are others who never open it. All have some different views as to what it teaches. Do you think God had it written so we would "understand" it differently so that each of us could believe what we want to believe? I think not!

According to Ephesians 4:5, there is just "one faith." This means there is just one body of truth. Paul had earlier (Eph.3:4) told these people that when they read (studied) the things he wrote, they would have the same understanding that he had in regard to God's will. Later (Eph.5:17), he commanded them to be not unwise but to understand what the will of God is. All of this does not sound like God gave a revelation that He knew people could not understand, but that they would have the freedom to "understand" it as they chose.

There are times when one will need to pray for wisdom (Jas.1:5) so he can rightly divide (2 Tim.2:15) the word of truth. There may also be times when one needs to ask help from another who has more knowledge (Acts 8:30, 31). The personal study, the prayers for wisdom, and the seeking help from others are all part of God's plan for people understanding His will for us today. At one time it was a mystery, and rightly so, but now it has been uncovered. We just have to study.

How to become a Christian is something that can be learned quickly if one will take the time to read the book of Acts. This is what it is all about. One can learn how Christians are supposed to live if he will study the letters

written to churches and individuals. God has revealed all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pet.1:3), but we have to study it to understand it.

Acts chapter 2 tells people what they have to believe and to do in order to be saved. But it will remain a mystery until one reads it carefully. Yes, the will of God for man today is still a mystery to many people simply because they don't study and rightly divide the word of truth. But God did not intend it to be so. That is why we have the New Testament. It is the mystery of God revealed!

Study is hard work (Eccl.12:12), and it is easier to let someone else tell us what God wants us to do. This was also true in the first century. 1 John 4:1 tells those who are interested in learning the will of God to test the teachers because there are those who don't teach the truth. Let us search the Scriptures as did the people in Berea in Acts 17:11. We can know the truth and by obedience to it be made free from our sins. God's will for us today has been revealed and is there waiting for us to study and obey it.

-- J.F. Dancer

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SUNDAY'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"As Your Soul Prospers!"* (text: 3 John 1-8); Sunday evening: A question answered from the Question Box.