

View

A Publication of the Folsom Point church of Christ. 900 E. Natoma, Folsom, CA

November 4 , 2007

“Better Felt Than Told” Religion

The belief that religion is based on the feelings that a person may experience is a major obstacle in getting people to obey the gospel. Those who adhere to such a belief cling to their feelings as the basis of their salvation. Even when the Bible plainly contradicts their beliefs and practices and teaches them what they must do to be saved, they still insist on following their feelings instead of the word of God. “I know how I feel and I wouldn’t trade my feelings for a stack of Bibles” is a common response, rather than obedience to the truth. Feelings, not God’s word, are the guides they rely on in life to determine what is right and wrong in morality and religion.

Conversion Begins not by a Feeling nor by a Sensation a Person Feels in the Body, but by Hearing God’s Word.

Today, many people, because of an intense feeling they experienced (e.g., fear, happiness) or a sensation they felt throughout their body (e.g., “I felt like I was floating and could fly”), make the claim to be saved. Convinced that the feeling came from God Himself, they will readily give their “testimony” of how they were “converted” to the Lord. However, there is no record in the Scriptures of anyone ever being converted in this manner.

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Instead, each person who was converted to the Lord first heard the word of God: “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17, NKJV). A saving faith begins by hearing God’s word. The apostle Peter understood this principle by what he said when addressing the apostles and elders at Jerusalem: “Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe” (Acts 15:7, NASB). The only way anyone can become a believer in Christ and be saved is by first hearing the word of the gospel.

If God converts people by sending them some “better felt than told” experience of salvation, then why did the Lord send the disciples to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15)? If all people had to do was wait for God to save them through some divine emotional experience, then why send a preacher to preach the gospel so the lost may hear God’s word? (Rom. 10:14-15).

The Holy Spirit Converts Through the Word, not Through Our Feelings.

It is often the case, that the people who base their conversions to Christ on a feeling, also believe it was the Holy Spirit who gave it (e.g., “I felt the Spirit come upon me and I just knew, at that moment, that I was saved”). The belief is that the Holy Spirit works to save people by a direct action upon the heart of each individual after a person prays for salvation or “prays Jesus into their heart.” This belief about the Holy Spirit comes from a serious misunderstanding as to how the Holy Spirit works in the saving of souls.

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When a person is saved, that person is “born again” or born of the Spirit (John 3:3, 5; Titus 3:5). The word of God also causes us to be “born again” spiritually when we obey it: “Of his own will begat he us (God caused us to born - ML) with the word of truth . . .” (James 1:18, KJV; cf. 1 Pet. 1:22-23). The “word of truth” is not literally a person that happens to do the same work as the Holy Spirit. Rather, the word of God must be the instrument the Holy Spirit uses in the work of saving souls (2 Thes. 2:13). Jesus, when addressing His apostles, spoke of the role the Holy Spirit would fulfill in our salvation: “And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment” (John 16:8, NASB). The Holy Spirit convicts the world by the word of God, which He gave to the apostles (Acts 2:4; Eph. 3:5) who in turn, gave it to us. In the Bible, we have the revealed will of God that we can read and understand (Eph. 3:3-4). The promise that “the Comforter” (i.e., the Holy Spirit) would come was specifically given to the apostles alone who were given the complete revelation of God’s word by the Spirit (John 14:16-20, 25-26; 15:26-27; 16:13).

Feelings Are not Reliable Indicators of Our Salvation.

The feelings we experience from day to day may range from a whole host of different emotions such as happiness, excitement, enthusiasm, embarrassment, disgust, anxiousness, annoyance, frustration, anger, fear, guilt, sadness, depression, etc. The emotions or feelings that we experience will vary depending on a number of factors such as our attitude, diet, health, sleep habits, pleasure, pain, and other circumstances of our lives.

Since feelings may differ from day to day, it is impossible to depend on them for truth and accuracy on whether or not we are the children of God. The person who relies on his or her feelings as the basis of a right relationship with God may feel “close” to God one day (due to feelings of happiness) and then may feel “distant” from God the next day (due to feelings of sadness or anger). The person who puts too much stock in his or her emotions does not enjoy confidence, but instead doubt and fear about their relationship with God (e.g., “Am I a child of God?”).

How We Can Know That We Are Children of God.

It is not enough to feel that you are a child of God. You must have the facts to verify the claim and those facts are established by at least two credible witnesses. Those two witnesses are the Holy Spirit and your spirit: “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him” (Rom. 8:16-17).

First, the Holy Spirit “bears witness” or speaks to us through the written Word (1 Tim. 4:1). The word of God or the gospel reveals to us how to become children of God. For example, the Holy Spirit did not personally reveal to the eunuch how to be saved, but instead the Spirit sent Philip to the eunuch to preach the gospel to him so he could learn how to become a Christian (Acts 8:26-40).

Secondly, “our spirit” may bear witness of the fact that we believed and obeyed what the Spirit said to do in the Bible on how to be saved. Hearing God’s word produces genuine faith the saves (Rom 10:17). While faith is important to salvation (Heb. 11:6; John 3:16), we are not saved by faith only (James 2:24). There are other conditions in God’s word that we must meet in order to become children of God and have the hope of salvation. A person must also confess his faith in Christ (Rom. 10:9-10), repent of their sins and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). Once baptized, a person must maintain an obedient faith to the end to be saved eternally (Heb. 3:12-14; James 2:14-26).

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Services

Sunday Morning Assembly
9:30AM
Sunday Evening: 5:00 PM
Wednesday Bible Study
7:30 PM

Classes for all ages.
Private classes arranged at your
convenience.

For more information,
visit our web site at:
www.folsomchurch.com

Agenda

The Lord's Day, November 4, 2007

9:30 AM: Worship: Singing, Lord's Supper, Preaching
Sermon: How Do I Know?

- ◆ Preaching: Dan Singleton

5:00 PM: Lord's Supper, Singing, Preaching

- ◆ Sermon: TBA

5:30 PM: Bible Classes, All Ages

Adult Classes

- ◆ Room 11-12, SeedSowers
- ◆ Auditorium: Deuteronomy (Brady Rembleski)

Wednesday, November 7, 2007

10 AM, No Class this week

7:30 PM, Bible Classes for ages 18 mos. and up

Auditorium: Deuteronomy

Meeting Notes

Bro. Harrell's sermons and charts are available online on our website (www.folsomchurch.com) or on CD (see a deacon)

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When we obey God's word, our spirit knows that we have followed the guidance of the Holy Spirit on how to be saved and therefore may "bear witness" that we are children of God. In addition, the Holy Spirit may also "bear witness" that we are children of God because He knows we have obeyed God's word. Both our spirit and the Holy Spirit may bear witness together of our salvation when they are in agreement with one another. Only when a person has obeyed the gospel can a person truly be confident that he or she is a child of God!

Walk by Faith, not by Feeling As a Christian.

Emotions must not be the basis for the decisions we make nor the rule of our conduct (e.g., "It just felt like the right thing to do. I knew at that moment the Spirit led me to do it"). To "walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25) or "walk by faith" (2 Cor. 5:7), the Christian must make decisions that are based upon the word of God (Ps. 119:105; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 5:12-14).

Decisions must not be made on sheer impulse or merely by what seems right (Prov. 14:12). The Christian must not "direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23) merely by what feels right. Instead, the Christian must "not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17) and do his or her best to obey it. Our ability to "Rejoice in the Lord always" (Phil. 4:4) and rejoice in our salvation (Ps. 51:12) is not based on our feelings, but on God and His promises and our faithfulness to Him (Rom. 15:13; 3 John 4).

Mark Larson

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The View contains news and articles of interest to the members of the Folsom Point church of Christ. Announcing an activity or event does not necessarily imply that we financially sponsor the event or that the elders specifically endorse every component of that event, since it may not fall under the direct oversight of the elders. The church's work and the elders' oversight is limited by Scripture. We will not announce events that are primarily social in nature. However, we do want to publicize and encourage those activities that provide an opportunity to be built up in the faith and provide an opportunity for you to be a more involved and active member of the body at Folsom Point.