

View

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May 4, 2008

The Difference Between Emotions and Emotionalism in Worship

By William Stewart

Perhaps you've heard about it. Maybe you've seen it. Possibly you have even experienced it. Cunningly orchestrated music is used to stir the emotions of the crowd; an emotionally charged evangelist spurs them on with repetitive chants; hands and bodies sway to and fro; the atmosphere has been established. As the crowd is further worked into a frenzy, often times, folks will end up rolling about in the aisles, bursting out in uncontrollable laughter, shaking, jumping, and shouting out unintelligible speech. Is this worship that gives glory to God, or merely a display of unbridled emotions?

Experiences based solely upon feeling and devoid of Biblical validity have increasingly become the norm in our religious world. Recently, while perusing an atheist site (Internet Infidels), I came across a statement that accurately summarizes the results of emotionalism in worship. It is "...used to

bring about a sort of altered state of awareness and emotion that does make one more susceptible to make choices you might not normally (like convert) or believe you have experienced a supernatural occurrence." As I read this statement, it brought to mind a faith healing service I attended a few years ago. All manner of emotional appeal was used to capture the audience, to prepare them for healings,

for the supernatural experience about to take place. One can easily get caught up in the moment; get a high from the emotion - but understand this is not godly worship.

One writer has said, "Truth without emo-

tion produces dead orthodoxy and a church full of artificial admirers... On the other hand, emotion without truth produces empty frenzy and cultivates shallow people who refuse the discipline of rigorous thought. But true worship comes from people who are deeply emotional and who love deep and sound doctrine. Strong affections for God rooted in

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truth are the bone and marrow of Biblical worship.” Without doubt, emotions have a place in worship. They are God-given, and when kindled and handled properly, worshippers are edified and God is glorified. However, when they are misused, they beget emotionalism — a profane worship. Webster’s defines emotionalism as “...undue indulgence in or display of emotion...” When “undue indulgence” is given to emotion, the result is more akin to a circus of giddy drunkards than a worship assembly. With such displays the Lord is not pleased.

The Bible identifies the heart as the center of man’s intellect (Matthew 13:15, 22), emotions (Acts 23:1), and volition (Hebrews 4:12). If we are to use our hearts appropriately, we cannot forsake any of these. If our hearts are to rightly enter into worship of the Almighty God, it must be a conscious decision, combining both our intellect and our emotions. Never should emotions be permitted to overrule intellect. Our emotions in worship must be a response to our intellectual acknowledgement and acceptance of God and His ways. When emotions are given the dominion, our worship is no longer emotional praise to God, but emotionalism, devoid of intellectual subjection to the will of God.

We need go no further than the book of Psalms to understand that worshipping God is an emotional experience. David wrote, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart; these, O God, You will not despise.” (Psalm 51:17).

“As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say to me, ‘Where is your God?’ When I remember these things, I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast.” (Psalm 42:1-4).

“Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands! Serve the LORD with gladness; come before His presence with singing. Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations” (Ps 100).

Worshipping God should bring a variety of emotions in us: contrition and sorrow for sin, a fervent longing to be in the presence of God, a trembling awe of the glory of His presence and greatness of His power, thanksgiving for the blessings of God, rejoicing and hope for the salvation which God supplies. Emotion is necessary, but it is not to be the basis of our faith and worship, nor is it an end to itself. Welling up emotions for the sake of being emotional is not sincere worship. It is emotionalism.

Let us be diligent students of God’s Word, and enter into worship with a readiness to give glory to God and encouragement to our brethren. If we will do so, our emotions will most certainly be stirred, as will the emotions of all others who have prepared themselves for worship - not stirred by human manufacture, but by our desire to uplift the name of God, in accordance with His will.

The church of Christ

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Services

Sunday Morning Assembly
9:30 AM
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

Webmaster: Richard Harvey

Agenda

The Lord's Day, May 4, 2008

9:30 AM: Worship: Singing, Lord's Supper, Preaching

Sermon: Singing

• Preaching: David Posey, The Story

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

Classes @ 5:30 PM

Auditorium, I John

• Teacher: Dennis Wade

Room 11-12,

Characters of the Bible

• Teacher: Bryan Byrd.

Wednesday, May 7, 2008

10 AM, Here — "The Bible for Everyday"

Teacher: David Posey, Sr.

7:30 PM, Classes

Auditorium, Proverbs

• Teacher: Randy Clark (Jeff Clark, Assisting)

Room 11-12, James

• Teacher: David Posey, Sr. (Zac Brown, Assisting)

Notes

Most sermons are available in MP3 format on our website (www.folsomchurch.com) or on CD (see a deacon).

"Pillar and Ground" by Robert F. Turner

Is the church the "mother of truth" who alone has the right to set forth truth?

Catholicism uses 1 Tim. 3:15 in drawing such a conclusion. This, in turn, leads to their claim of infallibility. We should give greater attention to this important scripture.

"These things write I..." tie but do not limit following statements to instructions re bishops, etc. "How...to behave" elsewhere translated... "live" (Eph. 2:3; 2 Cor. 1:12; Heb. 13:18), refers here to the manner of life prescribed by truth. "In the house of God" is not telling us how to act in the church building, nor in assembly only, but how to live at all times as God's people. "Church" is not here limited to local organization, nor does this refer to a universal "body politic." We will best grasp the overall significance of the instructions by considering "church" as the called-out people of God.

People of God are the pillar and ground (stay) of the truth. "Pillar" (Rev. 10:1; 3:12; Gal. 2:9) is used of prominent, obvious support of a temple. Some think Paul had in mind the magnificent pillars of the temple of Diana (at Ephesus, where Timothy was at the time); but pillared temples were common in those days, and the metaphor would be understood. "Ground" is related to a word translated "steadfast, settled" (1 Cor. 7:37; 15:58; Col. 1:23). The church (collective term for saints in all aspects) is said to be "pillar and ground" of truth in some way, and we must determine that way consistent with all of revealed truth. Far more is at stake than some may realize.

John says "truth" came by Jesus Christ (1:17). Christ said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (14:6).

He also prayed, "Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth" (17:17). And Christ called the Holy Spirit who would deliver truth, the "Spirit of Truth" (16:13). The authority of divine truth is derived from Christ, not from His followers. Christ is the foundation of the church (1 Cor. 3:11), which is the product of truth (Acts 2:41,47); hence the church can not be the foundation of truth. The seed of the kingdom is the word of God (Lu. 8:11), and God has not abdicated His law-making to His citizens (Jas. 4:12).

But God's people are those who have gladly received and understood the truth. These have acknowledged the truth, "confessing Him before men" and by their life bearing witness to the power of truth. Jesus prayed for unity among these people "that the world may believe that thou didst send me" (Jn. 17:21). In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation the saints are seen "as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15-16) "holding forth the word of life." Some one has said "the church gives truth an objective existence." Truth exists, whether accepted or rejected, but its power and effectiveness is demonstrated in its product, the church. The very existence of Jews and Gentiles united in Christ makes known "the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. 3:10). And "from you sounded forth the word of the Lord" (1 Thess. 1:8) as "the Spirit and the bride say 'Come!'" (Rev. 22:17).

This is how the church of God is "the pillar and ground of the truth."

Robert F. Turner

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