

THE BAPTIST LANDMARK

“REMOVE NOT THE ANCIENT LANDMARK, WHICH THY FATHERS HAVE SET.” PROVERBS 22:28

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ARE RELIGIOUS FEELINGS BIBLICAL?

by H. B. Little

I recently read an article entitled “Are Feelings Proof of Salvation?” I soon realized the author did not believe feelings are proof of salvation. I was bothered as I read his assault on religious *feelings*. As I finished the article, I felt the author wanted us to choose between our “feelings” and the Bible. Do we have to choose between the two? Or does the Bible teach that God deals with us through His word and our *feelings*?

Let’s consider the heart and its Biblical role in religion. *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* defines the heart as “one’s innermost character, feelings, or inclinations” and “the emotional or moral as distinguished from the intellectual nature.” In other words, we feel with our heart. The Bible describes our hearts in this way. Paul associates “blindness of... heart” with “being past feeling” in Eph 4:18-19.

Our Savior speaks against professing what we do not feel in our hearts. He says, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me...”, Mat 15:8-9. He calls this type of religion empty and useless. We should speak from a feeling heart or not at all. Our heart and our *feelings* are vital to our pleasing God.

Let’s consider the Bible’s teachings on *feelings* of the sinner. Can the lost feel their guilt and danger? John writes “For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.”, 1Jn 3:20. When our heart condemns us, we are aware of our sins. We feel the guilt of them within us.

Paul teaches us that “godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation...”, 2 Co 7:10. Sorrow is a *feeling* of deep distress. A godly sorrow is one which originates from God. This *feeling* of trouble produces repentance, and repentance is essential to salvation. So without sorrowful *feelings*, we will not repent and cannot be saved.

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ACCEPTING CHRIST AND SOUL SALVATION

by M. A. Brawner

This topic is one that I take personal as I have witnessed its effect a number of times. For example, one of the members where I pastored some years back brought his wife with him to Church. She had been led to assume that she was a born again person because she had “accepted Christ” at some point in her past. The revival began shortly afterwards, and she agreed to attend with her husband. She got under conviction Sunday night and began seeking the Lord. He saved her soul on Tuesday night. She had no problem telling the difference between what she had been told about “accepting Christ” years before and getting saved that night at the mourners bench. Other examples could be added to this one, but this makes it clear why this topic is one held personal by me. Yet, it would be unfair to introduce this topic without sharing another example from the positive side.

Many realize that I’ve preached at several locations west of the Mississippi River. In some of those locations, saved people sometimes refer to the time when they got saved as when they “accepted the Lord”. This experience has taught me to be careful NOT to jump to conclusions and to question one who tells me that they “accepted the Lord”. Most of the time when someone tells me that they have “accepted the Lord”, I will ask them what they mean by saying that. Those who have truly been saved will explain how they got under conviction, found godly sorrow, realized they were lost, then sought the Lord until He left the peace that comes with salvation down in their soul. If anyone can tell of that sort of experience, I tell them it is more scriptural to refer to that as “getting saved”. If they will give me a chance, I’ll tell them what I mean by saying that. After prayerful consideration, it seems that providing that explanation is what is needed for this article.

As a young preacher, I asked a deacon among the modern Baptists what

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THE STATE OF RELIGION

by B. W. Carver

According to Webster’s dictionary, the state of something is the condition of a person or thing at a certain time. Webster also defines religion as being the worship of God or gods.

James 1:27, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” A pure and undefiled religion is genuine. It is not corrupted and is not pretended.

With these things in mind, the state of religion currently is in much need of repair and improvement. As God’s children, we have become cold and seemingly uncaring, void of the love and compassion for each other, our churches, lost humanity, and the less fortunate. James 2:14-20 reads, “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man may say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?”

We believe, and the scriptures teach, that we are saved by grace through faith. Ephesians 2:8-9, “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.” We agree with this and do give it an amen. However, our religion, or our practice of religion, should be based on our works. Paul continues in Ephesians 2:10, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

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Briefly examining this verse, Paul refers to someone being created in Christ Jesus.

Paul wrote in II Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." This new creature is one who has been saved by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. It should also be mentioned that what God has created, no man can uncreate. Referring to the latter part of James 1:27, the writer says, "...to keep himself unspotted from the world." Rather than being unspotted from the world, we have allowed ourselves to become like the world. James 4:4, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." A friend of the world is one who finds joy in the world. This is the enemy of God. We also read in I John 2:15-17, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." This world that John refers to is the habitable earth, the world in which men live. We, being ambassadors for Christ (II Corinthians 5:20) in the world, are not to take the personality of the world. Christ was in this world for a period. We are in this world for such a period but are not to be of the world. As Christ was praying, he spoke these words in John 17:16, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

Let us notice the words of the apostle Paul in Philippians 2:5-8. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Christ was humble and obedient to One, God. He came to fulfill the law, to do the will of Him that sent Him and to

finish His work. As children of God, we are his workmanship and should be such that follow the example of Jesus Christ. In so doing, we keep ourselves unspotted from the world. Seemingly, it has become harder to discern one who is saved from one who is unsaved.

I am reminded of Nehemiah when he asked about the condition of the Jews, who were left of the captivity and concerning Jerusalem. Nehemiah 1:2-3 reads, "That Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire." Pure and undefiled religion today is in great distress.

How can it be improved? As God's people, we need to return to things that we have allowed the devil to stop us from doing. Do we pray as we ought? James 5:16 reads, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Even in prayer, we need the Lord's help. Luke 11:1 says, "And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." A personal note, I remember very vividly my grandfather asking God, during prayer to "teach us how to pray and what to pray for."

If we are in this condition now, where will we be in 5, 10, 15, or 20 years? In many things, we should not advocate change. However, when the state of something is in distress, we must. James wrote in James 1:16-17, "Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." The sun, the great light in the sky has its eclipses and turnings, castings of shadows; it rises and sets, appears and disappears every day. However, God, who is light and in him is no darkness, does not turn; he does not cast shadows, does not disappear, and does not change. May we pray to ever hold to the fountain of light.

RELIGION PRIOR TO THE GREAT AWAKENING

by H. B. Little

The Great Awakening was a religious revival occurring in England and the American colonies in the 1730s and 1740s. During this revival, many people were saved and the Baptist faith flourished. The residual of this great revival and the subsequent one, The Second Great Awakening, can be seen in our churches today. Much could be written on the great work accomplished by the Spirit during this revival. However, I would like to share with you the state of religion leading up to it.

Prior to the Great Awakening, society was uninterested in religion. People were more interested in drunkenness and revelry than visiting the Lord's house. The churches were lifeless. Often their ministers were unconverted. Worldly ideologies, such as naturalism, prevailed. The religious condition of this time period was very similar to ours today.

In J. T. Christian's *A History of the Baptists, Vol. II*, Dr. Christian describes the state of religion leading up to the great revival. He writes:

Jonathan Edwards, writing concerning the year 1730, when he succeeded his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, as the pastor of the church in Northampton, says:

It seemed to be a time of extraordinary dullness in religion; licentiousness for some years greatly prevailed among the youth of the town; they were many of them very much addicted to night walking, and frequenting the tavern, and lewd practices wherein some by their example exceedingly corrupted others. It was their manner very frequently to get together in conventions of both sexes, for mirth and jollity, which they called frolicks; and they would often spend the greater part of the night in them, without any regard to order in the families they belonged to; and indeed family government did not much prevail in the town. It was become very customary with many of our young people to be indecent in their carriage at meeting, which doubtless would not have prevailed to such a degree, had it not been that my grandfather, through his great age (though he retained his powers surprisingly to the last) was not able to observe them. There had also prevailed in the town a spirit of contention between two parties, into which they had for many years been

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he understood he was saying when he told a lost person to “accept Christ” in order to become a child of God. He told me that he understood that the word “accept” means the same thing as “believe”. So then, he concluded that telling a person to “accept Christ” was the same thing as telling them to “believe on Christ”. I researched his thinking both grammatically and scripturally leading me to conclude he was way off in his understanding of the subject. Let’s first look at the topic grammatically.

Grammatically speaking, the word “believe” is a verb which can be used in different ways. For instance, we could say that a person is called upon to “believe that” God has performed certain actions. We are to believe that God created the world. We are to believe that He made man and woman. We are to believe that God plans to end this world by consuming it with fire. Notice that in each of these cases the word believe was followed by the word “that”. In this way, the word “believe” requires nothing more than an operation of the mind. Those who believe these facts are passive and the verb believe is considered to be intransitive in nature. This is what the word “accept” actually means when substituting it for the word “believe”.

However, the word “believe” can also be used in an active sense and become transitive in nature. It is easier to see this difference by comparing the two forms. For example, a person can believe THAT the Lord Jesus Christ is the light of the world but this is different than believing ON Him in order to obtain that light down in the soul. Likewise, someone could believe THAT Lord Jesus Christ died on a cross for the sins of the world yet this is NOT the same as believing IN Him and having personal sins taken away. In both of these examples, there is a distinct difference between “believing that” something is a certain way and “believing in” or “believing on” that One to obtain it. Just based on the grammar involved, it is discovered that the word “accept” applies to someone who is “believing that” something is true while the word “trust” applies to someone who is “believing in” or “believing on” that something. Grammatically speaking, the word “accept” misses the mark of believing “to

the saving of the soul”, Heb 10:39. Next, let’s consider how this word is used in the scriptures.

The word “accept” and its variations are used 28 times in the New Testament. By variations I mean we find the words “accepted”, “acceptable”, etc... as forms of the word “accept” in the New Testament. All of these added together come to 28 instances of use. When reading each of these verses, it is found that many times Paul is telling of people accepting things from other people or expressing a desire that they will accept each other in the Lord. These cases are brethren interacting with brethren. However, when it comes to mankind interacting with God, the word “accept” is used on God’s side. That is to say, we are told of what allows God to find us acceptable to Him or conditions in which He will accept us rather than the other way around. Let’s consider a couple of these verses in hopes of clarifying the point.

Eph 1:6, *To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.* Notice that this verses refers to the grace of God making His Church acceptable in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Co 5:9, *Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him.* Likewise, this verse points out that we strive to lean on the Lord for daily strength so that we as His servants may be accepted by Him at the marriage of the Lamb.

Other examples could be added, but these two demonstrate the use of the word “accept” and its variations in the scriptures. In these examples, we find that it is God who does the accepting when conditions are met. So, when we read, “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent,” Act 17:30, we are reading that God accepts a person if they will repent. Likewise, as we discover, “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life,” Act 11:18, we are learning that God accepted people who repented. This point harmonizes throughout the Bible and causes me to conclude that it is God who does the accepting of man when it comes to salvation.

Let me wrap these thoughts up with some final points. Rational people will understand that there is a great difference between believing something with their mind and trusting that same thing with their heart. One could believe a thing to be a certain way but never really trust it. We do this all of the time in our relations with our fellow man. This is also true when it comes to our relationship with God. We can believe many things about God and the plan of salvation but never put our trust in Him. This is what I believe happened with the sister I described earlier who ended up getting saved. With her mind she accepted the Lord, but she had failed to trust Him to the saving of her soul. She had accepted Him, but He had never accepted her. Obviously, He was willing to accept her if she would repent of her unbelief / failure to trust Him. The Lord demonstrated this willingness by actually saving her soul when she met His conditions of sincere trust in Him. This is when He accepted her, and she was so glad that He did.

So then, let us be clear in what we present to the lost as the plan of God for salvation. Yes, a lost person must accept the fact that God loves them so much that He gave His only begotten Son in order that they could be saved. Yet, accepting this fact is only a work of the mind if that is all the lost person does. They need to go on and put their trust in the Lord so that He will in turn accept them. When the Lord does accept them, they will be the ones to tell us about it, for they are the only ones who will truly know. May God help us all to hear many testimonies of this saving work along this journey of serving the Lord.

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Let's consider some examples of sinners troubled with *feelings* of their sinful condition. When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit "the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked", Gen 3:7. Upon this realization, they made aprons of leaves to cover themselves. Yet when hearing God's voice, their best efforts to clothe themselves could not prevent their *feelings* of shame and fear. They were not physically naked, but they felt naked.

Luke recounts the cordial reception of the gospel in the New Testament age. He describes the hearers on Pentecost as "pricked in their heart", Act 2:37. When the gospel pierced their hearts, causing *feelings* of sorrow, they earnestly asked "what shall we do?" They received the gospel in response to their *feelings* of sorrow.

Let's consider the Spirit's work in conviction. Jesus foretold of the coming of the Comforter and His work on the hearts of unbelievers. He said "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment", Jhn 16:8. This word reprove is translated from a Greek word which means to shame, disgrace. In this context, it means to prove one wrong and thus to shame him. If he is shamed, he *feels* the shame and guilt of his sin. The *feelings* of conviction draw the sinner to the Savior.

Let's consider the witness of the Spirit. John describes the inward work of the Spirit in the heart of the believer. "He that believeth on the Son of God", he writes in 1 Jn 5:10, "hath the witness in himself". This witness is described by Paul as "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God", Rom 8:16. In other words, the Spirit witnesses to our spirit, when we believe, giving us internal assurance of saving faith.

How does the Spirit witness to our spirit? The word spirit has different meanings in the English New Testament. The spirit of man is his life force and breath, Jas 2:26, the disposition of his mind, 1 Co 4:21, and his immaterial intelligent or emotional center, Joh 11:33. It is this last definition that fits the context of the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit. The Spirit makes us aware of our being children of God. He does it within our spirit, which is the center

of our emotions, or *feelings*. He causes us to feel our accepted state as His children.

Let's consider the fruits of the Spirit. The fruits of the Spirit are those effects, or results, produced by Him. The first three fruits mentioned in Gal 5:22 are love, joy, and peace. Love is an intense *feeling* of deep affection. Joy is a *feeling* of great pleasure and happiness. Peace is freedom from disturbance, quiet and tranquility, serenity. These *feelings* are assurances of saving faith.

The Bible is the standard by which all opinions should be tried. When feelings contradict the Bible, they should be roundly rejected. However, the Bible teaches us that our *feelings* are important to our relationship with God. By our *feelings*, we can know when we are guilty before God. Our conscience accuses us. When we turn to God by faith, we are absolved of our guilt. By our *feelings*, we can know when we have been forgiven. Our conscience excuses us.

Let us close with a quote from Baptist pastor and author, Brother Joseph B. Moody (1838-1931). In this quote, he describes the state of the doctrine of those who reject religious *feelings*, and he asserts that all who have been saved *feel* the proof of it. He says:

It is necessitated by the fact that they have so perverted the Gospel that their preaching fails to produce conviction of sin...every truly converted man knows, from personal consciousness, that he received forgiveness of sins...all who ever did receive it knows that he received it when, under a conscious load of guilt, he looked to the Son of Man lifted up, and put his whole and implicit trust in the cross of Christ. (Nashville Debate - Moody - Harding, pg. 50-51.)

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divided, by which was maintained a jealousy one of the other, and they were prepared to oppose one another in public affairs (Edwards, Narrative of Surprising Conversions. Works, III.)

A minister in the capital town of New Hampshire says of the state of the churches at this time:

No serious Christian could behold it without a sad heart, and scarce without a weeping eye; to see the solid, substantial piety, for which our ancestors were justly renowned, having long languished under sore decays, brought

so low, and seemingly just ready to expire and give up the ghost. How did not only Pelagianism, but Arianism, Socinianism, and even Deism, and what is falsely called Free-Thinking, here and there prevail! The instituted means of salvation, in many places, were but lightly esteemed, and a horrid contempt was put upon the ministry of the word (Shurtliff, Defence of Whitefield).

Trumbull, the historian of Connecticut, speaking of the year 1734, says:

The forms of religion were kept up, but there appeared but little of the power of it. Both the wise and foolish virgins seemed to slumber. Professors appeared too generally to become worldly and lukewarm. The young people became loose and vicious, family prayer and religion were greatly neglected, the Sabbath was lamentably profaned; the intermissions were spent in worldly conversation. The young people made the evenings after the Lord's day, and after lectures, the times for their mirth and company keeping. Taverns were haunted; intemperance and other vices increased; and the Spirit of God appeared to be awfully withdrawn. It seems also to appear that many of the clergy, instead of clearly and powerfully preaching the doctrines of original sin, or regeneration, justification by faith alone, and the other peculiar doctrines of the gospel, contented themselves with preaching a cold, unprincipled and lifeless morality; for when these great doctrines were perspicuously and powerfully preached, and distinctions were made between the morality of Christians, originating in evangelical principles, faith and love, and the morality of heathen, they were offended, and became violent opposers (Trumbull, History of Connecticut, II.).

And of the year 1739 he says:

But few persons offered themselves to the communion of the churches. It was also observed that those who did offer themselves gave no account of any previous convictions which they had obtained of their great sin and misery by nature and practice. It does not appear that ministers in general, at that time, made any particular enquiry of those whom they admitted to communion, with respect to their internal feelings and exercises...(Trumbull, II.).

Despite the evils described in the preceding passage, in a few years all would change. Revival would sweep, like wildfire, across Britain and the Colonies. Let's take courage knowing that God has not changed and can send revival in our sinful world today.