

# DOCTRINE OF EMOTIONS

- I. Preliminary considerations.
  - A. Emotions are complex phenomena of which we are all aware and which we all experience, but to which we likely do not devote much consideration.
  - B. It is evident that emotions are somehow linked to the body, due to the physiological changes that are associated with their function.
    - 1. The pulse changes during certain emotional events, as does the respiration, perspiration, adrenaline production, body temperature, etc.
  - C. This has led some in the scientific community to explain emotions strictly in terms of the physical body stating that:
    - 1. Hormones are being released by specific endocrine glands into the blood stream to change things like heart rate, blood sugar level, endorphin levels, even white blood cells and oxidants in body tissues.
    - 2. Electrical impulses move across nerve pathways to anchor emotional events into biological memory.
    - 3. Emotions are processing trauma in the human body, whether it is physical or psychological trauma.
    - 4. Therefore, no emotions are ever bad or wrong since they are based on complex chemical interactions we cannot control.
  - D. Those who do so typically, although not exclusively, tend to be unbelievers that reject the entire concept of the soul and the dual nature of mankind.
  - E. They attempt to explain emotions strictly on the physical level, suggesting that the only reason for emotions is found in the complex chemical and hormonal interactions and fluctuations.
  - F. We would agree that several factors can affect and influence the emotions, we would suggest that emotions generally cause the chemical changes in the body, rather than vice versa.
    - 1. This is not to say that physical changes in the body, like blood sugar fluctuations, do not cause certain emotional responses.
    - 2. Hormonal fluctuations, which occur regularly in women (and probably men too), also have an effect on the emotions.
  - G. Others recognize that emotional responses to a given event are due to differing belief systems, and our beliefs determine the meaning we attach to events and how we respond emotionally to them.
  - H. This at least acknowledges the relationship between what we believe and how we respond, something that is very clearly correct.
  - I. If the group that states that emotions are strictly the work of the body is correct, one immediate conclusion is that people should not be held accountable for their emotional responses since they are caused by factors over which they have no control.
- II. Vocabulary.
  - A. There is no vocabulary in either the Hebrew or Greek for our word emotions.

- B. The Bible uses anatomical, bodily parts to describe the existence and function of emotions.
- C. The Old Testament includes:
  1. רַחֲמִימַי (rach<sup>a</sup>miym) This word is translated bowels or inner parts, and is akin to the word רֶחֶם (rechem) womb. It refers to the seat of the tender emotions such as pity, mercy, compassion, etc.
  2. כְּלָיוֹת (k<sup>l</sup>layoth) This word means the kidneys, and is always used in the plural, referring to the emotions in general.
  3. בֶּטֶן (beten) This word is the term for belly or stomach, and is occasionally used to express the emotion of contentment or satisfaction.
  4. עֲצָמַי ('etsem) This is the term for bones and is used to denote fear and possibly other emotions. Job 4:14
- D. Greek terms include:
  1. κοιλία (koilia) this word is the Greek counterpart of the Hebrew בֶּטֶן, belly or stomach, and is used sparingly to refer to the emotions.
  2. σπλάγχνον (splanchnon) This word is equivalent to the Hebrew רַחֲמִימַי and refers to the bowels or intestines. The Greeks regarded the bowels as the seat of the more violent or aggressive emotions, such as anger and love, whereas the Hebrews thought this to be the seat of the more benevolent emotions of compassion or mercy.
  3. νεφρός (nephros) This word is used only one time and refers to the kidneys, being the counterpart of the Hebrew term for kidneys.

### III. Definition and description.

- A. The term emotion is derived from the term motion, and means “after motion motion.”
- B. Hence, an emotion is a response to a stimulus that comes into one’s periphery.
- C. The emotions are properly responders, they are not designed by God to rule the soul or to dictate policy.
- D. The emotions themselves do not contain any doctrinal content, and are not capable of making good, clean decisions.
- E. Webster defines emotion as “any departure from the normal state of calm, producing a particular feeling, either pleasant or unpleasant, producing bodily changes in respiration, circulation, glandular actions, etc., which may prompt one to an overt response.
- F. Emotions are definitely a subjective phenomenon and are clearly affected by one’s environment, history, frame of mind, belief system and likely other factors as well.

### IV. The origin and place of the emotions.

- A. God created mankind with emotions as part of the human condition, designing them to be the appreciators and responders of the soul.
- B. Emotions were originally a part of God’s perfect creation and were, like all things, pronounced very good. Gen. 1:31

- C. To imply that emotions are evil, or wrong in some way, is to impugn the creation of God and is totally incorrect.
  - D. In the original creation, the emotions could only respond to a perfect situation; therefore, what we consider the unpleasant emotions did not exist.
  - E. In the perfect environment of Eden, with man and woman in a state of perfection, only the emotions of contentment, happiness, joy, pleasure, etc. existed. *The name Eden means delight.*
  - F. The emotions are part of the real you, the soul, placed there to appreciate God and His creation, His plan, etc.
  - G. Animals, which do not possess souls, do not truly possess conscious emotional responses in the temporal realm and certainly do not possess responses in the spiritual realm. *Skippy does not appreciate a sunset, a stirring musical piece, love, compassion, etc.*
- V. The function of the emotions.
- A. The emotions are designed to be responders and appreciators of the soul, and are not designed at all to rule our life.
  - B. As there exists two kidneys, so there also exists two general realms of emotions, the pleasant and the unpleasant.
  - C. The kidneys primarily secrete waste products from the body, but also provide a system by which certain necessary products are reabsorbed by the body.
  - D. This illustrates the fact that most emotions are not to be retained, but eliminated, while a few have a good effect on the body. Eph. 4:31ff; Prov. 17:22
  - E. Emotions are the external means by which the soul can express overtly the internal state of affairs, and thus, are not generally to be suppressed.
  - F. People that consistently suppress their emotions are often not dealing with the underlying issues or problems that prompted those emotions in the first place.
    - 1. It may be that the emotions stem from some external problem that must be acknowledged and with which one must deal.
    - 2. It may be that the emotions stem from some internal problem that one does not know exists or that one does not want to acknowledge.
  - G. While believers have the capacity to appreciate temporal things as well as spiritual things, the unbeliever can only experience emotions related to the temporal realm.
- VI. Emotional control of the soul.
- A. It is clear that God designed humanity to possess and express emotions, but He did not design the emotions to be placed in the position of rulership in the soul.
  - B. The believer should acknowledge the fact that he possesses certain emotions since suppressing emotions can be psychologically and physically dangerous.
  - C. However, he must recognize that the emotions are not to rule his existence and so must overrule this tendency when he becomes aware of it. Job 1:20-22, 2:9-10; IThess. 4:13
  - D. The analysis center in the soul is designed to evaluate the input it receives from all sources and then to make a proper decision based on these factors.

- E. Certainly, the input the analysis center is not to give more weight to the input from the emotions that it is from the conscience or from Bible doctrine.
- F. When believers possess doctrine and bring that doctrine to bear on issues, it has a moderating and stabilizing influence.
- G. The purpose of Bible doctrine in the soul is not to suppress or eliminate the emotions, but to keep them in their proper place and keep them in correct perspective. Gal. 5:22-23
- H. The suggestion that *“I feel this way and cannot do anything about it”* is strictly human viewpoint since emotions were not designed to control you.
- I. Even human viewpoint, cosmic types recognize that gaining control of your emotions is paramount if we are to lead pleasant, productive lives.
  - 1. The negative emotions, such as anger, sorrow, depression, etc. must be controlled or they can ultimately destroy us.
  - 2. The positive emotions must also be controlled or they may lead us away from rational, doctrinal decisions.
  - 3. The ultimate goal would be to experience your emotions while remaining completely in control of them, something the person without doctrine cannot do.
- J. Evidences of emotional control of the soul.
  - 1. Rejection of authority. Ex. 15:24, 16:2-3; Num. 12:1-5
  - 2. Blaming God or others. Ex. 16:7-8; Job 1:22
  - 3. Lack of faith-rest. Ex. 14:10ff; Num 14:10ff
  - 4. Maladjusting to your niche, characterized by complaining. Ex. 16:3; Num. 11:1-3,10-15
  - 5. Continual yearning for the past or future. Ex. 14:12, 16:3; Num. 14:2
  - 6. Severe mood swings, producing bizarre behavior. Num. 14:1,39,40
  - 7. Religious reversionism. Ex. 32:1-6; Rom. 16:17-18
  - 8. Pursuing the frantic search for happiness. Eph. 4:19

VII. The STA and its impact on the emotions.

- A. At the point of the fall and the introduction of the STA into the genetics of humanity, spiritual death was the immediate result. Rom. 5:12
- B. In the realm of spiritual death, the realm into which all men are born, the STA became the sole ruler of life. Rom. 5:21
- C. Whatever genetic alterations occurred at the fall would also have an impact on the realm of the emotions since the soul is interfaced with the body.
- D. The emotions would then be capable of responding to the new ruler of the world, Satan, via his access through the indwelling sin nature.
- E. Obviously, when one is influenced by an evil genius like Satan, or when he accepts faulty information in the form of STA input into the soul, the emotions can be adversely affected.
- F. In other words, those under the influence of evil will find it difficult, if not impossible, to have a normal emotional reaction to the many things that occur in life.

- G. Further, those that are negative and reject the light they are given will manifest even more bizarre emotional responses to what they confront in the world. Rom. 1:19-21,28,32
- VIII. The rulership of the soul and the content of the soul as related to the emotions.
- A. With the introduction of the genetic sin nature into humanity, the emotions are capable of responding to the STA, and their legitimate function was corrupted.
  - B. Those unbelievers living under the control of the genetic sin nature manifest a glaring number of inappropriate emotional responses. *Consider the liberal unbeliever that displays more emotional concern for the criminal than for the victim.*
  - C. Further, believers lacking the stabilizing influence of Bible doctrine often fall prey to the lies and misinformation in the Devil's world.
  - D. Although one may be a believer and possess some measure of doctrine in the soul, there still exists the possibility of responding to the corrupt influences of the world, the flesh or the Devil.
  - E. Therefore, unbelievers, or maladjusted believers under the influence of the STA, the cosmos or false doctrine are going to feel much differently about issues than those characterized by the F/HS and sound doctrine.
  - F. Typically, the emotional responses of the maladjusted will be in sharp contrast to those of the adjusted. Prov. 1:22, 8:36, 9:7-9; ICor. 5:2
  - G. Therefore, believers are commanded to be on the alert for those that demonstrate emotional control of the soul and separate from them, be they believers or unbelievers. Prov. 22:24-25; Rom. 16:17-18
  - H. When one responds to God via sound doctrine under the filling of the Holy Spirit, the correct emotional response will be forthcoming. Matt. 5:3-7
  - I. Conversely, when one responds to Satan via false doctrine under the rulership of the sin nature, he will likely produce an inappropriate emotional response. ICor. 5:2
  - J. Believers must recognize that emotional responses that arise when the STA rules the life are undesirable and completely unreliable. Gal. 5:17-21
  - K. Although emotions that arise from resident doctrine under the F/HS are both appropriate and acceptable nevertheless, they are not designed to rule the soul.
- IX. The positive and negative emotions.
- A. The "positive" emotions are generally classed as those that are pleasurable and the "negative" emotions are generally considered to be those that produce an unfavorable feeling.
  - B. Since God is the creator of the emotions, it should be evident that the full spectrum of emotional responses is necessary in human existence.
  - C. Some have espoused the strange idea that the adjusted believer will experience only the positive side of God's plan and will enjoy only the "positive" emotions.
  - D. This generally is taught by the "name it and claim it" crowd that teaches believers that God wants all believers to be rich, happy, healthy, etc.

- E. It is entirely incorrect to tell believers that if they are in fellowship and applying doctrine that they will be exempt from the “negative” emotions and will always be upbeat and happy. Mk. 3:5; Matt. 26:38
- F. There are very clear examples in the Old and New Testament of the “negative” emotions being the absolutely correct response.
  - 1. Anger. Gen. 30:2; Matt. 18:34; Eph. 4:26
  - 2. Hate. Ps. 119:113,128; Lk. 14:26; Rom. 7:15; Jude 23; Rev. 2:6
  - 3. Fear. Prov. 1:7; Matt. 10:28; Rom. 11:20; Heb. 4:1; IPet. 1:17
  - 4. Jealousy. Prov. 6:34; IICor. 11:2
  - 5. Sorrow. Rom. 9:2; IICor. 2:1-9
    - a. Initially, the Corinthians demonstrated their maladjustment by rejoicing when they should have been sorrowful. ICor. 5:2
    - b. Paul wrote the first epistle to the Corinthians, causing them sorrow. IICor. 2:3
    - c. Paul was sorrowful about the fact that the situation existed, and sorrowful that the Corinthians were so disoriented. IICor. 2:4
    - d. The purpose of the stern words recorded in I Corinthians was to orient them to the truth, not to cause them sorrow. IICor. 2:4
    - e. They finally experienced the legitimate emotion of sorrow when they recognized they were at odds with their authority and Bible doctrine. IICor. 2:5
    - f. The incestuous Corinthian was made sorrowful when other believers separated from him. IICor. 2:6
    - g. This produced the desired effect, a change of mind, orienting to Bible doctrine. IICor. 7:10
- G. Although Job was not under Divine discipline, God permitted some very severe testing in his life that devastated him emotionally. Job 16
  - 1. Job reproves his “comforters”. Vs 1-5
  - 2. He recognizes what they do not, that God has allowed this testing in his life and he is not some sort of a secret sinner. Vs 6-11
  - 3. Job expresses his emotional devastation since he does not understand why God is doing this to him. Vs. 12-17
  - 4. However, he knows that these men are wrong and that God is still his only hope. Vs. 18-22
  - 5. Job finds out what we all must learn; God’s plan is beyond our ability to grasp at certain times and we have to maintain our confidence that God knows what He is doing. Job 42:1-6

X. Emotions and God.

- A. As deity, God does not possess emotions that change or fluctuate since He resides in a state of complete glory at all times. Ps. 61:2, 62:2 *The term rock implies total stability, immutability.*
- B. However, anthropopathically, human emotions are attributed to Him in the Scripture.

- C. It is from these anthropopathisms that we readily observe that even the “negative” emotions are necessary and legitimate when based on the perfect standards of God.
- D. Bible doctrine provides the necessary frame of reference for the emotions to operate in a manner that is consistent with the essence of God.
- E. Emotions attributed to God include:
  1. Anger. Num. 22:22, 25:3; IKings 11:9; Isa. 5:25
  2. Jealousy. Ex. 20:5, 34:14; James 4:5
  3. Disgust. Ezek. 23:18
  4. Sorrow. Gen. 6:6
  5. Hate. Prov. 6:16; Amos 5:21; Zech. 8:17
  6. Regret. ISam. 15:11,35
  7. Surprise. Isa. 5:7
  8. Longing. Isa. 30:18
  9. Compassion. Ex. 34:6; IIChron. 30:9; Ps. 103:8
  10. Joy. Ps. 104:31
- F. These anthropopathisms are not employed to suggest that God actually experiences the emotion rather, they are employed to indicate the function of some attribute of the Divine essence.
- G. Emotions and the God/man.
  1. As perfect deity, the eternal Son did not possess emotions anymore than the Father did.
  2. However, in His humanity He possessed and experienced all the same emotions that normal humans experience. Heb. 2:17, 4:15
  3. This is observed in His display of:
    - a. Sorrow. Matt. 23:37, 26:38; Jn. 11:35
    - b. Anger. Mk. 3:5; Jn. 2:13
    - c. Surprise. Matt. 8:10; Lk. 7:9
    - d. Joy. Matt. 11:25
    - e. Love. Mk. 10:21; Jn. 11:5, 13:23
    - f. Compassion. Matt. 15:32, 20:34; Mk. 6:34
    - g. Frustration. Mk. 7:17-18, 8:14-21
    - h. Rejection. Matt. 26:31; Lk. 22:47-48
    - i. Repugnance. Heb. 12:2
    - j. Loneliness. Jn. 16:32
  4. He demonstrated, at all times, that the emotions He experienced did not have to rule the soul and He never allowed His emotions to dictate policy to His soul.
  5. No matter what situation He faced, or what emotion He was experiencing, He always made Bible doctrine the issue. Matt. 11:25; Mk. 6:34, 10:21
  6. The fact that all His emotional responses were devoted to God was taught in the Levitical offerings. Lev. 3:15-16
- H. Anthropopathically, emotion is attributed to the Holy Spirit as well. Eph. 4:30

## XI. Conclusions.

- A. The emotions are part of the human experience and were provided by God as the appreciators of the soul.
- B. Like every other creation of God, the emotions were perfect until the introduction of sin into human history.
- C. At that time, the sin nature caused the emotions to respond in a markedly different way.
- D. It is only through proper content in the soul (Bible doctrine in the inner man) and consistent rulership by the Holy Spirit that one may have some measure of confidence in his emotions.
- E. Even then, the emotions were not designed by God to be in the position of rulership over the soul.
- F. An understanding of Bible doctrine and acclimation to the same will cause us to manifest appropriate emotional responses to the various situations we face in our niche.
- G. We must be willing to submit “how we feel” at any given time, on any given subject to the Word of God and take every thought captive to Bible doctrine. IICor. 10:5
- H. Since emotions are related to the body, and bodily changes can certainly effect the emotions, believers are wise to take proper care of the body and not place unnecessary pressure on the soul. ICor. 6:12-13,19-20
  - 1. Proper rest.
  - 2. Appropriate exercise.
  - 3. Avoid excesses in food or drink.
  - 4. Excessive hours on the job.
- I. One should recognize when the body is adversely influencing the emotional responses and overrule these things with doctrine.
- J. Be aware that cosmic stimulation of the emotions is one of Satan’s regular tools and avoid those things that cause you to stumble.
- K. For single people, the emotion of love allows men and women to recognize RM/RW but the overriding consideration must be the precepts of doctrine.
- L. Generally speaking, those in fellowship with doctrine in the soul are not going to react the same way emotionally as their unbelieving or carnal counterpart. Jn. 16:20; Rev. 18:15,20
- M. Positive volition coupled with the F/HS and doctrine in the soul will cause your emotional responses to be much more accurate and more in line with how God “feels”.
- N. However, all this will not exempt you from the pressure of the angelic conflict but it will cause you to experience emotions unique to positive believers. IICor. 4:8-9, 6:7-10, 7:4-5

*“and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”*  
Rev. 21:4