

# It Is Written

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## Slaves To Emotions

*By Dan S. Shipley*

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 seemeth 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 heart 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 an— other, 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.

## SETTING ASIDE OUR DESIRES

*By Dan Gatlin*

Mark Twain once said, *"The only way to keep your health is to eat what you don't want, drink what you don't like, and do what you'd rather not."* Thomas Jefferson put it this way: *"We never have to repent of having eaten too little."* No truer statements have ever come from the wisdom of man. Most folks spend their lives not caring for their health until it's gone, and then it's often too late. We don't think twice about that second piece of pie or that extra twenty pounds until the doctor tells us we need to do something about it. Maintaining physical health requires discipline, in most cases, while we're still healthy.

Discipline is the key to spiritual health as well. There are many areas where self-discipline is essential to keep spiritually fit.

**1. In Overcoming the Desires of the Flesh.** Paul enumerates the desires of the flesh in Gal.5:16-21: *"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."* "Walking by the Spirit" means that we live by the standard that the Spirit set forth in the word. It is the very opposite of "fulfilling the lust of the flesh." In Gal.2:20 Paul wrote, *"it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me..."* The explanation of this statement can be found in Gal.5:24: *"And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with it's passions and desires."* This can only be achieved with a selfless love for the Lord that manifests itself in self-discipline.

**2. In Overcoming the Desire for Revenge.** The desire for revenge comes from a desire for justice, or what we perceive to be justice. Many would justify revenge by claiming righteous indignation. But the child of God must recognize that imperfect man cannot bring perfect justice. So, we are to leave justice in the hands of God: *"Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. Therefore 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.'* Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom.12:17-21). If we have been wronged let us trust that God will settle all accounts in the end. To violate this passage will place us on the receiving end of God's vengeance. Revenge may be sweet, as the saying goes, but it's fruit is bitter.

**3. In the Study of God's Word.** For those who have never studied God's word it can be an ominous task. Grasping such simple concepts as the nature of God or why God created man can be difficult for those who have no background in the Bible. This is why Paul began his lessons so simply in Lystra (Acts 14:8-18) and Athens (Acts 17:15-34). The pagan gods that they worshipped had limited powers and some very human attributes. The first thing they needed to understand was who God is. Add to that 4,000 years of Old Testament history and New Testament doctrine and we begin to appreciate just how much God expects us to know (2 Pet.1:2-3; 3:18).

It takes time, effort, and determination (self-discipline) to reach maturity. Some progress quicker than others (1 Tim.4:15), some never grow at all (Heb.5:12—6:2). It is the word that judges us (Jn.12:48), so we had best put forth the necessary diligence to know it.

Let us all strive to do those things that will ensure our spiritual health. The earlier we get started, the better.