

Walking by Faith or by Feeling?

by Bill Crews

Our emotional feelings often are allowed to play a greater role in our religious profession and practice than what the Bible speaks of as **“faith.”** The apostle Paul, in substantiating His contention in regard to being either **“at home in the body”** or **“absent from the body,”** declares, **“For we walk by faith, and not by sight”** (2 Cor. 5:7; read verses 1-10). And how is Bible faith produced? **“So belief (faith) cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ”** (Rom. 10:17). Said Peter of the Gentiles converted at the house of Cornelius, **“Brethren, ye know that a good while ago God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel, and believe”** (Acts 15:7). No one can be saved without believing, and no one can believe without the gospel; therefore, no one can be saved without the gospel (the power of God unto salvation, Rom. 1:16). Said Peter of Cornelius, **“And he told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, Send to Joppa, and fetch Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall speak unto thee words, whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house”** (Acts 11:13-14). Do you remember that Jesus said, **“Neither for these only (the apostles, vv. 11-12 BC) do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word”** (Jn. 17:20). Believing can only be through the word.

Anything that anyone believes in regard to religious or spiritual matters, to be the faith that God requires, must have the direct support of what the Scriptures plainly teach on those matters. I believe that both faith and baptism are essential to my salvation in the light of what Mark 16:15-16 plainly says. I believe that both repentance and baptism are required in order that my sins might be remitted in the light of what Acts 2:38 plainly says. I believe that Jesus purchased the church with His blood (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25), and that He is the Savior of that spiritual body (Eph. 5:23). I believe, because the Bible plainly teaches, that reconciliation unto God (Eph. 2:16) and peace with God (Col. 3:15) are in, and therefore not out of, the spiritual body, the church. Bible faith, then, is objective, being produced by the Scriptures.

But feelings are subjective. They are emotional in nature and arise from within. They are often produced in response to the atmosphere that surrounds us. They can be misleading. Things are not true merely because we fervently **“feel”** that they are true. Yet, far more people are influenced and led by their feelings than by Bible faith. In emotionally-charged atmospheres, where feelings are deliberately orchestrated, people testify that they **“felt”** the presence of God, or Christ, or the Holy Spirit. Such people are walking by feelings, and not by faith. At seances some people say that they have **“felt”** the presence of the spirit of some dead person. At pagan celebrations devotees have **“felt”** the presence and power of their false gods. At Satan worship ceremonies deluded souls have **“felt”** the power of Satan. Such people remind me of the very large and very heavy woman whose testimonial to prove that she had been saved went like this: **“I felt light as a feather; I felt like I was floating; and I felt like I had received salvation.”** She was asked by an astute listener if she had really been light as a feather and if she had actually floated, to which she replied, **“Of course not!”** Upon making that reply, she was then asked, **“If you can understand that you really weren’t light as a feather just because you felt like it, and that you really weren’t floating just because you felt like you were, then why can’t you understand that you were not really saved just because you felt like you were?”** Faith can affect our feelings, but our feelings must not take the place of faith.

If **“heartfelt religion”** doesn’t have the support of Bible teaching, it is worthless. The man in Numbers 15:32-36 who gathered sticks on the sabbath day may have felt that it was all right, but he sinned against the law of Moses, and died for it. Nadab and Abihu may have felt that the fire they were using to burn the incense was acceptable, but they used other than what God had commanded, and died for so doing (Leviticus 10:1-2). In 2 Samuel 6:6-7 Uzzah, obviously feeling that he was justified in touching the ark of the covenant to keep it from falling, was guilty of violating God’s law, and he too died. Many of the Jews who were responsible for the death of God’s Son acted in ignorance (Acts 3:17; 1 Cor. 2:8), but doubtless felt they were doing the right thing. They were still charged with sin and called upon to repent (Acts 2:22-23, 36-38). Saul of Tarsus, with a clear conscience and zeal for God (Acts 22:3; 23:1), felt that he was doing the right thing in persecuting and even killing the followers of Jesus, but he was wrong wasn’t he? Please do not try to influence me or impress me by what you think you have felt, and please do not be influenced or led by feelings, either your own or someone else’s. Let it be by an appeal to what the word of God teaches.