

Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries

**The TREE OF LIFE is a weekly teaching summary. The Tree of Life
for the week ending 01-21-01**

The Doctrine of the Emotions of the Soul, Part II

By way of review, we have been noting that **emotion** is the *appreciator* of the soul and responds or reacts to whatever thoughts reside there. Normal functions of the emotion include pleasure, entertainment, excitement, or appreciation. The Greek word for “emotions” in our main passage of **Phi 3:19** is “*koilia*,” which means something empty or hollow. It is important to remember that emotion is something empty, waiting and wanting to respond, not to act on its own. Emotions contain no doctrine, thought, common sense, or ability to reason. If emotion controls the soul, we can not think or apply doctrine to our life. If the way we feel becomes the criterion for our life and the basis for our decisions, we will never be able to execute God’s plan as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, **Isa 52:1 4-53:12**.

The purpose of normal emotion is to respond to various stimuli in our soul by way of norms and standards. Emotion is meant and designed to *respond* to thought, and when it functions without thought, it becomes abnormal. Emotions can be a hindrance to the perception of doctrine, especially if you don’t “feel” like being around someone in the local assembly, or perhaps when you don’t feel like listening to a particular subject that is being taught. When believers make emotion the criterion for their spiritual life, they generally have an uncontrolled, unrestrained emotional pattern. This can be very dangerous, as it is the basis for criminality, violence, hatred, bitterness, jealousy, and implacability. Under the predesigned plan of God for the Church-age, emotions are not adequate guides for the motives, thoughts, or decisions of the believer. Emotions are not tools of cognition, nor are they the basis or standard for life. The believer may experience an emotional response to the Word and plan of God, but it is not necessary for his spirituality or spiritual growth. Being emotional does not mean being spiritual.

Point 2: New Testament Greek Words for Emotion.

“*Koilia*” is identified with the solar plexus, a part of the central nervous system; therefore, it is often translated “stomach.” It is used in such passages as **Joh 7:37-39** (cf. **Act 2:13**), **Heb 12:2**, and **Rom 6:18**.

Rom 16:18 *For such believers are slaves, not of our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own emotions.*

Joh 7:38 *“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’”*

The word “*splagchnon*” represents the *parasympathetic* and *sympathetic* effects of emotion. It is the word used for intestines, often translated “guts,” “entrails,” or

“tender mercies,” and actually means feelings and affections. It is found in **2Co 6:12, 7:13-15; Phi 1:8, 2:1, 3:17; Col 3:12; Phm 1:7,12,20.**

2Co 6:12 *You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained by your own **emotions**.*

2Co 7:13-15 *For this reason we have been comforted. And besides our comfort, we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, so also our boasting before Titus proved to be the truth. And his **affection** abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling.*

This word has an interesting use in **1Jo 3:17**, “*But whoever has the world’s goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his **heart** against him, how does the love of God abide in him?*” When we are thinking with the mind of Christ, we will have feelings and emotions toward someone in need.

The noun “**nephros**” is often translated “*reins*” in the *King James Version* and “*heart*” in the *New American Standard Bible*.

Rev 2:23 “*And I will kill her children with pestilence; and all the churches will know that I am He Who searches the **minds** [should be translated “emotions”] and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.*”

Here the Lord Jesus Christ is searching and testing the emotions. While emotion never represents spirituality or any function related to divine omnipotence, it is still a part of your soul. Emotions are not essential to Christian experience, and were never designed by God to replace the mentorship of God the Holy Spirit as our teacher. However, God can and will test the way in which they respond or react.

Point 4: Emotions are tested by God, **Psa 7:9**, “*For the righteous God tests the right lobes [hearts] and the **emotions**.*” When emotion is responding to the right lobe you have a normal, healthy soul. When emotion is controlling the soul you have an abnormal, unhealthy soul. God has a way of revealing the state of your soul. In **Psa 26:2**, David said, “*Test my **emotions** and my right lobe.*”

Jer 11:20 “*But, O Lord of hosts, Who judges righteously, Who tries the **feelings** and the heart.*”

God, in His omniscience, knew billions of years ago the condition of our soul at any point in our life. “Testing” here is used as an *anthropo-morphism*; God is not literally running a check on our souls to see what’s going on inside — He already knows! Testing is simply a part of God’s character and the means by which He reveals our capacity for life — He does this for our benefit, not His! God desires us to have maximum capacity for life, therefore He challenges us in our emotions and heart. Since capacity for life is based on the amount of doctrine in our right lobe, the testing of our emotions refers to the response of our emotions to the information we have stored in our soul.

An anthropomorphism ascribes to God a part of the human soul (e.g., volition) or body (e.g., hand) that He does not literally possess.

Point 3: Old Testament Words for Emotions.

The Hebrew word “*racham*,” often translated “*bowels*” (that which is filled with the waste of the body) is used to designate the emotions, and also points to having mercy. It is used in several passages, including **Gen 43:30** and **1Ki 3:26**. In **Gen 43:30**, love for his family stirred Joseph’s emotions to the point of weeping, which is an emotional response (it contains no thought).

“*Me`ah*” is used to refer to the intestines, abdomen, stomach, belly, or bowels (those whose emotions rule their lives can be compared to intestines filled with waste); it designates the place of emotion. Let us note the differences in the translation of this word.

Job 30:27 (KJV) “My *bowels* boiled, and rested not: the days of affliction prevented me.”

Job 30:27 (NASB) “I am seething within, and cannot relax; days of affliction confront me.”

Jer 4:19 (KJV) “My *bowels*, my *bowels*! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.”

Jer 4:19 (NASB) “My *soul*, my *soul*! I am in anguish! Oh, my heart! My heart is pounding in me; I cannot be silent, because you have heard, O my soul [the word “soul” here is a totally different Hebrew word (“*nephesh*”), the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.” [You can see how important it is to see the discrepancies in the English translations!]

Jeremiah has filled his right lobe with disturbing thoughts, and his emotions are responding.

A translation of “*me`ah*” that is actually quite humorous in our day and age is found in **Sol 5:4** in the *KJV*: “My beloved extended his hand through the opening, and my *bowels* were moved for him.” “Moving your bowels” hardly goes hand-in-hand with romance!

“*Beten*” means something hollow, and refers to the belly or the abdomen. The translation “belly” is actually a reference to emotion in **Pro 13:25, 18:8, 26:22**.

Pro 18:18 *The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels, and they go down into the innermost parts of the body.*

The person who listens to gossip is allowing his emotions to be stimulated and adversely affected, especially when he listens to condemning stories about someone who makes him jealous. Responding to gossip (rather than ignoring it) produces wounds in the soul like an ulcer. This emotional activity of gloating over someone else’s misfortunes you can only destroy you.

“*Kilyah*,” often translated “*reins*” (an old English word for the kidneys) is used to designate the emotions. It refers to the fat pads covering the kidneys and adrenal glands. The adrenal glands secrete the hormone *epinephrine* which is the “fright, flight, or fight” hormone. It increases glucose and cardiac output to the muscles and is stimulated by the emotions. It appears in **Psa 139:13; Jer 12:12, 20:12, and Pro 23:15-16.**

Pro 23:15-16 *My son, if your heart is wise, my own heart also will be glad; and my inmost being will rejoice, when your lips speak what is right.*

Psa 139:13a *For You formed my inward parts...*

Point 5: Emotion and spirituality must be related to the correct dispensation.

Remember that in the Church-age, Christ is absent from the earth. Therefore, in this dispensation, the filling of the Holy Spirit is never characterized by ecstasies. In the Church-age, the filling of the Holy Spirit produces the character and glory of Christ, without emotion as an integral part of spirituality, **Rom 5:5, Gal 5:22-23**, “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*” Emotion was never designed to produce character, but to respond to character and therefore cannot be a part of spirituality. Appreciation of Jesus Christ comes through perception of doctrine rather than emotional function (which can not produce integrity nor fulfill the *Royal Family Honor Code*). This does not eliminate emotion, but rather puts emotion in its proper place.

In the Church-age, emotion responds to many factors in the right lobe, including Bible doctrine, the laws of divine establishment, love, and patriotism, but emotional response is never the filling of the Holy Spirit. You can be depressed for physiological reasons and still be filled with the Spirit. The way you feel has nothing to do with your spiritual “status quo.” The purpose of the filling of the Holy Spirit is perception of doctrine, advancement to maturity, and production of divine good from your *royal ambassadorship* (in which you represent the Lord Jesus Christ in the devil’s world), but never the production of ecstasies. Only in the Millennium, when Christ is present on the earth and ruling the world, do emotion and ecstasies characterize the filling of the Holy Spirit. During the Millennium, the filling of the Holy Spirit manifests an emotional appreciation of the present Christ. Therefore, ecstasies will then be a legitimate spiritual function. Believers in the Millennium are universally indwelt by the Holy Spirit, as in the Church-age, **Eze 36:27, 37:14; Jer 31:33.** The filling of the Holy Spirit in the Millennium includes emotional appreciation, **Joe 2:28-29.**

Point 6: Emotional Revolt of the Soul.

Emotion can be a hindrance to the plan of God and a distraction to the perception of doctrine, as noted in **2Co 6:11-12, Rom 16:17-18.** *Emotional revolt*, which stems from the old sin nature, causes emotion to become the aggressor instead of the responder. Emotion now becomes the standard and criterion for one’s life, rather than the doctrinal content of the right lobe. Therefore, emotional revolution against the establishment of the soul results in the total failure (malfunction of perception, metabolization, and application of doctrine) of the Christian life, and prevents the fulfillment of God’s plan in the believer’s life. Rather than responding to doctrine in the soul, emotion revolts and

takes command of the soul. Once emotion is in charge, all capacity, love, and happiness are gone, and the individual becomes very frustrated. He becomes consumed by the frantic search for happiness, and is completely dependent on feeling rather than common sense.

Point 7: Emotion as a responder contributes to capacity for life.

Emotion is to be an *appreciator* of love, but as a *leader* it destroys capacity for life.

Gen 43:30 *And Joseph made haste, for his emotions did yearn upon his brother, and he sought where to weep, and he entered into his chamber and wept there.*

Joseph had great love in his soul for his brother Benjamin, and he was responding emotionally to that love. Sometimes you are not even aware of the love in your right lobe until something triggers it in the memory center and elicits a response in the emotion. Here we see emotion as related to *category three* (family) love as a legitimate stimulating factor in this area. When triggered, the emotions respond and make you aware of that love; however, they do not contain love themselves.

The communion table is designed for us to remember and appreciate our Lord Jesus Christ and His work on the Cross. If we love Him, our emotions will often respond in memory of all He is and all He has done for us. The pertinent doctrines are already in our right lobe. The cup and the bread give our emotion an opportunity to respond to the One unseen, Whom we love, and yet still maintain poise and stability in assembled worship. Ritual was designed for two reasons—to communicate principles of truth, and to allow the function of emotion without destroying order. As believer-priests assembled together for communion, this is a very tender moment for all of us. Although true appreciation for the Lord Jesus Christ comes through perception of doctrine, it can be manifested through emotion. However, as great a blessing as emotion is, there is nothing more dangerous than allowing it to rule your soul.