

THE “EMOTIONAL” LIFE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (Part 6: Emotions: vices and virtues)

As I previously noted, I place “emotions” within quotation marks to indicate that I do not accept the modern view of “emotions.” Not only do I reject reductionistic/physicalistic views of emotions (i.e., mere passive physiological states), I reject much of what is taught both by “emotional” churches (who make emotions the basis of truth) as well as conservative Bible churches who tend to denigrate and consider it a virtue to suppress “emotions” (in a way very similar to the ethics of the Stoics). The foundation of all of my criticisms is the undeniable, self-evident evidence both from reality as such (philosophical realism) as well as from God’s infallible Word.

In short, “emotions” are not passive and uncontrollable physiological states. And these feelings are not the ground or basis of truth. Instead, “emotions” are active powers of the soul (affections and sentiments) that resonate corporeally in our bodies (passions). Moreover, they are not amoral physiological states of being. They do have moral, immoral, and spiritual dimensions: they fall in the category of virtue/vice. Let’s consider a scriptural example:

Matthew 20:30-34 And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"³¹ And the multitude sternly told them to be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!"³² And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?"³³ They said to Him, "Lord, we want our eyes to be opened."³⁴ And moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.

1. Jesus Christ as the perfect Man loved the two blind men and felt compassion (σπλαγχνισθεῖς) for them, which moved Him to heal them. Christ’s physical feelings for them fall under the category of spiritual virtue—this was the work of God manifested in Christ’s understanding and physical feelings.
2. A thought experiment: What if someone without the virtue of love and compassion for the needy happened to walk by the two blind men before Christ arrived? Instead of possessing the virtues of love and compassion, he was a bitter, hateful, and scornful person? Say, for example, instead of feeling compassion, he laughed at the way the blind men groped around. In other words, he would actually experience (in soul and body) a measure of joy and happiness. He actually feels momentary happiness as he mocks them. How are we to categorize this person’s “emotions?” Mere passive physiological states of the body or very much part of the person’s character? Is he not responsible for his feelings? Did he not make many decisions in his life to so debase his will/desires as to “consider” blind men funny? Is he not a “mocker” by character and thus by feelings? Does the Bible not condemn those who experience the “emotion” of *delight* in scoffing? (Cf., Prov. 1:21, 3:34, 15:12; Psa.

1:1.) Would it not be more virtuous for him to feel compassion for the blind men as Christ did?

People may delude themselves into thinking that they cannot help their “evil feelings.” While this may be true in some limited respects due to making many evil choices (which forms evil character), the bottom line is that we do have control of the *direction* of our character. As Christ put it, *for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also* (Matt. 6:21). Make your treasure Christ and the things of God, and your heart and virtuous “emotions” will be sure to follow; make yourself and this world your treasure, and your heart with “emotions” of vice will be sure to follow as well. All one has to do to move his heart in the right direction is to make the right things his treasure. In other words, to have a heart for God, the Word of God, and loving others, all one has to do is to make these things your treasure—and your heart will be sure to follow! *Quo Vadis?*

In the Sacred Romance,

Pastor Don