

**THE “EMOTIONAL” LIFE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST
(Part 8: A look at Jesus’s groaning and lachrymosity)**

At the outset, I want to reiterate my categorical rejection of modern notions *embedded* and *reflected* in the relatively modern term “emotion.” This term has so dominated and saturated our modern way of thinking that it is difficult for modern man, including the most assiduous Bible-believer and pastor, not to use the term when he wants to describe human feelings. Yet, neither this term nor its *equivalent* is found anywhere in Scripture. Apparently neither God nor man, from Genesis through Revelation, had any trouble referring to and describing divine “feelings” and human feelings without needing the term “emotions” or some physicalistic equivalent. This is because there is no equivalent concept or term in Scripture. In other words, the term and its modern connotations are not biblical. It is based on a Cartesian dualism, not a biblical framework. Moreover, the bankruptcy or at least ambiguity of this term is increasingly being recognized in materialistic modern psychology—but more on that later, maybe.

The fact that the term “emotion” does not match reality, either in the supernatural revelation of Scripture or modern physicalistic psychology, does not stop believers, even the most intelligent and gifted pastors, from referring to it and even building elaborate doctrines, charts, and diagrams to show how human “emotions” should or should not be viewed with regard to the spiritual life. This just goes to show you how deep naturalistic, physicalistic, and atheistic concepts can affect even the greatest Bible scholars and exegetes of the Word of God. It also shows how easy it is for anyone to be brainwashed if he does not have the proper foundation of philosophical realism.

Philosophical realism contains a very robust and elaborate account of all of human affections, sentiments, and passions. The account fits perfectly with the data of Scripture. This should not surprise us since what is real in the natural world (accessed through philosophical realism) is also the same reality that we find in Scripture. In sum, realism teaches that man is viewed as one whole being (hylomorphism) who consists of an immaterial soul that gives life to his entire corporeal being. This is different from the Cartesian view, which pictures man as an immaterial soul that resides in the brain (originally posited in the pineal gland) and the body as merely an *extraneous* way to get around. It is not hard to see how “emotions” as a predominately physiological phenomenon fits nicely with Cartesianism, but does not in hylomorphism. In Cartesianism, it is not difficult to see how these physicalistic “emotions” can be depreciated and could never be viewed as a locus for virtue. True to the Darwinian physicalistic paradigm, they are *just* physical feelings. Enough said!

In contrast to “emotions” as just physical feelings that are void of virtue and morality, the Bible depicts these feelings, that include physical feelings, as part of man’s intrinsic nature and therefore they fall in the category of virtue/vice (cf., 1 John 3:17). How we feel about things, God, and fellow man are part of our moral and spiritual makeup. These feelings begin in the rational intellect and will (“affections”) and then tend to resonate in our corporeal nature (passions). We “feel” on both immaterial levels (affections of the mind) and material levels (passions of the body), but both are very much part of our intrinsic nature. They makeup part of our character for the good (virtue) and bad (vice). So, biblical hylomorphism accounts for the non-physical affections of the immaterial mind and will as well as the physical passions that are felt in our corporeal being. This also explains

how God can have affections but not passions, and how Christ as the God-man has both affections and passions.

Far from the amoral and non-virtuous nature “emotions,” affections and passions are part of man’s moral and spiritual nature. The man who loves God is virtuous; the man who loves darkness instead of God is evil (John 3:19). The husband who loves his wife is virtuous; the husband who loves other women is evil. The person who feels *compassion* at seeing someone viciously beaten has virtue in capacity (as a power of the soul) to sympathize; the person who feels nothing at witnessing the same evil event has no virtue of sympathy (e.g., a sociopath)—it is immoral not to have certain feelings in the mental affections and physical passions (“*com-compassion*”). Yes, feelings matter.

Now let us note an example of Jesus’s immaterial affections and physical passions and make some general observations:

John 11:35-35, *Jesus groaned in spirit and was vexed. . . Jesus wept..Jesus groaned*

1. Contrary to popular belief, Jesus did not weep because Lazarus died. This death was part of His plan (John 11:1-6). Moreover, He is not crying at the death (cf., John Calvin), this death, again, was part of His plan. Neither of these explanations can be supported by the context, which indicates that the death of Lazarus was part of His plan to reveal the glory of God and draw people closer to God.
2. Jesus *groaned in spirit, wept, and groaned* because He was discouraged and dismayed at the sight of unbelief before Him. Other examples of His discouragement at the sight of the destructive consequences of unbelief include Matt. 23:37; Lk 13:34.
3. Jesus has more than a little reason for discouragement at this point in John. He had a plan to draw His close friends into greater and deeper faith in and love for God, but they were not responding appropriately. Instead of being drawn closer to God, Mary was actually weeping, rebuking, and blaming Him for Lazarus’s death (John 11:33). This frustrated Jesus and caused Him to groan and weep.
4. When the crowd around Jesus saw Him weeping, they responded to Him disparately. Some people looked at Jesus’s “emotions” and remarked that He must have loved Lazarus very much (11:36). Others wondered why Jesus had not healed Lazarus so he would not have died in the first place (11:37). This sight dismayed Jesus and made him groan again. He was clearly frustrated at their unbelief and ignorance.
5. The sight of Mary crying and rebuking Him—especially, seeing her filled with thoughts of His betrayal *and* hearing the crowd’s ignorant remarks was extremely frustrating for the Perfect Man, who had made it known that He is the resurrection and the life (John 11:25-26). The sight of all of this causes Jesus to become even more frustrated, demonstrated by His second groaning (John 11:38).

6. Etymologically “groan” (ἐνεβριμήσατο in verses 33 and 38) can signify the sound horses make when they *snort* in anger (Aeschylus uses the word this way). Anger can come in many forms. In this context the anger or frustration is a mix of dismay and frustration at the sight before Him. This was all expressed corporeally by Him “crying and groaning.”
7. Jesus’s absolute sinlessness and perfect nature: Jesus is not only sinless in that He did not commit sins of commission. He is also faultless in the sense of never committing a sin of *omission*. In other words, whatever He did was perfect. He never committed any sins of commission or *sins* of omission.
8. It is not the case that Jesus’s “emotions” overcame Him—they did not get the best of Him. In other words, His crying and groaning from frustration and disappointment were not acts indicating that He was weak in any way. It is blasphemous to think Christ would have or should have said anything like we hear Christians might imagine Him to say, like “I am sorry, My emotions just got the best of me. I know I should be stronger. Please forgive Me for being like a woman.” Such a view is blasphemous as well as ignorant on many levels.
9. Crying and groaning can be acts of virtue or vice. If one is crying because of sympathy for loved ones due to seeing their deplorable condition, it is a manifestation of the virtue of caring for them. If one is crying because one is simply feeling sorry for himself for selfish reasons, it is not good; it is a vice. Moreover, not feeling anything at the misery of others is not only a vice, it really is not even being a normal human being, at least not human in the fullest sense of man’s capacity for sympathy and empathy. It is the animal who lacks the power or capacity of soul to feel pain for others. Empathy is a uniquely human characteristic.
10. In the Cratylean mindset it is believed that words in and of themselves can be thought of as being good or bad (like a simple list of MAS sins to avoid). This is manifestly false. Love can be a virtue (John 3:16; 2 Tim. 4:8) or vice (John 3:19; 2 Tim. 4:10)—by the way, all references to “love” in these four above passages use the same Greek word: *agapao* (apparently neither John nor Paul used the Cratylean hermeneutics used throughout Christianity today). The meaning is never in the word—that is not how language works with reality. The word is only a sign that points to reality. Take another example, the word “betray.” Is that a positive or a negative word? Really?! What if I was with my wife at an event where I did not get to visit with her very much. However, during the event there was one time when our eyes meet from across the room, and so I gave her a wink to *betray* my affections and love for her. Do you still think that “betray” is a negative word? This goes to show that even words that tend to have very negative connotations can have positive ones—for the root meaning of betray means to reveal—it is the context that makes all of the difference. I include this point to show the invalidity of making words by themselves the reality instead of what is going on in reality. Jesus was angry, disappointed, sad, and actually wept. Moreover, they were all the perfect acts of the Perfect Man. Yes, the God-man’s virtuous sentimentality included lachrymosity. And there was nothing weak about it. It was a power of the perfect human soul expressed in His corporeal being.

In the Sacred Romance,

Pastor Don