

**To the Saints at Kossuth Street . . . Be a worshipping community!**

Ephesians 1:4-8

September 5, 2010

**Intro.** Where do feelings for God come from? The Bible in various ways and places calls for the child of God . . . even expects and assumes that the child of God . . . will express feelings, emotions and affections from a heart that has come alive with a gladness in God. Some this morning may think it a strange question but both the scriptures and our own experience compel us to address the question . . . where do feelings for God come from?

The question is key to our mission as the people of God. A gospel that rests heavily on our minds that has not transformed the desires of our hearts and initiated growing affections for God is not the genuine gospel of scripture. A person unmoved at the core of his being by the delights of God's work on his behalf is a person who does not know God. This is the essential point of the first half of Ephesians 1. God's people are those who break out in affectionate blessing of God in intelligent response to all that he has done for them in Christ Jesus, by his Spirit, according to his will and by his enormous grace.

The scriptures are not shy or unclear in describing the expected responses and behavior of people who know and love God . . . delight, rejoice, gladness, singing, magnify, tell, bless, seek, love, praise, thanks, shout, pour out your heart are all terms used to shape and describe the response of people who know and have experienced God's great love.

Where God is not blessed, spoken well of and affectionately referred to, the truth about God has been rejected, misunderstood, forgotten or overlooked.

I believe that for many in the room this is a haunting question. Where do feelings for God come from? Please understand and note carefully that we are not talking about your feelings for God from a comparative worship perspective. In other words the issue is not how your feelings or affections for God compare to the person who cries at supermarket openings, raises their hands during songs at church or is annoyingly happy all the time because God talks to them. The question if parsed out to an extreme could be expressed in another form . . . have you ever wondered if you really love God because you have recognized a worrisome absence of feeling or affection for him? In other words the admonition of 5:19 'singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart' is a stretch for you for some reason.

Be encouraged today as we study God's word for answers to this question. A lack of feeling for God may indicate that you are relying on inadequate sources to generate feelings for God. Circumstances of life, answered or non-answered prayer, expectations of worship music and styles and fear of man all contribute to significant confusion that may produce faint, yet unsustainable feelings for God.

A quote from John Stott used by Bob Kauflin in his book 'Worship Matters' may help direct our thinking as we prepare to address this question of where do feelings for God come from in Ephesians 1:4-8 this morning:

*All true worship is a response to the self-revelation of God in Christ and Scripture, and arises from our reflection on who He is what He has done . . . The worship of God is evoked, informed, and inspired by the vision of God . . . The true knowledge of God will always lead to worship.*

Read Ephesians 1:3-8

This letter from the Apostle to the saints at Kossuth Street begins with an outburst of praise to God with the direct implication that this is both a core value and distinctive mark of faithful saints in Christ Jesus. Verse 4 begins with 'even as', which essentially means that now the blessings that God has blessed us with will be amplified and explained. In these verses for our study today and next Lord's Day are 5 foundational truths about God's saving love for you that as the hymn writer says . . . should tune your

heart to sing his praise.

The answer to our question of where do feelings for God come from is found in this passage. Feelings for God are found in and expressed because of these truths that describe what God has done and is doing for you in Christ Jesus. Worship, your affectionate response to God, begins in some hard to reach places. Let's examine the truths that produce affectionate, genuine praise from the heart.

### **1. Affectionate worship begins in eternity past with God's choice. 1:4**

The scriptures teach the astounding truth that 'believing saints in Christ Jesus' are what they are because God chose them and determined to save them. If you are a genuine Christian, it is because God set his love on you in eternity past. Election is a challenging truth to understand. Rather than defend this truth or explain various questions about it, let's explain it as the scriptures present it for our encouragement.

- Election means that before creation God selected those whom he would redeem, bring to faith, justify and glorify in and through Christ Jesus.

Cmp Deut. 7:6-11

John 15:16, 19

Rom. 8:33

1Thess. 1:3-6

- Election is in Christ. God's means of glorifying himself is through and in his Son Jesus. The elect have been connected to and in solidarity with Christ since before the foundations of the world.
- Election is just the beginning/starting point of God's many gracious saving acts on your behalf. He predestined, redeemed, forgave, poured out grace, made know truth and gave the Holy Spirit. Your salvation is God's work from start to finish. Cmp description of depravity in Eph.2
- God's choice is not based on merit, circumstance or foresight. It is not comparative in that God expresses preference over others due to characteristics inherent in people.
- God chooses people to salvation for a purpose . . . that they should be holy and blameless before him. The objective of God's choice is both to repair the damage done by sin and to create for himself a people conformed to the likeness of his son.
- God's choice of a person produces a heart response of . . .

confidence in God – Phil.1:6; Isa. 41:8-10    humility – Rom. 9:15-16    diligence – 2Pet.1:10

God's choice of you to be his child is one truth that feeds the flame of affection for him. What positive, undeniable evidence do you have that God has been and is at work completing what he began before the creation of the world?                      Cmp. Rom. 11:33-36

### **1. Affectionate worship begins in eternity past with God's choice. 1:4**

### **2. Expressive delight in God flows from understanding adoption. 1:5-6**

Following the translation of ESV we learn that motivated by love for you, God took the initiative to set you aside for the specific purpose of becoming his son. Adoption is a permanent relationship of intimacy with God the Father. It is a change of status.

Galatians 4:1-6 teaches 2 truths to grasp regarding adoption:

Your identity has changed . . . from slaves to sons.

Eph.2:2-3 sons of disobedience; children of wrath

Your inheritance has changed . . . from damnation to glory.

Eph. 1:5-6 teaches 3 truths about adoption to deepen your response of wonder toward your heavenly Father who adopted you:

It was God's pleasure to adopt you as His son. God delights in loving you. He was not forced or coerced by anything other than his will and desire. V.5 according to the purpose of his will

Your adoption as God's son shows off God's indescribable kindness. You are a testimony to God's glorious grace. Why he made you his son with a new identity and a huge inheritance is only and forever because of his grace. V.6

Your adoption as God's son places you in an unbreakable relationship with Jesus Christ, the Beloved one. You are 'fellow heirs with Christ.' Rom. 8:17

You are a son of God with all the privileges and rights of a legal son. Compared to being a son of disobedience, a child of wrath, alienated, an enemy and separated from Christ . . . adopted to sonship is something to consider valuable and respond to with expressive delight.

Cmp. 1John 3:1-3

### **3. Singing to God is launched at the cross with the provision of redemption. 1:7-8**

Another truth that prompts the follower of Christ to praise is that of redemption. Redemption carries both the idea of being set free from slavery and the price paid to gain that freedom. The OT speaks of redemption in terms of the release of slaves and the deliverance of God's people out of Egypt.

Deepen your appreciation and responsiveness by . . .

Understanding that your enslavement to sin was real. Rom. 5:12; Eph.2

Appreciating the violent death of Jesus that paid the price for your freedom. Rom. 3:24-25  
Reviewing the meaning of forgiveness. Heb. 8:12 I will remember their sins no more

Remembering the kindness of God extended to you in redeeming you. Riches of his grace

Acknowledging that you have been bought, you are not your own. 1Cor. 6:19-20

Cmp. Rev. 1:4-6 redemption prompts eternal praise.

- 1. Affectionate worship begins in eternity past with God's choice. 1:4**
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- 3. Singing to God is launched at the cross with the provision of redemption. 1:7-8**

**Lord, I am listening . . .**

1. Acknowledge your self-focus as an underlying cause of your lack of affection and feelings for God.  
Humility and awareness of our lostness is the beginning of appreciation for God and his blessings. 1<sup>st</sup> 2 beatitudes Matt.5
2. Admit that your feelings for God mirror your efforts to seek him and know him.  
Agree to be more diligent in seeking to see and know God in some of these harder to reach places. The greater blessings of God in your life relate to the unseen world of spiritual realities. These can only be cultivated with the Word, prayer and by the Spirit.
3. Ask God to expand your heart and transform your affections for the praise of his glory.  
Cry out to God to help you respond to him in spirit and in truth. You may not have feelings for God because you have do not want to change and have not sought his help to change. Old and worldly blessings and affections rule your heart.

Give thanks and sing . . .