

The Objective Gospel Versus Subjectivism

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There has always been a strong tendency in men to base their religious convictions upon feelings and experiences. Perhaps this trend has never been stronger than at present. It has always been a prominent feature of Pentecostalism, but it now effects a much wider segment of religionists. Such things as seeking a direct sign from God that one is saved or deciding that one is saved because one feels a certain way are examples. Others go out trying to evangelize and spend most of their time “witnessing” about how good they are since they’ve been “saved.” The Mormons believe in Joseph Smith and his Book of Mormon because they prayed about it and God told them it was true. All such things are only as certain as the feelings, emotions and moods of those who testify about them. And there is nothing more fickle than human feelings and emotions. There is no standard by which to gauge such experiences. The insincere and imposters can claim experiences every bit as good as the most devout. How can a Pentecostal who does not accept the *Book of Mormon* or Joseph Smith discount the testimony of the Mormon? Or how can either the Pentecostal or Mormon deny the claim of the Jehovah’s Witness who claims the Watchtower Society alone can perfectly interpret the Bible? Although not intending to impugn the sincerity of anyone, it must be a very convenient form of religion that rests on “it is so because I say so, I feel so, or I know so.” This approach to religion and life is correctly called, “Subjectivism” (“a doctrine that individual feeling. . . is the ultimate criterion of the good and the right,” Webster). Only by following such a doctrine could one clasp his breast and declare, “I wouldn’t swap the feeling I have right here for a stack of Bibles!”

Neither the Lord nor His apostles ever rested the authority of the Gospel or the salvation it offers upon subjective feelings. Neither did they allow mere feelings or emotions in those to whom they preached to be signs of salvation. The authority from which their Gospel sprang was not from the imaginations, hope-so, think-so, or personal feelings of themselves or any other men. Their message was not, “Look what we are doing for Jesus,” but, “Look what Jesus has done and will do for you.” The message they preached was objective (as opposed to subjective), for it was Truth, independent of their own thinking and feelings. The Gospel of Christ, faithfully communicated to us in our New Testament, is God’s thinking, not man’s (John 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:13; Gal. 1:11–12). When men wanted to be saved, they were not told to seek a certain feeling or experience, but to obey Gospel commands that would put them in touch with

the blood of Christ (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3–4). By obeying this objective Gospel, all men who believe in Christ can know that they are saved!

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