

Lest We Drift Away An offer of Thanksgiving

by Hendrik Joubert

When we think of drifting away we inevitably think of it in a doctrinal context, however the mental-emotional side should be an area of concern also – we must worship God in truth as well as *in spirit*. (John 4:24) The difference between right or wrong in the sense that it will condemn us often lies in the attitude with which we do it. Ulterior motives may cause an otherwise positive action to be viewed negatively. We did it for personal gain, and not for the good of others or to express a loving submission to the will of God.

The mental-emotional side of worship is not the irrational expression of personal desires and emotions as it is frequently done in the charismatic movement. It addresses the need for us to *put our heart into what we do* and doing it with a deep sense of *gratitude*. When a person loses the dedication with which things were done we say his or her *heart is not in it any longer*.

Consider the foremost command: ***'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.'*** (Matthew 22:37) All your heart...all your soul...all your mind... The repetition reveals the significance of the commandment. Are we capable of such committed love? ***"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?"*** (John 21:15) Most of us heard a lesson on the different types of love under discussion in the conversation between Jesus and Peter, when this question was asked, and as a result we may even feel a little superior to Simon Peter...the traitor. At least we did not deny the Lord as he did! How could he have...tsk...mphff...sigh...?! We need to do more than *know* the difference between the loves under discussion; we need to *express* this love in our worship of God so we will deny Him less often by sinning.

When we have this type of committed love, submitting the word of God to frivolous interpretation becomes unthinkable, let alone starting or accepting false doctrines. We will not be ashamed to stand up for what others may consider archaic doctrines in our liberally minded, liberated (from accountability to God) society – we love the Lord our God with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our minds and we are not ashamed to admit it.

Consider the arrogance with which we (attempt to) express our *humility* as we shake our heads at the Jews, Peter and the denominations, while engaging in our own doctrines in a *scholarly* manner, so that we may feel good about our ability to *dissect* the Word. We decide that this and that was for so and such a reason, meaning we do not have to do it any longer. There is also the idea of church of Christ doctrine as a preacher's wife once objected to something another preacher presented from the Scriptures for consideration – *the church of Christ does not believe that, does it?! Is it what the Scriptures teach, and therefore the teaching of Christ?*

I can think of no better example of expressing the *putting your heart into it* aspect of worshipping God 24/7 than that of the apostle Paul as he declares: ***I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the***

flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20) His life is an enactment of this statement.

The church at Ephesus seemed to have kept themselves morally and doctrinally pure. ***“I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.”*** (Revelation 2:2)

In **Psalm 50:8** the Lord God says to Israel: ***I will not rebuke you for your sacrifices Or your burnt offerings, Which are continually before Me.*** They were doing what they were supposed to do, sacrifice to God; however they missed the point of the sacrifices. It was not to “feed Kong.” In the following verses God explains that He did not need the food, and if He were hungry He would not even tell them as everything belongs to Him. What God desired was for them to ***Offer to God thanksgiving, And pay your vows to the Most High. ¹⁵ Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.”*** (Psalm 50:14-15)

In a New Testament version of this situation the church at Ephesus received some impressive compliments concerning their “sacrifices” (doctrinal purity); however they would be rejected if they did not return to their ***first love***. We are to pour out our love and appreciation in worship of God. This is only possible if we do realize the desperate situation Jesus saved us from.