

The Spiritual Feelings of Believers and Hypocrites Compared

by Ralph Erskine

Ralph Erskine contrasts the spiritual experiences of true believers with those of hypocrites, emphasizing the natural and harmonious nature of genuine faith.

Scripture: Song of Solomon 2:7

Topics: "True Faith", "Holy Spirit"

Description

Ralph Erskine delves into the difference between the pleasant spiritual impressions peculiar to true believers and those that hypocrites may have in the ways of religion. He emphasizes that true and saving impressions in believers are sociable, unlimited, habitual, and natural, advancing and harmoniously helping one another. In contrast, hypocrites' impressions are limited, temporary, and not natural to them, as their carnal unrenewed nature recoils against it. Erskine illustrates how believers' impressions are like a living spring, never drying up, as they are under the influence of the Spirit dwelling in them.

Transcript

The Difference between the Pleasant Spiritual Impressions peculiar to true Believers, and those which Hypocrites may have in the Ways of Religion.

1. True and saving impressions are sociable; they accompany one another and go hand in hand together: for example holy fear does not cast out love nor love cast out fear: holy triumph in the Lord does not take away trembling at his presence; nor holy trembling take away triumph: joy does not destroy godly sorrow for sin; nor godly sorrow remove spiritual joy: faith does not destroy repentance; nor repentance destroy faith: the man's humility does not destroy his boldness before God; nor his boldness of access destroy humility. His low thoughts of himself does not destroy his high thoughts of Christ; nor his high thoughts of Christ destroy his low thoughts of himself: his self-diffidence does not destroy his holy confidence; nor his holy confidence destroy self-diffidence. Nay, instead of destroying one another, they advance and harmoniously help and forward one another.--Whereas the hypocrite's joy destroys his sorrow; his faith and false confidence destroys and excludes his repentance; his fear destroys his love; and his pretended love to God destroys his fear of him: one good impression he has, destroys another; they cannot keep company together. Whereas spiritual impressions in believers excite and quicken one another.

2. True and saving impressions are unlimited and unstinted; the good frames of hypocrites stinted and limited; insomuch that they rest satisfied without their attainments: so far they go, and reckon they need go no farther, if they think they have so much as will keep them out of hell, or bring them to heaven.

But true believers have restrained measures of grace: whatever holy impressions are made upon them, they still desire more, and more, and more; pressing after consummate perfection: "I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," Phil. 3:13.3. True and saving impressions are habitual impressions; they are like the believer's daily bread: though a man be not always eating or drinking, yet the taking of food for the nourishment of the body, is a man's daily habitual activity: so though the believer be not always under a divine impression, or in a spiritual frame of mind, but has his variations, yet he is habitually in this activity; and if any days pass wherein he is destitute of these meals, they are to him as days of famine, and spiritual scarcity; his soul pines and languishes, and is uneasy for the lack of what it would be according to his desires. Whereas hypocrites can be quite easy in the lack of these things, without ever giving a longing look towards the Lord for his returning to them. But the believer dies when he experiences penury and deprivation: these are his melancholy days, his sighing days, till he recover all again, by the Spirit of the Lord returning, and reviving his heart, and restoring his soul. It is true, the established believer learns, in the absence of perceptible enjoyments, to live by faith on the Son of God-- indeed, but still that faith gives many a long look for the Lord's returning to its sweet and sensible embraces.

4. These impressions, in believers, are not only habitual, but natural. If the hypocrite can have any such impressions, they are not natural to him, they are not his element; he has no new nature corresponding thereto: and therefore he cannot endure to be long under any good and spiritual impressions because his carnal unrenewed recoils against it. His carnal mind, being enmity against God, and he is content that the impressions be gone. But to a child of God, these impressions are natural: they are his new nature, his element; they are like the very breath of his new nature; natural to his sanctified part, as breath is to his body: yea, so natural to him, that they are like a part of his life, and the removal of them is like death to him: and hence, when under these sweet and heavenly impressions, he is disposed to give, as it were, a charge to all the world, to beware of disturbing him, and bereaving him of his joy: "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that you stir not up nor awake my Love till he please," Song 2:7.

In a word, the hypocrite and the godly differ as clock in their motions and affections, as the motion of a clock differs from the sun; the one moves by art, the other by nature: the hypocrite's motions and impressions are like artificial clockwork, under the influence of the common operations of the Spirit, working upon him by some outward means and providences: but the impressions of believers are natural, under the influence of the Spirit dwelling in them: and whatever secondary purposes outward providences and ordinances may have for advancing them, yet they are the fruits of the special operation of the Spirit that is in him, "as a well of water springing up to eternal life." So that their impressions differ as much as a land flood, that quickly dries up, being only maintained with rain from the clouds, differs from a living spring, which is never altogether dried, even when the flood is abated.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net