

## PART II – SIGNS WHICH NEITHER PROVE NOR DISPROVE GENUINE EXPERIENCE

- 1.) **Affections that are raised very high.**
- 2.) **Affections that create unusual effects on the body.**
- 3.) **Abundant talk of religious things.**
- 4.) **Affections that are not purposefully stirred in oneself.**
- 5.) **Affections that come to the mind powerfully with texts of Scripture.**
- 6.) **The appearance of great love for God and man.**
- 7.) **A mixture of these all or any of these traits.**
  - false affections include love, sorrow, fear, submission, gratitude, joy, zeal, desires, hope
  - if any one of them can be false, then several of them together can also be false
- 8.) **Presence of comforts and joys that seem to follow in a certain order.**
  - Positively - in observing experiences, some have identified certain patterns – fears, humbling, sinfulness, light, comfort, joy - there certainly seems to be a general pattern that people go through – to call on God out of a sense of need
  - the Gospel as “good news” makes sense in the context of being aware of the bad news – this all comes connected with the truth that affects them in these ways
  - Negatively – not everyone who feels first fear then joy are necessarily converted to Christ
  - They may have genuine fears, but then hear a false Gospel, built on works, or an experience that gives them a sense of comfort/joy without an understanding of the work of Jesus Christ
  - There could be a kind of belief without repentance of heart, bringing false hope
  - There is also the danger that one pattern of spiritual experience is set up as the standard for all
- 9.) **A disposition to spend much time in external duties of religion.**
  - Positively – there are many Scriptural examples of those who had a heart for God, and that love expressed itself in prayer, worship, proclamation, testimony, desire to hear the Word preached, etc.
  - Negatively – there are those who God is displeased with who are very busy in religious duties Is1:12-15; this was true of the Pharisees ; there are many “religious” people from other religions who are very busy in activities, but it is not saving
  - It is also possible that those who are very busy in the forms of Christianity are not Christians; the externals do not make one a Christian, but the expressions of being a Christian when there is the internal truth
  - This is true even of good preaching – Ezek33:31-32 Mk6:20
- 10.) **A disposition to praise and glorify God with the mouth.**
  - Positively – this is certainly true of those who love, esteem, adore, and desire to magnify God
  - Negatively – there are many examples, particularly in the Gospels, where there was praise but after the fact do not seem to have been converted (small number of those in Acts); Mt15:31 Lk7:16
  - Is66:5 Jews who persecuted God’s people, and did so with a call to praise God
- 11.) **Great confidence.**
  - Confidence/assurance are often deemed as an infallible evidence of true conversion
  - Positively – God desires for His children to have assurance of their salvation in Christ (1Jn5:13 ), and there are many examples of those in Scripture who have such confidence (2Tim1:12)
  - Negatively – there are those who can have great confidence, speak with lofty language, and be very assured and be absent of saving faith – this can happen in **self-flattery** of those who have a belief of the goodness of their own works; **self-exaltation** in trying to impress others with their spirituality; **the Pharisees** are the great example of this
  - What the Pharisees lacked included (1.) a cautious spirit [to test their faith], (2.) knowledge of their own spiritual blindness and hardness, (3.) the devil assaulting their hope (as he does many believers) “*Some hypocrites are a great deal more confident than many saints*” (*Flavel*), (4.) a sight of their own corruption
  - Those who are deceived by self-confidence “despise all argument and inquiry into the case”, not being willing to take heed to 2Cor13:5.
  - Some encourage themselves by applying “walk by faith and not by sight” to their own claim to be Christians, and without fruit and evidence believe “by faith” God has saved them – a most dangerous position
- 12.) **A moving testimony.**
  - This claim is that when people speak of their experiences, they move other people; when someone hears their testimony, they are deeply moved, and this is given as evidence
  - Positively – God’s work in the lives of others should move us deeply, to gratitude, humility, and joy without a hyper-skepticism
  - Negatively – There are no Scriptural evidence that because we are moved, this is itself evidence that the other person is converted; it is a claim that our emotions are like a grace detector, and that our affections are able to infallibly find grace
  - Many of us have known the pain and the perplexity of those who are friends, pastors, fellow Christians who seemed to have God in their lives and yet see them depart from the faith
  - Illustration: during times when God is moving is like a tree that has many blossoms; but the blossoms, as pretty and moving as they are, are not always an indication of the kind of fruit that will come afterwards; so likewise, it is the fruit (next section) that is to be looked for
  - It is also possible that someone that we initially don’t believe has come to know Christ, eventually shows themselves to be true believers by their fruit