

DOES A "TESTIMONY" ASSURE DISCOVERY OF TRUTH?

"Testimony" is understood by some to be sure knowledge received by revelation accompanied by a warm feeling of calm unwavering certainty. It is granted by several who bear such a testimony that this is essentially an inner experience not given to explanation or based on reason or logic.

But does feeling something is true make it so? Does profound belief assure truthfulness? Can feelings be depended upon to be the witness of the Spirit? When, for example, two opposing religionists both "know" their respective viewpoints are "true" because of personal "revelation" or an inner warm glow, how can it be determined which, if either of them, is correct?

A basic Bible fact is Jeremiah 17:9. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. . ." Therefore, it may be concluded that even a burning conviction or "testimony" is totally untrustworthy. Tragically, even many "answers to prayer" fall under this description when based primarily on feelings.

Is there any absolute way to know the truth? Yes! The prophet Isaiah has said, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). Here the only reliable testimony is identified as the written Word of God. That certainly explains why the Apostle Paul commanded his readers to study the Bible, the Word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15). It is also highly informative to note that though Peter received direct revelation from both the Father and the Son, he emphatically declared the Bible to be ". . . a more sure word of prophecy. . ." (2 Peter 1:16-21).

The Apostle John reaffirms these principles by stating, "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. . ." (1 John 5:9). He goes on to identify "the witness of God" to be that which he was writing, New Testament Scripture! The pressing importance of this discussion is also included in his narrative. It is only when feelings and predispositions give way to God's objective written revelation, the Bible, that the truth about eternal life can be positively known.

"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life. . ." (1 John 5:11-13).

Lloyd A. Larkin
Baptist Mid-Missions, Emeritus