

Emotionalism

A little while ago I was walking out with a pastor friend, when he said, “Gareth, I love being with you – you’ve got a fire in your belly!” It was meant as a compliment, I know, but my first thought was, “Well, why doesn’t everyone else?”

I came to know the Lord when I was in my late teens. My conversion was not spectacular but I knew that something radical had happened to my spirit. I was hungry for God’s Word and my first pastor lit a fire in me that has never gone out. Later, while at university studying Physics, I was baptized in the Spirit in a wonderful experience of God’s all-enveloping love. I have never forgotten that ‘mountain-top’ experience when I saw the burning bush, and have often revisited that place in my memory to stir up again the commitment of my heart.

In 1975 I was preaching at a church in the valleys of Wales, built to seat almost 1000 during the Welsh revival of 1904/5. This night there were only about 25 people in attendance and I had to do everything, even lead out in the acapello hymn singing. At the end of the service an elderly man came up to me to apologise for appearing to have fallen asleep during the service. “I was not asleep” he assured me. “I was just making my peace with God.” He went on to tell me how he had given his life to the Lord as a lad of 16, seated in the same pew as he had occupied this evening. He told me how old elder Lewis had led him to Christ that evening but then he said, “I have not lived for Him as I ought”. He went on, “I do not know what it was about your opening comments that caused me to flash back to that day.” He paused – then he added, “O yes, I do. It’s obvious to me that you, like he, are a child of the revival!” How I sang as I drove home that evening! That I should be considered ‘a child of the revival’, though born-again more than 50 years after its passing. I determined I would always endeavor to carry the evidence of personal revival in my daily walk.

Thus it is that I am passionate in my preaching and always eager to tell stories of God’s faithful dealings in my life. I find it strange when I’m in the company of other believers and our conversation is on anything other than the Lord. We have been given a great treasure – surely our lives should be ‘to the praise of His glory’ as we celebrate Him!

The fruit of the Spirit includes love, joy and peace – all emotions! Surely they should be evident to others. When I am happy, my friends all know it. How much more should my joy be evident! If I can get excited in a football game, how much more excited should I get in considering my riches in Christ Jesus!