

FAITH OVER FEELINGS – PART 2

THE PRIORITY OF TRUTH OVER EMOTIONS

- In the process of being sanctified in our emotions, we must acknowledge that no feelings, emotions, or associated behaviors are exempt from the authority of God’s Word
- The emotions are not “off-limits” to the truth
- “[We] must acknowledge that just as God authoritatively commands our moral decisions, he also authoritatively commands our emotions. God tells us how and what we should and should not feel. Our emotions are a part of our humanity that needs to be sanctified and brought under the authority of God’s Word and into conformity with God’s Word. The redemptive process is for the whole person; the emotions are an inherent part of what it means to be a person. The are sinful emotional expressions that need to be repented of and put to death. There are Christlike emotions that need to be brought to life and cultivated.”¹
- The only true way for our emotions to be sanctified is for them to be brought into submission to the truth
- We must learn to lay down new patterns of thinking based on a new understanding of the truth
- This is not some Christian version of the secular “positive thinking” approach
- It involves having our minds renewed with and restored by the Word
- This is necessary because wrong thinking leads to wrong feeling and right thinking leads to right feeling

Biblical Priority of the Heart and Mind

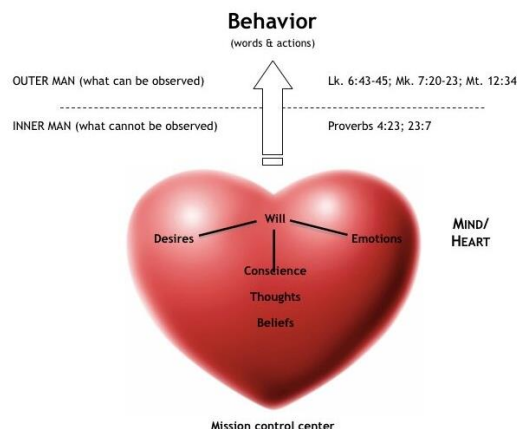
- It is the inner person that makes us who we are...the root always produces the fruit

Proverbs 4:23 ~ Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.

Proverbs 23:7 ~ For as he thinks within himself, so he is. He says to you, “Eat and drink!” But his heart is not with you.

Matthew 12:34 ~ For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.

Matthew 15:17-20 ~ Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and is eliminated?
 18 But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. 20 These are the things which defile the man...



¹ Brian Borgman, *Feelings and Faith*, 62.

² <https://thebcd.org/resources/anthropology-a-theology-of-biblical-counseling>

- This is why there is always a focus in Scripture on the renewing of the mind

Romans 12:2 ~ And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Ephesians 4:22-24 ~ that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Examples of the Sinful Emotions Resulting from Wrong Beliefs

Anger

- Cain's anger was the result of him believing that God should have accepted his offering

Genesis 4:4-6 ~ Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; 5 but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. 6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?"

- Moses' anger was the result of him not believing that God was holy

Numbers 20:8-12 ~ "Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink." 9 So Moses took the rod from before the LORD, just as He had commanded him; 10 and Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock. And he said to them, "Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?" 11 Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank. 12 But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

Fear

- Abraham's fear resulted from a failure to trust the Lord as he should from the time he left Haran

Genesis 20:10-13 ~ And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What have you encountered, that you have done this thing?" 11 Abraham said, "Because I thought, surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. 12 Besides, she actually is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife; 13 and it came about, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her, 'This is the kindness which you will show to me: everywhere we go, say of me, "He is my brother." ' "

- The fear of the people under Moses resulted from their lack of trust in the Lord to go before them

Deuteronomy 1:21-33 ~ 'See, the LORD your God has placed the land before you; go up, take possession, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has spoken to you. Do not fear or be dismayed.' 22 "Then all of you approached me and said, 'Let us send men before us, that they may search out the land for us, and bring back to us word of the way by which we should go up and the cities which we shall enter.' 23 "The thing pleased me and I took twelve of your men, one man for each tribe. 24 "They turned and went up into the hill country, and came to the valley of Eshcol and spied it out. 25 "Then they took some of the fruit of the land in their hands and brought it down to us; and they brought us back a report and said, 'It is a good land which the LORD our God is about to give us.' 26 "Yet you were not willing to go up, but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God; 27 and you grumbled in your tents and said, 'Because the LORD hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us. 28 'Where can we go up? Our brethren have made our hearts melt, saying, "The people are bigger and taller than we; the cities are large and fortified to heaven. And besides, we saw the sons of the Anakim there." ' 29 "Then I said to you, 'Do not be shocked, nor fear them. 30 'The LORD your God who goes before you will Himself fight on your behalf, just as He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, 31 and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, just as a man carries his son, in all the way which you have walked until you came to this place.' 32 "But for all this, you did

not trust the LORD your God, 33 who goes before you on your way, to seek out a place for you to encamp, in fire by night and cloud by day, to show you the way in which you should go.

Importance of the Truth in Sanctifying Emotions

- A primary principle in understanding the Christian life is that truth always must supersede experience
- Truth defines, interprets, and directs experience, not vice versa
- We do not look to our experiences to define what is true but rather we look to what is true to define our experiences
- Doctrine and experience are not enemies of each other; however, there is a priority
- We are to seek God as revealed by his truth, not emotional experiences

2 Peter 1:16-19 ~ For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. 17 For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased”— 18 and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. 19 So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

- “Misperceptions about God, the gospel, Christ, the accomplishment and application of redemption, the nature of Scripture, the Christian life, and faith will cause emotional short circuits that will threaten our well-being. We must grip and be gripped by the truth...Pastoral and personal experience have constantly taught me there are certain truths the Christian must understand, marinate in, and fully embrace in order to have spiritual and emotional equilibrium.”³
- Some core truths that every believer must marinate in regularly in order to continually “think on what is right and true” (Phil 4:8):

- **A Robust Belief in God’s Sovereignty**

Genesis 50:20 ~ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive

Romans 8:28 ~ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

- **A Deep Understanding of God’s Character**

Jeremiah 9:23-24 ~ Thus says the LORD, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; 24 but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the LORD.

Daniel 11:32 ~ By smooth words he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action.

- **A Firm Conviction About Scripture’s Sufficiency**

Psalms 19:7-9 ~ The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.⁸ The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether.

³ Ibid., 68.

Hebrews 4:12 ~ For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

○ **A Passionate Desire for Pleasing Christ**

2 Corinthians 5:9 ~ Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.

Colossians 1:10 ~ so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

○ **A Profound Awareness of Gospel Realities**

Romans 5:1 ~ Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

2 Corinthians 5:21 ~ He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Ephesians 2:8-9 ~ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

○ **A Humble Acceptance of Life's Trials**

Romans 5:3-5 ~ And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

James 1:3-4 ~ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

○ **An Unwavering Hope in Future Glory**

Job 19:25-27 ~ As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth. 26 Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God; 27 Whom I myself shall behold, And whom my eyes will see and not another. My heart faints within me!

Romans 8:16-19 ~ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 ~ Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. 17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

- “The Bible authoritatively commands our emotions. God expects us to feel certain ways and to sanctify our emotions. In this process the Word of God has the priority. The emotions are transformed through truth and biblical thinking...The priority of truth in the transformation of the emotions also requires a sound theology of Christian experience. WE cannot afford to misunderstand our struggle with sin or suffering. We cannot afford to live by emotional impulses; we must live by the truth. We cannot be experience seekers; we must seek God as he is revealed in his Word. These are the foundational perspectives necessary to move forward in spiritual and emotional growth.”⁴

⁴ Ibid., 81.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF SUBMITTING EMOTIONS TO THE TRUTH

Psalm 6

- Psalm 6 provides an example of dealing with difficult emotional circumstances with rock-solid truth
- The psalm begins with an avalanche of emotions from the Psalmist

Psalm 6:1-7 ~ O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your anger, Nor chasten me in Your wrath. 2 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for **I am pining away**; Heal me, O LORD, for **my bones are dismayed**. 3 And **my soul is greatly dismayed**; But You, O LORD—how long? 4 Return, O LORD, rescue my soul; Save me because of Your lovingkindness. 5 For there is no mention of You in death; In Sheol who will give You thanks? 6 **I am weary with my sighing; Every night I make my bed swim, I dissolve my couch with my tears.** 7 **My eye has wasted away with grief; It has become old because of all my adversaries.**

- But David's fear, anxiety, and distress seem to melt away in the remainder of the Psalm

Psalm 6:8-10 ~ Depart from me, all you who do iniquity, For the LORD has heard the voice of my weeping. 9 The LORD has heard my supplication, The LORD receives my prayer. 10 All my enemies will be ashamed and greatly dismayed; They shall turn back, they will suddenly be ashamed.

- What changed? → truth about God...specifically his conviction that God hears his prayers and answers
- "The truth that God hears his prayers and sees his pain pulls the psalmist out of the ocean of tears and fills him with confidence that God is faithful."⁵

Psalm 16

- David demonstrates how truth about God properly directed his emotions

Psalm 16:8-9 ~ I have set the Lord continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. 9 Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely.

- David committed to "set the Lord continually before" him...namely, to keep the truth of who God is and what he is like in the forefront of his mind
- He committed to regularly and consistently think about God
- This had a dramatic effect on his emotions: it produced stability, gladness, joy, and security (v. 9)...as well as fullness of joy and pleasures forever (v. 16)

Psalm 42

- The Psalmist reveals the darkness of his soul in this psalm, transparently describing the distress and pain that characterized him

Psalm 42:5, 6, 9-11 ~ Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me?...6 O my God, my soul is in despair within me...9 I will say to God my rock, "Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" 10 As a shattering of my bones, my adversaries revile me, While they say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" 11 Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me?

- The solution to his misery is preaching to himself the things he knows to be true about God

⁵ Ibid., 86.

Psalm 42:5, 6, 8, 11 ~ ...Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him For the help of His presence...6 Therefore I remember You from the land of the Jordan And the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar...8 The LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime; And His song will be with me in the night, A prayer to the God of my life...11 Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.

Psalm 43

Psalm 43:1-5 ~ Vindicate me, O God, and plead my case against an ungodly nation; O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man! 2 For You are the God of my strength; why have You rejected me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? 3 O send out Your light and Your truth, let them lead me; Let them bring me to Your holy hill And to Your dwelling places. 4 Then I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy; And upon the lyre I shall praise You, O God, my God. 5 Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.

Lamentations 3

- This book records Jeremiah's lament over the failure of the people to heed his prophetic warnings and the tragic downfall of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians
- "Jerusalem lay in a heap of smoldering rubble. The stench of death permeated the air. The prophet's heart, which had already been broken time and again, is now ripped out of his chest, seemingly without mercy. In this brutal brokenness, Jeremiah picks up his pen. With tears and gut-wrenching grief, he writes. He writes from the heart."⁶

Lamentations 3:1-20 (especially vv. 19-20)

- But something changes on the heels of this despair as he thinks about God and preaches truth to himself

Lamentations 3:21-25 ~ This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. 22 The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. 24 "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I have hope in Him." 25 The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, To the person who seeks Him.

- Jeremiah's confidence is not the result of mere positive thinking or imagining a happy place far away
- It occurs because he starts to think true thoughts about God

2 Corinthians 1

2 Corinthians 1:8-10 ~ For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; 9 indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; 10 who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us,

- Some affliction so troubled Paul that he was excessively burdened...to the point of even wanting to die in order to escape it...this suffering was dark and deep
- But a truth about God gripped his heart and guided him out of despair: God raises the dead!
- "The truth about God, his sovereign purpose, and his resurrection power was an emotional lifeline that rescued Paul. Truth apprehended and truth applied realigned his emotional vertigo and brought him back to stability, faith, and confidence in God. God staged the events that led to the despair and then used the power of truth to buoy up his sinking apostle."⁷

⁶ Ibid., 87.

⁷ Ibid., 91.