

If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction.

Psalm 119:92

Cultivating Feelings for God

Doy Moyer

Store In My Heart

Matthew 28:18

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

The first of the four books that tell the story of Jesus ends with this assurance and the instruction to tell the world.

Matthew probably wrote his gospel about 20 or 30 years after the death of the Savior with a focus on showing his Jewish brethren that Jesus is the Messiah spoken of by the prophets of old. From the genealogy in the first chapter through this statement of authority at the close, Matthew speaks regularly of the conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders as he shows the fulfillment of prophecy in the life and ministry of Jesus.

We would do well to spend time considering these proofs for our own faith even today. Truly Jesus is the Messiah!

Feelings are strange. We don't usually pick our feelings consciously, as if we normally wake up in the morning and say, "Here is how I'm going to feel today." We usually just feel a certain way, and in that sense we probably think of this as our general mood. When something needs to be done, we might then think, "I don't feel like it," and instead think, "I feel like doing that." I don't often feel like taking out the garbage, but I also don't feel like dealing with the mess of not taking out the garbage, so the garbage goes out. Yet what we are talking about here is much deeper than typical surface feelings.

There are the deep-seated feelings that we may have developed over time—feelings that culminate in anger, outbursts, lusts, covetousness, and other sins that are contrary to what we know is good and right. These are feelings that, if not brought under control, will destroy us. Paul warned about such works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. James warned that overt sin starts with an internal lust (Jas 1:13-15), and Jesus said that it was "out of the heart" that various evils will come (Matt 15:18-20). What we feel in the heart will come out and result in overt sinful behaviors, so we need to learn how to deal with the heart issues if we will master the outward actions. In other words, we must deal with feelings that run contrary to what we know is right.

I realize that there are a variety of factors that go into how we feel (e.g., chemical reactions, hormones, and so on). However, the feelings we are discussing here are more about sinful desires that are bound up in the heart. We might "feel badly" because of something going on in our bodies, but that does not excuse evil feelings and desires. One possible problem is that perhaps we have not given enough time and thought to cultivating how we feel spiritually. We may think that how we feel "can't be helped." We might just chalk our feelings up to the way we are, but this is a mistake, for the way we feel can actually be directed, focused, and changed for the good.



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We want opportunities to speak with others about the Lord's Kingdom.

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For Our Information

Joyce Venable is home and doing some better. They found some pockets of swelling on her brain. She also has a kidney infection.

Vickie McNeas is still dealing with a lot of shoulder and neck pain the last few weeks.

Paula Laubach has been having some sinus issues this past week.

Phyllis Jackson is in Alabama this weekend.

Pray for safety, courage & healing.

This is not easy, though, so how do we begin to make these permanent changes in our thinking patterns? How can we affect how we feel?

1. We can target what we think about (Phil 4:8). We can decide to think on things that are true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute, excellent, and worthy of praise. Don't accept from yourself the idea that you can't help thinking a certain way. Decide you will target your thoughts toward the higher ideals. Think about things that are excellent. Think with intention and purpose.

2. We can deliberately set our minds on things above (Col 3:1-2). Think about the resurrection of Jesus. Think about what Jesus has done for you. If you have been raised with Him, then you have every reason to set your mind on things above. This takes discipline, but by constantly focusing on this, we can change our attitude.

3. We can read regularly and with purpose (Psa 1). The blessed man learns to read God's word regularly, meditating on it, focused on it. He learns to take delight in God's will. Since faith comes by hearing God's word (Rom 10:17), regularly reading and hearing it will increase faith, change attitudes, and help us direct our feelings.

4. We can surround ourselves with people who lift us up to higher thoughts (Heb 10:23-25). Our brethren are there to encourage and strengthen. If we will surround ourselves with those who will do this, our own spirits will be lifted, and we can also encourage others. Discuss God's word with others. Confess your own failures and sins (Jas 5:16). Help each other grow in His grace and knowledge. We need each other.

5. We can develop the mind of Christ (Phil 2:1-8). This is the culmination of all these points. Notice in the context of Philippians 2 that developing the mind of Christ is very much tied to focusing on the needs of others (vv. 3-4). The more selfish we are, the more we will not feel disposed toward doing what is right. The more we can think of the needs of others, the more we will think like Christ, who died for us that we might live for Him.

6. We should tie all of this together with continual prayer (Phil 4:6-7). Without regular communication with God, we will surely falter. When we are continually praying to God, our feelings toward Him will be affected. If we are continually praying for others, including our enemies, then our feelings for them will be affected for the good.

Like anything else worthwhile, we must commit ourselves to the time, effort, and discipline necessary to change our thinking, habits, feelings, and actions. May God help us to so commit.

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We seek only to serve God according to His Will!