

2 Corinthians 5 (7) – Walk by Faith not by Feelings

Have you ever had that feeling like you did something wrong, when you really didn't? But your mind still beats you up. And it's not like you did something that was obviously wrong, some obvious sin. But you still feel like you should have taken an opportunity to share the Lord, or do someone a favor, or work harder, or make some commitment or decision. And now you wonder if your motivation was selfish, or worldly. And it happens a lot. It's like you're haunted. And you feel like you're not a good Christian.

Sometimes you might feel like you stink because of what you thought of, or should have said, or should have done but didn't. Maybe you've been in an intense situation, and you just felt like giving up. Or you've been in a troublesome season of life, and you were afraid. Or anxious, or doubtful. You don't feel like you have much faith. What you feel is a lot of fear. You know that God is with you. But you are afraid of what God is going to allow to happen. These sorts of feelings happen to every Christian at times. We feel bad, and we just can't seem to shake the feeling.

You feel bad and it makes you think that you are bad. So, you're discouraged. But sometimes you feel bad and you shouldn't. I'm not saying that you should deny your feelings. Those feelings are very real. But they aren't always true. Sometimes your feelings are lying to you. And you don't have to let them dominate you. And God is showing you what courage really is.

And that brings us to 2 Corinthians 5:7 – *for we walk by faith, not by sight*. *Walking by faith not by sight* means that we are supposed to walk by what God says, not how it looks or what it seems like to us. Paul says even the prospect of death holds out great hope for the Christian. We should always be of good courage. Look at vs.6 and vs.8, and know this: faith is the key to courage. Even when the temporary appearance is not good, the eternal God is still good, and you still have great hope, and you should still have good courage. Even when you don't feel it. That's faith. That's courage. That was Paul. And that can be you.

This faith, this courage, is not believing that God will always grant your wishes if you just have no doubts. I'm not talking about denying your physical pain. I'm not talking about ignoring your emotions. As if they didn't exist. As if you can just believe and it will all go away. No, walking by faith not by sight is not talking about claiming your healing, or about having faith despite reality. Faith is not superstitious wishing. Faith is what gives you courage. To face life and death, ups and downs and all arounds, whatever may happen. Whatever you may feel.

Faith doesn't always change what happens. Faith changes how you look at what happens. How you react to what happens. How you are before anything happens. Whatever you may feel. Because faith is not a feeling. Faith is a choice. Faith is a determination to follow God's will, not your own. Faith is not the absence of fear, faith is in the face of fear. Faith believes and acts like God is good even when the situation is not. And many times, our situation is not as bad as we think.

Feelings can be good. They play an important role in how you process your life. But if you don't train your feelings, your feelings will train you. So, you need to see and evaluate situations through the filter of the word of God. Separating your feelings from facts will help eliminate unnecessary stress in your life and can also improve your relationships with others. And even when the facts are bad, and true, the feelings you get because of what you see can still lie to you. This is where faith in what God says makes a difference. The word of God is what will build your faith.

We are not denying your emotions. They are real, and everyone has them. Emotions are not all bad. They are a powerful motivator and they explain a lot. But we often fail to process our emotions in a rational way, a godly way. And we can get caught up in a whirlwind of emotional activity and make decisions we might not otherwise make. Emotions are there to inform us, not to lead us. They inform us of how we feel about a situation, not about how we should deal with a situation.

Emotions and feelings are related but distinct. Emotions are about your body, like a lump in your throat, or shaking in fear. Your heart is pounding, your stomach is churning, you're weak, and you're sweating like rain. That's emotional. Feelings are about your mind, like how you think about a situation. You're angry, you're disgusted, you're suspicious, you're sad, you're fearful. That is how you feel.

Emotions can trigger certain negative feelings. You can have bodily impulses to serve as warnings. And then your feelings respond to those signals. Sometimes that can be very good. But other times they aren't. Perhaps you have been conditioned to feel a certain way, because of false ideas and bad experiences.

Emotions are meant to inform you, not to lead you. And sometimes our emotions give us feelings that are not true. Feelings can lie. Feelings can make stuff up. Feelings don't always help you, sometimes they hurt you. So, you can rightly say that you should walk by faith and not by what you see, hear, or feel. In other words, you walk by faith not by feelings. Feelings are gauges not guides. Feelings tell you how you feel, not what to do. And faith walks by what God says, not by how you feel. You need to train your feelings, instead of letting your feelings train you.

The Bible presents us with many cases where God's people had strong feelings, but God's word prevailed. They walked by faith, not by feelings.

- Noah – Genesis 6 – it took 120 years to make the Ark
- Abraham – Genesis 22 / Hebrews 11:17-19
- Moses – Exodus 14 – he had already passed Pihahiroth
- Gideon – Judges 7 – from 32000 (vs.135000) to 300
- David – 1 Samuel 17 – facing Goliath
- Elisha – 2 Kings 6:15-17
- Jehoshaphat – 2 Chronicles 20:3, 13-17
- Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego in the fiery furnace – Daniel 3
- Daniel in the lion's den – Daniel 6
- Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:8 – this comes before 4:16-18
- Jesus in Gethsemane – sweat great drops of blood. When Jesus said, not my will but yours be done, he was saying, not as I feel, father, but as you say
- Disciples in upper room – Jesus died, but then rose, but then left

You might say, "But they had a word from God." But so do you, 2 Corinthians 5:7. What matters most is not how you feel, but how you deal.

So, now, how do you deal? How do you find your way out of that hopeless hole you've been living in? Well, of course, you walk by faith, not by feelings. But you might wonder, what does that look like for me? I mean, I know what God's word says. Proverbs 3:5 says, "*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.*" Walk by faith, not by feelings. Proverbs 28:26 says, "*Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.*" Walk by faith, not by feelings. So ok, I know I need to walk by faith, not by feelings. What I want to know is if I can ever stop having these feelings?

Let's get real. Some types of feelings you might have to deal with for a long time. But if you train your feelings with the truth of God's word, those feelings may come, but they will have much less effect on you. Hallelujah! However, there are some feelings that you may have been dealing with for a long time, but you don't actually have to. You can effectively stop them. I want to talk to you about false guilt.

Now you might actually be guilty of an offense. And so, the legal guilt would be real. But God has canceled that debt for you in Christ (Colossians 2:13-14). Once you are a believer, your problem is not legal guilt. Your problem is emotional guilt. And you need to trust that God has forgiven you, instead of trusting your feelings. If

you have confessed your sin to God, and asked for forgiveness, because of Jesus, then you are forgiven. Maybe you realize that you need to repent, but maybe you repent of the wrong thing. You keep repenting of something you feel, but instead you need to repent of your unbelief. Christian, if you have confessed and asked for forgiveness, then you are forgiven. Believe what God says, not what you feel.

Now, what if you have some feeling of guilt or despair that you can't even name, but it is very real? It haunts you. It shames you. It controls you. It clouds your conscience, and it dominates your decisions. Well, you can still have forgiveness. You can still trust God instead of your feelings.

King David felt this way, too. He had to deal with strong feelings like yours. And he shows you how to deal with it. Look at Psalm 19:12-14 – *Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.*

Look at how David describes this sort of feeling, just like those feelings you've had. Notice how he approaches God in honest humility. David feels bad, and he feels confused. He's not sure about himself. But he brings it to God. He trusts that God knows what to do about the hidden things in his heart and life that David may be blind to. And he trusts that God will deal with it no matter how David feels with it.

You can stop being tormented today. God has forgiven you. It's not about feeling forgiven. It's about being forgiven. What does God's word say? Stop believing your feelings rather than God. The devil wants you to distrust, disbelieve, and disobey God. To place your feelings above God's word. Let God be true, and everything else a liar. Repent of not trusting God with your past, present, and future. Stop trying to save yourself and realize that salvation comes from God.

Have you ever given it all to God? Have you given God your past, and its regrets, your present, and its struggles, your future, and your life and your death, and all your opportunities? Have you turned it all over to God? Do it, now! But don't turn this giving it over to God into a treadmill, where every once in a while, you doubt that you've given it to God, and you go through this all over again. Once you've done it, you're done with it. Now, you just keep a short account with God. You don't need to rededicate your life to God. You need to repent of not believing God. Trust God's word, not your feelings. Have faith. Take courage. Today is the day for you to break that stronghold in your life. With God's truth. In Jesus name. Amen.