

The Foundation of Good Feelings

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[0:00] Well, we're continuing to study Brian Borgman's book, Feelings and Faith Cultivating Godly Emotions in the Christian Life. If you're interested in reading more about this or studying this more, I would suggest picking up the book.

I was going to say there's a couple on the table, but there's not a couple on the table anymore. We keep putting them out and they keep selling. And so what I want to do right now is I want to ask you, if you're interested in maybe purchasing the book, would you raise your hand so we can get a count to see that?

Just raise your hand nice and high so we can get a count. You don't have to. So one, two, three. OK, so about three or four then. Very good.

Well, the last two weeks, we've laid a foundation for understanding the emotion. And we started with God. God is an emotional being.

We are made in the image of God. And so we, in turn, are emotional creatures. And it's good for us to start with the emotion, the emotionalness, the emotions of God, because it reminds us that emotions are not a weakness.

[1:17] They're not a failure. We are, when we emote, when we feel, we are being like God. Now, of course, I'm not saying that he's sinful in his emotions or anything like that.

I'm just saying that God has feelings. And so it's right and it's good for us to as well. Then we talked about how the Bible speaks to our emotions.

The Bible doesn't read like a DVD manual or a DVD player manual where, you know, it's this thing and this thing and it just all addresses your mind.

The Bible grips our hearts, doesn't it? There are instructions that address our minds, but the whole thing is designed not only to address our minds, but to reach through our thoughts into our heart and reach our emotions.

And then next we looked at the history of emotions in man. So Adam was created perfect and he had perfect emotions.

[2:26] Then Adam fell. And when Adam fell, man's nature, including his emotions, also fell. And so every part of us as human beings is now infected, infested with sin.

And I want to point out here that man's emotions didn't fall especially. Sometimes some theologians have a way of talking that sort of it puts all the blame on these disorderly, unruly emotions.

They say things like passions are so disorderly, they cloud the eye of pure reason. As if if they weren't there, then we would not sin. But that's not the Bible's view of the fall of man.

Our emotions did fall, but our minds fell and our wills are also fallen. And so there's enough blame to go around.

We don't have to park all the blame on the emotions. Our sin comes out of our heart. And our heart includes the way we think and the way we feel and the things that we desire and the things that we will.

[3:42] So man has fallen. But then we saw that in Christ Jesus, man is redeemed. God makes them new creatures. And now they are able, once again, to have God glorifying emotions.

And we're either in one of those two camps as we stand here or as we sit here in this room. You are either still totally depraved or God has brought you to new life.

And so now, in part, you can have godly emotions. And so there's still a battle. We don't feel the way that we're supposed to feel all the time. But we have the Holy Spirit.

There's sin. But our sinful hearts no longer have the upper hand in our lives. And so there are losses. There's sin, sure. But we are new creatures in Christ.

And so we're not what we are going to be. But you know what? We're not what we used to be. We're sort of in this already. We already have this possibility of having new feelings.

[4:49] We already have new feelings. And yet, there are still sinful emotions to deal with. And then in heaven, man will be perfected forever. The emotions will be exactly what God designed them to be.

And then, it's really beyond our imagination how deep and how great our feelings are going to be. But we will forever and ever have an ever-increasing joy and love.

Heaven will never grow stale. Heaven will never grow old. We'll always be fully emotionally engaged. And that means that we'll always be growing in our love for God and our joy in Him.

And so we will see God. And we will be like Him. In our holiness. And in our feelings. Well, that's man in his fourfold state. And now, we begin a new session in this book.

And this session is dedicated. The next two weeks is dedicated to working through how the Word of God and our emotions interact, intersect.

[5:59] How do they relate? How do our emotions relate to the Word of God? And so let's begin with a true or false question. This is for you.

I want you to think about it and answer. I'm going to give you a quote. And I want you to tell me if it's true or false. God's Word never commands you to change your feelings.

But you are commanded to change your deeds, thoughts, words, and actions by being obedient to Scripture. True or false? False.

Why is it false? False. Okay. The Holy Spirit changes us. And so it includes our emotions.

Why else is that false? There's something very superficially wrong with it. Okay. We're commanded to love.

[6:58] We're commanded to feel certain things, aren't we? And so the Bible does command us to do certain things. But let's suppose for a moment that that statement was true.

That God never ever commands us to feel a certain way. He just commands us to do certain things in obedience to His Word. What does that say about God then?

What does that say about God and our emotions? If God doesn't or can't or shouldn't command how we feel? What do you think?

What does that say about God then? Steve? Okay. We're not satisfied with mechanical obedience from our children, are we?

When I talk to my children and I teach them what obedience is, I say do it right away. All the way with a happy heart. And that happy heart is not just an additional thing to make my life easier.

Having a happy heart is part of obedience.

[8:00] And so God is not shallow. It also says that God isn't Lord in that area. That in all the universe, everywhere you go, this is the only place, this is the only area where God can't or doesn't have authority or control.

It's the one place where whatever goes. However you feel, you can't help it. That's the way it is.

Emotions are the one place that God doesn't or can't have the right or the ability to command us.

And so they can't be helped. Emotions are off limits. Emotions are off limits. Emotions are off limits.

And maybe some of you have bought into that. You wouldn't say it directly.

I'm not saying that. But you say things like, I can't help how I feel. This is my personality. I'm naturally this way.

I'm naturally a mopey person. I have a temper. I have a short fuse. I can't help it. This is just who I am. This is my temperament. Let me ask you, are there different temperaments?

[9:14] Is it really obvious? Yeah. There are different temperaments. Some of you are naturally melancholy. You're naturally sort of on the depressed side.

You're sort of even-keeled or you're sad. Right? On your best days, you're kind of up here. And then some of you are the exact opposite. You're either up here, you're really glad, or on your worst days, you're pretty even-keeled.

And then some of you wish you were one or the other. You have more giant things. You're in ecstasy and then you're in depression.

There's different temperaments. God has made us differently, hasn't He? He's composed us emotionally different from each other, just like we look different from each other.

Our hearts and our feelings are different. And that's partly how God has made us. They're from God. We're not all the same and that's okay. But does that mean, should that mean, that you are

controlled by your temperament?

[10 : 22] What do you think? What do you think? If you're controlled by your temperament, who are you not controlled by?

God. God's not in control of your temperament. He doesn't have authority over your temperament. The Word of God doesn't say anything to how you feel. And so the Lord is not Lord anymore.

Well, here's a question with two answers. Who should be in control of how we feel? Two answers. They're right. Who should be in control of how we feel? Chuck. We are to be self-controlled. We are to be in control of our feelings. Who else?

God. God. Right? And more specifically, the Holy Spirit. Who is inside of us. Listen to this quote from Martin Lloyd-Jones.

[11 : 25] It's rather long, but listen carefully. What is so tragically wrong in a Christian is that he should allow himself to be controlled by his temperament.

The natural man is always controlled by his temperament. He cannot help himself. But the difference that regeneration makes is that there is now a higher control even over our temperament. The moment the Holy Spirit enters in, he controls everything, including temperament. And so he enables you to function in your own particular way through your own temperament.

That is the miracle of redemption. Temperament remains, but temperament no longer controls. The Holy Spirit is in control. And so, the main idea that I want you to get from just this section so far is that God is the Lord of your emotions.

He is the Lord of your emotions. They are off limits to his authority. And they are off limits to his sanctifying work.

[12 : 36] There's not a wall that goes around your emotions and how you feel that blocks out what God says and what his word says. And so what that means is that you have an obligation to cultivate godly emotions.

Sanctification is not just getting all the numbers punched into the calculator properly. It is cultivating how you feel about how you love your emotions.

And so it isn't a pure mental reality. God tells us to have rich, godly emotions. It isn't an option. And you can't say, none of you can say, well, I'm just not a naturally emotional person. That's not good enough. God tells you to feel.

And is God satisfied with just a teeny tiny bit of feeling? He wants us to feel up to, worthy of, the things, the truth.

[13 : 49] So, God is this great creature, or this great being. We shouldn't have small feelings of love for him. Because he is so great, we should have large feelings of love for him. That's what I'm saying.

And so he says, love him with all our heart. And so we have to feel, no matter what our tendency is, no matter what our temperament is, we have to feel this holy, passionate love for him.

He commands it. And you must obey it. And you can't obey it if you have the Holy Spirit inside of you. Well, God commands us not only to love, but as the Lord of emotions, he expects and he commands other emotions as well.

God commands us, commands you, to be joyful. To be joyful. Where's the verse? What's the few verses can you think of that says, to be joyful?

There. Philippians 4.4, rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice. Can you think of another one?

[14 : 57] That one's the easiest. There took the, the ball off the tee. Romans 12. 12. Be joyful in hope. How are we supposed to hope?

Joyfully. Be joyful in hope. What are we to do when we're persecuted according to the Beatitudes, according to what Jesus said?

Rejoice and be glad. What are we supposed to feel when we're under trial? What does James say? Consider it pure joy.

That's what we're supposed to do. So God commands you to be happy, to rejoice in the Lord, to rejoice in His goodness, to rejoice in His provision, to rejoice in His promises.

We are commanded to feel a certain way. Now God commands us to desire His word. 1 Peter 2.2 says, Like newborn babies crave pure spiritual milk.

[16 : 07] Now, most of you have had young babies at some time, and some of you have them right now. Are babies little stoics when they want fed? No, they're not.

So in the middle of the night, it's 2 in the morning. Are they these calm, collected, emotionless, little darlings? I wish. But they're not.

They're passionate about it, aren't they? They want to be fed. They want milk. And they want it bad. And they want it now. And they feel it.

And Peter says, that's how you should crave the word of God. You should crave pure spiritual milk. We're supposed to do it with passion, with feeling.

And then, God commands us to forgive from the heart. That's what Jesus said. We are to forgive from the heart.

[17:07] And sometimes, I think, we get sort of a reduced, a shortened, an abbreviated view of forgiveness. forgiveness. J. Adams defines forgiveness as making a promise not to bring up the sin against a person again.

So, it's this promise not to bring up the sin against a person again. And that's a pretty good definition. But, forgiveness is more than just making a promise.

And making it and keeping it. There is something emotional about it, isn't there? It's sort of hard to put into words. But when Jesus says forgive from the heart, he's talking about you have to emotionally forgive that person.

It's totally a different thing to say, you know what? I am not going to bring that thing up against that person again. You're going to gut it out. And no matter how you feel on the inside, you're just saying, I'm not going to bring it up.

It hurts, but I'm not going to bring it up. I don't know if J. Adams was saying that, but we can have that. sort of forgiveness where it just silences our lips, but meanwhile, our hearts are still going over it.

[18:22] And Jesus says, you have to let it go on the inside. You have to forgive from the heart. Then God commands us to be devoted to loving each other with brotherly affection.

Romans 12.10, be devoted to each other, love each other with brotherly love. The word brotherly love is a different word for love than agape, or that's the normal or the most common New Testament one.

It's storge. Storge is another Greek word for love, and it refers to natural affection. So you, maybe you've seen a big dog and a little kitten, and they're curled up next to each other, and they love each other, and they're, wherever the big dog goes, the little kitten goes.

Or you have puppies, puppies, or even your children. You know, it's Saturday morning. I know they don't watch Saturday morning cartoons anymore, but when I was little, you watch Saturday morning cartoons, and you're all in your pajamas, and you're sitting on, laying on the floor, laying on the couch, and you're all there.

That's storge. That's brotherly love. And so, we're to have, that's how we're to feel about each other.

[19:49] We're to have this warm, affectionate feeling for one another. That's how we are to love each other. It's not just doing loving things.

Isn't that what 1 Corinthians 13 is saying? You can do all sorts of, you can do all sorts of loving things, but you cannot have love. And so, Paul says, you are, we're supposed to feel these things. not just do loving things, but feel loving towards each other. Yes. Mm-hmm. Right. But on the other hand, we don't want to stop at just the will.

Right. And I guess that's the side I'm leaning on. That we are called to obey. And to obey partly is better than to not obey at all.

But on the other hand, full obedience is what God requires, and that's an emotional involvement. And let's move on then.

[20:55] God calls us not only to feel brotherly love, not only to rejoice, he calls us to a lot of other emotions. God commands us to be tenderhearted, to mourn, to fear, to have peace, to be zealous, and to have self-control over our emotions.

Our emotions are to be under our control. They are to do what they are supposed to do. And so, we're to put to death evil emotions and we're to cultivate godly emotions.

That's what the Word of God is teaching us. And now, the \$64,000 question is, how do you do that? How do you put to death evil emotions and cultivate godly emotions?

How do we obey these commands to feel certain ways? how do we bring them under the control of the Holy Spirit in our own control?

And the answer begins with a realization that holy emotions begin, they're founded on truth. Appreciating and resting in the truth.

[22 : 12] And it's specifically the truth of God's Word. And so, in the Word of God, it commands us to feel certain ways. but, it does more than that.

It lays the foundation so that we can do that. It gives us the truth so that we can have right feeling. So, right feeling, right emotions, begins with right thinking.

And right thinking always ends in right feelings. And so, if you've thought out things, but you don't feel any differently about it, then there's something wrong with your thinking.

And so, right feeling isn't right feeling if it didn't begin with right thinking. So, there's this connection, what I'm saying is there's this connection between the truth of God's Word and how we feel.

And if we are going to feel properly, then it has to be resting on the truth of God's Word. Well, the Bible is, it's a big book. it's a big book and there's a, it contains a lot of truth.

[23 : 23] But not all truth is equally, this is going to sound terrible, but I think you know what I'm saying. Not all truth is equally important to our emotional holiness.

Some things are like vitamins and minerals. You need them. And after a while, if you don't have them, well, it's going to be bad. But other truth, it's like oxygen.

You know, you can go a long time without vitamin C, but you can't go very long at all without oxygen. And there are some truths that are oxygen to our emotional health, our emotional holiness, our emotional obedience.

And Borgman lists three oxygen truths, and that's what we're going to finish up with today. These things are absolutely vital for emotional holiness.

And so the first oxygen truth is the truth about the character of God. And isn't this what we saw with Psalms 1 through 12?

[24 : 32] How many times did we see that the psalmist is in depression? Just in the first 12 psalms we saw this. He begins down. He begins frustrated or frightened or he begins in a very bad emotional place and then what does he do?

He grasps a hold of something about God and he rides that truth from depression to hope. And so that's what we need to do.

Listen to what Borgman says. If we do not have the truth of God's character firmly fixed as foundational to all our thinking, then all our effort in trying to obey God and sanctify the emotions will amount to our chasing our tails, ending in frustration.

this is absolutely vital because all are trying to be more holy emotionally and to obey emotion, the word of God as it regards to our emotion, then it all begins with understanding who God is.

Everything else, if we skip that point, then we're just going to be like little puppy dogs, chasing our tail and going nowhere. that's what David did.

[25 : 55] He laid a hold of God and he went from depression or fear, despair to hope. And so the question I have for you is, are you a good theologian?

I'm not asking you if you are a theologian because everyone is a theologian. everyone has thoughts about God, regardless of who you are.

Everyone in this room has thoughts about God. And so the question is, are you a good theologian or are you a poor one? A poor theologian has low views of God, has unbiblical views of God, who maybe their hearts aren't fully engaged, they don't believe the things that they know.

But a good theologian are like David. He's like David. David not only knew about God, he knew God. And he knew enough about God that, I mean, no matter where he was, no matter what his situation is, you could see it in the Psalms.

He could be happy and he could be sad and he could be in distress, rest, but he knew how to relate all those situations to the character of God. And so, good theologians are like David.

[27 : 26] They have a robust, they have a big, biblical view of God. And so, my question for you is, are you that kind of theologian? a good theologian has a God-centered, God-entranced vision of all things.

So, do you know God? Do you know God well? That's the first key. How do you know if you know God? Well, we can't go into all those sorts of things, but Psalm 9, 10 says, chapter 9, verse 10 says, those who know your name, put their trust in you.

Those who know you, they trust you. They rest secure in God. They know God, and so they worship Him. They rely on Him.

So, knowing God, it strengthens our faith, it spurs our worship, but then it also gives us emotional balance, emotional equilibrium.

It gives us the ability to have those godly emotions that God commands from us. So, Borgman tells a story of a number of women in his church, and the ladies wanted to organize a women's theology study group.

[28:48] The elders said, great, I mean, you can't say everyone's a theologian, but don't work on being a good one, and so they said, great, and after some consultation, the ladies picked Wayne Grudem's systematic theology, theology, and for three years together, they studied theology.

Now, one of the women wrote to Borgman after they had finished their first semester together of study, and listen to what she said, what she had accomplished, or what God had done in her, excuse me, through the study.

Studying theology has brought me incredible joy. That's an emotional word, isn't it? Studying theology has brought me incredible joy.

Knowing God better, and spending more time in His presence, and beholding His beauty and glory, make me happy and content in a way I have never, I have not known before.

Hearing the doctrine of God preached has made me mentally and emotionally healthier. I rarely suffer from depression, now, I rarely suffer from depression now like I used to.

[30:04] A deep joy in the Lord is mine. Did you hear all the emotional words? If you don't think studying God does wonders for your emotions, then you've really never studied God like you ought.

And so, knowing God, studying theology isn't just for smart people. It's not just for the pastors. It's not just for those upper crust Christians or something like that. It's for people who need emotional holiness. And so, let me give you a few ideas to help you in this area, very practically in this area.

One, do what those ladies did. Get a systematic theology and begin working through it. And you can start with Wayne Grudem's systematic theology.

He's not exactly a Reformed Baptist, but he's really close. He's very readable and he's very devotional. At the end of each of his chapters, he has memory verses to work on. He has a hymn that you can learn and sing.

[31:16] So, begin there. Tip number two, read A.W. Pink's book, The Attributes of God. I know there's at least one on the shelf down there.

Study it. Use it to meditate. If you know the character of God, it will help you emotionally. And then the third tip is drink deep from the Word of God.

Read more deeply. Read more slowly. Read more carefully the Word of God. Memorize it. Meditate on it.

Because our emotional holiness depends on how well we know God. Well, that's oxygen truth number one. The knowledge of God. Here's oxygen truth number two.

Justification by faith alone. Justification by faith alone. Let me ask you, what does that mean? What is justification by faith alone? That's a huge question, but give me an answer.

[32:24] Okay. Justification is about our right standing with God. Whether God says you're right or you're not right.

And so justification is saying, well, how do we get to the status of being right with God? it is by faith alone in Jesus Christ. Apart from anything I've done or could do or am or could be, it's all of him. And I give myself to him. And so we are made right through faith alone. And specifically we're made right, we're justified through faith in Jesus.

Jesus, his obedience, his active obedience. And so his life, as he lived those 33 years, working out in obedience, I put my trust in his obedience.

My obedience, it's like filthy rags. His obedience, perfect, spotless, that's what I need. And then it's his passive obedience. And passive doesn't mean inactive.

[33:34] Passive relates to the word pain. It's his obedience as he died on the cross. And so I put my faith in Jesus' death.

That his death is a substitutionary death. That he died for me. Or he died for his people. And it was a penal death. It was a death for the penalty of sin.

Sin deserved death and Jesus took death on the cross. death. And so he absorbed the wrath of God which we deserved. And so justification is this great exchange.

My unrighteousness for Jesus' righteousness. And when I believe in Jesus, all of his righteousness is imputed to me and I am as right as Jesus is before God.

That is justification by faith. He took my sins, I took his righteousness. So let me ask you, what does all that have to do with emotions? Or, let's be more specific, what emotional sins stem from not understanding justification by faith alone?

[34 : 45] What do you guys think? What happens to a person when they don't really grasp that idea? What happens to them emotionally? What are they worried about?

Okay, they're worried about their destiny? Yeah, there. Okay, how so? Okay, are you saying because when you're trying to work out your obedience, you're generally trying to work it out to a different standard and it's someone else's standard.

Is that what you're saying? So you want to be, you know, you're like the Pharisees. They had their own standard and it wasn't God's standard and so they worried about people. What other sins come from not understanding that I am right with God because of Jesus and only because of Jesus?

Dad. Right, there's, so there's that worry that Ed talked about and I think there's also the frustration. frustration. It's not only a frustration with myself, it's a frustration with God because here I am, I'm working, I'm working and I'm never getting the seal of approval that it's enough.

And so who's to blame? I'm working really hard. What's wrong with you, God? There's frustration, there's fear, there's despair, there's moodiness. I mean, if your spiritual life is going up and down and when you're down, you're down and out and you're going to hell, it's going to make you moody with other people.

[36 : 28] It's going to make you hard to live with. Now, let me ask you, what emotional, what godly emotions flow from understanding justification by faith?

Peace. Peace. No more up and down, up and down. There's peace. Joy. Rejoice in the Lord always.

How can you ever do that if you don't appreciate that Jesus is my righteousness and because he's my righteousness, I delight in him all the days of my life? Roger, the work is done.

Contentment? Love? I mean, we can go on and on. We could unpack all of these. If you don't understand, if justification by faith is not dwelling in you richly, if you're not just absolutely exuding it, you're going to be an emotional wreck, you're going to be an emotional mess of sin.

So, justification by faith is the second oxygen truth and we only have time just to mention the third one. It's future glory. no matter what the bestsellers say, your best life is not now.

[37 : 54] Your best life is then. That's what gave Paul hope in difficult times. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

Have you ever wondered how Paul ever stayed sane? He says, I worked harder than everyone else. I was in prison more frequently. I was flogged more severely.

I have been exposed to death again and again. Five times forty lashes, three times beaten, one times stoned, three times shipwrecked, and on and on he goes. How did Paul not just go insane or become incredibly mean and incredibly self-righteous?

It was because he knew that these present sufferings are not even worth comparing to the glory that will follow. so what gave him hope in the middle of physical anguish?

It was for these light momentary afflictions is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. And so we look to things not seen but to the things that are unseen.

[39 : 02] So heaven was oxygen for Paul's emotional health. It gave him hope. And so until heaven grips your mind, then all this talk about rejoicing in the Lord is just going to be utterly foolish.

You're going to be excuse, excuse, excuse, I can't do it, I can't do it, I can't do it. Well, you can do it until your mind is filled with the truth. And so do you want to be emotionally holy?

Then meditate on these three things, the character of God, justification by faith, and third, heaven.

Well, may God bless us and give us holy, godly emotions.

We're dismissed. God bless.