

## Choosing Our Feelings

One of the many blessings our gracious God provides is that of **choice**; *free moral agency*, if you prefer. He allows us to choose **whom we serve** (cf. Gen.3; Josh 24:15, *Him or Satan, Self, and Sin*); **where we live** (cf. Gen.13:8-13); **whom we marry** (cf. Gen.26:34-35; Judg.14); and even **our occupations** (cf. Gen.4:2), among many other hundreds of *choices* we make each day. **But all significant choices have consequences attached.** The Israelites were plagued throughout their biblical history with the *consequences* of having *chosen idolatry*. Lot's *choice of living in and around the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah* cost him his family. Esau and Samson's *choice of heathen wives* "made life miserable" for them and their parents, and altered the course of their lives. And Cain's *occupational choice* probably contributed to the overall corruption of his life. So although we might not see it at the time, many of our choices are impactful, and have both lifelong and eternal consequences. But...

God also allows us to make *choices* that we sometimes don't recognize. For instance, we get to choose *how* and *on what we think*. We can "set their (or our) minds on earthly things," Phil.3:18-19; or, we can "let their (again, or our) minds dwell" on things that are *honorable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute* things that are *excellent and worthy of praise*, Phil.4:8. We get to *choose*, but the choice we make surely has consequences!

Most people *choose to think* that they "can't help the way I feel." This is patently false. It is usually a lie we tell ourselves, with Satan and the world's help of course, to feel better about NOT making good choices about how we opt to or allow ourselves to feel. Think about all the passages that instruct us regarding *how we should and shouldn't feel*. I'll provide just one of the plethora of passages as an example, Eph.4:31-32. We are commanded to "put away" feelings of "bitterness and wrath and anger" that lead to "clamor and slander... along with all malice," v.32, opting instead for feelings that are "kind" and "tenderhearted" and enable "forgiving each other," v.33. Far from being a law that only deals with "actions," the NT is replete with passages that urge us to "control our emotions" and choose to *feel in right ways* rather than *wrong ones*. Thus, not only *can* we "help" and "choose the way we feel," we **MUST** do so!

Now, all of the above was leading to what I'd really like you to consider. As demonstrated above, God has given us the ability to control our emotions, and thus **choose how we "feel."** Additionally, we've noted that **choices have consequences.** So, *how* we choose to "feel" has direct bearing not only on how we *act*, but also on the *course, direction, and destination* of our lives. Since this season reminds us of the importance of gratefulness and thankfulness, please consider that:

- We can choose to feel *thankful/grateful for what we have*; or, we can choose to feel *envious* of and/or *covet what we don't have*; (pertaining to the *present*)
- We can choose to feel *thankful/grateful for what we have had*; or we can choose continually *grieve and mourn for what we have lost*; (pertaining to the *past*)
- We can choose to feel *thankful/grateful for what we can/may have (opportunities available) in the present*; or we can choose to be *resentful and bitter for what is currently out of our reach* (pertaining to the *future*).

- Thus, we can choose to feel *humbly* “**thankful/grateful;**” or we can choose to feel *arrogantly entitled, bitter, and* “**ungrateful**” (always).

Applications to the principles above seem to be without end, so YOU make the appropriate ones for your specific circumstance(s). But the “bottom line” to all of this is simple: **We get to choose “how we feel” about pretty much everything.** But every **choice we make about “how we feel” has consequences**, not only in the subsequent actions we take, but also in our overall demeanor now, and in our eternal destiny later. God has given us choices, so **choose wisely my friends; choose wisely.**

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