

Forty Days of Purpose Devotional

Day 14 "God is real, no matter how I feel."

It is very important for the growing Christian to learn to distinguish between beliefs and thoughts, and between thoughts and feelings. For example, it is inaccurate to say: "I feel that God is far from me and doesn't care any more." That is a *thought*, probably arising from various feelings, such as sadness and hopelessness. We know that salvation includes freedom from control by negative feelings, because the fruit of the Spirit includes *joy* and *peace*. How does this freedom come about?

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." (Rom 12:2 [NIV])

A significant part of the "pattern of this world" is to be controlled by emotions, but God's plan is for our emotions to be controlled by our thoughts. But what is to control our thoughts?

"All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you." (Phil 3:15 [NIV])

Our thoughts are to be controlled by God's thoughts, especially through insight the Holy Spirit gives the seeking believer into the meaning of the Bible. How does this work? BY FAITH – faith that God is all wise and that His Word is the truth, combined with humility regarding the fallibility of our own thoughts. We must believe that, whenever there is a disagreement between God's thoughts and ours, He is right – ALWAYS! Our thoughts are transformed by the mixture of God's Word and our faith. The latter without the former results in immaturity (see Heb 5:13), whereas the former without the latter results in disaster (see Heb 3:18 and 4:2). When a believer experiences negative feelings, such as hopelessness, the following questions should be asked: What is the *thought* underlying this feeling? Does this agree with what God says? Choose to believe what God says, rather than what you have been thinking. The result is growth of spiritual fruit (= love + joy + peace + patience + kindness + goodness + faithfulness + gentleness + self-control). This is His good plan for every believer.

- God's plan for every believer is transformation into the likeness of Christ. Toward this end He is always present and always working.
- Persistent negative emotions are signposts for erroneous thoughts, which God wants to replace with the truth.
- Persistent erroneous thoughts are signposts for areas of unbelief, which God wants to replace with faith.

Today, affirm your desire to be transformed into the likeness of Christ. DO NOT TRUST YOUR EMOTIONS – rather, trust the Word of God. If your emotions seem out of control, shift your attention to your thoughts. Test your thoughts by comparing them to God's thoughts, as expressed in the Bible. Finally, if you are unable to agree with God, confess your unbelief to God and to a mature believer you trust. Believe this – you can be forgiven, cleansed, and healed. God wants your faith to grow!
