

**Out of the Furnace of Feeling: Escaping the Tyranny of Feeling, Passion & Emotion**  
**Series: Healing the Heart and Life by Walking with Jesus Christ Daily, Session 3**

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## Transcript

**Dallas Willard 00:00**

Let me just say, Bill calls me Dr. Willard and I actually... I'm one of those kinds of doctors that can't do anyone any good.

**Dallas Willard 00:13**

So, but you know, actually, Jesus said some things about that. And I'm very content if you just call me Dallas, right. And I don't want to make a thing about it. And I appreciate, I know that Bill is expressing good things with that. And people do generally. And I'm certainly not scolding him. But I'm trying to say to you, you know, we approach this, we're all standing on a level. And Jesus talked about that, because it really does make a difference. And what I have to give to you is not some kind of specialists thing that I learned in school. And my credentials mean nothing. Because when we are serving Jesus, the only thing that means anything is what's going to happen now. And I appreciate I know many of you have been really praying for the meetings. And I really appreciate that. Because what we're hoping to see come out of this can only be accomplished if we do our best. But the blessing of God falls and touches lives, and changes on the inside. See, what I'm hoping to do is to lead you into an easy life of righteousness, and joy. That's what Jesus came to give. That's, that's the shepherd stuff. So now, Johnny Cash has a song that says, the beast in me is caged in frail and fragile bars.

**Dallas Willard 02:13**

And, you know, that's the picture that many people have that I'm just holding it in. No, let it out. Get rid of it. See because someone like that, they are holding on to an identity that they have conceived in their minds. And they keep feeding that beast. We don't have to do that. And now this evening, we're going to make a transition from thoughts to feelings. Because you see, that's what that old beast is primarily thoughts and feelings. And then next week, we're going to talk about the body. Because the body gets mixed up in these thoughts and feelings. And pretty soon it's out of control. It's running wild in a social context, that's dominated by evil, designed to destroy human life. And you look around the world, and you look next door, and you look maybe in your own family, and you see how that works. What we're talking about now is really changing how we think and how we feel. See, I asked you to experiment this week with giving thanks and everything. That's a real challenge, isn't it? Right? See, and the last thing we want to do is to suggest some kind of pollyannish sort of thing that involves just thought manipulation. Now many of the other spiritualities around us some have well known religious names, and some don't, but many of the spiritualities that surround us are trying to come to grips with this reality that is out there. And many of the most well known ones actually wind up just denying it saying it's an illusion. And they try to try to train your thinking so that you'll that's not the way of Christ, the way of Christ is to say it's all real. That's all real. And everything is redeemable. There isn't a single thing that happens to a human being in this world. That is not redeemable. All things work together for good. That doesn't mean all things are good. Do

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you understand that? There's some bad stuff. There's some bad things . I did a bit of it. Right? And you may have done a little yourself. Those that you do look pretty good. Confess. But probably there's something, you know that we contribute to it. So we acknowledge that, and we acknowledge pain, and we acknowledge death. And we acknowledge the disappointment in the midst of that we say, everything works together for good to those who love God, and are called into his purposes.

**Dallas Willard 05:30**

See, now . That's the story. So that's what enables us no matter what is happening, to be able to give thanks. Now, that takes some work, because our thoughts have often been obsessed with bad stuff. And one of the things that really pulls us in is the bad stuff that happens to us, then we become fixed on that. And we become angry and unforgiving, and superior in our outlook, to defend ourselves all kinds of things. And that's what you see, pulling your own soul, you know, the bad stuff, focus on that. That's why we need the discipline of celebration. I'm not going to be talking too much about disciplines, though I mentioned a few this evening. But the truth of the matter is, we have to have times when we make a point of remembering the good things. Right. If upon life's billows, you are tempest tossed, do not be discouraged, thinking all is lost. Count your many blessings. Name them one by one. And it will surprise you what the Lord has done. And you know, it is true because we have our head stuck down and all the bad stuff. And if we look at the good stuff, we say, Wow, I'm surprised. Now that's a choice. See know, that's what I've been talking to you about? Is making that choice. Where are you going to put your mind? What are you going to be focused on? That's your first freedom. And of course, the first thing we focus on, to begin to pull ourselves out is Jesus Christ. And the God that reveals himself in him. You know, Romans 5:8, God recommends his love to us. It's like Jesus is a letter of recommendation in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. And you know, you cannot begin to measure the depth of that . I often when I hear some terrible person, Jeffrey Dahmer or Noriega, or somebody, you know, has been converted, I just sort of say, oh, Lord, am I gonna wind up rooming with Him in Heaven?

**Dallas Willard 08:06**

No, no, no, or Ahab or Manasseh in the Bible, you know how awful they were. And they would repent, and God would forgive them. See, that's the goodness of God. That's the center of our focus. And that's the center of our focus, the goodness of God as seen in the person of Jesus Christ. That's, we have to be willing to turn our minds to that and live there. But we don't want to stop there now. Because many of our thoughts have locked us in to feelings. And there are sensations caused by others and emotions that grasp us. And once they get ahold of us, they begin to control our thoughts. And, and that's a major point for tonight is that if we are not weary, in fact, even if we are weary, if we don't have help, teaching the grace of God, our feelings will capture our thoughts. And when that happens, then our thoughts turn towards ourselves and bad things, and we become incapable of trusting God. And so then we wind up trying to run our own life. And that's where the works of the flesh that we read last time from Philippians from Galatians, 5 come in. So we have to now make a transition to feelings. I want to use scripture this evening and make a lot of use of it. So maybe if you just turn to Philippians 4 and look at this picture. That's a wonderful, wonderful picture. Start out with this, this is written by a guy who is in prison. Paul. Now prison was

**Dallas Willard**

often a kind of funny thing in those days, because, you know, when we think of prison today, we think of a huge building and all this electronic stuff and steel bars and all the doors and all that thing they didn't have that.

**Dallas Willard 10:28**

So their idea of a prison was to just chain you to a soldier. Chain you to soldier now you're going to spend all your time except, maybe some time, asleep and chain you to something else, you're going to spend your time chained to a soldier. And, you know, these are these aren't people like Chevy Chase, or someone like this, this is a, these are rough guys. These are rough guys. Think terminator or something. Like to spend your time chained to him. Actually wouldn't be that interesting, because a lot of these guys didn't have much to say. You're just chained. And now he's in the royal grounds. And all of the evil stuff that you have learned from history is going on with the Emperor, and others. And Paul is sitting there. And now what's his attitude? Well, let's look at some words here. Because this, I think, will be very instructive. And I, I would like to start with a passage with a part of the passage here that you all know, which is I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me that's verse 13 of Philippians 4. But now, let's put that in context. Because this is not talking about enjoying challenges that you're overcoming, shall we say, and leading a life of excitement and victory and so forth. So in order to understand the meaning of that you have to go back away, like verse six or verse four, Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say, rejoice, remember who's talking.

**Dallas Willard 12:47**

Be anxious for nothing. But in everything with prayer, and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God, which out runs any understanding you may have, you'll never understand how it works. Will set a guard on your heart. I love that terminology. Because what he's talking about here is how God comes into the life and begins to protect and guide the inner life. And that's what we're looking for. But look at verse eight. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, or noble, whatever is of good repute. If there's any excellence and anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things. So you see, all of the goodness of God in the world is what Paul is saying, Turn your mind to that. Ever think about beauty. Think about why we have why we have beautiful things in church. You know, it's impossible to look at beauty and not be thankful. Do you know that? Well check it out. See God could have made the world very ugly. But beauty is good made present to our senses. And when you look at beauty, you are thankful for good and good things that come through that. Just think of all these excellent things. Now it isn't Paul isn't just advising them to do it. Look at verse nine the things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me practice those things, and the God of peace will be with you. So this is what he did. Paul really had a rough life. And I don't want to start into that tonight. But if you know your scriptures, you know he really had a rough life. And it isn't fun to sit in a place with a soldier cuff to you. But look at look at what he says in the following verses now.

**Dallas Willard 15:31**

I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that you have revived your concern for me see, that's one of the things

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he was thinking about was how the Philippians loved him, and cared for him and thought about him in jail. Not that I speak from want. Now here, we need to blow a trumpet and beat a drum before we read this next phrase, not that I speak speak from want see he knew the Good Shepherd. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want he said I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about my love for your care for me, not the goods that came from it. I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means I know how to live in prosperity. In any and every circumstance, I've learned the secret, I have learned see that phrase occurs in both verses there I have learned it didn't just happen to him. It was something that he had to learn. I have learned the secret of being filled, of going hungry, having abundance, suffering need. Now then the verse I can do all things, through Christ who strengtheneth me. So we start with Christ, we come down to the good things that God has filled our life with. And, you know, being content is a matter of not being dominated by your feelings. Being content means, well, I'm contained feelings when they come on you. You're not contained, you're splattered all over the wall. The person who is content is the person who is contained, he has learned he or she has learned how to take whatever the circumstances are, and do so have their thoughts focused on Christ and God and what is good, that they are not victimized by their feelings. And that is what Paul means when he says I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me. So those words now are things that we really need to keep before us and think about, as we consider this transition from thought to feeling and this just summarizes the three main positive thoughts, who God is, who I am, and the good things that God has made and given to me, those are the three positive thoughts, who God is all powerful father, King, Shepherd, a Savior who died. And, of course, the death is just the prelude to the resurrection. So if he hadn't died, he could never have been resurrected, right? And so he had to go through that and let the worst happen in a manner of speaking from human point of view, let the worst happen and then know the best. And to see that the kingdom of God as present in our lives, through the grace of God overcomes all evil and turns it into good.

**Dallas Willard 19:06**

But what about you, who are you? You have to get that right too now look at that wording, it's on your sheet if you can't see it from back there, whatever. And I want you to I want to ask you to just dwell on that a moment. You see once we understand who God is the most important thing then for us is to see us as God sees us. What are you in God's view God has a place for you in his universe. He didn't make you just to be a consumer of goods but to be a participant. So look at this wording I am an unceasing spiritual being with an eternal destiny in God's great universe. Can you say that? Let's say it together I am an unceasing spiritual being, with an eternal destiny in God's great universe. So you have a future before you. And God isn't the universe isn't going to go away. It's good, God made it, he will preserve it, and he will preserve you in it. So you see, really one of the things that we need to say is the most important thing that God gets out of your life is the person you become. That's what he's looking for the person and in some mysterious way, it's going to turn out to even be greater because we sinned. And that's very important. See, God's plan did not suddenly cut down because of the budget shrunk you sin, or we sin, he will find a way to make your future even greater than it would have been if you hadn't sinned.

**Dallas Willard 21:12**

The mystery of who God is. And what his world is about, will be clearer, because of redemption. That's a deep lesson about human life, too. Because we often think when something happened, there's some things are so bad, that that's the end of the world. No, no, wait and see. Wait and see. But you have to give it to God. And I want to say again, the most important thing now once we get that first thought fixed is to see ourselves as God sees us in our world. And that's important because that when we see that, then nothing that happens can change that God will still see us the same way and he will bring us. So these issues, like I've mentioned before, about moral failure, about unhappiness about not being able to accomplish the good, that we aspire to see those, those are things that work out as we go along. And then the good things God has given me and placed around me. And that's where Paul is lots of what Paul is talking about. Whenever he says, Whatsoever things are good and lovely, and all of that. So this is, this is where our mind should be.

**Dallas Willard 22:38**

Now, if I am unable to believe that God has done well by me, I will not be able to love and trust him. And that's where the big cleanup operation has to go on in our minds see all those things down through the years that happened. And they are legion or they have their many names for them. But they are the things that would make us think I have not been served well by God. That the choices, as it were that God made for me have not been for my good. So now that's, that's a big challenge. I need to stop at that point say no, no, I'm not denying that bad things happen. Because it's almost sounds like this is just a bunch of pollyannish dope. It isn't. I mean, you take the whole life. And you look at it, and you say, by faith. God has done well by me. And then it begins to come in focus. But until you're able to say that on the basis of one and two, then our thoughts will continually be dragged down into feelings that are deadly for us. So let's talk now about feelings and understand what they are. And I hope that this will not be too hard to understand. You need to really think about feelings. You know, our whole life runs on these things. And we even have songs about them you know feelings. Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. You know that song? It ought to be Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh, feelings. But you see, it's a worship, we worship feelings.

**Dallas Willard 24:47**

We worship feelings. And we want to feed them and that's why we do so many things that we do. See, getting getting a buzz on from alcohol. Well, that's a feeling and people get to where, they just want to feel that buzz, or the rush of drugs, or sexual excitement, or even anger. And all of this is deeply rooted in our body. We'll talk about that some next week. But the main thing is to realize what feelings are here they pervade and structure our self and world and poise it for a relevant range of actions, feelings are absolutely essential to action, and we are active beings we're made to act. And if, if you just had to do it with thought it wouldn't happen. And when, when we feel good, as we say, you feel good. Wow, yeah. Okay, that life is flowing isn't that right? When you feel good, it flows. And, of course, that's good, that makes you feel even better, doesn't it? So I mean, even treating some forms of mental malfunction, if you can just get people to be active. It'll do wonders for them, see that's deeply rooted in it. When we feel bad, we experience opposition and resistance. It's a real drag. That's what we say isn't a real drag, what's a drag? Well, that means you just tend to pull it alone. It's a drag, it's not flowing. And then if we feel blah, I couldn't think of a

**Dallas Willard**

better word for that. Then we're stuck. We're we hardly move. And this becomes a vicious cycle, because the more you're stuck, the more you're stuck, and the worse you feel, and so forth. And, and it can slip into real paralysis. I mean, this is not superficial stuff. And many people find themselves stuck there. Sometimes it's because terrible things that happened to them or thoughts that have worked themselves out in ways that have led them to a dead end or so. But see, that's that's what feelings are. And we've got to have them, we can't get by without them, the role of feeling is to move us to incline and to allow us to will, you cannot will without feeling you cannot will without feeling.

**Dallas Willard 27:40**

Now sometimes you get to in a position and we talk about this don't we well, it's just willpower. Well, that's, that's one response to being stuck is willpower, and sometimes it can, it can jump, you jumpstart you and get things going. But you can't live by willpower. And that's one of the things that we really have to understand in doing this series. Because so much so many times people think well, it's just your will. For example and I don't think there is such a thing as a lazy person. When people say lazy or just don't want to do anything, you don't want to no that's not it, the problem is deeper. The problem is that the will has somehow been isolated from thoughts and feelings that allow it to function freely. And so that's the role of feelings see that's a part of your image. The image of God in you is your feelings. See, when God created you, He created you an active being to create good. That's, that's what the deal is. Go back and read Genesis one. Let us make human beings in our image and let them have dominion that's active. The image of God and you is not your mind, it's your will. And in all of creation, as we know it. The only thing that has a will is a person a human being and that's one of the things so sad to see people who can't tell the difference between a human being and an animal

**Dallas Willard 29:43**

see the now you know probably you read the newspapers and you know that they have now discovered a brand, a brand of chimpanzee that has almost all of your DNA and what conclusion are you supposed to draw that you are very like a chimp. But here's the conclusion you want to draw, there's a great deal more to you than there is to a chimp. Namely, you're not just DNA. And if you ask the person who found that whether or not he thinks that the chimp has 99.4%, that's the figure they give of his experiences, I guarantee you he will stop. Before he says yes. Because experience is what your life consistent of. And the life of a chimpanzee is not your life. And at the center of this is your will, and your understanding and your capacity to relate to God. See, that's it's very important to understand that. And your feelings are vital to that. Now, chimps have feelings and chimps have thoughts. If they had as many thoughts, as that story suggests, they would be able to do better on tests than some of my students.

**Dallas Willard 31:10**

But see, there's no comparison, because my students, however much like a chimp, they may look. And act actually have the capacity to do things like solve equations of second level, and algebra, all kinds of things. See, that's important to understand now. So the feelings, there is not something that can be this inclined to feeling it can't be left to thought. Without without real thought, and right

**Dallas Willard**

thought, we're in trouble. But you have to have feelings to guide. And generally they do guide in ways that realize good that is beyond thought, if all you could do is think you would think too much. You'd think too much. And so for example, when we get married, we usually have a desire that guides us not just thought, gee, this is a wonderful person, wouldn't it be wonderful for us to have a life together, and so forth, and so on? Well, that we need to have that. And today, many people don't know what marriage is. But we also need to have this wonderful, sweet, beautiful person. See that's what I thought when I first saw Jane. I haven't changed my mind. But if it had just been a matter of thought, I wouldn't have had enough sense to do what was good for me. I mean, think of having to eat all the time, just because you thought it's time to eat.

**Dallas Willard 32:58**

See God has formed our lives in wonderful ways and put our will, right down here in the center of our thoughts and our feelings. And so we have to have the right thoughts to guide because we can't allow our desires to define what is good. And that's the situation we're in roughly today, where people define good in terms of what is desired. And that lies back of so many of our problems. So we have to understand the place of thought and the place of emotion. Now, generally, in a fallen world, the feelings that are present are set against God, because they're focused on the self, and the wholeness of life. And the first phase of brokenness is in our feelings. Right. So if you, if you read a newspaper in the morning, you'll see that a lot of bad things happened. And most of those happen, because immediately because of feelings didn't happen because of thoughts. Now, if the thoughts had been right, perhaps many of them wouldn't have happened. So you need both of them, and they need both to be right. And in this world, a terrible pain and suffering that people live through at the level of feelings is the first face of brokenness. And that's where we begin to take it out on others, always those nearest to us. And so in families, you have people you have a family organized around the pain of one or more members and the acting out of that pain.

**Dallas Willard 34:46**

Although feelings are basically good in the form that they have assumed they do tremendous harm and in some respect, art helps us with this. And what makes art interesting is the brokenness of human life. See you art always requires a contrast between good and evil. And so in our movies, and in our plays and our music, right, I mean, what does Shelley say about this we looked before and after, we pined for what is not. And our sincerest laughter with some pain is fraught. Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought, isn't that interesting. See that's human life that's broken human life. And art is one way of helping us understand that. And Aristotle's theory that it was that it was cathartic that it helped us cleanse and purge the deadly emotions. And here's Anna Marie, and she directs, plays and works in the field of art, and others of you may do that. But that play is a reflection of the natural human condition. Now, among intellectual people, they tend to want to substitute art for religion. And especially any kind of straightforward religion in terms of belief about God and about Christ, and so on, or in other religions, the details ??? they tried to smooth it over and make it something that is merely aesthetic, merely aesthetic. But that's see one side of that is, it tells you how powerful art is, and how deep the need is, see we suffer today because the field of art has been corrupted. And it has lost its purpose of healing and revelation of truth.

**Dallas Willard 37:07**

And now, it just wants to get attention. And that's why sex and violence is such a big deal. See when we talk about sex and violence, the real problem is not moral, it's aesthetic, we have people who cannot produce art, that is healing. They can't get the contrast, right, and use evil to reveal good. And art is one of those great function in our churches, art, the artist often has the hardest time, because they're in a world of imagination, and that is often experienced as threatening. But you see what you what happens if the people of God do not redeem art by their presence. And I don't mean by making Christian pictures or whatever. I mean, making good pictures. If they don't do it, then he's taken over by evil and used with tremendous force. And the 20th century and the present is full of all these things, but feelings are basically good, but they have become twisted and constantly deepen the human brokenness. And then when all of the all of the aspects of human life like art, and information and all of the all of those aspects, are not able to come back against this and find a way to straighten out and see the good and see the right and have the emotions that will support it, then it just gets deeper and deeper into what is problematic. I mean, just to be sure what we're talking about quickly. I've talked about sensations, feelings and emotions, and it's really an unruly lot of things. But we know in general pain, hunger, sexual desire, weariness, comfort, gratified desire, I should have desire in there , energetic, life, being left out, feeling loved, loving, anger, joy, being interested.

**Dallas Willard 39:09**

That's a feeling bored, fear, safe, greed, resentment, vengefulness adoration. These are cases of feelings or emotions. So this is what we're talking about now. And feelings always involve inclinations to good or evil. I really want to spend some time on the screen now and that and and help you think through this, because a confusion on this matter defeats a lot of people before they do anything wrong. For example, many people don't understand that the thought of sin is not sin. So if you if you are angry at someone and you think about doing something bad to them, that isn't a sin. that isn't even temptation. Just the thought, the temptation comes in at the point where we have an inclination to do it, there is a tug or pull something that moves us in that direction. And but temptation also is not sin. See temptation is something that we can go over let go over into the final stage, which is willingness to sin. Okay, now, the clearest illustration of this in Jesus's teaching is what he said about adultery. And you will remember that teaching in Matthew 5. And so now it applies to any kind of sin. But that's one of the more powerful ones, and he addresses it. And he is saying that it is not enough just to avoid the action. He's talking about something that everyone knows there must have been construction workers in Jesus's day. He's talking about looking for the purpose of lusting, not talking about having a thought. He's not talking about even being tempted. He's talking about looking for the purpose of lusting. And that's the person who would be willing if the circumstances were right. And Jesus says that person has already sinned. But it's very important to understand where that happens. Now, if we want to stay out of that, and that would include staying out of the action, we stay out of temptation. And one way of doing that is to stay out of thought. But that's not an altogether healthy way of doing it. See, people in the early centuries, the church read what Jesus said, and they said, we want to do this. And so we will not see a woman.

**Dallas Willard 42:28**

And so you had people who would brag about not having seen their mother or their sister for 30 years. Now, this is literally true. But you know, you see the legalism in that. Because what they do is they took Jesus's teachings, well, don't look to lust, and said, Well, we know how not to do that. Don't look, how do you not look, live where you can't see. And this is a part of the really sad story of the Christian church that sees women as evil or less, at least, than men. Now, you see, Jesus is not talking about doing that. See he's talking about a kind of change and inward change, where you wouldn't do what he's saying, don't do. And if you understand that, then you will have a route of dealing with these kinds of issues. Because then you will know how to stay out of inclination without cutting off thought. You can learn how to do that. towards goodness, the same way except here we want to move towards just the thought of goodness is not enough. Just being inclined to goodness, not enough. We want to be in a situation where we're ready to do it when the situation is right. And we're poised to do the good. And this kind of feeling for the good replaces the feeling for evil. See, now we want to grow to the point to where when something presents itself, perhaps around us in the social situation, and people are doing things that are wrong, that we would see that as simply crazy.

**Dallas Willard 44:31**

We want to be in a position where instead of in many of social situations, people expect you to lie or to deceive. It's just something they're prepared. They they believe that human beings are like that. So they think they can count on you to do that. And you want to be in a position of looking at them and saying Why would anyone want to do that? You, Understand? Or in the case of sexual temptation? Why would anyone want to be involved in that? Now, if you if you get the bent of that question, you'll see what a tremendous difference now has been made. See, it's, so someone slaps you on the one cheek, and you turn the other, you remain vulnerable. People now say, why would you want to do that? But see, when the change is developed of thought and feeling it's the other way around? Why would I want to hit him just because he hit me? Should I say that again? See, because we're really talking about changing thoughts and feelings here. Why would I want to hit him just because he hit me.

**Dallas Willard 45:57**

See, when Paul teaches about don't take vengeance, leave vengeance to God and all of that. He's talking about a total shifting of thought and feeling. Now, we will talk about this next week, which you see, ordinarily, when someone hits me, I've already hit them back before I think about it. If I'm the standard human being, maybe it's just verbal. They slap me verbally, I slap them before I think, okay, so we have to, we have to talk next time about the body and the social circumstances and how that works. But tonight, we have to talk about the feelings. Because you see if my thoughts and feelings are in such a way that when someone strikes me, or criticizes me or does anything I don't like, then I am hurt. I'm not thinking rightly about things. My thinking and my feeling are messed up. And I have to retrain myself, so that all of those things which would normally lead me to act wrongly, I now recognize as occasions to do what is right. And that that phrase, recognizing the occasion, is a major part of what has to happen in thought and feeling before you can begin to think about doing what Jesus said, so the normal person reads what Jesus says? And think, Oh, I gotta do that? And the answer is, No, you can't do that. And if you

try, you'll just mess yourself up. And a lot of other people too. You wind up faking it, you create a legalism of some sort. And there you are. So you say no, you don't want to do that. You want to become the kind of person who would do that. And now a key to understanding this is decision, we cannot allow our lives and actions to be dominated by feelings and emotions. See this is this is an understanding and a decision. And I'm going to come to some scripture verses now in a moment on this, but I want to just say it, first, I have to have decided I will not act on the basis of my feelings.

**Dallas Willard 48:21**

I see we have a whole cultural load. Now that's opposed to that says if you don't act on your feelings, you're a hypocrite. Now you're a nut, if you do act on it. I'm not talking about suppressing feelings, denying feelings. I'm talking about having different feelings. And we have to have come to the place to where in the situation where normally our feelings would have overwhelmed us and thrown us in the wrong direction. They just don't do that anymore. Because we now have different feelings. So in the case where I might be tempted sexually with money, to defend my reputation, to deceive about who I am and what I'm thinking, see, now I'm standing in a place to where that just doesn't seem attractive. Other things seem attractive. If we concede to feelings, the rule of our life, living to gratify them, they will corrupt our thinking and thought will become crazy and devoted to rationalizing our acts. You know anyone like that? No. didn't mean for a confession here. No, no. See, I know that I know from experience how that works. And you'll see people around you you may work with some. You may have family members, and their whole life is devoted to rationalizing their feelings. Their feelings have commandeered their thoughts and they are very sincere. That's one of the things I think you have to to except if you're, if you have someone like that to do they really do believe their own rationalizations. And they may be just doing things that are absolutely crazy. And they're saying things that make no sense. But they have been locked in because they have conceded to feeling the right to rule their life. And they may not even feel like they're alive if they don't do that. See, many people, for example, don't know what it would be like not to be angry. They wonder if their heart would still beat but these are people that Paul uses this phrase a couple of times, their god is their belly. That isn't just gluttons. He's talking about see, belly was the feeling center of the self. And they worship their feelings, they please their feelings. And I'll bet you you may feel some uneasiness. Now, as I say this, like somehow, wouldn't this be a betrayal of myself? If I didn't let my feelings see that's the teaching that we have is feelings are Lord, feelings are holy. That's why today for example, it is de rigueur, it is absolutely enforced, that you not hurt someone's feelings. Why? Because they don't know the difference between their feelings and themselves. They don't know the difference, they don't understand that their will is different from their feeling. And that their whole life has to do with good and not how they feel. And so they're extremely hard to reason with, we cannot allow our lives and actions to be dominated by feelings and emotions.

**Dallas Willard 51:57**

They must serve what is good, and not define it. Feelings do not define what is good. But again, now that is an orthodoxy that reaches to the highest levels of the academic world, that the good is what you desire. No, the good is what you ought to desire. And if you had any sense, you would desire it. But how do you establish what is good, if not by what is desired? Well, you have to know something other than yourself. You have to know what God is like. And you have to know his teaching. And

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perhaps once you get that teaching, you can see that it's good. Without reference to God, even it's just good. Like truth telling. Now since we're in the mess we're in, we need God to tell us to tell the truth. Because as I mentioned last time, truth is painful and not doesn't necessarily cooperate with our desires. So we need God to tell us that, you know, tell the truth. We don't want to tell the truth. If I tell the truth, I put myself out of control. See when I discuss this with students, often they're the thing they bring up most often is well. If I tell the truth, I'll hurt other people's feelings. You're not in charge of other people's feelings. And there are many ways of being kind and considerate other than lying.

**Dallas Willard 53:48**

But you have to trust God. The idea you that that's how to be kind and considerate is kind of ridiculous when you start thinking about it. So you must serve what is good, they are good servants, but horrible masters. So here's what we do now. If there are feelings or emotions, which negatively dominate us, pulling us off the course of Christ's-likeness, then what we have to do is to identify them clearly. And that requires some prayerful, honest searching. And often our feelings have come to the point where we don't recognize them as feelings. We just think their reality. decisively give up their gratification as a ruling aim. And that's, again, putting ourselves out .??? the kingdom. We're allowing God to be God pray specifically to God for relief. And this is something that you need to learn personally, because many times feelings are so overwhelming, you just have to simply say, Lord, lift this, lift this. And I've had to do that many times in my life. Just say lift it I can't deal with it. And you will learn that God does answer that prayer. Then take actions appropriate to the denying of the feelings. If you if you're really angry at someone, for example, find some way to serve them. You know not to grind it in or rub it in, find some way to serve them maybe in ways that they don't even know. But that is a way that will genuinely transform your feelings. And then, of course, we need to seek the ministry of others, to overcome them. So in our church fellowships in our small groups in our families, we need others praying for us. And we need to address these issues very specifically. Sometimes we need ministry from people who are specially gifted, dealing with those things. And sometimes we need really exorcism. I'll say something blow your mind. A demon is simply a compound of thought and feeling that is sufficiently developed to lead a life of its own.

**Dallas Willard 56:29**

I say a demon is a complex of thought and feeling that is sufficiently developed to lead a life of its own. Don't I mean, I don't have time tonight to say all the things I don't mean by that, okay. But sometimes, sometimes the boundary between things that are not demonic, and the things that are is not that clear, we need to be able to identify the things that are demonic. And we can always do that, by bringing in Jesus Christ, and his supremacy over everything. Do you acknowledge the supremacy of Jesus Christ, you acknowledge His death on the cross his resurrection, that will always identify a demonic force. Sometimes we need to speak to or pray to something in the person that has not been ??? demonic, it's something they've received some thought or feeling that has come to grip them. And so we need that sort of ministry also, but at the root of it all now must be the resignation of living to fulfill our feelings. I wish I had time to discuss a lot of these things tonight. Let me just say quickly, things like anger and contempt. Contempt is one of the most powerful and destructive feelings in human life. I'd like to encourage you this evening to believe

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that you can live entirely free of contempt. Never have contempt for another person. Contempt means that you regard them as worthless. Basically, contempt the backside of contempt is always pride, you certainly regard them as better worse than you. The language of contempt is very complicated.

**Dallas Willard 58:36**

For example, the word stupid as used to address someone who's just done something in traffic, you don't approve of. That's a term of contempt . Or in a family setting. I sinned with that word many times. In the family setting, and the harm that it does is terrible. That's why Jesus, in Matthew 5 talks about it and anger laying aside, see if you have contempt for someone. Anger is just natural. You rarely have anger with anyone you don't have contempt for. filthy language is always an expression of contempt. You don't need it. And one of the things that you could do is to decide to live your life without contempt. And you know what, you will not be deprived. You will not be deprived now you think of all of the battles see, we have a politics of contempt and now in our culture, political issues when they get going, it's nearly always just loaded with contempt . I mean, just think of how people take after Mr. Bush, everything from his ears to his grade average at Yale, all these things have really nothing to do with the things they're discussing, but they are ways of putting him down. Right now. I'm not saying he's perfect or anything, I'm just saying that's something to observe. And you watch the other side. I mean, why do people listen to Rush Limbaugh anyway? You know, you know, what comes out of Rush Limbaugh contempt is a steady stream of contempt . Now, you know, normally, when we're doing that, we say well, but I'm right

**Dallas Willard 1:00:41**

isn't that what Rush says to himself, you know, ditto, ditto, ditto? Well, that's the opposite of contempt people are expressing adulation for him. I see, you may not listen to this. But occasionally I listened to this driving into work. Then I usually switch over to Dennis Prager pretty quickly. Because but see, Dennis can do a lot of contempt too. So our life just oozes with it. And, you know, I don't have time to focus on all the feelings we can talk about. But there's nothing more illustrative about destructive feelings than contempt. And if you pull contempt out of your life, many of the other negative things will simply disappear.

**Dallas Willard 1:01:38**

Anger I mentioned you can anything you can do with anger, you can do much better without it. Now, again, I'm not talking about denying or repressing, I'm talking about not having it. And Paul says in Colossians 3, among other things, lay aside anger, you will do much better without it. Now, if you see the Great Shepherd, and you see yourself in his world, and so and then you'll be able to do that, because anger is always a response to a crossed will. People get angry when their will is crossed? Doesn't matter how trivial it is. Now, if you're living in a world where the will that matters is God's will, then when your will is called crossed . It will not mean the same thing. Now, I'm not talking about not standing up for what is right. You can stand up for what is right without anger and without contempt. But you might never know it if you just observe people, right. I mean, in my circles in the academic world, very refined language for contempt . But knowing who to have contempt for is a revelation of whether or not you're intelligent. If you don't have contempt for the right things, and

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the right people, there's something wrong with you and you're contemptible. See, because now at all echelons of our world, we've lost any sense of what genuine respect and love for other people is. And we're always running after desire and sanctifying desire, getting my way and all those sorts of things. That's see, we just have to get off that boat entirely. And we have to recognize that's not God's world. Now I can stand for what is right. And I can stand in a way that people may have to kill me. But they cannot make me angry. And they cannot make me have contempt for them. If I have taken care, to let the mind and personality of Christ move into my life

**Dallas Willard 1:04:16**

now remember, when you hear these things, the mistake is to think oh, well, I must go out and do that. No, no. You don't solve problems of contempt by trying not to be contemptuous you change inwardly. For example, if you live as a servant, you will never be troubled by contempt. Never. Because you will have, as Peter says, humbled yourself under the mighty hand of God. And that will take care of it. And you will be very comfortable there. I will just quickly finish up here. Some of the spiritual disciplines that help in mastering and eliminating feelings would be fasting and solitude, silence, silence is very powerful. If you practice silence, that may not mean that you were comfortable not talking. That would mean, things like for example, you wouldn't have to have the last word. Now for people like Bill and me that make our living talking, as it were, that's hard when people almost pay us to have the last word. But I'll tell you, it's a tremendous relief to realize you don't have to have it. And it's actually very instructive for others. Because if you don't have the last word, then they sort of have to think about what the last word is. Solitude, fasting, the function of fasting is to train us to where we can be sweet and strong, when we don't get what we want. And the old saints all knew that if you fasted, well, that would affect everything else. You would never be in a position where I gotta have this, oh, you got to have this. Why don't you let me have this? Why did you keep me from I deserve this. And all that stuff is gone. Then you find out, people pay attention to you, they care about you. They take care of you better if you don't do that they may even come say what do you want

**Dallas Willard 1:06:39**

so these disciplines, Scripture memorization, we fill our mind with the truth of God, it is a literal substance. I've encouraged you to work with the 23rd Psalm but go beyond that and find larger portions Bill arranged for in the notes that he's made to you have a section from this sermon on the mount that I talked about. And so that's a good thing to the fruit of the Spirit. Now, we want to understand does not consist of feelings or emotions, but character. Love is not a feeling. Love is a character. Right? And so you know the song Falling in love with love. And you know, that song. It's a wonderful thing. Falling in love with love is playing the fool. Whoo, wow, some truth.

**Dallas Willard 1:07:37**

Love is a feeling. Now, if you want the feeling of love, rather than the character of love then you will be dopey. Right? Like, like our whole world is dopey. I mean, look at what the songs say about love what the poets say about love and so on. But if you have the character of love, you will have wonderful feelings the same way with joy and peace, joy is a deep sense of well being. That goes with peace. Peace is this kind of wholeness, shalom, that word shalom. It doesn't just mean

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nobody is trying to kill me right now. It means, boy, I am so filled with the goodness of God. That would mean things like you could actually sleep well and rest well. And peace would hit your body, your body would be at peace. And that's where you want it, you know, you wanted to go all the way down to your socks. So now we there's strong feelings that come with these. flood our being and drive out the negative feelings. So perfect love casts out fear. Remember that. That means love that has been brought to completion is something that just makes fear disappear. And of course, primary to that would be God's love for us and understanding what that is. Now, just quickly note these points you cannot deal with feelings head on, they will always win. They will always win you cannot deal with them head on. You have to rather recognize that there is a different way of living and move into that. And if for example, if you wanted to be free of contempt, or anger, you can do that. But you can't do it by trying to resist contempt and anger. Sometimes we have to do that because it's going to make a bad mess if we don't and that's okay. So don't I'm not talking against that. I'm saying if you want to solve the problem, then you have to become a different kind of person. you have to change in your thoughts and your feelings along the lines that we've been talking about? Now, here's a real tough one, as adults, we are responsible for the feelings we have. No one else is. And if you can take the notes on that home and think about that.

**Dallas Willard 1:10:21**

Now, you may say, Well, what about pain, I'm in physical pain, I've been injured and so on, well, you're not entirely responsible for the pain. But there are ways of taking it that are better than other ways. And I almost feel cheap to stand up here and say this, because those of you who are involved in serious pain, may think, well, he just doesn't know what he's talking about. That's always a possibility. And I don't deny that. But I just want to say that if you are suffering, pain, learn ways of surrendering it rather than fighting it but when you fight pain, it becomes much worse. And to be able to surrender it to God and learn to pray for it, I think you will find is a much better way of handling it and a way that actually can allow you to see a blessing even in that. Now there is no sin generating feel or emotion that we cannot eliminate, or at least master by grace and wise action. And I affirm that to you ask you to take it home and think about it. And then of course, you think about ways of doing that.

**Dallas Willard 1:11:51**

I wonder, I want to leave you this evening, thinking about what you're going to do. We've been talking now three weeks running, I'm hoping that you've had you've had some experience of things that you haven't had before, as you've tried to work with the things that I've said, we do not fail to receive healing of life in Christ, because of lack of will. That's not the problem. And that is so commonly thought, Oh, you just don't will it? Well, it's not I mean, that can that can happen. But because of lack of intelligent order and decision and removing the things that defeat will. That's what we have to work on. So what we have to learn to do, in other words, is how to apply our will. Not to just trust in strength of will see because the issue is almost never strength of will, but rather will misapplied. The question is, if you wish to change, where will you apply your will. So for example, to go back to the theme, I'm stressing here contempt, and I'm choosing that because it's such a huge issue in human life, you actually can change that. But you have to think differently. And so you start there. And a good rerun of the idea of grace wouldn't might not be a bad place to start,

**Dallas Willard**

see. And then how grace works in life and thinking about other people and, and learning that they're not to be degraded in any way, that they're to be honored and treasured because God honors and treasures them. See that kind of thinking and retraining. You cannot change your thoughts by changing your feelings, but you can change your feelings by changing your thoughts. And that's where the will comes in. In any kind in any situation of temptation. Pay attention to where your thoughts are. Now, you may know the story of Saint Benedict. And he was troubled by sexual lust and he threw himself in a briar patch and rolled about in it and I'm sure that had the desired effect

**Dallas Willard** 1:14:37

and I know a lot of people who would have done better to have done that than what they did. He redirected his mind now, you may not want to do that. But I'll tell you in any situation where you really want to change, you can find something that will change. Now remember, you're doing that in cooperation with God, you're counting on that you're praying, you're looking to God for help. You're invoking the presence of Christ in His Kingdom, right where you are in that life, no matter what the problem is. But you must act, you must act. Those who belong to Jesus Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. He who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human desires, but for the will of God. Does this represent something that has happened in your life? Are you willing for this to happen in your life? That's the question that we face tonight. Now next week, we're going to talk about the body and the social situation. In this context, in particular, we're going to talk about redeeming the family. But we have to come to that having already decided this is for me, I'm prepared to have my desires and my feelings and my emotions. crucified I am prepared to allow God to take over and direct them into ways that are good. Let's stand and have a prayer. Father, we thank You for this word that comes to us from our brother Paul and other writers, good teaching that we can genuinely be transformed. And we asked you to lead us gently into this. So that even as we go from this room, and as we go home, there will present itself to our minds, ways that we can drop the terribly negative and harmful feelings and emotions that rule life outside of you. So we count on you to do it, and ask you to glorify the name of Your Son Jesus in so doing Amen. Thank you. Thank you.