**Faith and Feelings-*Martha Rodman January 13, 2022***

Our weather has been pretty cold and miserable here. Sunday morning I woke up, all snuggled warm in my bed, thinking I don’t really “feel” like going to church this morning. I am not serving anywhere. My friend, who I pick up most Sundays, didn’t want to leave her house because of snow. I was listening to the service from Living Word Fellowship, in Voluntown, Ct. Their different elders were discussing the mindset of the privilege of coming/belonging to a church versus feeling like it is a duty. It was so encouraging, but I almost missed the point by focusing on my “feelings”!

I admit, my feelings almost won. But I encouraged myself in the Lord, made it to pre-service prayer, and was so grateful that I went. In God’s providence, I connected with a new lady who is now a part of our Life Group. As I reflected on this moment, I wondered, how often do our “feelings” direct our path, rather than the Lord.

Feelings are fleeting. They come and go. They focus us on ourselves, and can make us so very short-sighted. Our culture has become a “what about me?” culture. As I pondered staying in bed and watching our church service online, it definitely was about me. If we are to become the salt and light God desires us to be, we must learn to submit our feelings to Him and His ways. I’m sure Paul didn’t “feel” like enduring the beatings, shipwrecks and imprisonments he writes about in 2 Corinthians 11:26, but he learned to endure them like a good soldier, and we still benefit from his writings.

If we are to become the influencers God desires us to be, we must learn self-control. Self-control is the ability to stop yourself from doing what you feel like doing, but it isn’t in your or others’ best interest. Self-control is actually growing up. Toddlers react to the feelings immediately, as adults we should be able to control those feelings. We mustn’t act like little children, but we must mature in our thoughts and actions. In Matthew 5,we find Jesus teaching about anger, adultery and divorce. The beginning of each of these actions started with a feeling which triggered an emotion which resulted in an action. I wonder how many divisions, divorces, and destructive actions begin with feelings. Because feelings are not always based on fact, how much pain could or would be avoided if a person took the time to examine their feelings.

Feelings are God given. God has them, but He uses them correctly. We must learn to submit them to the Lord, and use them correctly as well. He wants to teach us how. The ESV versions of Proverbs 16:32 states: *Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.* Maybe anger isn’t your struggle when dealing with feelings, but learning to rule your spirit when dealing with any feelings is important. Comparing the works of the flesh found in Galatians 5: 19-21 *sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies and things like these*to the fruit of the spirit found in Galatians 5: 22-23, *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*, feelings are involved in both. When reading the works of the flesh list, I found it so destructive and something I, personally, do not want to encourage in my life.

Satan is looking for any foothold he can take in our lives. He isn’t above using our feelings for his purposes. Philippians 2:3-8 *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests, but each of you to the interests of others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: who, being in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be used by his own advatange; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant.* Dear friends, let us keep our feelings in their rightful place. Acknowledge them, examine their source, but do not let them rule your life. Your feelings, if allowed to run things, will lead you to a self-centered and eventually selfish life. Your flesh may be happy, but your spirit will suffer.