



(Mar 8:31-38)

These verses are some of the most important in all of Scripture. That because they make clear that our greatest enemy is not Satan and the world, or God and His laws. It is instead ourselves (or self). Learning then what that means, why it is so dangerous and how to conquer it, should be of first importance.

1. WHAT THESE VERSES (31-34) TEACH US ABOUT SELF:

1.1. “Setting your mind on (i.e. being committed to) the things of man” (v33) is the same thing as living for self (hence v34).

1.2. Living for self (or “setting you mind on the things of man”) means YOU ARE A PERSON CONTROLLED BY YOUR FEELINGS. What you are committed to - or what determines what you do, are those things which are agreeable to your feelings, those things that make a man feel good (v34 - the “things of man”).

(Support):

1.2.1. The context of Jesus’ chastisement of Peter (vv31-32) = Peter’s “rebuke” of Jesus is an emotional response - a response based on how Jesus’ prediction of coming suffering and rejection made him feel. As a person controlled by his feelings, Peter wanted safety and pleasure (not suffering and pain), approval and praise (not rejection and condemnation).¹

1.2.2. Feelings are what the apostle Paul is referring to when he speaks about “self-control” or “the old self” or “selfish ambition” (1Co 7:5, 9:24-27 “self-control” = Control over feelings/desires. Which does not mean the absence of feelings, but feelings as servant rather than master. I control my feelings, they don’t control me//Eph 4:20-23//Phi 2:3).

1.2.3. Feelings are what apostles Peter and Paul are referring to when speaking negatively about “the flesh” (1Pe 2:11; 2Pe 2:18// Eph 2:3; 1Co 3:1-3 “infants” = A person controlled by their feelings and lacking self-control; Rom 7:5, 8:1-8, 12-14).

1.3. Jesus is therefore demanding that everyone who would be His disciple (or “come after [Him]”) not only deny, but put to death their feelings as that which controls (or determines) what they do (Again v34).

1.4. Being controlled by feelings is a big problem for many people (Hence v33 [“seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said”], v34 [And calling the crowd to him with his disciples he said to them”] in contrast to v32 [“And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him”]) = Jesus makes sure His words are heard by everyone since He knew that Peter was not the only one w/this problem. It encompassed the majority of humanity. Modern marketing/advertising knows this and exploits it on a regular basis. For example: 1) FOMO (Behavioral scientists have demonstrated that appealing to people’s emotions has a far greater impact than rational appeals. Scarcity – or creating the feeling of scarcity, has proven to be the most effective. Displaying the words, “low stock” or indicating that only a “limited number” of the product is available is employed by almost every marketing/advertising campaign as part of their sales strategy). 2) Fb “likes” (Studies show that receiving “likes” or “hearts” or “smiley faces” activates the brain’s dopamine receptors giving us the emotional sensation of pleasure no different from that found in drugs or sex. Sean Parker, Fb’s founding president admitted that exploiting this “vulnerability in human psychology” was part of their strategy. Whenever someone likes a comment or post, “we give you a little dopamine hit.” All of it is meant to appeal to your emotions/feelings and keep you always checking/going to their app).

¹ That Jesus would accuse Peter of being an individual committed to/controlled by his feelings is confirmed by his later rash-actions, big-talk and lack of follow-thru/perseverance/loyalty (Joh 18:10; Joh 13:36-38 w/18:17, 25-27).

2. WHAT BEING CHARACTERIZED/CONTROLLED BY YOUR FEELINGS LOOKS LIKE (the signs that this is you):

2.1. You are characterized by rash decisions [“ghetto thinking”] (i.e. decisions based on feelings in the moment or short-term gratification w/no thought of how it will affect the future) (e.g. The average household has over \$15k in credit card, much of it due to impulse/rash purchases – purchases made based on emotions in the moment - HSN!; Studies show that inability to control the emotions related to stress/exhaustion often leads to rash decisions – e.g. Because he was “exhausted”, Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of soup – Gen 25:29-34; Many an unwanted pregnancy was the result of emotions out of control leading to rash sexual decisions).

2.2. You are characterized by big talk/promises/commitments and no follow thru/perseverance/loyalty (e.g. Many people’s New Year’s resolutions; Many people’s decisions to exercise or go on a diet; Many American marriages – 42.6% divorce rate).

2.3. Truth and error, good and bad, right and wrong, are determined by how you feel (e.g. How most people determine what religion they follow or what church they attend [Beth Moore: you know a church has the Holy Spirit by the feeling of affirmation you get when you attend]; e.g. Most Evangelicals in what they believe to be the gospel/Christianity; e.g. The reason many people end up in adulterous affairs - “how could something so wrong feel so right?”).

2.4. What decides what you do or don’t do most days is pleasure (rather than the accomplishment of more noble tasks or goals) (e.g. Most kids – Pro 22:15).

2.5. You make it a point to avoid anything that would cause controversy, conflict and/or tension w/another person (e.g. Husbands or parents who rarely raise their voice; Christians who have never had to separate from false Christian family or friends – Luk 2:34-35; Mat 10:34-38 – Notice Jesus brings up killing our feelings [taking up our cross] as key to such separation).

2.6. You choose what to do or not do based on its potential to cause pain and/or discomfort regardless of the benefit it may afford you (e.g. Exercise, dieting, change!).

2.7. You always seek the path of least resistance (e.g. Career choice).

2.8. You fantasize about “checking out” of life or your responsibilities (e.g. Alcohol/drug addiction often associated w/this emotional crutch).

2.9. You fear the future or missing out (e.g. Most teenagers/young adults).

2.10. You cry easily (A sign of addiction to negative emotions. Fear, sadness, feeling sorry for yourself are some of the strongest emotions – eliciting the same dopamine receptors as cocaine in the brain).