

The Christian's Motivation

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“And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to dress it and keep it”- (Gen. 2:15).

The Funk and Wagnall's Dictionary (1913 ed.) defines the *motive* adding this statement: "The *motives* of men are intricate and complicated. It suffices the wise to profit by actions and leave the *motives* in shade." (Bulwer-Lyrron, *My Novel*, xi. 297. 1852). What this statement seems to be saying is that men's motives are such a tangle of intricacies and complications that it would therefore be wise to deal with man's behavior rather than his motives. Leave such complexities strictly alone. But this is far from satisfactory, for everyone naturally asks, “What motivates a person's behavior (actions)?” More to the point, the same dictionary, one of the best, defines *motive* as that which incites to action, that which determines the choice or moves the will. There are good motives and bad motives; strong motives and weak motives. As the creature made in God's image, what motivated Adam to love and serve his Creator? What incited him to action as Eden's steward and caretaker? What inspired his will to act in harmony with the divine purpose for placing him in the garden, namely, "to dress it and keep it"?

It being obvious that Adam was created a worker, the question is, “Why did he work?” “Why *do* men work?” Some behaviorists explain it this way: man works because he has an instinct to work (just as a cow has a natural instinct to eat grass); or because he must work (as he will tell you, I have to eat!). So he works to procure food and shelter. Or he works because he wants to be socially acceptable. Work is still the "in" thing, and he does not wish to be derided and scorned. At this point we could easily become entangled with all sorts of rationalizations or go to psychoanalyzing as to why men work. But we are not interested in such things as hunger motives, sex motives, competitive spirit, etc.

Rather we are concerned to see from scripture that it was God and His divine purpose that motivated Adam. The holy prophets were motivated by the Spirit of God and His revealed will. II Pet. 1 :20,21. We, too. must be motivated by the mind of the Spirit and His commandments. For if our motivation is less than that, or other than that, it is humanistic. Now humanistic motivation is a bowing at the Shrine of Man and therefore God-dishonoring. As the dictionary further expresses it. "the motive to change is the prospect of good." This applied to Adam even in his state of perfection. For he had not only to be something, but to *become* something. He had not only to *be* a steward, but to go on to become a faithful steward. Cp. I Cor. 4:2 with Luke 16:8. The prospect of good, motivating Adam to change, to grow in righteousness, was that God would maintain His covenant with him! (Or essentially the same prospect of good motivating Abraham. Gen. 17: 1-2)

Therefore, all efforts to change apart from God's power, apart from the almighty God, are terrible mistakes. All schemes of self-improvement apart from God are proud ineffectuality. An illustration you have of it in, "I will build greater. . .then I will eat, drink and be merry! but God said, Fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee!" Luke 12:18-20. So with all self-made-men philosophies as seen in, "Is not this great Babylon that *I* have built. . .by the might of *my* power and for the honor of *my* majesty?"

Dn. 4:30. So also with all help of the experts without God. "A certain woman. . .had suffered many things of many physicians," spending all she had, yet became no better, "but rather grew worse." Mk 5:26. God had placed Adam in a position to change from good to better and motivated him to this by the prospect of infinite good. For God, too, was his shield and exceedingly great reward. But Adam chose to take a do-it-yourself course; he chose the advice of the expert without God. He chose to be god. He had been motivated quite properly. The purpose and precept of God had motivated him. He loved God: he loved whatever was of His mind and mandate. So Adam had been a well-motivated rational-moral creature.

But some will object to precepts and mandates, because, as they say, they would not *impose* their standards on another. They would leave the will perfectly free. By this they mean a will in equilibrium, thus free to "accept or reject Christ." But this is not facing reality. The will of man is not in equilibrium, for it is by nature incapable of any good and prone to all wickedness, unless man is regenerated at the center of his being, in heart, and so the will motivated by love for God, His purposes and precepts. Nor is this thinking the facing of reality for another reason, and that is that the gospel itself imposes the will of Another on us. "If any man wills to do His will he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Jn. 7: 17. "This do, and thou shalt live." Lk. 10:28. "Come, follow Me." Matt. 19:21. God by His Spirit and Word does press His holy will on us. "Be ye holy for I am holy." I Pet. 1:16. No one has a right to choose *not* to do God's will! No one has a right to reject Christ. So the Lord had well-motivated Adam when He put him in the garden of Eden *to dress it and keep it*. In New Testament gospel language this motivation is expressed in, "Walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye are called." Eph. 4:1.

A little thought will find it obvious that a change in motivation will result in change of behavior. Take Zacchaeus for instance. He had been motivated by selfishness and the will to be rich. I Tim. 6:9. His behavior was then characterized by avarice and purloining (stealing), until, by God's giving him a new heart, he was motivated by the will of Christ. Then his conduct was changed to marked repentance, godly sorrow, confession of sin, the seeking and obtaining of forgiveness and complete amendment of life to walk in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But there is another avenue of approach to the paths of peace. It is in the experience that behavior changed for the better will change motivation to right motivation. So the gospel prescribes, In regard to former conduct, put off the old man. . .put on the new man. Put away lying. Speak every man truth with his neighbor. Eph. 4:22, 24, 25. Godly conduct changes faulty motivation or lack of motivation to right motivation. Think of the son whose father had ordered, Son, go work today in my vineyard! and who had replied, I will not! but afterward he repented, and went. Matt. 21:28-29. Only when his conduct was changed (corrected) could he believe that his motives were right (mended).

But just how can biblical motivation (the only kind acceptable to God) be recognized? It is that which is congruent to the pattern of scripture. It has for its direction or goal the glory of God. It operates on the principle of faith. (For whatever is not of faith is sin.) Where you have these features, there is biblical motivation, and not otherwise. Every motivation must be biblically justifiable. Cain's motivation for killing his brother Abel was terribly unjustifiable. Why did he do this? Because his own works and motives were evil, but his brother's righteous. I John 3:12. David's motivation for killing Goliath was faith in Jehovah God (Heb. 11:32-33), for "without faith it is impossible to please

Him," v. 6, and David's aim in this execution was the honor and glory of God. I Sam. 17:29, 45-46. Also, he did it according to the Word of God. Psalm 119:23.

How may we become and remain biblically motivated? We must hold before our eyes by faith the prospect of good the Lord has promised! And that even though "there are many that say, Who will show us any good?" Ps. 4:6. For we know better. We *know* that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. Rom. 8:28. God's eternal purpose revealed in His Word holds before us the happy prospect as a reality that all things do work together for good. *This* motivates us to say, I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me. This motivates to endure tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril or sword. Rom. 8:35. It takes mighty motivation to achieve this unflinching endurance. What God gives, then, to thus motivate us is a happy trusting anticipation of the promised good. Then we shall be moved to right action and to a thriving, godly manner of life.

For those who are weak, worn and sad, see yourselves as God sees you-perfect, risen and reigning with Christ. We have been buried with Him through the Baptism (of the Cross) in the Death (of the Cross), in order that as Christ rose from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too shall conduct ourselves in a new way of living. For when Christ did rise from the dead, we all rose with Him and He seated us with Him in the heavenly spheres. Rom. 6; Eph. 2:6. Even so, consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Rom. 6:11. Evaluate yourself as God evaluates you. See yourself identified with Christ in all His redemptive acts. Say, I have been crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20); I died with Him (Rom. 6:4; I was buried with Him; I rose with Him; I ascended with Him) I was made to sit together with Him. Now I reign with Him. Reckon this to be so in your case. Then what hope will flood your soul! What a well-adjusted person you will become! How highly motivated you will be! Then this perfect, objective sanctification will by faith be more real to you than all imperfection. *Faith* makes the things of heaven and grace more real than the things (the defeats, the discouragements) of this life. Let *that* motivate you! The world is no Garden of Eden, but there is the Eden of your heart and life! II Cor. 5:17. Cultivate it and care for it. Gn. 2:15, Berkeley. I pray God to search you, test you, "see whether there is any baneful motive in" you (Ps. 139:23f), then trust His grace to lead you in the everlasting way. You know what motivates to this action. Then act! Do it!

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