

MOTIVE, THE ACID TEST OF ACTION

By W. Edmund Smith

"Keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life." Pro. 4:23.

God's Word teaches that motive is the main-spring of action, and motive determines the moral quality of everything we say or do. As a man thinketh in his heart so is he. As he thinks, and imagines, and desires down in the deepest recesses of his moral and spiritual being, where only the eye of God can penetrate, there lies the real character, not as man who may be our friend, may judge us, attributing to us virtues he thinks we possess. He may mark us a hundred per cent because he is prejudiced in our favor, when God may mark us zero because so many seemingly noble and virtuous actions have back of them selfish and defective motives. This is the fly in the ointment that can make so many so-called beautiful characters abominable in the sight of God, because the character is self-centered and not Christ-centered; it loves the praise of men more than the praise of God. But too, there are those who would mark us zero, for service that goes against their pride and carnal estimate of things. They did that to the works of Christ. Yes, they admitted he did many wonderful works, but he was in league with the devil. All his words and works were inspired by demoniac motives. And if they have so misjudged Jesus will they not impugn wrong motives to his lowly followers, whose best words and works, while springing from a fountain of love, are, nevertheless, tinged with defects because of the limitations of mind and not of heart. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, will they not apply that same name to us? But God will mark us a hundred per cent if He sees that we are true at the center of our being; so this makes the true child of God happy when he can open the door of the innermost room in his heart and invite Jesus to go through on a tour of inspection, to see that there are no closets in which there are skeletons of guile, malice, jealousy, or bitterness, and thus the heart is laid naked and open before the eyes of Him whom we have to do.

Our theme in this message is motive, the determining factor in moral action and character.

Higher and Lower Motives

There is a higher or a lower motive in all of our activities. You ask a man why he is working late and early at a hard task, and he may reply, "I labor by compulsion to keep the wolf from the door. Oh, I wish I didn't have to work. But I suppose it is part of the penalty we pay for the fall of Adam. But another man may say, "I love to work. I get a real kick out of it. I like to see things done. But I am not thinking wholly of the pay I shall take home on Saturday night. That is important. But we are making great machines at our factory and it gives me joy when I see that machine complete and finished to think that I had a hand in it. Yes, I really love my work; idleness would make me miserable indeed."

But we may engage in a noble work with not the highest motive at the beginning. When the call came for soldiers to meet the attacks of the enemy in the last World War, many, with patriotic zeal and love for their country,

sprang to arms. They cried, "Here am I, send me." But the majority were pulled away from their ordinary vocations with the rope of the draft law. They went to the front rather than resist the power of Uncle Sam to punish them for their refusal to become a soldier. But these same soldiers who started in through fear of disobeying, may soon have become dominated by a higher motive even that of love for country, and love for the ideology their country represented.

Why do men and women become Christians? Is it through a sense of fear, duty, or love? It is often any one of these three motives. Fear may not be the highest motive that brings us to God but it is a worthy motive, for all through the word of God the most persistent and vehement appeals are made to that motive. The prophets thundered the judgments of the Lord to secure moral and spiritual changes in individual and national conduct, with salutary effects. Jesus was the most terrific hell-fire preacher who ever preached. "Outer darkness; weeping and gnashing of teeth; where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. These shall go away into everlasting punishment but the righteous into life eternal." These are some of the most terrible pronouncements of the meek and lowly Jesus used to inspire men and women to amend their lives by godly sorrow for sin.

And shall any one of us blush to confess that it was the fear of death and hell that made us tremble at the gulf of damnation we saw before us? We say that in the light of all that Jesus, and Paul, and Peter, and John have told us of the doom of the impenitent, he is a fool not to fear and tremble at the judgments God will inflict upon those who reject His offers of mercy and grace, which can come only through Jesus Christ and Him crucified, who died to save us from eternal woe. Today, with the small estimate men have of sin and its consequences, for fools make a mock of sin, one has said, "Men are not much troubled by their sins today." Why? Because there is no fear of God before their eyes. But thank God for these who are wise to flee from the wrath to come.

A Change from a Lower to a Higher Motive

It comes to a reconciled child of God. Oh, what joy to feel the burden of a slavish fear lifted and in its place to have the sweet spirit of adoption springing up whereby we cry, Abba Father! We sing:

My God is reconciled,
His pardoning voice I hear.
He owns me for His child,
I can no longer fear.
With confidence I now draw nigh
And Father Abba, Father cry."

It was at Sianai we saw the fire and the tempest, and heard the thunder and saw the quaking earth which threatened our destruction. But God, for Jesus sake, lifted upon us the light of His countenance. No longer an enemy, we sing: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God." Under conviction we, like Herod, did many things; broke off this and that through fear. But now love has come in and will we do less with even initial love than we did through slavish fear. Yea, far more we will do with this higher motive. In our first love how our tears of joy flowed down! We saw God in Jesus as a loving Father and we wanted to please him. We didn't

want to sin and didn't expect to sin any more. "Old things had passed away and behold all things had become new."

But alas! We soon found that we had a traitor in our heart that was not subject to the law of love and could not be. The power of sin was broken but, Oh, the nature of sin rose up against us.

We did not have to hear holiness preached to become conscious of our need; not of forgiveness but of cleansing. We had received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear, but we "had received the spirit of adoption whereby we cried, Abba Father. The Spirit Himself bore witness with our spirit that we were the children of God; "heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ."

But what motive can persuade us to seek the blessing of heart purity and entire sanctification? God through his servants appealed to us, not by the spirit of fear, but by the highest motive, even that of love. How tenderly Paul makes his appeal! Not from the frowning and flaming brow of Sinai, but from the blood-stained Cross of Mt. Calvary. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God." Note, it is by the mercies of God, His mercies that had redeemed us from our sins, and blotted them all out and made us heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. Fear called us to repentance. "Turn ye, turn ye for why will ye die?" was the cry. Now being made alive from the dead, with a right to heaven through the blood of Jesus, but very conscious of a lack of fitness for heaven. This is what the love nature longed for, and thank God this is what God promised his children back in the Old Testament, that he would "circumcise our hearts to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and our neighbor as ourselves."

The only motive that is acceptable to God in Christian service, is that of love. When we lose the first love we received at conversion, we must either be reclaimed or sink into a backslidden state, rendering only formal devotion as did the Pharisees, the most religious people of Jesus' day and the most antagonistic to Him. No true child of God can oppose holiness and retain his relationship with God. He may rest upon a naturally good disposition which keeps him from gross sins, and maintain an outward form of devotion. This may be the preacher in the pulpit, and a holiness pulpit at that. For a preacher may profess holiness of heart and have some measure of joy, and at the same time have not died out to his ambition in the ministry and his love of the praise of men. To go outside the camp bearing the reproach is a condition he may have never met.

The higher motive of love renders the most complete and acceptable service to God. This is all summed up in the word Sacrifice. Love makes us a Living Sacrifice. It takes all that we have to let Jesus be the custodian of all we have and are. Why did not Jesus, and John Wesley, and other great and holy men, bring over tithing from the Old Testament into the New? Could they not trust Christians, dominated by the Spirit of love, to give more even than those who were pressed to giving by law? In heathen lands the new converts amaze us with the extent of their sacrificial devotion through the impelling power of love. A man has been known to give his only cow, the chief means of his family's support for money with which to build a church. One was known

(Continued on Page 8)