

MOTIVATED BY THE GOODNESS OF GOD

By Victor Paul Wierwille

Negative motivation is the basic ingredient in our cultures. It sells products; it sells government; it sells religion. Motivation is a primary prerequisite to a successful success, or to a successful failure.

Acts 2:38: ... Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

This verse of scripture has been an enigma since the early days of Christianity, because of erroneous teachings. For instance, the word "repent" has been taught to mean: "confession of sin". We have been taught: "If you do not confess your sin then you are going to go to hell." Therefore fear has been bred into people, and people gotten "saved" because they were afraid to go to hell.

In contrast to this, Romans 2 makes a singularly significant statement.

Romans 2:4: ... knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.

Thus repentance is not a confession of sin, nor do you repent to avoid hell. We are not to preach hell-fire and brimstone in order to get people saved, for it is the goodness of God that leads men to repentance. When people see how good God really is, they will see that He is not a fire-escape from hell. In fact, God and His Word give an enrichment, a joy and an effervescence that make life worth living, and then we can change the motivation for our lives. The non-Biblical motivation has been fear. People have been motivated to be Christian because of fear and have been told: "If you do not confess your sin then you are going to go to hell."

God knew that the world would build on fear, therefore He instituted repentance. "Repentance" means: "a mental change of principle of motivation due to positive action". For one who is motivated by fear, true repentance is a mental change of motivation due to positive action and not negative. It is the goodness of God that leads to repentance, and that is positive action.

In order to see this, we have to first begin to see where the natural man's basic condition resides, and so we go to I Corinthians, chapter 2.

1 Corinthians 2:14: But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

The natural man, under no condition, can receive the things of the Spirit of God. As a matter of fact, to the natural man the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness, because the natural man is limited to the information he gathers via the five senses. Via the five senses the natural man cannot know spirit, because spirit is spirit; and, in order to understand spiritual things, you must have spirit.

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The physical body is fed on physical food, but what are you going to feed the spirit? You cannot feed the spirit on physical food. The Bible is in the senses realm, thus a man could memorize everything from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21 and not believe one word of it. The Bible is not "spirit" food; it is "head" food. The mind is part of the natural man, and that is why the natural man could quote the entire Scripture and still not be spiritually alive.

Spirit has to be fed via spirit, and the Word of God teaches that there is only one way whereby you can feed that spiritual man in you, and that is by speaking in tongues in your private prayer life. (See Victor Paul Wierwille, *Receiving the Holy Spirit Today*, 7th ed. (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, 1982), pp. 26-28, 35-36.)

The natural man's condition is of such a nature that he simply cannot receive spiritual things. Therefore he will say: "Well that is foolish. Why would you want to?..." "Man, have you got the religious bug or something? You are crazy!"

If those of us who believe His Word are crazy, then God's Word is crazy. And, if God's Word is crazy, then we have not got much else left. If the natural man laughs at you for your believing and for the manifestations of the spirit that you operate, do not criticize him; he cannot help it. He cannot understand it, it is foolishness to him.

Let us look at this natural man in Ephesians, chapter 2.

Ephesians 2:1-3: And [the word "and" is the word "even"] you ... who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

The natural man is by nature a child of wrath. He cannot help but to tear down the things that are the truth of God's Word. The natural man came into the world just body and soul, that is why he is dead in trespasses and sins. He is living physically, but he is dead spiritually. All of God's blessings are wrapped up in Jesus Christ, and it is Christ in you, the hope of glory, that makes the change.

We see this in the 13th verse and following of chapter 2.

Ephesians 2:13 and 14: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

For he is our peace, who hath made both [that is Judaeans and Gentiles] one, and hath broken

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down the middle wall of partition *between* us [Judaean and Gentile].

You can never have peace without the prince of peace, the Lord Jesus Christ, because the natural man is the child of wrath. He is going to utilize, to the best of his ability, what he knows, but all he knows is what is gathered via the five senses, and that cannot be spiritual. Therefore, everything he institutes for peace has to terminate; it has no life in it, for it lacks that one great element that makes for peace, the prince of peace.

Verses 15-19: Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain [two, Judaean and Gentile] one new man, so making peace;

And that he might reconcile both [Judaean and Gentile] unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby [that is, in himself with his death]:

And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

For through him we both [Judaean and Gentile] have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

If you belong to a household then you must have a father. The natural man is a child of wrath by nature because he is dead in trespasses and sins. When the natural man gets born again he has Christ in him, the hope of glory; he spiritually has a new Father. For those that are born again, God is our Father, and we are His children. That makes the household.

Christianity is not a religion. There is a lot of religion in so-called "Christianity" today, but that is not God's fault. Religion is what man does; Christianity is what God wrought in Christ. Christianity is not a religion-it is The Way, The Truth, and The Life it is what God wrought in Christ. It is a Father and His family; God is our Father, and we are His children. That puts us in the household of God.

Verse 20: And [we] are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*.

To walk in the revelation of the apostles and to apply the principles that they applied and the efficacy of the Word that they utilized is apostolic succession.

Verse 21: In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.

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Every individual believer in this Body is a tabernacle, but the believers all put together make up the Temple.

Verse 22: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through [or, "by way of"] the Spirit.

Still speaking of the spirit, II Timothy 1:7 tells us:

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Therefore the spiritually dead man, who is outside of Christ, has to have an unsound mind because all he has to go by is the information he has acquired via the five senses. That information is not trustworthy when it comes to spiritual things. Thus, without the spirit and without a mind renewed to the reality of the spirit within, man, biblically speaking, has an unsound or insane mind.

God does not give a spirit of fear. Then there must be someone else who does give it. But, the spirit that God gives is a spirit of power, love and a sound mind.

The reason that people who have belonged to the household of God, the born-again ones, have continued to manifest an equally unsound mind is because they have never put on, in the renewed mind, what God, by His mercy and grace, put on the inside, Christ in you, the hope of glory. They have never been transformed by the renewing of the mind, because the new birth does not affect the mind.

Whether we like it, or whether we do not like it, we are the products of what we think. No one can believe beyond what he or she is taught. All the knowledge of the natural man has to come by the five senses. He is totally ruled and governed by those five senses, and therefore his motivation is a motivation of fear.

Repentance is a mental change of principle of motivation due to positive action. There is only one way up and out for the natural man—he has to get born again and then begin to get a sound mind.

Romans 5:12,15-17: (*The New English Bible*) Mark what follows. It was through one man that sin entered the world, and through sin death, and thus death pervaded the whole human race, inasmuch as all men have sinned.

But God's act of grace is out of all proportion to Adam's wrongdoing. For if the wrongdoing of that one man brought death upon so many, its effect is vastly exceeded by the grace of God and the gift that came to so many by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ.

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And again, the gift of God is not to be compared in its effect with that one man's sin; for the judicial action, following upon the one offence, issued in a verdict of condemnation, but the act of grace, following upon so many misdeeds, issued in a verdict of acquittal.

For if by the wrongdoing of that one man [Adam] death established its reign, through a single sinner, much more shall those who receive in far greater measure God's grace, and his gift of righteousness, live and reign through the one man, Jesus Christ.

There is only one way whereby the natural man can get all these blessings. He cannot receive it as a natural man, for they are foolishness unto him; he must be born again, born from above. (That is what the words "born again" mean in John 3:3 and 7. The word "again" is the Greek word *anōthen*, meaning "from on high"; thus: "born from above").

The natural man must be born from above so that the spiritual law will take precedent over the natural law. By nature he is a child of wrath, but when he is born again of God's Spirit he is a child of God and belongs to the household of God. At that moment he again has a contact, a connection, between God and the spirit that God gives and can walk and talk with Him. This is what Christianity is all about.

Romans 10:9 and 10: That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

This is talking about confessing Jesus as lord in your life. Before this, the natural man has confessed somebody else as lord, but he changes and confesses with his mouth Jesus as lord and believes in his heart (in the innermost part of his being) that God raised him from the dead. Man is not saved by works, he is saved by grace; and yet, believing and confession are works. That is why believing is unto righteousness and confession is unto salvation. At that moment God goes into operation, and that which He operates is by grace. The natural man believes "unto", but the work has to be a work of unmerited grace, for you are born again of God's Spirit.

That is the miracle of the new birth, which is the greatest reality in the whole world—that God would so love us that in a moment of time we could be born again of God's Spirit. At that moment we belong to the household of God and pass from death unto life, and are nevermore to come into condemnation. The wrath of God has no effect upon us, and we are now heaven bound and all hell cannot stop us. That is the only way the natural man can attain. The natural man cannot work his way in; he cannot even pray his way in. He cannot even confess his sins and get in, because man is not saved by confession of sin, he is saved by confessing the saviour from sin, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And from that moment on, the natural man is now a man of the household of God. He has the peace of God. He has all the fullness of God in Christ in him.

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Ephesians 2:4-10: But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together ["quickened" means "made alive"] with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

And [not only quickened us, but] hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus:

That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

Not of works, lest any man should boast.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Each man must choose his motivating principle. We are surrounded with the negative in abundance. This is why we must declare God's goodness, which leads a man to repentance. This is a day of grace. We have the privilege of living in this day and in this grace and of holding forth the ineffable greatness of God's wonderful, matchless Word.

This type of repentance means, a mental change of principle of motivation due to positive action. You are the one who decides what you want to do with your life. Each person has to make that decision for himself. Everything starts with the individual. You cannot help your neighbour until you first help yourself.

Every man must make the decision whether his motivating principle is going to be fear or whether the motivating principle of his life is going to be the grace of God which He has so freely bestowed.