

# Fulton County Gospel News

*Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World*

“. . . Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

Established 1953

July 2007

Vol. 41 / No. 7

## WHY AM I NOT PROPERLY MOTIVATED?

by Lee Moses

A Christian understands what is right and what is wrong. He understands the magnitude of the commitment he made when he committed his life to Christ in obedience to the Gospel. He wants to serve God in all aspects of his life, and longs for the day when he can praise God before His throne in heaven. However, despite all his proper desires and intentions, a child of God may still fall far short of accomplishing what he is capable of accomplishing for his Father in heaven and for the kingdom of his Lord. Such a man or woman may wonder, “Why am I not properly motivated?” There are other facets to which one must properly attend before he can be properly motivated.

### Proper Faith

Faith needs to be based upon the correct criteria. “*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Romans 10:17); therefore, faith received any other way than from hearing the word of God is not true Biblical faith. If one’s sole reason for continuing outwardly to serve Christ is because those in his family were Christians, he does not have Biblical faith—he has what some aptly call a “second-hand religion.” A man or woman’s faith must be his own, for he will not be judged based upon what his parents have done, but upon what he himself has done (Ezekiel 18:20; 2 Corinthians 5:10). If one lacks his own Biblical faith, he does not have “the substance of things hoped for” (Hebrews 11:1). The original word for “substance” holds the concept of “that which stands under,” so faith is that

which stands under the things for which a Christian hopes. Hope is defined as “desire plus expectation”—The Christian earnestly desires and expects to be rewarded at the end of his life for living faithfully in Christ. One without true Biblical faith does not have that hope; he either does not have the desire or does not have the expectation of a final reward. A child of God without hope is robbed of his motivation to endure the trials of this life in service to God. “*But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience* [“steadfastness,” ASV margin] *wait for it*” (Romans 8:25). One’s faith must be internalized throughout in order that he may be properly motivated.

### Proper Understanding

There are certain things one must understand before he can be saved (Matthew 13:15). There are also things a Christian must understand if he is to “*press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 3:14). The word of God provides strength and comfort – but it must be properly understood to have its power. A failure to understand the nature of God will deprive a Christian of proper motivation. God is worthy of the Christian’s best service, the understanding of which will contribute greatly to the motivation needed by a Christian. One must understand the dual nature of God—“*Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God*” (Romans 11:22). An understanding of the severity of God is legitimate motivation to serve Him. The Bible repeatedly emphasizes that men are to “fear Him”

(Deuteronomy 6:13,24; Psalm 33:8; Ecclesiastes 8:12; 12:13; 1 Peter 2:17; Revelation 14:7; et al.). God is infinitely powerful, and has our eternal fate in His hands. Having the fear of God, and the desire to avoid His wrath, can save us from doing that which separates us from God (Ephesians 5:5-7; Jude 23). However, God is not only severe, He also possesses a goodness which transcends any ever seen in man (Luke 18:19). He is not a tyrant or a bully, but One Who will use His great power only for good. If one is serving God only because he is fearful of Him, that person will not “*serve the Lord with gladness*” (Psalm 100:2), but “*grudgingly, or of necessity*” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

One must also understand what God will or will not do for him. Some believe that once they become Christians, all the problems in their lives will be immediately solved. Upon their realization that they still have many problems, they oftentimes conclude that God is at fault. However, God never promised that a Christian would have no problems in life. The Christian will still struggle with sin and a multitude of trials (1 John 1:8; 2 Timothy 3:12). Nonetheless, God provides an abundance of help – through His word we are able to avoid sin and to have perfect direction for our lives (Psalm 119:11; 2 Peter 1:3).

One must also have a proper understanding of himself. Some Christians set for themselves unrealistic expectations, such as living sinlessly perfect lives. While every Christian purposes in his mind to give up sin, making every effort to avoid sin, he should not be overly hard upon himself for sin after he has confessed to God and received forgiveness. Such an occasion is a time of joy, not sorrow. It is also acceptable to have doubts at times. Job and the various writers of the Psalms spoke of doubts they had about God,

**FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS**

USPS Publication #211780

. . . is a Periodical publication issued monthly by the Church of Christ at Third and Bethel (P.O. Box 251), Mammoth Spring, AR 72554-0251. **POSTMASTER: Please mail all changes of address to the above address.**

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**FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS**

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and later had those doubts answered. If one has a proper understanding of God, such doubts will not last terribly long.

**Proper Love**

Proper love is essential to proper motivation. One must be possessed with a great love for the Lord, and *"We love him, because he first loved us"* (1 John 4:19). How could one not love such a great Being, Who provided for mankind the amazing means of salvation unto eternal life, although man rightfully deserved eternal damnation? (Romans 6:23). If one loves God, he will also love all Christians, with a great desire to serve them as well as God (1 John 4:20; 2 Corinthians 5:13-15; 1 Peter 1:22). If one loves God, he will love what God loves—the souls of men (1 Timothy 2:4). He will labor to see souls saved from their lost state of sin. One will not be properly motivated if one's labor is not truly a "labour of love" (1 Thessalonians 1:3; Hebrews 6:10).

**Proper Emphasis**

The Christian should regularly examine himself, asking, "What is

taking priority in my life?" God should always come first, with no close second. If one is truly to serve God, he cannot be serving anything or anyone else that would detract from that service (Luke 16:13). So many allow themselves to be robbed of spirituality by spending hours watching television and significantly less poring over the word of God. Many have made material things their god over the Lord. Many believe it is acceptable to spend the occasional Lord's Day morning or evening out on the lake instead of worshiping God. Even though one may involve himself in more noble activities, if God is not holding the preeminence in one's life, that individual will never be properly motivated.

**Proper Actions**

It is generally understood that attitude affects action (Proverbs 4:23). But action also affects attitude. David spoke of the wicked man who had a gross misconception of God because of that man's own wicked deeds: *"He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it"* (Psalm 10:11). Jesus said, *"Every one that doeth evil hateth the light"* (John 3:20). Those who act wickedly will avoid the truth and make themselves believe lies, hardening their consciences in the process. Doing that which God commands will also affect one's attitude: *"Now the end of the commandment is charity [love, American Standard Version] out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned"* (1 Timothy 1:5). When one is doing God's will, he will be blessed with a healthy attitude, having many of the attributes previously mentioned as necessary to proper motivation. One should resolve to begin a pattern of work for the Lord, doing as much of which he is capable. It will amaze some how much more fulfilled they will feel if they are busily engaged in the Lord's work. It will take motivation in other areas to begin to work, but that will lead to an increase in motivation. Contrariwise, when one is not accomplishing what he is capable of doing, this can cause him to become greatly discouraged; thereby robbing

him of even more motivation.

God has provided mankind with all the motivation needed to serve Him, and so much more. A Christian need only to lay hold of that motivation given in the precious assurances of His word. By applying himself to God's word, he will be able to obtain the proper faith, understanding, love, emphasis, and actions needed in order to be properly motivated.

## CHANGE AGENTS AND THEIR "PHARISAICAL" ACCUSATIONS

by Lee Moses

No one wants to be called a "Pharisee." While the Pharisees were religious leaders generally respected by the people, Jesus repeatedly took them to task for their defective doctrine, self-promoting attitude, misplaced accusations, and inconsistent actions. So for any who professes to follow Christ, being called a "Pharisee" is a serious insult to one's faith. And this is an insult that the change agents in the church love to hurl. The change agents' agenda is more or less to transform the Lord's church from strictly adhering to the Biblical pattern to becoming a people-pleasing denomination. When they find in the road to their desired transformation an impediment (a faithful Christian who points out the error of such transformation), they deride that impediment as a "Pharisee": "Don't listen to that old Pharisee, he thinks that he is going to be saved by his works"; "Those Pharisees condemn others for not following their views of the Bible"; "Those Pharisees are stuck in the mire of past traditions, failing to realize that the world and the church are passing them by." But what the change agents fail to realize is that their accusations of others as "Pharisaical" come back upon themselves.

Change agents accuse many in the church of being Pharisaical for alleged *traditionalism*. If this pertains to

traditionalism as observed in the Pharisees, this is a serious allegation. When the Pharisees and scribes attempted to bind their tradition on Christ's disciples, Jesus applied Isaiah's rebuke to them: "*Howbeit, in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*" (Mark 7:7; quoting Isaiah 29:13). Likewise, if any today were to teach manmade commandments as authoritative religious doctrine, that person's worship to God would be rendered vain.

Two primary areas in which change agents have accused churches of Christ of being traditionalistic are a cappella singing in worship and women's roles in the church. They claim that a cappella singing is merely a **tradition** of the churches of Christ, and not essential to Scriptural worship. Yes, a cappella singing was certainly the type of music found in the worship of the church of Christ, or of any church claiming to be such, for over 1200 years following its inception. Hence the name *a cappella*, literally, "in the manner of the chapel." But were the churches observing a manmade tradition, or a Divine principle? God must be worshipped "*in spirit and in truth*," and God's word is truth (John 4:24; 17:17). Christians must do all that they do with Christ's authority (Colossians 3:17), and singing is the only music in worship authorized by Christ (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; compare with Matthew 26:30).

Likewise, one can find that women have not historically served in leadership roles in the church. Obviously, things have changed in many churches that profess to follow Christ; which is why the change agents believe churches of Christ must likewise change to remain "current and relevant." However, reserving leadership roles for men is not just a "Church of Christ tradition," as per the Ashdodic speech of the change agents. The apostle Paul said, "*I will therefore that men pray every where*" (1 Timothy 2:8). This alludes to leading prayer in public worship, and the word for "men" refers specifically to *males* in contrast to females.<sup>1</sup> Paul went on to say, "*Let the woman learn in silence with all*

*subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence*" (1 Timothy 2:10-11). Mere manmade tradition? Paul wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and thus his writings reveal the mind and will of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:9-16). In another passage that alludes to the Divine prohibition on women's leadership roles in the church, Paul cautioned, "*If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord*" (1 Cor. 14:37; see verse 34).

*Traditionalism* has two definitions in Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary: (1) The doctrines or practices of those who follow or accept tradition, and (2) The beliefs of those opposed to modernism, liberalism, or radicalism. Now certainly the church is to oppose modernism (John 20:30-31), liberalism (Revelation 22:19), and radicalism (Galatians 6:12-13; Colossians 2:20-23). But if the change agents' charge against the church of our Lord is that we follow or accept manmade traditions as authoritative, the charge cannot stand. Furthermore, many change agents worship with churches that generally practice both a cappella singing in worship and male leadership in the church. When asked why, they allude to their "heritage" or "tradition." So who is following manmade tradition? Who is more like the Pharisees, "*teaching for doctrine the commandments of men*"? The change agents "Pharisaical" accusations of traditionalism turn back on themselves.

Change agents accuse many in the church of being Pharisaical for alleged *legalism*. They hurl, "You Pharisees think you are going to be saved by meticulous law-keeping"; "You Pharisees don't believe in grace." I am unaware of any of their objects of criticism who believes that meticulous law-keeping in and of itself is going to save anyone. We readily affirm the same truth Paul affirmed:

*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* (Ephesians 2:8-10).

We are fully dependent upon the grace of God for salvation. We cannot concoct a system that produces salvation. But notice in the same context that speaks of salvation by grace through faith, Paul says that Christians are created for the purpose of walking in the good works which God has prepared for them.

Can we as Christians brazenly reject the good works God has prepared for us, and still be saved? Can we merely believe in **some** truths Christ gave, and obey **some** works (or none of them) that Christ gave, and still be saved? One influential change agent went so far as to write, "A man need not have New Testament writings to know the will of God for holy living."<sup>2</sup> Such a statement might well prompt the question, "How then **can** I know the will of God for holy living?" The response given: "New Testament Scriptures will not be necessary as [new Christians, LM] continue to call on their God in Christ...Each will serve in his individual relationship with God."<sup>3</sup> **This** is to reject the grace of God: "*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*" (Titus 2:11-12). God's grace reveals to us His will for holy living in the New Testament Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16-17; compare with John 12:48; Colossians 2:14). If we do not have the New Testament Scriptures, or if we brazenly refuse to adhere to them, yet claim to have the sanction and salvation of God; we become like those of Israel who "*going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God*" (Romans 10:3). Never has God allowed man to choose his own course of action for salvation (compare with Judges 17:6; Proverbs 14:12). And "*faith without works is*

dead” (James 2:20).

Legalism is defined as “excessive adherence to law or formula.”<sup>4</sup> But how does one adhere excessively, or too closely, to the teachings of the New Testament? “I give thee charge in the sight of God...that thou keep this commandment *without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Timothy 6:13-14). We can be satisfied with nothing less than complete obedience to God’s will.

Just as the change agents are satisfied with less than complete obedience to God’s will, so were the Pharisees. The Pharisees loosed many commandments of God that they apparently felt were superfluous. Jesus told them,

*Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother (Mark 9:7-12, emphasis LM).*

Like the Pharisees, the change agents love making loopholes in God’s law, and telling them “you are free” from complete obedience. Like the change agents, the Pharisees chose their own course of action for salvation. Again, the change agents’ “Pharisaical” accusations come back on them.

Change agents accuse others of Pharisaism for alleged “unbalance.” The change agents despise preaching that includes the more uncomfortable parts of God’s counsel. Clearly, the balanced and necessary approach is to include **all** the counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27), something the Pharisees failed to do (Matthew 23:23).

Like the Pharisees, the change agents are often able to gain the favor of the people. Part of the way they accomplish this is by hurling against faithful churches accusations and key

pejorative terms, a prime example being “Pharisee.” But whether they accuse faithful Christians of hypocrisy, irrelevance, unlovingness, traditionalism, legalism, or unbalance; they end up accusing themselves. They stand self-accused as “Pharisaical.”

<sup>1</sup> *aneer*, in Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 79. Every lexicon of which this writer is aware concurs.

<sup>2</sup> Cecil Hook, *Free in Christ* (New Braunfels, TX: Cecil and Lea Hook, 1985 printing), p. 135.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>4</sup> *Oxford American College Dictionary*

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### GOD’S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

### THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God’s commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

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 MAMMOTH SPRING, AR 72554  
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Periodical Postage  
 Paid At  
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 72554-0998  
 Publication #211780