

## ***Because It Is Right***

Reward incentive motivation permeates our society. People respond to rewards just like little puppies do. Some parents think only in terms of rewarding their children, and, they even reward them for being bad. When a parent says to a little child, "If you will quit throwing a temper tantrum, we will go get an ice cream as soon we get away from the doctor's office," he is rewarding bad behavior and the child quickly understands how to get what he wants. The "in thing" now in many churches is to offer physical rewards for being religious. That ranges from the "gospel of health and wealth" that says, "If you give \$100, God will give you \$1,000," to appealing to the fleshly appetites of entertainment to get people to come to "church."

Whatever happened to doing right because it is right? Surely, Jesus offers men rewards but those incentives have nothing to do with the sensual desires. In fact, he condemned those who followed him because they were fed -- "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life," (John 6:29). The reward for righteousness is eternal life with God. God expects right behavior, because he is holy and we must be like him to share in spiritual life (1 Peter 1:15-16).

Christians are committed to a way of life that is righteous, because it is the right way to live. Sometimes the righteous life may offer a material advantage but that isn't why the Christian lives that way. At other times, being righteous may be a difficult road and the righteous may be mocked and persecuted. The disciple of the Lord does right when people speak well of him and when they do not -- his motivation is doing right, because it is the right thing. to do.

- by *Jim R. Everett*

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## ***Nothing To Hide!***

Consider this:

If someone has some printed money but is not willing to have it carefully examined, people will probably think it is counterfeit.

If one stands accused, and is afraid to take a lie detector test, people will almost certainly think they are guilty of the crime.

If someone conducts a business but is unwilling to let anyone investigate it, folks will probably think they are running a crooked business.

Yet many people teach doctrines that under no circumstances will they test or allow to be tested by the Bible. However, millions of people will accept them as upright, honest teachers of the truth, and will risk their salvation upon them.

What makes the difference? The Bible instructs us to test those who claim to be teachers of spiritual truths (1 John 4:1). The truth never fears investigation! It has nothing to hide!

- by *Bill Crews*

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## ***Worst or Best?***

In Ephesians the second chapter, Paul in just a few verses shows the worst and best condition in which one can find himself. Consider the following:

"Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." (Eph. 2:11-13).

One is either "in Christ" or not. "Without Christ...having no hope...without God in the world" - can it get any worse than that? In such a state one is doomed to eternal damnation in the fires of hell. That's exactly where the Ephesians were prior to their conversion. On the other hand, when one obeys the gospel, is "baptized into Christ" (Gal. 3:27), and remains faithful to the Lord (Rev. 2:10) - can it get any better than that? In such a state one looks forward to eternal bliss in the joys of heaven. Thankfully, the Ephesians got there.

Which scenario will it be for us, the worst case or the best? It all hinges on what we do with Jesus. In Christ, or without Christ? The choice is yours. Please choose wisely!

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## ***Dealing With The Unrepentant***

Are you discouraged because you can't get someone to change? Maybe you've worked long and hard to teach someone what they should do to be saved, but they simply won't accept it. It's clear to you and to them that there are things amiss in their life, but they just won't commit to do what is right. Or, it might be some erring brother in the church. You have struggled to convince him that he has sinned and needs to repent, but he steadfastly refuses to admit his sin and turn back to God. Surely, these are discouraging situations.

When we face these difficult scenarios, it should help us to remember that others before us have faced the same woes. In fact, when we 'hit a wall' while trying to convert the lost or restore the erring, we are joining the good company of God's faithful servants through the ages. Their words certainly strike a familiar chord:

*"The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts"* (Psalms 10:4).

*"... they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return"* (Jeremiah 5:3).

*"Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent ..."* (Zechariah 7:12).

*"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye"* (Acts 7:51).

*"But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God"* (Romans 2:5).

So, you see, your frustrations at being unable to change the ways of unrepentant folks is not new. Others have endured the same things. The key thing is for us to stay committed to our task of faithfully serving God. ". . . be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).  
Think!

- by Greg Gwin