

Finding Your True Motivation

Happy Sabbath to all.

Our study today is entitled “Finding Your True Motivation,” and it is, though a concept that should be very easy to understand, one of the most vital topics with regard to sanctification and the Christian life.

In October of 2005, I presented a study that examined a structured list of “motivations,” those ideas and factors that cause an individual to act. Although that was quite some time ago, perhaps some here will remember this list, being given as: Addictions, Impulses, Desires, Needs, Conscience, Revelations and Principles.

During the course of that study, we saw that for the born-again believer, all Addictions and most Impulses were considered invalid motives for speaking and acting. These are things that are based mostly, if not entirely, upon a foundation of the flesh, and are at odds with the Biblical instructions to “examine” ourselves, and to take our thoughts captive to the character of Christ. Desires were something of a “gray area,” depending upon what it IS that is desired, but the word is a very general one, which may indicate desire for a good thing as easily as a bad one.

Needs, of course, are the motivations to obtain those things that we require, such as food, air, water and safety. Anything that motivates us beyond this becomes, at least potentially, a sacrifice. Conscience will sometimes compel us to ignore our needs, and this is the reason why righteous individuals have endured imprisonment and even death in order to be true to their beliefs. They have followed their convictions, even though it has cost them some requirement for their life, their freedom, or the fulfillment of their intended plans.

Revelation, as we see in the Scriptures, when Yah speaks to us directly, can also cause us to act beyond our needs. The prophets and the martyrs have shown the powerful testimony that comes from denying the “self” in order to fulfill the revealed will of our Father. Often, souls take note, and souls are saved, when Yah’s people act upon the things He has revealed to them.

Perhaps most importantly, we have Principles. Even when conscience is not giving a clear direction, even when there is not direct word from the Almighty, we have principles. These are the aspects of our Father’s personality as expressed in guidelines, in “rules of thumb,” and in spiritual instruction. Those who are true as steel to principles, when those principles are inspired by Heaven, are they whom Satan cannot touch, no matter how powerfully or how subtly he may approach.

In yet another study, we looked at motivating factors from yet another perspective. We saw that, for those in the world, much of their motivation comes from fear of punishment. Even religion is treated this way, with “everlasting hell” being held before them as the price of failure to attain holiness in this life. Some are motivated by fear of rebuke or correction, either by Yah Himself, or by His various representatives. If you think about it, this is really a kind of idolatry, and thus a violation of the second commandment. This is something I actually want to go into in a little more detail next week. It should be clear, then, that one may be “in a Church” and yet “in the world” with regard to motive. This is clearly not what motivated Christ, and therefore will not be what motivates His genuine followers either.

A little better than fear is obligation. Some people act from a sense of “owing” others certain things. Again, when applied to religion we have those who are grateful to Christianity for saving them “from” something, whether it is addiction, guilt, or a life of misfortune. It can certainly do that, and obligation is not bad, by any means, but those who are motivated by nothing higher than this will not perfect Christian character. And why not? Because again, “obligation” is not what motivated Yahshua.

A little better than obligation is duty. Those who follow duty are trying to “do the right thing” with their lives. This is certainly not bad... duty is an integral part of the Christian experience, for it teaches us to follow the will and instruction of Yah despite our personal feelings which, at times, can conflict with the narrow way. But those who are motivated merely by duty can be deceived, and thus taken off the path. If they do not “know” the Father and Son intimately, thinking of Them as judges and overseers rather than Heads of the spiritual Family, then Satan can turn them away from the truth.

Better than obligation is trust. We believe that our Father has our best interest at heart, and we believe that even the more unusual commands will ultimately lead to a blessing, and therefore we obey. There is joy in this kind of obedience, just as there is joy in a child taking a walk with a parent, being held and led by the hand. As it is written, “Nevertheless I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.” (Psa 73:23, 24)

Best of all, of course, is agreement. This corresponds with “principles” from our first list. If we understand the principles, and are motivated by a knowledge of the character of the Father and Son, then (as we are of the right Spirit) we are not merely walking “behind” the Father, but we are walking “with” the Father in a much more harmonious way. There is mutual love, mutual respect, and like Abraham, Moses, and Enoch, we are suited to be called Yahweh’s “friends.” (Exo 33:11, John 15:15)

So, all this is by way of review, and to remind us that we have looked at this topic before, and from several different angles. We have asked, “What is it that motivates the Christian?” We have asked individually, therefore, “What is it that motivates me?”

Those who survive this dark and wicked generation, to be received by Yahshua in glory, will all be heroes of faith. There is a list of various ones in the Book of Hebrews, and all who will stand before Yahshua in peace, having never tasted death, and having no stain of sin upon them, they will be worthy to be listed among them.

Now for many people, and even for whole religions, this kind of speaking is like unto blasphemy. “How can you compare yourself,” they say, “to these great figures of faith?” But even though the apostles are now held up as examples of faith, even venerated among some groups, they faced the same kinds of questions in their day. They were asked, “Who are you to compare yourselves to those recorded in the Scriptures (i.e., the Old Testament)?” But they gave answer this way, when discussing the effectiveness of prayer, “Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.” (James 5:17, 18)

If any doubted that the apostles’ prayers could be effective, or even the members of the churches that they raised up, let them not think that the figures of the Old Testament who prayed for rain, for fire, for deliverance, for miracles of all kinds, were any special creatures. No, they were men and women with

“like passions,” with similar desires and thoughts... but when they prayed, because their faith was pleasing to the Almighty, they saw the fulfillment of those things they asked for.

Now, we know that Yah has not changed. He and His Son are the same yesterday, today and forever. We know that faith is an everlasting principle, and so that has not changed. If we are not seeing miracles today, then the only thing that COULD have changed is the nature of those who are praying. Satan has done a great work in the world to reduce faith so that, as it was said of Yahshua traveling in His own homeland, “And He could there do no mighty work” (Mark 6:5) because of their unbelief.

Today, Yah’s people are praying for many things. We are praying for husbands, for wives, for children. We are praying for the ministry in different parts of the world, and for the resources and workers to accomplish those things we have been inspired to accomplish. Today we are praying for many miracles, for the healing of many wounded souls, and therefore we have a choice: are we going to be like those who pray, not expecting anything but the fulfillment of duty... or are we going to pray like Enoch and Elijah, like the apostles who are now compared to them (but were “ordinary men” in their own day)? We have that choice to make.

We are the “ordinary men” and “ordinary women” of this generation, and few even know who we are. Of those few, fewer still believe the Gospel that our Father has given us to bear. But because our faith is pleasing to our Father in Heaven, when we pray for rain, it rains. We must be bold in understanding this, bold in declaring this, and bold in seeing it fulfilled.

Again, this works because our faith is of that quality that pleases our Father in Heaven. What quality is that? It is faith born of the highest and purest form of motivation: an understanding and acceptance of principle that goes beyond mere trust (although sometimes we ARE called to step out in faith before our understanding catches up) and into agreement. It is a faith based on love for our Father in Heaven above all else, and our fellow man as a close second. It is a faith that is based on these pure motives, which are worth our time to examine, to study, and to really take in on a heart-level.

Why is it that we do what we do? Let none of us be obedient, or apparently so, because of a fear of punishment. We ought not to “behave” as children do, because our parents will punish us. The “wrath of Yah” may be necessary to get the attention of those with the most worldly of minds, as it is written, “others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 1:22, 23) However, this cannot keep anyone faithful beyond that initial pull. As I have mentioned several times, I became a mainstream Seventh-day Adventist was because some well-meaning friends explained the Book of Revelation to me through Adventist eyes, and I believed them. I still accept much of their interpretation of those prophecies as being true; however merely desiring to avoid the plagues on earth and the lake of fire to come did not hold my heart for very long. We are seeking to win the hearts of those in the world, not merely their dedication.

Similarly, let none of us be obedient merely for duty’s sake. Duty can be a guide to us when the way ahead seems dark, but it cannot keep us consistently acting out of love. The mind, body and even spirit can grow weary of duty, and like the apostles who were trying to keep watch with Yahshua during His night in Gethsemane, they may fall asleep.

But if we are to find our true motivation, we must decide (for motivation is a choice) that it will be based upon trust and agreement. It must be in an intelligent knowledge of our Father, trusting in the righteousness of His course when we do not fully understand, and being joyful in our unity with Him when we do.

Now, if we wish to come up to the standard of the righteousness of Christ Yahshua, some are in need of “catching up.” What do I mean by that?

I have used the example of the apostles as figures of Christian faith, and they in turn have looked to the Old Testament saints as examples. But what was the nature of their faith? What was the quality of the faith of these heroes? There are many, many passages I could quote to demonstrate the point I wish to make, but I think that one of the simplest, and the most powerful, can be found here:

“And Yahshua, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And He saith unto them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ And they straightway left their nets, and followed Him.” (Math 4:18-20)

This, to me, is one of the most powerful, and relevant, passages for us at this moment in history, and in the course of our ministry. And the two verses that follow it confirm that it was not merely an isolated incident:

“And going on from thence, He saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him.” (Mat 4:21, 22)

Here we have the same situation, and the same reaction. In fact, it might be said that this one was even more clear an example of the principles involved here, for they not only left their ship, but also “their father.”

We know, from other Gospels, from other inspired writings, that this incident was not the first encounter these men had with Yahshua. He did not possess them, or cast a spell over them that compelled their obedience. They had heard Him speaking before, when they had gone out to see John the Baptist, and they had heard the prophet’s words, declaring Yahshua to be the Messiah. They knew these things already, and so when Yahshua came to them, and called them, they had seen and heard Him before. And so because of what they knew of Him, and because they heard His voice calling them, they immediately responded.

This is the quality of the faith that made these men suitable to become judges of spiritual Israel, and their names forever recorded as being willing followers of the Savior. The Bible, being a true record, also notes their faults, their disputes, their struggles to understand the principles of righteousness... but they did not depart from Yahshua, and He did not depart from them. This is what made them endure to the end, not their perfect understanding from the first day we hear of them, but their perfect willingness to trust in the One who had called to them.

Now, to many who read these words, this is a “story” to inspire faith. It is something that happened long ago, and far away...

But for those four men, this was a real experience, and this was a real day. They had plans, as do we. They had desires, ambitions as do all of us. And yet, when the voice of Yahshua came to them, they lay down their earthly labors, and took up their spiritual ones. They had found their true motivation.

There are things here for us to learn, about trust, and agreement, and motivation, considering this record as a true and accurate account of this event in these four men's lives. But today, while the Church prays for many things, there are some who may be hearing the voice of the Messiah saying, "Follow me." There are some who are hearing the voice of the Messiah saying, "Come with me, for we have a work to do." There are responsibilities to fulfill, and deeper levels of understanding to reach. There are greater expressions of love for us to give, both out to the world, and within our own family circles.

If we wish to be as the apostles were, and as the saints of the Old Testament were, then we must make the decision – it is not some faraway goal, it is JUST a decision – to receive the Faith of Yahshua as they did, and to merely let the things that we know to be just, and true, and right, to be our guiding principles.

As Moses said of the commandments to the Israelites, and brethren, I prepared these notes with tears in my eyes – tears of both sorrow and joy, if you can understand it – it is written:

"And Yahweh thy Almighty will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good. For Yahweh will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of Yahweh thy Almighty, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the Law, and if thou turn unto Yahweh thy Almighty with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

"For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in Heaven, that thou shouldest say, 'Who shall go up for us to Heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?'

"Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, 'Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?'

"But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." (Deu 30:9-14)

What a gracious Father we have! What a loving Father we have! He has made it easy to do the right thing. He has made it natural for us to do righteousness... this is among the greatest of blessings. If any struggle to fulfill duty, to serve obediently, then they need not struggle any longer. All they must do is examine their motivation, and they will see the problem. All they must do is ask themselves, "What is it I truly want here?" If the answer is, "To serve Yahweh, and be faithful unto Him," if we CHOOSE to make that our answer, then all the difficulties will fall away. And we will say to whatsoever mountain stands in our path, "Be thou removed," and it will be rooted up and cast into the sea.

The way of truth and righteousness is not difficult; it is not far from us. For those struggling with the fiercest of temptations, the most devious and deceptive of Satan's suggestions of doubt, the solution is but a decision away... but we must be self-aware. We must be willing to see ourselves as we truly are, and as Yah sees us. We must be willing to admit where there is the need for heart-work, to set aside the fear,

and the mere obligation, and to obey truly, from the heart, agreeing that what Yah has planned for us is best.

I am joyful this Sabbath that our Father has made the way so clear before His people. But I am sorrowful also, that so few have chosen to take this straight and sure path to peace and to holiness. I am sorrowful that some who have started on that path have been distracted, as the seeds that fell upon the hard or shallow soil. But our Father can be charged with no wrong, with no failure, because some have decided not to say, “I have chosen to follow Yahweh, I have chosen to follow Yahshua.”

We need to have the Faith of Yahshua, and we needed to have it from the very beginning, as those four men who became apostles did. If any have hesitated when they heard that call, or if any hesitate still, then (as I have said) they have some catching up to do... some time to redeem. It may be that, because time is shorter, the trials may be more fierce, or more numerous. But the end product will be the same – a life refined to purest gold, and this is to be our focus. And let none fear the trials, no matter how many or how powerful they may seem. Where there are trials, there is grace. Where there are trials in exceeding number or heaviness, there is grace in greater and even more exceeding majesty. We must submit to the path of our own sanctification, for it is ours alone from our Father, and see the miracles unfold.

This invitation is open before us. We are called to find our motivation, our true motivation. We are called to make a choice, to make a commitment to do what Yah’s people have been called to do from the very beginning. As I quoted, we are called to “hearken unto the voice of Yahweh thy Almighty, [and] keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the Law.”

Now, we know that for us the commandments, and the Law, are far beyond (but not against) that which is merely written down. We have the living voice of prophecy among the Bride of Yahshua, and a great trust has been committed to Her care. We have the work laid out before us, sometimes clearly, and sometimes a little obscured in order to develop our trust, but before us all the same. Yahshua says, “Here is the work, the blessed work; come and follow me.”

May it be to all our mutual joy, our mutual rejoicing, both in Heaven and on earth, that those who are so called should leave their addictions, their impulses, their desires, perhaps even some of their needs – to leave them as Peter, Andrew, James and John, did, to learn how to do the work of love upon the earth.

Are there any questions or comments before we close?