

What Moves You? I Chronicles 28:9-10

INTRODUCTION:

Times of transition can be difficult. Just ask Jay Leno and Conan O'Brien!

Every time a new president is elected, our nation goes through a time of transition. Sometimes that transition is fairly smooth and sometimes it is not. What is remarkable is that we can have spirited debates, hotly contested elections, mud-slinging, name-calling and character attacks yet once the ballots have been counted and a final decision has been announced, we transition smoothly from one administration to the next without riots, *coup d'état* or anarchy. We may not fully appreciate the blessing of a smooth transition of power.

About 1000 years before the birth of Jesus, the nation of Israel was preparing for a transition. King David had ruled over Israel for forty years but he was advanced in age and knew he was dying. He wanted a smooth transition of administration from his regime to that of his son, Solomon. So David gave Solomon some advice about how to be a good and effective monarch.

Many of David's instructions related to the temple to LORD that he had wanted to build but that Solomon would actually construct.

Not all of David's counsel related to building projects, though. Some of his words of wisdom were about developing a good relationship with the LORD. In I Chronicles 28:9-10, you can read this teaching that David gave to his son:

⁹ *“And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever.*

Did you get that? David told Solomon that “the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts.” We may deceive others as to our true motivation. We may lie to ourselves about our real purpose and intent. In fact, as Eric Hoffer has written, “We lie the loudest when we lie to ourselves.” But we cannot fool God about our motivation. God knows our hearts and discerns out motives.

This is not the first time David had written about motivation. While still a younger man and a prolific poet, David wrote in Psalm 139 that the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive. In that psalm, David wrote:

¹ *O LORD, you have searched me
and you know me.*
² *You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.*
³ *You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.*
⁴ *Before a word is on my tongue
you know it completely, O LORD.*

The LORD searches every heart and understands every motive. But have you searched your heart and do you understand your motives? For instance, why do you serve the Lord? Would you still serve him if you got nothing out of it?

And if you want to be spiritually fit, why? I want to take some time to look at a few different motives that move people in the direction of spiritual fitness. See if any of these fit you.

I. **FAITH**

Some people serve the LORD because they have faith that there will be some sort of reward for their efforts. They have heard about heaven and they surely want to go there so they want to be spiritually fit enough to secure a place in paradise.

Perhaps you heard about the evangelist who was preaching and he asked how many people wanted to go to heaven. Most of the members of the congregation raised their hands and indicated that they wanted to go to heaven. But not everyone raised his hand. So the preacher waxed a little longer about the splendor of heaven and the horror of hell and then he posed the question again: "How many of you want to go to heaven?" By now almost everyone had raised his hand. But the speaker still wasn't satisfied because there were a few hands that had not yet been raised so he revisited the fineries of paradise and the fieriness of hell and then asked one more time, "Now how many of you want to go to heaven?" By now there was only one little boy who was a holdout and he sat there with his arms crossed and a resolute look on his face. So the preacher leaned across the pulpit and pointed his finger at the young fellow and asked, "Do you mean you don't want to go to heaven when you die?" And the little guy brightened and said, "When I die? Sure. But I thought you were getting up a trip this morning."

The promise of heaven is an incentive that motivates some to want to be spiritually fit. But may I tell you something important? You do not secure your place in heaven by being spiritually fit. If you could, that would imply that you could earn your salvation and you cannot. Spiritual fitness does not guarantee a place for you in heaven. Jesus guaranteed a place for

you in heaven when he died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sin and that place becomes yours when you accept him as your savior. When you accept Jesus as your redeemer, you are admitting that you cannot be fit enough to save yourself: you need a savior.

For some people, the reward that motivates them to spiritual fitness is that they want to leave a lasting legacy of good works. When they have passed from this life and their bodies lie in state, they want the preacher to be able to say lots of good things about them so that the mourners will mourn and not rejoice in their passing. Ideally, many years after they have gone, they want people to still miss them because of all the great things they did while on this earth.

But good deeds and a lasting legacy are not proof of spiritual fitness. There are people who have never ever acknowledged Jesus as Lord but who have done many good and benevolent things. Atheists can be fine, upstanding, civic-minded members of a community. But that does not make them spiritually fit.

II. **FEAR**

While some people serve the LORD because they have faith that it will be rewarded in some way, others serve the Lord as a kind of spiritual fire insurance: they want to avoid hell. They have heard preachers wax long and eloquent about the torments of Hades. They have heard evangelists intone about the fearful prospect of the everlasting night of separation from the presence of God. They have heard sermons, lessons and lectures about eternal punishment and the unending agony of hell and they have resolved that they do not want to go there. So they are motivated to become spiritually fit so that they can avoid the place of never ending anguish.

Now I want to avoid the punishment of hell as much as anybody else does. I have a low pain tolerance so I don't want eternal torture. And I am not a very patient person so that "ceaseless", "everlasting", "unending" stuff doesn't sit well with me. But if it were possible to earn your way out of hell by virtue of your spiritual fitness, that would be woefully similar to earning your reward. And besides, the Bible says that the wages of sin is death and I have sinned. More than once. More than twice. More than a few times. I am a sinner. So I know I deserve to be sentenced to hell...until it freezes over, which it won't.

So spiritual fitness as fire insurance is not a very good motivation.

Neither is the desire to be spiritually fit so I can avoid criticism from other people. I suspect that some people think that if they get their act together,

everybody will like them, no one will gossip about them and they will lead a more pleasant, placid and peaceful life.

But think of this: who is the most spiritually fit, spiritually mature person who ever walked the face of the earth? It was Jesus. In Matthew 11, Jesus told some disciples of John the Baptist:

¹⁸ *For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.'* ¹⁹ *The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners."*

Clearly, Jesus' holiness did not exempt him from criticism. Quite to the contrary, Jesus was persecuted because of his spirituality. You will not evade criticism because you follow Jesus. In fact, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned that being his disciple will subject you to harassment. He said:

¹¹ *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me."* ¹² *Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Spiritual fitness is no guarantee that you will not be misunderstood, maligned and mistreated. In fact, it is a pretty sure sign that you will be criticized. So fear of criticism is not a very good motive for spiritual fitness

By now you ought to be asking, "Then what is a good motive for becoming spiritually fit. At the risk of understatement, may I say it is "fondness".

III. **FONDNESS**

Are you fond of Jesus? Please don't misunderstand me. I'm sure you love Jesus; but do you like him?

Love is a decision and not just an emotion. We can decide to love our neighbor and the Bible commands that we do. We can decide to love our enemies and the Bible says we must. We can decide to love Jesus and I'm sure you do.

Given that Jesus is God's only son, of course we love him. Because he died to save us from the penalty and the effect of our sin, we are grateful and so naturally we love him. Knowing that one day he will judge the living and the dead and that our destiny is his decision, of course we choose to love him. We would be foolish not to.

That love is a decision and I trust that you have decided to love Jesus. But the decision to love Jesus will not change you. What changes you is when you not only love Jesus but you also *like* him. What changes you is

when Jesus is not only your savior but he is also your friend. What changes you is when you find delight and pleasure and joy in Jesus.

Grudging servitude and reluctant obedience may be better than indifference and disobedience but it will not move you. You will be moved to pursue spiritual maturity when you are actually fond of Jesus. When you are fond of Jesus, you will enjoy seasons of prayer. You will eagerly anticipate time spent reading the Bible. You will meditate on him and on his Word, not as an obligation but as an opportunity, not as a duty but as a privilege.

So let me ask you that very important question: are you fond of Jesus? Is he dear to you? When you think about it, are you fond of him for what he has done for you? Are you so fond of him that you want to be like him?

When I am so enchanted in Jesus that I want to love like he loved, that fondness for him will change my life. When I am so thrilled with Jesus that I want to live like he lived, that fondness for him will change my life. When I am so delighted with Jesus that I want him to be delighted with me, that fondness for him will make me hunger and thirst for his righteousness. When I am so thrilled with Jesus that I hang on his every word, that fondness for him will cause me to feed on his word.

Yes, I'm sure you love Jesus. But are you fond of him, too? That, my friends, is a motivation for spiritual fitness.

CONCLUSION:

Earlier this morning, I made reference to Psalm 139 and I read the first few verses to you. That is the psalm in which David said that God has searched us and knows us both in regard to our actions and in regard to our motives.

That same psalm concludes with these lines:

²³ *Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.*

²⁴ *See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.*

J. Edwin Orr picked up these words, set them to a melody from the Maori people of Australia and left them for us as a musical prayer. Here is a challenge: knowing that the LORD knows our hearts and discerns our motives, will you honestly pray this prayer and mean its words?

*Search me, O God, and know my heart today;
Try me, O Savior, know my thoughts, I pray:
See if there be some wicked way in me:
Cleanse me from ev'ry sin, and set me free.*

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Now try praying this one:

*Lord, take my life, and make it wholly Thine;
Fill my poor heart with Thy great love divine;
Take all my will, my passion, self and pride;
I now surrender: Lord in me abide.*

Let's pray that prayer together...in concert...as we stand and as we sing.

INVITATION: #657 – “*Cleanse Me*”