

Doctrine of Motives for Ministry

Psalm 31:23

“O love the Lord, all ye his saints: for the Lord preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer”.

While attending the Sovereign Grace Baptist Association (SGBA) conference in 2003, I was intrigued by an analogy the main speaker used to set forth his view that the grace of God as revealed in the New Testament is superior to the Law of God in the Old. *“If you wanted your wife to love you more,”* he suggested, *“you would not take her to the Law to remind her each day before you go to work not to commit adultery.”* That would not be a proper motive. In fact, it might be counter productive. But you might want to love her as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25).

My immediate concern with this line of reasoning is that it places the ethical standards of the New Testament on a higher plane than that of the Old, which I am not sure is the case. What might be here is a Straw Man argument, that is an argument without real substance designed to silence any questions.

Rather than be scared off, the mind is stimulated to inquire what is the proper motive for serving God.

Those who come from a legalist background might argue that the only real motive they have known for serving God is fear. These people were placed under a list of rules and regulation and, naturally enough, they were resisted the excessive rules and regulations, and rightly so.

But rather than develop a new theology let us stay close to the Scriptures in both Testaments and consider some biblical motives for serving God.

1. God is to be served on the basis of respect. God is the Creator. He is the Supreme Ruler of the Universe. The Creature has an intrinsic moral obligation to submit to the Sovereign.
 - *Job 38:1 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, 2 Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? 3 Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. 4 Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding. 5 Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? Or who hath stretched the line upon it? 6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner stone thereof; 7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?*
 - *Ephesians 3:9 ...God, who created all things by Jesus Christ*
2. God is to be served on the basis of revelation. The Word of God is authoritative and it is binding. The God who is there is not silent. He has made known His will.

- *Genesis 17:1ff And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.*
 - *James 1::21 1:21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.*
3. God is to be served on the basis of moral restraint. Sin has polluted the stream of society and every individual heart. There is a national corruption, which Franklin Graham confessed at the 2000 Republican National Convention (RNC), and there is a natural corruption whereby every imagination of the heart is only evil continually. The Laws of God remind us that restraint is needed.
- *Exodus 20:1ff Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*
 - *Colossians 3:8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. 9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; 10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:*
4. God is to be served on the basis of fear. If fear were the only motive for serving God then He would soon be hated. But it is not wrong to fear God. In fact, it is the beginning of wisdom. (see Doctrine of Fear)
- *Job 28:28 And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.*
 - *1 Peter 2:17 Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.*
5. God is to be served on the basis of love. Time and again the voice of God cries out to man saying, “*I love you, love me.*” It is a Divine plea in part; it is a positive command that is immolated by good parents who raise their children.
- *Jeremiah 31:3 The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.*
 - *1 Corinthians 8:3 But if an man love God the same is known of him.*
6. God is to be served on the basis of gratitude. The soul that has been rescued from temporal shame and eternal death should be naturally grateful.
- *Psalms 54:6 I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O LORD; for it is good*
 - *Hebrews 13:15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.*

7. God is to be served on the basis of a renewed will. When a person is converted there is a new heart which wants to do what is right. The commandments of Christ are not grievous, in the same manner that the Law of the Lord was delightful to those who had a good heart.
- *Psalm 119:125 I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies. 126 It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law. 127 Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. 128 Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way. 129 Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them. 130 The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.*
 - *Matthew 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*
8. God is to be served on the basis of compassion for others who were once in despair and darkness.
- *Isaiah 63:7 I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses. 8 For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Savior. 9 In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.*
 - *Jude 1:22 And of some have compassion, making a difference:*
9. God is to be served because it is in one's best interest. Jesus asked what it would gain a man if he possessed the whole world and yet lost His soul. Spiritual treasure must be laid up in heaven, not on the earth.
- *Deuteronomy 7:11 Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them. 12 Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he swear unto thy fathers: 13 And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he swear unto thy fathers to give thee. 14 Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. 15 And the LORD will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee. 16 And thou shalt consume all the people which the LORD thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them: neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that will be a snare unto thee.*

- *2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

10. God is to be served because a life of obedience is better than a life of disobedience. There is less pain and more joy in pleasing the Father than in displeasing Him.

- *Leviticus 26:18 And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.*
- *Revelation 22:12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. 13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. 14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*

Conclusion

From the Old and New Testaments come identical motives for pursuing holiness without which no man will see God. May the Lord be pleased to sanctify our motives and draw us closer to Himself.