

Motives Galatians 6:11-18

Almost every sermon series that we teach at Venture seems to have a focus on right motives in the acts of obeying God. This is not coincidence. The theme of right motives for Christian living is actually a major tenet of what it means to be a Christian. Think about some of the things that Jesus said to people who were seeking to obey his law in just the opening on the Sermon on the Mount.

“unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees you will ever enter the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:20

“everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment (similar to murder).....if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there at the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” Matthew 5:21-24

“everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Matthew 5:27

“if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.” Matthew 5:40

“But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your father who sees in secret will reward you.” Matthew 6:34

The point of these teachings is that God is concerned first and foremost about our hearts. This is the location of motives and the place from whence all God-honoring actions come.

As the Apostle Paul finishes his concluding thoughts in the book of Galatians, motives are front and center to how the doctrine of salvation by grace finds its way into ethics of how Christians are to live their daily lives.

Galatians 6:11-18

¹¹ See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand. ¹² It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. ¹³ For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. ¹⁴ But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵ For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. ¹⁶ And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

¹⁷ From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus

¹⁸The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

Discussion Questions

- How were Paul's motives different from the motives of the outwardly religious?
- Do you believe this axiom is true? "You can only lead others to a place where you yourself have been."
- What was the motive of false teachers in the first century? What is their motive today?
- How was Paul willing to lead by example in a way that the religious false teachers were not?
- Why was Paul motivated to suffer on behalf of the church? What were his motives?
- What does Paul mean by "boasting in the cross?"
- How can we have confidence in Christ without pride in our flesh?
- What have been the biggest lessons you have applied to your own life in Galatians?
- How do your motives measure up against the things you try to do outwardly in your Christian life?