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CHRIST-CENTERED MOTIVATIONS

By
Olan Stubbs

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
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FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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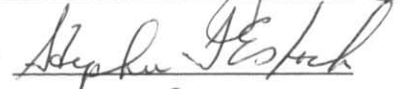
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to understand the challenges of preaching Christ-centered sermons while using all of the motives for Christian obedience that the Bible uses. The Bible uses many different motivations to move Christians towards obedience, such as the promise of rewards and the threat of consequences. Some of these motives do not seem “Christ-centered” to some at first glance and thus are often neglected by so called “Christ-centered” preachers.

This study utilized a qualitative design using semi-structured interviews with five pastors in the Reformed Church in America. The review of literature and analysis of the five interviews focused on three key areas of motivations in preaching. These three areas of focus were: legitimate motives, motives preachers actually use, and how various motives relate to one another.

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Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION.

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Chapter One

Introduction to the Study

Known as the prince of preachers, Charles Spurgeon writes, “Of all I would wish to say this is the sum; my brethren, preach Christ, always and evermore.”¹ But how can preachers center every sermon on Christ and still be faithful to all scriptures, especially when preaching about the motivation for Christian obedience? The Bible presents Christ’s work on behalf of his people as the main reason for obedience: obedience should arise from a grateful, loving heart in response to the love God has shown. Yet, God also motivates his people by many other means, such as threats, as in Exodus 22:3-4, and promises of blessing, as in Psalm 1. How can preachers use such biblical models to motivate their listeners to obedience, while retaining Christ as the central motivation?

Many preachers are committed to keeping Christ as the center of all sermons. Yet, in working hard to place Christ at the center of their sermons, preachers are often tempted to leave out much of what the text says, especially about motivations for obedience. Spurgeon helps frame the problem: “Certain important doctrines of the gospel can be so proclaimed in excess as to throw the rest of truth into the shade, and the preaching is no longer the gospel in its natural beauty, but a caricature of the truth.”²

An article in the *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* by Jason Hood says, “the volume and forcefulness of ‘Christ-centered’ admonitions may lead seminarians,

¹ Charles H. Spurgeon, *Lectures To My Students* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), 79.

² *Ibid.*, 189.

pastors and laity away from deep reflection on the moral use of Scripture.”³ Hood continues,

...the charge of reductionism must be taken seriously and appropriate adjustments to the preferred model of interpretation made...wise biblical interpreters should carefully attend to scripture’s own self-interpretation, lest a slogan like ‘Christ-centered’ lead to a one-dimensional approach to a text which ... interprets itself in variegated fashion.⁴

Because the Bible does not contradict itself, preachers must find a way to preach faithfully through difficult passages, which seem to emphasis obedience more than the grace of Christ. This research seeks to discover the ways in which Christ-centered preachers motivate their hearers from the scripture. Part of the good news is that “the moral use [of a passage] is frequently *enhanced* when Christological interpretation is present.”⁵

Romans 10:14 proclaims: “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?”⁶ God in his infinite wisdom has chosen to set the task of preaching at the center of his plan to redeem his people. In 1 Corinthians 1:17-18, Paul says, “Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel...For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”⁷ Paul proclaims preaching as central to both justification and

³ Jason Hood, “Christ-Centered Interpretation Only? Moral Instruction from Scripture’s Self Interpretation as Caveat and Guide,” *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* (January 1, 2009): 58.

⁴ Ibid., 59.

⁵ Ibid., 65.

⁶ Romans 10:14. All Scripture quotations are taken from *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983).

⁷ 1 Corinthians 1:17-18.

sanctification. But he also goes a step further by defining gospel preaching as “the word of the cross.” Cementing his commitment to preach Christ’s redeeming work, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:2 that he “determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”⁸ In the rest of 1 Corinthians, Paul considers many topics, including arguments, lawsuits, communion, sex, marriage, gender, and charismatic gifts. But Paul can honestly say that all of this teaching is really only an amplification of preaching “Christ and him crucified.” Paul sees Christ as the proper foundation, empowerment, and motivation to produce holy living in all of these different areas. Christian preaching on any topic should be rooted in and centered on the gospel of Christ.

Christ-centered preaching can be defined as preaching, in and through all topics, about Christ and his cross, for God has made this gospel-preaching central to all redemption. Bryan Chapell, president of Covenant Theological Seminary and author of *Christ-Centered Preaching*, gives this definition: “Christ-centered preaching is not merely evangelistic, nor confined to a few gospel accounts. It perceives the whole of - scripture as revelatory of God’s redemptive plan and preaches every passage within this context, a pattern Jesus himself introduced to us.”⁹ Another author further clarifies Christ-centered sermons:

A gospel-centered sermon is centered in the Christ of faith...What benefit of Christ is to be given to the hearers by the sermon? Why is Christ necessary in this sermon? When these questions and the question of Christ’s role in the sermon are answered in correlation with one another, the whole sermon is unified in Christ. The answers determine whether or not the heart of the sermon is the gospel of God in Christ.¹⁰

⁸ 1 Corinthians 2:2.

⁹ Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 30.

¹⁰ Andrew M. Weyermann, “Christ-Centered Preaching,” *Theology and Mission* 28:6 (December, 2001): 594.

These practical questions can help a sermon stay centered on Christ. Jesus says in Luke 24:27 that all of the Old Testament is ultimately about himself as Savior. Christ is the theme and the summation of all scripture. In truth, the Old Testament is the New Testament in seed form. Christ and his sacrifice is the primary theme of all scripture and should thus permeate all Christian sermons. Motivation is an important part of a sermon. If a sermon should be centered on Christ, so should the motivations presented within the sermon.

Problem and Purpose Statement

Motivational preaching is a challenging art. How do preachers motivate others to change their behaviors, thoughts and affections via a sermon? Many pastors preach that Christ's love should be the primary motivation for all obedience. However, these preachers may emphasize Christ's love while neglecting other biblical motivations. The problem is not that preachers might emphasize love for Christ too much as a motivation to obey, but problems arise when preachers emphasize Christ to the exclusion of other biblical motivations. When preachers do this, they redefine the idea of being Christ-centered in a personal, unbiblical way. They imply that to be Christ-centered, they must only ever use Christ as a motivation, whereas the Bible never puts that limitation on Christ-centered preaching. Instead, all the biblical motivations for obedience, including Christ's love, work in harmony together. Nonetheless, communicating their continuity through a sermon remains a difficult task. How does a preacher stay centered on Christ in sermons while presenting all the biblical motivations in the text with proper emphasis?

Preachers should want to preach Christ-centered sermons that reflect the way God and the Bible are Christ-centered, not sermons that reflect the pastors' own feelings. One

author has said that anytime preachers retell someone else's story, they in a sense become co-authors. It is impossible for pastors not to add their own biases, ideas and emphases to the retelling.¹¹ If this is true, it is easy for pastors to let their own bias for or against certain motivations slip into their preaching and distort the proper, biblical emphasis. A thorough study of how the Bible centers on Christ while presenting different motivations, along with a study of how faithful preachers motivate their congregations, will help alleviate this problem.

If the purpose of Christ-centered preaching is to teach the whole Bible, then leaving out motivations for obedience that the Bible clearly includes strikes against the heart of Christ-centered preaching. Pastors should heed the advice of researchers Wayne Booth, Gregory Colomb and Joseph Williams, who exhort: "As paradoxical as it seems, you make your argument stronger and more credible by modestly acknowledging its limits. You gain your readers' trust...[b]ut you can lose that trust if you then make claims that over-reach their support. Limit your claims to what your argument can actually support by qualifying their scope and certainty."¹² Some preachers may be so eager to emphasize Christ as the central theme and central motivation of all scripture that they make him the only theme and the only motivation. Scripture is more nuanced than that.

The author wholeheartedly affirms the preeminence of Christ and the value of Christ-centered preaching. This paper aims to explore and research how pastors strengthen their Christian preaching by faithfully expounding all motivations extant

¹¹ E. G. Mishler, "Models of Narrative Analysis: A Typology," *Journal of Narrative and Life History* 5:2 (1995): 117-118.

¹² Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 127.

within a given text. No biblical motivation should be neglected for the sake of Christ-centered preaching. Faithfulness to the text demands faithfulness to all the motivations scripture provides. Done correctly, preaching all the biblical motivations will enhance Christ-centered preaching and prevent many of the other mistakes Christ-centered preachers are prone to make. The purpose of this study is to explore how in their weekly sermons Christ-centered preachers maintain a proper emphasis on multiple biblical motivations.

Research Questions

Three main questions will guide the research.

1. What motivations does the Bible use in its teaching, and how are they related?
2. What different biblical motivations do Christ-centered preachers utilize in their sermons?
3. How do Christ-centered preachers relate the various motivations to the motivation of love for God and Christ?

Significance of the Study

Especially following the release of Bryan Chapell's *Christ-Centered Preaching*, many preachers committed themselves to Christ-centered preaching as the most faithful way to teach the scriptures. While evangelicals often affirm that all Christian sermons should center on Christ, others are not convinced.¹³ Further, preachers who advocate Christ-centered preaching still stumble into common expository pitfalls and mistakes. More research on faithful Christ-centered preaching is necessary for training preachers to avoid these errors.

¹³ Jason Hood, "Christ-Centered Interpretation Only? Moral Instruction from Scripture's Self Interpretation as Caveat and Guide," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* (January 1, 2009).

Though a large number of preachers follow the guidelines of Christ-centered preaching, they often make exegetical mistakes in their preaching. Most of the men interviewed for this research agreed that one of the most common pitfalls is to minimize the broad range of motivations the Bible provides for obeying biblical commands. This research will focus on addressing this pitfall.

Christ should be the central motivation for all obedience. Without Christ, the primary motivations for obedience are threats of consequences and promises of future rewards. Thus, without Christ, sermons and lives can quickly become legalistic.¹⁴ Christ and his cross provide forgiveness of sin and freedom from sin's power, as well as the empowerment and motivation needed for obedience. He and his cross must therefore remain the primary motivation. Other motivations cannot forgive sins, break the power of sin, or empower obedience. Therefore, Christ and his cross must remain central in all sermons, lives, and motivations. But he and his cross are not the only things that can motivate us, nor should they be. The Bible provides many supporting motivations that, when properly understood, all flow from Christ and his cross.

Michael Spencer, a visiting columnist in *Modern Reformation*, summarizes this issue well. He says that as important as it is not to diminish the gospel by emphasizing discipleship too much, it is equally important not to remove the call to discipleship from its attachment to the gospel. Part of faithful teaching on Christian discipleship is preaching and teaching all the motivations that move believers to obey.¹⁵ A full

¹⁴ Jim Belcher, *Deep Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 114-119.

¹⁵ Michael Spencer, "Lifestyle and Discipleship," *Modern Reformation* 18:6 (September/October 2009), 21.

understanding of the gospel must include teaching on discipleship and obedience, and teaching on discipleship and obedience must remain grounded in the gospel of grace.

There is a temptation to be so committed to only preaching the gospel that much of what Christ the Lord taught about obedience may be left out. The Bible often motivates the sanctification process with warnings of consequences. Preachers might feel that they are being more Christ-centered when they skip over these warnings, but Christ did not skip over them. This research will investigate what the Bible and Christian literature say a person's motivations should be. Moreover, because preaching should align with the scripture, this research will also investigate which methodologies Christ-centered preachers use to motivate their hearers from the scripture.

The significance of this study is to explore how Christ-centered preaching more effectively achieves its goal when it accounts for the diverse biblical motivations for Christian behavior. If the Bible sees fit to give multiple motivations for obedience, preachers should not ignore any of these inspired motivations. The more faithfully preachers tether themselves to the biblical text, the more powerful their sermons will be, for the Bible promises that God's Word is living and powerful.¹⁶

If God saw fit to give multiple motivations for obedience in the Bible, the modern-day preacher has no business disagreeing with God and removing biblical motivations from the call to obedience. Even if this is done in the name of the centrality of Christ, removing these motivations from Christ-centered preaching efforts creates a false dichotomy. As will become clear in this study, Christ-centered preaching does not require pastors to make Christ the only motivation to obey. God's wisdom will abound in

¹⁶ Hebrews 4:12.

preaching that exalts Christ by exploring with the hearers all God's motivations for obeying his commands.

Once preachers begin using their own discretion to determine which content should be left out of a sermon, Christ-centered preaching is in danger. If preachers decide today to remove the motivation of heavenly rewards, they might decide tomorrow to remove Christ from their sermons. Christ-centered preaching is essentially biblically faithful preaching. "From every text in Scripture there is a road towards the great metropolis, Christ. And my dear brother, your business is, when you get to a text, to say, now what is the road to Christ?...I have never found a text that had not got a road to Christ in it."¹⁷

Paul says multiple times in Acts that he is innocent of the blood of all men because he fearlessly preached the whole counsel of God's Word. Acts 20:20 says, "I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you."¹⁸ Some preachers today, in the name of the centrality of Christ, have shrunk back from preaching all that would be helpful to their hearers. The Bible sees no tension in presenting Christ as one (albeit central and essential) source of motivation among other valid and useful sources. This research could encourage pastors to use more diverse and biblical motivations in their preaching.

There is certainly a danger of overly emphasizing other biblical motivations so that Christ is obscured from the sermon. This result is certainly not the goal of this research. Rather, the goal is to more fully secure Christ's centrality by stopping a

¹⁷ Charles Spurgeon, "Christ Precious to Believers," in *The New Park Street Pulpit*, vol. 5 (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1860), 140.

¹⁸ Acts 20:20.

potential threat. The goal is proper emphasis; how much should Christ be emphasized as a motivation for obedience in relation to and comparison with other motivations?

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms will be defined as described below:

Motivations will be defined as anything that inclines someone to choose one action over another. This definition is based on James Boice's summary of Jonathan Edwards' and John Gerstner's thoughts on the issue.¹⁹ All three of these men are significant reformed theologians from the past few centuries.

Christ-centered preaching will be defined as a particular type of preaching that seeks to teach every text of the Bible with "Christ and him crucified" at the center of the message. Bryan Chapell, president of Covenant Theological Seminary and author of *Christ-Centered Preaching*, gives this definition: "Christ-centered preaching is not merely evangelistic, nor confined to a few gospel accounts. It perceives the whole of scripture as revelatory of God's redemptive plan and preaches every passage within this context, a pattern Jesus himself introduced to us."²⁰

Christ-centered preachers will be defined as those who consistently practice Christ-centered preaching.

Secondary motivations will be defined as those biblical motives that are not meant to be central in a believer's life, yet are used by the Bible to motivate believers to obey.

¹⁹ James Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1981), 212-213. John Gerstner, *A Primer on Free Will* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1982), 4-5.

²⁰ Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 30.

Motives are determined to be central based on how frequently they are used in scripture.

Often, at first glance, these motives seem not to center on Christ.

Chapter Two

Review of Selected Literature

This study will explore four main types of literature. First, the researcher will search the Bible because it is the authoritative foundation for the entire study. The second type of literature will be secular sources, especially from the areas of business, economics, education, psychology and motivational speaking, that could reveal trends relating to themes also found in the Bible. Third, the researcher will investigate Christian writings on motivations for holy living. Within this category, a broad scope of Christian literature will illuminate the methods Christian writers primarily use to motivate other Christians. Fourth, the research literature will include books on homiletics, specifically with regard to their teachings about the use of various motivations in preaching.

Biblical Sources

The primary biblical passages informing this study will present situations in which a biblical writer, while teaching someone to obey, also mentions specific motivations for obedience. Texts where a motive is explicit are the most valuable for this study, though other passages, where a motive is implicit, will be useful as well. The passages will come from many different types of biblical literature, and the researcher will examine the main motivations the authors use in each. Because there is some overlap between different motivations, clear distinctions are not always possible. God never intended for his followers to pit one motivation against another. Rather, all types of motivation should work together to bring about the obedience of faith.

To Glorify God

Glorifying God may be the best reason for holy living, and it sums up all the other reasons. First Corinthians 10:31 states that glorifying God should literally be behind all that Christians do. One of the main reasons that God's glory should motivate Christians' actions is that it often motivates God's actions. In Isaiah 41:20, God says that he acts "so that people may see and know, may consider and understand, that the hand of the Lord has done this, that the Holy One of Israel has created it."²¹ God desires that he get credit for his actions. He wants glory for himself. Isaiah 40:8 is even clearer and more explicit regarding God's desire for his glory. Isaiah 45:3-8 and Isaiah 46:9-10 repeat the same theme. Isaiah 48:9-11 emphasizes it even more strongly. This motive – God's glory – is central to the core of the Lord's heart and passion, and thus it should be for those being conformed to his image.

Paul tells us to do everything for the glory of the Lord.²² Glorifying God is an overarching motive that encompasses all others. Because glorifying God should be behind all that Christians do, all other motives mentioned are merely different angles from which to look at the broad category of glorifying the Lord. Eating and drinking, life and death, all should work together in the life of a believer unto God's glory. Decisions should be made in light of this reality.²³ God's glory should be our ultimate motive. Jesus was very motivated to glorify his Father and tried to motivate his disciples to do the same.²⁴ All Christians should be motivated to glorify God in all that they do.

²¹ Isaiah 41:20.

²² 1 Corinthians 10:31.

²³ Philippians 1:20-21.

²⁴ John 15:8.

Love from God and Love for God

The apostle John gives a long chain of reasons that help Christians see the foundational motivation for obedience. First John 4:19 says, “We love because he first loved us.”²⁵ As with all good things in life, love starts with God. God loves his people primarily in Christ and the cross, according to 1 John 3:16. First John 5:2-3 says that if people love God, they will obey him. Therefore, we can conclude that the main motivation for obedience is God’s love for his people, which produces in them a love for him and for others. As previously stated, all motives are a part of glorifying God. But, love from God producing love for God seems to be a first among equals. Only God’s love in Christ can produce affections for Christ strong enough to fully motivate and sustain Christians in obedience. Paul agrees with this line of reasoning in Romans 12:1-2, when he argues that in light of all God has done for us in Christ, Christians ought to be motivated to live for Christ. Second Corinthians 5:14 clearly shows that Christ’s love was a motive for the apostle Paul. Romans 5:3-8 teaches that Christians can persevere in obedience and holiness even while suffering because God has so powerfully convinced us that he loves us, through the sacrificial death of Christ. If love for God and man are the greatest two commands and are a summation of all that the Law and Prophets commanded believers to do, as Jesus states in Matthew 22:37-40, then love for God should be Christians’ primary motive for obedience. And if believers only love (thus fulfilling those commands) because God first loved them, as John says in 1 John 4:19, then it is right to say that God’s love for us, displayed in Christ, leading to our love in

²⁵ 1 John 4:19.

return is the greatest motive there is. Without this motive, one cannot truly, fully and continuously obey the Lord.

This pattern of motivation based on God's love for his people is not merely a New Testament phenomenon. Leviticus 19:36 and 25:38 motivate obedience by reminding the people that the Lord brought them out of slavery in Egypt. Deuteronomy 5:12 commands the people to keep the Sabbath because God saved them. Deuteronomy 5:16 tells children to honor their parents so that it will go well with them. Deuteronomy 7:9-11 promises that those who obey are the ones who will experience God's love. Later, God motivates his people to love the aliens and strangers in their midst by reminding them of how he loved and redeemed them when they were Egyptian slaves.²⁶

Joshua 23:9-11, to motivate the Israelites to love God, reminds the people that God had given them victories and fought for them in battle. In Joshua 24:18, the people say that because God is their God and has blessed them, they will serve him. Luke 7:47 is a key passage as well. Jesus says that the people who are aware of how much God has forgiven them will love God very much. Conversely, those who are not aware of God's forgiveness or who believe that God has only forgiven a small portion of their sin will love God only a little. In Psalm 40:8, David expresses his love for God's law and his desire to obey it.

Pleasing God

In the Scriptures, desiring to please God serves as a motivation for obedience. Deuteronomy 24:13 commands people to return a poor person's cloak to him so that God will regard it as a righteous act. At the end of his psalm of repentance, David says that

²⁶ Deuteronomy 10:18-19.

God does not delight in sacrifices or take pleasure in burnt offerings but rather desires a broken spirit and contrite heart.²⁷ David was motivated to do the things that would bring the most pleasure to the Lord's heart; Psalm 69:30-31 shows that he was motivated to praise and magnify God because doing so would please God more than sacrificing burnt offerings.²⁸ Micah 6:8 teaches that pleasing God is a good motive for obedience. Christians should understand what God desires and delights in and should seek to do those things.

Paul says he is motivated by the desire to please God in 2 Corinthians 5:9. In Galatians 1:10, he mentions again the idea of seeking God's approval. The context of Galatians proves that Paul was not seeking justification in Christ; he already had that. Paul sought to please God with his faithful life as children please their father when they already have his love. Paul specifically tells Christians in Ephesians 5:10 to "try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord."²⁹ Pleasing the Lord seems to be such an obvious biblical motivation that obedience is almost synonymous with the idea of pleasing the Lord. Even children are motivated to "obey your parents in everything for this pleases the Lord."³⁰

Paul goes further with this idea in 1 Thessalonians 2:4, saying that God will test Christians' hearts to see if they are pleasing to him. This is a key passage on the idea of motivation in the Christian life because Paul and his associates have been accused of doing good works for greed, personal glory or both. As Paul vindicates his work, he

²⁷ Psalm 51:16-17.

²⁸ Psalm 69:30-31.

²⁹ Ephesians 5:10.

³⁰ Colossians 3:20.

shows that why Christians obey is just as important as what they actually do for God.

Paul says here that not only did he obey God, but he obeyed with proper motivation: a desire to please God. Paul's obedience is an outflow and overflow of his love for Christ.

Later, in 1 Thessalonians 4:1, Paul says that he taught people to obey so that they could please God. Part of what made Christ's obedience to the Father on earth so perfect was that he always pleased the Father.³¹ First Timothy 5:4 cites this motivation as well. First John 3:22 also makes the connection between obedience and pleasing the Lord. If biblical authors use this motivation so much in their writings, pastors should likewise draw upon this truth in motivating their listeners. Pleasing the Lord is a rich and repeated biblical theme to be included in Christ-centered sermons everywhere. Ultimately, God will receive glory from all people, either by displaying his mercy to them or showing them his justice. Ezekiel 18:23 and 33:11 show us that God does not take pleasure or joy in destroying the wicked, though their destruction is just. Although God gets glory even from the wicked as they magnify his righteousness, he only receives pleasure from those who obey him.

Love for God and Love for Neighbor

In Matthew 22:36-40, when a man asked him to identify the greatest commandment, Christ did not give only one command. Instead, he replied that loving God with all one's being is the first and greatest command. An extrapolation from that shows that love for God should be the primary motivation in every action. But Jesus quickly added that the second greatest commandment, in verse 39, is like the first and

³¹ John 8:29.

also very important: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”³² Both of these loves motivate the Christian life. Far from canceling one another out or hindering one another, these two motivations Christ links indivisibly to each other.

Paul was certainly motivated by a love for his fellow man. In Romans he proclaims his willingness to die and suffer hell for the Israelites if it would mean that God might save them.³³ Leviticus 19:18 motivates people not to hold a grudge or seek vengeance, in part because they should love their neighbor. Likewise, Nehemiah uses the Jews’ love of their neighbors to motivate obedience. In Luke 10, Jesus showed how love for ones’ neighbor should motivate one to sacrificially serve another human who may even be considered an enemy. Paul says, in 1 Thessalonians 2:8, that he was motivated in his ministry by his love and fondness for those to whom he ministered.

Christ knew that it was easy for anyone to say that they love God while living a life of hatred towards others. He rejected this hypocrisy by teaching that people who truly love God will also love their neighbor. Thus, the combined love for God and neighbor motivates mature believers. Christ goes even further to say that these two commands are the foundation of the entire Old Testament. What if a preacher leaves either one of these dual motivations out of his preaching? Paul answers this question in 1 Corinthians 13, saying that people may do many right actions without love for their neighbor, but they gain nothing.

³² Matthew 22:39.

³³ Romans 9:1-4.

Joy

Psalm 40:8 says “I delight to do Thy will, O my God.”³⁴ It seems David is motivated to obey simply because he enjoys obeying the Lord. Not only did obeying God please God; it pleased David. God has designed our souls so that the more we know and love him and are conformed to his likeness, the more we will love and enjoy what he loves and enjoys. This reality was certainly true in David’s life. Paul picks up on a similar theme, saying, “I have the desire to do what is good...in my inner being I delight in God’s law.”³⁵ In 2 Corinthians 1:24, Paul was motivated by the joy of other believers. In the next chapter, Paul shows that he was not only motivated by their joy but by his own. In 2 Corinthians 8:2, joy seems to motivate poor believers to give more. This same motivation is seen in Paul’s desire to stay alive and minister longer in Philippians 1:25. In 2 Timothy 1:4, Paul was motivated by a desire for more joy to see Timothy again. Jesus was motivated by joy in Hebrews 12:2 to suffer the cross for his people. In 1 John 1:4, John was motivated to write scripture for the joy he would derive from the fruit that would come. John wanted to see his hearers again so that his joy would grow.³⁶

Fear of the Lord

Beyond love for God, the Bible seems to use many different truths to motivate people. In Exodus 20:20, God motivates his people to obey by saying that they should fear him, presumably in a proper way that should keep them from sinning. The fear of the Lord is huge theme that stretches throughout the Bible. John Murray, a former

³⁴ Psalm 40:8.

³⁵ Romans 7:18, 22.

³⁶ 2 John 2:12.

Westminster Theological Seminary professor, composed a brief two part definition of the human fear of God: “(1) the fear of being afraid of God and his punitive judgments; (2) the fear of reverential awe and adoration.”³⁷ This research will focus primarily on the second of these descriptions, though the first will be addressed as well.

Although it is often misunderstood, the fear of the Lord is a motivation to obey the Lord. A thorough study of the Bible will show that there are right and wrong reasons to fear the Lord. But it is clear that the proper fear of the Lord should be a strong motivation for obedience. Nehemiah 5:15 also shows that the fear of the Lord was a motive for obedience.

It is wrong to assign this motive to the old covenant alone. Second Corinthians 5:11 is a New Testament example, where Paul clearly states that he was motivated by the fear of the Lord. A proper understanding of the fear of the Lord, being rooted in overwhelming awe and love for Him, fits perfectly into New Testament motivation and obedience. First John 4:18 does warn though that most types of motivation by fear are sinful. So one must be careful to distinguish between a proper fear of the Lord, such as a child feels toward his loving father, and a sinful fear of God, as a slave feels toward an evil master. Romans 8:15-16 and Hebrews 12:4-13 help distinguish between the sinful fear of a slave and the loving fear of a son. Sinful fear is afraid of punishment, which is retributive or penal, such as that mentioned in Matthew 25:46. Godly fear desires not to grieve a loving Father or experience his loving displeasure in chastisement.

³⁷ John Murray, *The Fear of God* (Birmingham, AL: Solid Ground Christian Books, 1975), 22.

Godly Sorrow

Throughout the scriptures, the threat of God's sorrow or displeasure further motivates his people to obey him. Ecclesiastes 5:4, for example, uses the threat of God's displeasure to motivate. Micah 7:8-9 also shows a proper way for a believer to be motivated by God's fatherly displeasure. When Christians sin, the guilt they feel should lead to changed actions. The key is that guilt should come from grieving God, not from fearing or experiencing sin's consequences. Second Corinthians 7:10-11 clearly illustrates that "[g]odly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret."³⁸ Sorrow over sin can lead to growth in sanctification that has no bad residue. The conviction of sin and human sorrow over sin, when felt for godly reasons, do not contradict God's grace. Rather, sorrow is a function of God's favor toward us, to let us know when we have gone astray and offended him. A spiritual conscience functions similarly to nerves within a body that send painful warning signals when the body is in danger. God's love and benevolence convict his people of sin, with the aim of restoring them through repentance and for his glory.

Desire to Avoid Judgment, Discipline and Consequences

God uses threats to motivate as well. As mentioned above, God primarily uses threats of divine punishment to motivate those who are not in covenant with himself. After salvation, God rarely, if ever, uses the threat of punishment, except perhaps to warn against apostasy. A sinning believer is still motivated by God's threats, but the threats are those of fatherly displeasure, which result in painful, yet helpful chastisement. Again, Hebrews 12:4-13 offers insight on this point. Judgment is condemnation, and this is

³⁸ 2 Corinthians 7:10-11.

reserved for the unregenerate. For believers, on the other hand, Christ took all the judgment. However, in contrast to judgment, discipline is something all believers experience, as God loving works with them to grow them in holiness. Consequences, a third potential result of sin, are negative experiences that are naturally and organically rooted in the creation order.

Exodus 22:3-4 uses the threat and fear of God's anger and wrath to motivate holy living. Exodus 23:8 threatens that sin's consequences may be experienced by both the sinner and the others involved in the situation: "You shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the clear-sighted and subverts the cause of those who are in the right."³⁹ Exodus 28:35, 43 motivate Aaron and his sons to obey so that they will not be killed. Exodus 30:38 motivates people with the threat of being cut off from their people, while Exodus 31:14-15 uses the threat of death as motivation to observe the Sabbath. Ezekiel 33:11 also uses the threat of death as a motivation. Galatians 6:8 motivates believers away from sin with the promise of corruption for all who persevere in sin.

Leviticus 20 is filled with different commands, backed up by threats of punishment that were surely meant to motivate. Everything from child sacrifice to sex outside of marriage was forbidden, and consequences were included. These consequences included death, being cut off from the people of God, and being kicked out of the Promised Land. In Leviticus 16:14-39, God promises to discipline his people if they do not obey.

The biblical consequences for those who fail to recognize God's authority are also mentioned frequently in the scriptures. Deuteronomy 5:8-11 commands the people not to

³⁹ Exodus 23:8.

have idols or to use God's name in vain because God punishes sin. Deuteronomy 6:14-15 tells the people not to follow other gods because their God is a jealous God and will become angry and destroy them if they do. The passage in Deuteronomy 7:3-4, 9-11 repeats these threats. So that all would hear and fear and never repeat those sins again, Deuteronomy 13:10-11 commands that rebels be stoned. Similarly, Deuteronomy 28:15-62 promises that God will curse people who disobey. Joshua 23:12-13 says that if you disobey there will be consequences. Psalm 2:10-11 teaches that if someone disobeys, God will be angry at them. The idea of future threats seems to loom in Paul's mind as he discusses Christian obedience in light of the judgment seat of Christ in 2 Corinthians 5:10. Hebrews 12:9-16 shows how God's discipline in this life should motivate our respect for and obedience to him now.

Desire for Rewards/Blessings in this Life

God also promises benefits for obedience as a means to motivate. Exodus 23:22 promises God's blessing of protection from enemies as his people obey him. God encourages, in Leviticus 26:3-13, by promising blessing in return for obedience. In Deuteronomy 4:40 and 12:25, 28 God encourages obedience so that it will go well with you and your children. In Deuteronomy 5:8-10, Moses commands the people not to have idols because the Lord blesses those who obey. Deuteronomy 6:18-24 shows God motivating the people with promises that they will take the land, prosper and be kept alive. Moses explains, in Deuteronomy 13:17, why God's people should obey. They should obey so that God will turn from his fierce anger and show mercy and increase the numbers of the Israelites. In Deuteronomy 15:10, Moses tells the people to give generously and without a grudging heart and God will bless them in all that they do.

Deuteronomy 28:1-13 promises blessing for obedience. Deuteronomy 29:9 promises that those who obey will prosper in all they do.

As a reward for obedience, God often gives blessings in this life, as seen above in several passages from the Pentateuch; this theme continues on into the wisdom books. Psalm 1:1-3 motivates believers with the promise that they will prosper in all they do, that they will bear fruit and will not wither. Those who seek the Lord, as Psalm 34:9 reminds us, will lack no good thing. Later in that same chapter, in verses 12-14, the psalmist encourages all those who desire a long, good life to obey God. Fulfillment of the heart's desires is another promise, appearing in Psalm 37:4, that motivates people to find their delight in the Lord. Similarly, Proverbs 2:1-5 motivates hearers by promising the knowledge of God.

Finally, the New Testament writers also mentioned personal joy and earthly benefit as motivational reasons for living righteously before God. John 15:7, 11 and Acts 20:35 show that believers should be motivated by their own desire for happiness. Paul seems to say in 1 Corinthians 13 that if you do many right actions without neighborly love as your motivation, you gain nothing. Gain is a proper biblical motivation. In Philippians 3:7-9, Paul seems to be motivated by knowing Christ more in this life. First Timothy 6:6 also motivates with a promise of great gain. Hebrews 11:6 goes further: the essential element of faith that pleases the Lord, explains the author, is the faith that trusts God to reward those who seek him. Peter also speaks of obeying with a desire for a blessing in this life.⁴⁰ Based on the biblical account, obedience that is motivated by the rewards God has promised is obviously a good thing.

⁴⁰ 1 Peter 3:9-12.

Desire for Rewards/Blessings in the Next Life

Christ often repeats the motivation of a promised reward. Jesus encouraged his followers to handle persecution well, being motivated by their future heavenly reward.⁴¹ Matthew 6:1-18 tells Christians not to give money, pray or fast for earthly praise or rewards. And yet, Christ still affirms the value of rewards. He explains that the believer should do all of these things motivated by desire for a heavenly reward from Father God. Matthew 6:19-21 further motivates believers to seek the better heavenly rewards because they are more secure. When believers are obedient, as both Mark 10:29-30 and Galatians 6:7-9 promise, they will have rewards in this life and the next.⁴² A great future reward is also promised in Luke 6:35, as well as Luke 12:12-14. Finally, Paul also teaches that believers should give (“sow”) so that they will reap eternal rewards in this life and the next.⁴³ Christ intended his followers to be motivated by these heavenly and earthly rewards.

Similarly, Luke 12:32-33, 14:14 and 16:9 show eternal rewards to be the motivation for good deeds. In an interesting twist, Luke 9:24 encourages followers of Christ to lose their earthly lives in order to gain better lives eternally. Philippians 3:13-14 and other verses prove that Paul is motivated by a desire not to lose his heavenly prize.⁴⁴ In the face of terrible hardships, he is able to continue in obedience, buoyed by the promise of future rewards.⁴⁵ In 2 Corinthians, Paul speaks of being motivated by the

⁴¹ Matthew 5:11-12.

⁴² Mark 10:29-30 and Galatians 6:7-9.

⁴³ 2 Corinthians 9:6-9.

⁴⁴ 1 Corinthians 9:27.

⁴⁵ 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:1.

judgment seat of Christ, where we all will receive what is due to us.⁴⁶ Specifically, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 shows that Paul intentionally set his eyes on future rewards as a way to motivate himself in the toughest times. In Colossians 3:23-24, the promise of receiving a future inheritance motivates everyday service. In 2 Timothy 2:12, Paul also motivates believers to endure suffering in light of the promise of reigning one day with Christ. Even Moses, as Hebrews 11:24-26 explains, was motivated by valuing Christ over all the pleasures of the Egyptian palace. Interestingly, Hebrews 12:1-3 shows that Christ was similarly motivated by future gain.

These are the main biblical motives for Christian obedience: Glorifying God; Receiving love from God and Loving God; Pleasing God; Loving Neighbor; Living in Joy; Fearing the Lord; Anticipating Godly Sorrow; Avoiding Judgment, Discipline, and Consequences; Desiring Rewards/Blessings in this Life; and Desiring Rewards/Blessings in the Next Life. The Bible mentions these motives more frequently than any others. They are also some of the major biblical motivators that systematic theologians have identified.⁴⁷ Other biblical sources of motivation may exist that will not be covered in this paper because of space constraints or because of the lack of focus they receive in the Bible.

Business and Education Motivation

To glean what can be learned from secular wisdom on the topic, the researcher will review articles that explain how educators and secular leaders motivate their listeners. Some of this material will come from business books; some will come from

⁴⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:10.

⁴⁷ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: InterVarsity, 2000), 757-758. John Murray, Louis Berkhof, and John Calvin.

articles on economics or educational learning theory. These materials are relevant in the discussion about human motivation, as business writers are highly interested in studying what motivates people to work hard and to spend money, and teachers are highly interested in learning how to motivate their students. The researcher will also consider a number of articles on motivational speaking and social psychology. These secular categories will be helpful for recognizing which natural, human motivations are so strong that they affect many different areas of life.

The four secular fields that seem especially interested in human motivation are business/economics, education, motivational speaking, and psychology. Thus, the research will focus on these four areas. After reviewing literature from these areas, the researcher will consider its implications for the use of motivations in preaching.

Different Types of Motives

Daniel Pink, the *New York Times* bestselling author who writes books on several topics including economics, has written a great book on motivations. One of his main premises is that extrinsic motivations, things that motivate us from the outside such as the promise of rewards, should not and cannot be the main motive for much of what we do.⁴⁸

Pink goes on to list three primary types of motivation. The first is biological. Biological motivations are basic desires such as for food, water, and sex. The second type of motivation is external rewards, which include not only rewards but also punishments. The third type of motivation he calls “intrinsic,” and the root of it is joy. While according to Pink external motivators are not evil,⁴⁹ Pink does believe that intrinsic motivation is

⁴⁸ Daniel Pink, *Drive* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2009), x.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.

better than extrinsic.⁵⁰ Thus, Pink's third type of motivation does not banish the second type, but it does supersede it.⁵¹ Some authors agree on this point but believe that intrinsic motivation, Pink's third motivator, can be more fragile – and thus harder to work with – than extrinsic motivation.⁵² But, according to Pink, too much emphasis on extrinsic rewards can “crowd out” intrinsic motivations.⁵³

Problems with Extrinsic

Extrinsic rewards are unreliable.⁵⁴ Focusing too much on extrinsic rewards or motives can ruin intrinsic motives.⁵⁵ In their research, Deci, Ryan and Koester concluded that “tangible rewards tend to have a substantially negative effect on intrinsic motivation.”⁵⁶ Their study went on to equate tangible rewards with short-term focus and controlling behavior, and the researchers warned that such behaviors would result in serious detriment in the long run: it is ultimately problematic “when institutions – families, schools, businesses, and athletic teams, for example – focus on the short-term and opt for controlling people's behavior.”⁵⁷ Using external rewards to encourage or elicit a certain behavior often damages the person's internal motivation to do the desired

⁵⁰ Ibid., 2-3.

⁵¹ Ibid., 21.

⁵² Edward Deci, “Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Reinforcement, and Inequity,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 22 (1972): 119-120.

⁵³ Pink, 46-47.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁵ Pink, 8.

⁵⁶ Edward L. Deci, Richard M. Ryan and Richard Koestner, “A Meta-Analytic Review of Experiments Examining the Effects on Extrinsic Rewards on Intrinsic Motivation,” *Psychological Bulletin* 125, no. 6 (1999): 659.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 659.

task over the long haul.⁵⁸ For example, artists who are motivated primarily by joy in their art survive the hard times when no one is paying them. Their joy encourages them to persevere. But those artists who have grown accustomed to doing artwork for financial remuneration do not have the intrinsic motivation to persevere through times of poverty and often quit in the long run.⁵⁹ Maybe the main problem with typical rewards is that they are short-term fixes and almost all unethical practices are based on some sort of short-term fix.⁶⁰ “The very presence of goals may lead employees to focus myopically on short-term gains and to lose sight of the potential devastating long-term effects on the organization.”⁶¹

Rewards Lead to Bad Performance

Often, higher rewards mean decreased performance.⁶² The pressure of a contingent reward or of public scrutiny works well for tasks requiring only brute effort. But tasks requiring creativity and thinking are often squashed under the pressure of concern about how much money one will make or about what others will say.⁶³ Rewards narrow a person’s focus, which can be positive for simple tasks but negative for difficult, creative tasks. Tasks that require ingenuity need a broad, outside-of-the-box perspective

⁵⁸ Jonmarshall Reeve, *Understanding Motivation and Emotion*, 4th ed. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2005), 143.

⁵⁹ Pink, 43-44.

⁶⁰ Pink, 55.

⁶¹ Lisa Ordonez, Maurice Schweitzer, Adam Galinsky and Max Braverman, “Goals Gone Wild: The Systematic Side Effects of Over-Prescribing Goal Setting,” *Harvard Business School Working Paper No. 09-083*, February 2009.

⁶² Dan Ariely, Uri Gneezy, George Lowenstein and Nina Mazar, “Large Stakes and Big Mistakes,” *Federal Reserve Bank of Boston Working Paper No. 05-11*, July 23, 2005.

⁶³ Dan Ariely, “What’s the Value of a Big Bonus?” *New York Times*, November 20, 2008.

that can often be lost when rewards loom heavy in one's mind.⁶⁴ Huge rewards promised beforehand can make people focus so much on the short term that they totally lose sight of the long-term consequences for their short-term behavior.⁶⁵

Consequences

Consequences are also an important extrinsic motivation to investigate. Consequences can help motivate people to do basic, simple tasks that merely require effort. On the other hand, consequences can routinely backfire when a task requires creative solutions. Over-emphasizing external controls such as "short review cycles" can have a negative effect on long-term performance. Institutes with policies that are "unforgiving of failure" will crush creativity. An institute whose funding process "tolerates early failure, rewards long-term success, and gives its appointees great freedom to experiment" will thrive in production. "Rewarded subjects often have a harder time seeing the periphery and crafting original solutions. This, too, is one of the sturdiest findings in social science."⁶⁶ Frequently, negative consequences can have the effect of crowding out positive behavior that was thriving before the consequences were introduced.⁶⁷

Other research agrees that punitive motivation rarely, if ever, works in the long haul. Parole officers have found that the fear of prison never motivates previous criminals to "change their behavior, overcome their problems, and live as lawful citizens."⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Pink, 42.

⁶⁵ Pink, 48-49.

⁶⁶ Pink, 44.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 51.

⁶⁸ Alan Deutschman, *Change or Die*. (New York: Harper, 2007), 93.

Reward Can Produce Opposite Behavior

In fact, if one is only motivated by extrinsic motives or if rewards are used improperly, those promises of reward can often backfire and produce the exact opposite of the behavior desired.⁶⁹ Extrinsic motives alone can often lead to “cheating, addiction, and dangerously myopic thinking.”⁷⁰ Other research has found that using financial rewards for charitable acts does not work well.⁷¹ Rewards in themselves are not harmful, especially if they are given as a surprise at the end of a task and were not promised beforehand. Rewards that are explained in the beginning as contingent on the performance are the most dangerous. Promised rewards can have this negative effect because people lose a sense of fun in their work and also a sense of independence in their motives for doing the work.⁷² Oddly enough, “it is those who are least motivated to pursue extrinsic rewards who eventually receive them.”⁷³

Another problem is that rewards can begin to work like a drug. They may motivate in the short run, but the next time the same task is demanded, the reward may have to increase to bring about the same level of motivation. Pink even shows that similar areas of the human brain are stimulated by drugs and by promise of monetary rewards.⁷⁴ Extrinsic motivation promised beforehand can be addictive. The employee begins to

⁶⁹ Pink, 10, 47.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 33.

⁷¹ Dan Ariely, Anat Bracha and Stephan Meier, “Doing Good or Doing Well? Image Motivation and Monetary Incentives in Behaving Prosocially,” *Federal Reserve Bank of Boston Working Paper No. 07-9*, August 2007.

⁷² Pink, 36.

⁷³ Jean Kathryn Carney, “Intrinsic Motivation and Artistic Success” (unpublished dissertation, 1986, University of Chicago).

⁷⁴ Pink, 53.

expect and even demand a similar or better reward anytime a similar task is required.

Thus, the employer is then in a trap of always having to use rewards to motivate effort.⁷⁵

Pink offers a helpful summary of all the problems extrinsic rewards can cause: they can, for example, “extinguish intrinsic motivation...diminish performance...crush creativity...crowd out good behavior...encourage cheating, shortcuts, and unethical behavior...become addictive...foster short-term thinking.”⁷⁶ None of this research proves that extrinsic rewards are bad in themselves and never to be used. It only points out that one must be careful in determining when and how to use them.

Primary Extrinsic Benefits

Used cautiously and correctly, extrinsic benefits can still motivate.⁷⁷ Pink wisely believes that a person seeking to motivate others should use extrinsic motives only to clear the way for intrinsic motives to flourish. “The best use of money as a motivator is to pay people enough to take the issue of money off the table.”⁷⁸ When rewards are used, he writes, “downplay them significantly.”⁷⁹

Primary Intrinsic Benefits

One study showed that having a lack of extrinsic reward, such as an insufficient salary, can lead to job frustration.⁸⁰ However, the presence of extrinsic rewards “didn’t lead to job satisfaction...[T]hings like enjoyment of the work itself, genuine

⁷⁵ Ibid., 53.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 57.

⁷⁷ Teresa Amabile, *Creativity in Context* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 119.

⁷⁸ Pink, 33.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 62.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 18

achievement, and personal growth...really bolster both satisfaction and performance.”⁸¹

Another study explained the same idea in this way: “[E]njoyment-based intrinsic motivation, namely how creative a person feels when working on the project, is the strongest and most pervasive driver.”⁸² Other economic research has defined intrinsic motives as “the fun...of mastering the challenge of a given...problem...[and the] desire to give a gift to the ...community.”⁸³ People intrinsically want to do something interesting, challenging, and absorbing.⁸⁴ One study found that many students in academic settings choose classes based on their level of interest in the class.⁸⁵ Similarly, individuals listening to a speaker are much more likely to engage with that speakers and be motivated by their arguments if the topic under consideration affects their personal lives.⁸⁶ How interested someone is in a given topic or task is a huge factor in determining how motivated the person will be to study that topic or complete that task.

Long-Term vs. Short-Term Motivators

One benefit of intrinsic rewards is that they are rarely, if ever, short-term motivators. For example, “[t]ake mastery. The objective itself is inherently long-term

⁸¹ Ibid., 18.

⁸² Karim Lakhani and Robert G. Wolf, “Why Hackers Do what They Do: Understanding Motivation and Effort and Free/Open Source Software Projects,” in *Perspectives on Free and Open Software*, ed. J. Feller, B. Fitzgerald, S. Hissam and K. Lakhani (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 3, 12.

⁸³ Jurgen Blitzer, Wolfram Schrettl and Philipp J. H. Schroeder, “Intrinsic Motivation in Open Source Software Development,” *Journal of Comparative Economics* 35 (2007): 4, 17.

⁸⁴ Pink, 45.

⁸⁵ Linda A. Bressler, Mark E. Bressler and Martin S. Bressler, “The Role and Relationship of Hope, Optimism and Goal Setting in Achieving Academic Success,” *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal* 14:4 (December 2010): 38.

⁸⁶ Richard Beach and Candance Doerr-Sterens. “Learning Argument Practices through Online Role Play: Toward a Rhetoric of Significance and Transformation,” *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 52:6, vol. 1 (March 2009): 460.

because complete mastery, in a sense, is unattainable.”⁸⁷ When people seeking to motivate others over-emphasize outward, tangible rewards, their hearers will often work to the specified goal but will rarely continue working past it for the joy of the work or for the greater purpose.⁸⁸

Purpose

Pink states that the reason or the purpose behind the work we do is one of the biggest and most important intrinsic motivators.⁸⁹ He states that we are “intrinsically-motivated purpose maximizers.”⁹⁰ Another economist goes even further: “Intrinsic motivation is of great importance for all economic activities. It is inconceivable that people are motivated solely or even mainly by external incentives.”⁹¹ Pink summarizes “the ingredients of genuine motivation – autonomy, mastery, and purpose.” When we ignore them, we limit what we can achieve.⁹² For instance, many businesses are now choosing not to hire managers. Historically, a major task of managers was to motivate workers to do the work that was assumed to be inherently boring. But, when the joy of work itself becomes enough to motivate employees, paid motivators are no longer needed. Many people today have more pleasing experiences at work than they do at play. Some even pay money to go on “vacations” on which they actually do more work than

⁸⁷ Pink, 56.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 56.

⁸⁹ Pink, 23-26.

⁹⁰ Pink, 31.

⁹¹ Bruno Frey, *Not Just for the Money: An Economic Theory of Personal Motivation* (Brookfield, VT: Edward Elgar, 1997), 118-119.

⁹² Pink, 47.

usual.⁹³ Further, when people receive pay for charitable acts such as giving blood, they often give less.⁹⁴ If used, incentives must be applied cautiously, carefully and wisely. They cannot focus on the short-term only. “Meaningful achievement depends on lifting one’s sights and pushing towards the horizon.”⁹⁵ The more an employer can “provide a sense of urgency and significance,” the better their employees’ intrinsic motives will flourish.⁹⁶ In fact, Jim Collins, a business-writing guru, teaches that the best companies pay “scant attention to managing change [and] motivating people...”⁹⁷ The best companies do not have to motivate their employees because in the best companies with the best visions and purposes, people are largely and intrinsically self-motivated.

Collins goes on to say that “expending energy trying to motivate people is largely a waste of time...[T]he right people...will be self-motivated. The real question then becomes: *How do you manage in such a way as not to de-motivate people?*”⁹⁸ This research fits beautifully with Pink’s assertions that emphasizing outward rewards as motivation can actually backfire. Collins, explaining how to avoid de-motivating people, says that you should give people as much of the “brutal facts” about a situation or task as you can and give them ample opportunity to speak into it and to help fix it.⁹⁹ This honesty, combined with the opportunity to pitch in, gives people a sense of purpose.

⁹³ Pink, 29-30.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 45-46.

⁹⁵ Pink, 57.

⁹⁶ Pink, 64.

⁹⁷ Jim Collins, *Good to Great* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 11.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 73-74.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 74.

Creative vs. Boring Work

Interestingly, Pink and others also observe that the more creative the work is, the more important intrinsic motives become. When the work is boring and simple, extrinsic motives often serve well.¹⁰⁰ “Rewards do not undermine people’s intrinsic motivation for dull tasks because there is little or no intrinsic motivation to be undermined.”¹⁰¹ Even so, extrinsic rewards for dull work should be unexpected, “now-that” rewards given at the end of a task, rather than contingent, “if-then” rewards promised ahead of time.¹⁰² When this is done, there is less chance that the extrinsic will negatively affect the intrinsic because the extrinsic could not have been the person’s reason for doing the task.¹⁰³

Under the right circumstances, extrinsic motives can go hand in hand with intrinsic motives. Rewards for creative work should always be given at the completion of a task, in the semblance of a bonus.¹⁰⁴ Praise and positive feedback and other intangible rewards are often best for this type of reward. Your recipient should feel as though you are merely “offering your appreciation.”¹⁰⁵

Goal Setting

Setting goals is another example of a practice that is meant to motivate but can actually de-motivate. If goals are imposed from the outside on creative work, they will

¹⁰⁰ Pink, 27-29.

¹⁰¹ Edward Deci, Richard Koestner, and Richard Ryan, “Extrinsic Rewards and Intrinsic Motivation in Education: Reconsidered Once Again,” *Review of Educational Research* 71, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 14.

¹⁰² Pink, 64.

¹⁰³ Deci, “Extrinsic Rewards and Intrinsic Motivation in Education.”

¹⁰⁴ Amabile, *Creativity in Context*, 117.

¹⁰⁵ Pink, 65.

probably be damaging. But if they are self-set goals that have to do with the worker's internal desire to master a task or field, they are often very helpful. Goals help us, "tune out distractions, ...try harder, work longer, and achieve more."¹⁰⁶ However, "rather than being offered as an 'over-the-counter' salve for boosting performance, goal setting should be prescribed selectively, presented with a warning label, and closely monitored."¹⁰⁷ One study found that the pure joy of working for oneself and for the sake of creativity was much more rewarding than working for someone else. So, in essence, some creative people have more incentive to work for themselves, even without getting paid, than to work for others and get paid.¹⁰⁸ Collins gives a great example in his book of a high school boys' track team where the coaches never motivated the team to win the state championship. Instead, they let the team set the goal. The athletes motivated themselves to win the state. Before long, many coaches who had other full-time jobs began to be attracted to the team. The team was so purposeful, meaningful and fun that people from outside initiated interaction with it, giving their free time to help the team without pay.¹⁰⁹ Collins later says, "The moment you feel the need to tightly manage someone, you might have made a hiring mistake. If you have the right people, you don't need to spend a lot of

¹⁰⁶ Pink, 48.

¹⁰⁷ Lisa Ordonez, Maurice Schweitzer, Adam Galinsky and Max Braverman, "Goals Gone Wild: The Systematic Side effects of Over-Prescribing Goal Setting," *Harvard Business School Working Paper No. 09-083*, February 2009.

¹⁰⁸ Teresa Amabile, Elise Philips and Mary Ann Collins, "Person and Environment in Talent Development: The Case of Creativity," in *Talent Development: Proceedings from the 1993 Henry B. and Joceplyn Wallace National Research Symposim on Talent Development*, ed. Nicholas Colangelo, Susan Assouline and DeAnn Ambrosion (Dayton, OH: Ohio Psychology Press, 1993), 273-274.

¹⁰⁹ Collins, *Good to Great*, 207.

time ‘motivating’ or ‘managing’ them.”¹¹⁰ The fact that the best employees do not need to be motivated is the power of intrinsic motivation.

Deutschman also shows that self-set goals seem to be the most effective. People do not want to be forced to be changed from the outside. If you can show people respect and listen to their opinions, this will help motivate change in their lives. “They’re more likely to try new things, and persist in the effort, if they’re the ones who come up with the plan.”¹¹¹ Rewards can still be useful if the job itself retains a level of interest and excitement and purpose.¹¹²

Motivational Speakers

A study of modern-day motivational speaking techniques will further enrich this research, as motivational speakers capitalize on several major motivational strategies. They often tell stories of achievement. Through stories, the speakers connect to the audience’s desire to achieve. If the speakers can tell compelling stories of their own achievements, others may be inspired and motivated to do something similar. These stories often focus on the value of endurance. Many motivational speakers come from challenging backgrounds or have experienced physical disabilities. If someone with so many personal difficulties to overcome can accomplish so much, then the average listener feels that he ought to be able to overcome the hardships and setbacks in his life and accomplish something great. The story, the personal connection, the achievement and the endurance all seem to be factors in motivating people to seek and work towards

¹¹⁰ Jim Collins, *How the Mighty Fall*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 159-160.

¹¹¹ Deutschman, 94.

¹¹² Amabile, *Creativity in Context*, 175.

change.¹¹³ Deutschman's parole research agrees with this as well. His work showed that one of the best motivators for change is to provide "veterans as role models for change." If a prisoner can see another ex-con going straight, it motivates him that he can do so as well.¹¹⁴

The speaker's style also affects the listeners' motivation. One study showed that when speakers were skilled in their logical debating skills and low in their "verbal aggressiveness," students were positively motivated to learn.¹¹⁵ This research will primarily be concerned with the verbal content that motivates listeners, but it would be naïve to neglect the fact that often things like body language, facial expressions, overall demeanor and tone of voice can have a negative or positive effect on motivation.

Conclusion

For the purpose of this research, the main points to draw from the literature thus far are the differences between extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. The Bible motivates extrinsically, using rewards and discipline; it also motivates intrinsically, through personal experiences like joy and love. The secular literature provides insight to how those two types of motives should be used together in a sermon. The best motivators are intrinsic. But this does not mean that extrinsic motivations should never be used, only that they should be used sparingly and carefully, especially because they seem able to do as much harm as good. Another important point to glean from the literature is the difference between motivations that work for the long term and those that work for the

¹¹³ Leigh Buchanan, "Motivational Speaking" *INC*. December 2010/January 2011, 128.

¹¹⁴ Deutschman, 97.

¹¹⁵ Scott A. Myers, "Perceived Aggressive Instructor Communication and Student State Motivation, Learning, and Satisfaction," *Communication Reports* 15:2 (Summer 2002): 113.

short term. Christians may face some short-term tasks for which they need extra motivations to help them through. But most of the Christian life is a marathon, not a sprint, and long-term motives are essential. Intrinsic motivations can help people press through long-lasting hard times, even after extrinsic motivations are gone from view.

Furthermore, extrinsic motivators are good for simple, narrow tasks but are not as effective for broad, complex tasks. Again, the Christian life requires the completion of some simple tasks, but most of the Christian life is complex and relational, for which intrinsic motivations should serve better.

Purpose is one of the best sources of intrinsic motivation, and the Christian life offers people a strong and multi-faceted sense of purpose. This point about intrinsic motivation, in addition to the characteristics of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation described above, summarizes the insight that can be gleaned for the Christian life and sermon from this study's secular research.

Motivations for Christian Living

Introduction

Why we obey can be as important as whether we obey. Saint Augustine, one of the most influential theologians of the Western church, said, "if the commandment be done through fear of penalty and not through love of righteousness, it is done in the temper of servitude not freedom – and therefore it is not done at all."¹¹⁶ If anyone outwardly obeys a commandment and yet hates righteousness in his heart, that person has not truly obeyed at all. "Whatever is not from faith, is sin."¹¹⁷ Many Christian authors

¹¹⁶ Augustine, *Augustine: Later Works*, trans. John Burnaby (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955), 215.

¹¹⁷ Romans 14:23.

since Augustine have sought to instruct believers in how and why to obey the Lord. Therefore, the following section of this paper will primarily investigate books on Christian obedience and maturity that also discuss Christian motivation. The researcher chose most of these books because they are based in Reformed theology but also have a very practical focus. The researcher also sought out books whose authors seem to embrace the essential concepts of Christ-centered preaching.

Christian books, much like the Bible, are full of motivations to obey Christ. Jerry Bridges, a Reformed theologian who works for the Navigators and has written many helpful books on Christian growth, says, “We should be committed...out of a grateful response to God’s grace, not to try to earn God’s blessings. Our motivation for commitment, discipline, and obedience is important to God, perhaps even more so, than our performance.”¹¹⁸ John Piper goes as far as to say that “an act does not qualify as love unless it involves right motives.”¹¹⁹

“Mere acquisition of personal gain” is not a truly Christian motive. Gratitude for Christ’s mercy towards us is.¹²⁰ At the same time, personal gain can be a part of proper motivation. Charles Hodge, the Princeton theologian, is helpful on this subject:

As the proper motive for acts of benevolences, a desire for the happiness of others and a concern for God’s will, human wisdom says it is wrong to appeal to any selfish motive. The wisdom of God, while reaching the entire abnegation of self and requiring us to hate even our own life when in conflict with the glory of God, tells all who thus deny themselves that in doing so they are promoting their own interests most effectively. Anyone who loses his life will save it...There can be no hypocrisy in the matter, however. The one who is rewarded in this way is not the person who pretends to deny himself...while in fact he acts for himself...It is only

¹¹⁸ Bridges, *Growing Your Faith*, 27.

¹¹⁹ Piper, *Desiring God*, 101.

¹²⁰ Chapell, *Holiness by Grace*, 193.

those who sincerely put themselves after others who will be preferred before them. From this we may learn that it is right to present people with the divinely ordained consequences of their actions as motives for controlling their conduct. It is right to tell people that obedience to God and devotion to his glory and the good of others will effectively promote their own welfare.¹²¹

This quotation is helpful in many respects. First, it points to how important inner motives are. Second, it shows how many different motivations should properly mingle in believers' hearts when they choose to obey. Further, it describes how different truths should motivate believers in their fight with sin.

Outward obedience without attention to motivation is not what the Lord desires from his people. Others agree: "The Law's demands are inward, touching motive and desire, and are not concerned solely with outward actions."¹²² God knows this and thus pays special attention to motives in his Word. One of the ways he does this is by giving different motives that he knows his people will need in different seasons. The more motives and details we see in the biblical story, the more glorious Christ, the supreme motive, looks in the end.¹²³ As mentioned before, "God's loving mercy" should be our primary motive or the spring from which all other motives flow.¹²⁴ "Mercy stimulates the gratitude that is the only enduring motivation for effective Christian service."¹²⁵ J. I. Packer, the author and theologian, says, "From the plan of salvation I learn that the true

¹²¹ Charles Hodge, *2 Corinthians* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1995), 171.

¹²² Ernest F. Kevan, *The Grace of Law* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1976), 63.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹²⁴ Chapell, *Holiness by Grace*, 185.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 192.

driving force in authentic Christian living is, and ever must be, not the hope of gain, but the heart of gratitude.”¹²⁶

Love for God, His Glory and His Pleasure

John Calvin, the great French theologian, teaches that “the Christian life receives its strongest motive to God’s work through the person and redemptive act of Christ.”¹²⁷ He goes on to say that if a Christian’s past is rooted in God’s cleansing us from sin, then Christians should be motivated by that to strive for daily holiness. If Christians’ future destiny is to live in heaven with no spot or blemish, then they should be compelled to obey in holiness today.¹²⁸ David Clyde Jones, a professor of systematic theology, says that “the impelling motive of the Christian life is love for God.”¹²⁹ This love for God is rooted in his love for us.¹³⁰ Jones goes on to say that loving God like a child loves a parent “is motivated by the thought of pleasing one’s heavenly Father and so yields the true obedience of a willing mind.”¹³¹ He thus ties tightly together the motives of loving God and pleasing God. All a Christian’s motives ought to be rooted in love for God “and a desire to glorify Him.”¹³² Charles Hodge, the great Princeton theologian, agrees, saying that love for God and a desire to glorify him are the best motives for sanctification.¹³³

¹²⁶ J. I. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1992), 75.

¹²⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* vol. 1, ed. John McNeill (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 686.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 686-687.

¹²⁹ David Clyde Jones, *Biblical Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 16.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 44-49, 94.

¹³¹ Jones, 40.

¹³² Bridges, *Growing Your Faith*, 27.

¹³³ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 230.

The main motivation for obedience, according to Louis Berkhof, renowned Reformed systematic theologian, is gratitude to God for all he has done for you.¹³⁴ J.I. Packer has written that Christians should be motivated to find ways to express their love and gratitude to God.¹³⁵ The love for God and gratitude toward God that believers feel should be the primary motivation for walking in the ways of Christ.

Saying that love for Christ should be a Christians' primary motive does not mean Christians have to feel in each moment that they love God. Rather, Jerry Bridges teaches, believers should think through their motivation and know that at the root, the reason they obey is their love for God in response to his love for them.¹³⁶ In reference to 2 Corinthians 5:14, Bridges goes on to show that "Christ's love is the constant wellspring of Paul's motivation every day." Christ-centered preachers must continuously stay true to love as their supreme motivation, while being faithful to all the other motivations that flow from and to it.¹³⁷ John Murray states: "Love is both emotive and motive; love is feeling and it impels to action...[Love is] intensely preoccupied with him who is its supreme object, and therefore intensely active in the doing of his will."¹³⁸

Multiple motives here are tied together: the desire to please the Lord is actually another way to express love for the Lord. Pleasing the Lord flows directly from a person's affections and desires. Emotional love for the Lord leads to a volitional love for the Lord. So, there is a love for the Lord that makes us love what he loves and thus

¹³⁴ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 543.

¹³⁵ J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1993), 186.

¹³⁶ Jerry Bridges, *Growing Your Faith* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2004), 27-28.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹³⁸ John Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 22-23.

causes us to enjoy doing his pleasure even for our own pleasure. There is also a love for the Lord that is committed to obeying him even when one can find no personal joy in the task. St. Francis de Sales, bishop of Geneva from 1602-1622, further explains: “We express our love for God chiefly in two ways – spontaneously (affectively), and deliberately (effectively)... In the first of these ways we grow fond of God, of what he likes; in the second we serve God, do what he enjoins. The first way unites us with God’s goodness, the second urges us to carry out his will.”¹³⁹

One of the ways that God shows his love for us is in the discipline he gives us when we disobey. Thus, his discipline, driven by his love, motivates us towards future obedience. Again, multiple motives work together here. The pain of discipline, combined with the grace of God’s love and severe mercy, motivates us to obedience.¹⁴⁰ One of the ways believers can know that God’s discipline is loving and not merely punitive is that it is always preparing us for future obedience.¹⁴¹

Gratitude

Donald Whitney teaches that salvation is the greatest of all possible gifts.

Gratitude for that gift ought to drive our obedience.¹⁴²

The heir of heaven serves his Lord simply out of gratitude; he has no salvation to gain, no heaven to lose;...now out of love to the God who chose him, and who gave so great a price for his redemption, he desires to lay out himself entirely to

¹³⁹St. Francis de Sales, *Treatise on the Love of God*, trans. Vincent Kern (Westminster, MD: Newman, 1962), 217.

¹⁴⁰Chapell, *Holiness by Grace*, 160-161.

¹⁴¹Ibid., 162.

¹⁴²Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), 118-119.

his Master's service...The child of God works not for life, but from life; he does not work to be saved, he works because he is saved.¹⁴³

Joe Wall, who has written about the judgment seat of Christ, also teaches that we obey based on our response to how Christ has loved us.¹⁴⁴ Bolton agrees that "God's goodness is a motive."¹⁴⁵ He is zealous to exalt God's mercy over his rewards as our primary motive for obedience.¹⁴⁶

John Piper teaches that it is wrong to obey God out of a "debtor's ethic." "In the debtor's ethic the Christian life is pictured as an effort to pay back the debt we owe to God. Usually, the concession is made that we can never fully pay it off...This debtor's ethic often lies, perhaps unintentionally, beneath the words, 'We should obey Christ *out of gratitude*'."¹⁴⁷ This type of gratitude is wrong and unbiblical. "The most common way of talking about motivating Christian obedience is scarcely mentioned in the Bible...read the Old Testament in vain for texts that make gratitude the explicit motive or power for obedience."¹⁴⁸

As much as Piper attacks the dangers of gratitude as the primary motivator for believers, even he acknowledges its usefulness. As long as gratitude for past grace is mingled with trust in God's continued grace that enables me to obey today and tomorrow,

¹⁴³ Charles Spurgeon, "Serving the Lord with Gladness," in *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit* vol. 13 (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1989), 495-496.

¹⁴⁴ Wall, 24.

¹⁴⁵ Bolton, 169.

¹⁴⁶ Bolton, 171-176.

¹⁴⁷ John Piper, *Future Grace* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1995), 33.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

gratitude can be a helpful motivator.¹⁴⁹ One should remember that all our efforts to serve the Lord can never repay him because the Lord enables all a believer's good deeds with fresh, new grace for each task. So, in reality, a believer never makes one step of progress in paying God back. Rather, all obedience a believer produces truly only further indebts him or her to God's free, sustaining and enabling grace.¹⁵⁰ Remembering this truth frees gratitude to be a proper motivation. The Bible may explicitly mention gratitude as a motive only once, but gratitude, as a theme, appears in the scriptures often. Hebrews 12:28 is the passage that clearly and explicitly mentions grace as a motivator for obedience; Joshua 24:1-14 is one of numerous passages that thematically reference gratitude for what God has done in the past as a motivation for future obedience.

Reverence/Fear of the Lord

Many people initially come to Christ for salvation out of a right fear of God's punishment. But after a person becomes a Christian, fear of punishment should not continue as a motivation for obedience, "other than as a standing warning against apostasy."¹⁵¹

For the believer, there is a wrong way to fear God and a right way. "The fear of terror makes us want to run away and hide; the fear of honor leads us to stand up and worship. The gospel removes the fear of terror as a source of motivation in the Christian

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 48-49.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 38.

¹⁵¹ Jones, 43.

life. Punishment has no power to rehabilitate.”¹⁵² We should rather fear the fatherly discipline that comes upon God’s children when they disobey.¹⁵³

John MacArthur, a famous California author and radio Bible teacher, says that the fear of the Lord is not just a possible motive for Christian obedience, but it is a necessary one. He describes this proper fear as “reverence...and...fear of God’s displeasure...The deeper our sense of our own guilt, the more profound should be our dread of God’s displeasure...Without that sort of fear, genuine repentance is not even possible.”¹⁵⁴ He goes on to say that the fear of the Lord includes or leads to a fear of sin, which is a healthy thing that Christians should cultivate in order to spare them pain in this life.¹⁵⁵ David Clyde Jones, who writes on biblical ethics, says that believers should not be afraid of punishment, “but they are sobered by the awesome transaction: Christ died for our sins.”¹⁵⁶ Similarly, John Piper describes proper fear in this way: “fear the terrible insult it would be to God if you do not trust in his gracious promises of power and wisdom on your behalf.”¹⁵⁷ In another book, he writes, “Because we are all sinners, there is in our reverence a holy dread of God’s righteous power;...this dread is not a paralyzing fright full of resentment against God’s absolute authority. It finds release in brokenness and contrition and grief for our ungodliness.”¹⁵⁸ These quotes are helpful for distinguishing

¹⁵² Jones, 41.

¹⁵³ Wall, 24.

¹⁵⁴ John MacArthur, *What the Bible says About Parenting*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 78-80.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 80.

¹⁵⁶ Jones, 41.

¹⁵⁷ Piper, *Future Grace*, 35.

¹⁵⁸ Piper, *Desiring God*, 80.

between the sinful fear of a slave who trembles before God as an evil master and that the proper fear of a loving child who is humbled before his merciful father and savior.

Bridges agrees and admits that love for Christ is not the only motivation for proper obedience. Reverence should motivate as well.¹⁵⁹ He points out that God's discipline should motivate believers, but that even God's discipline is rooted in his grace.¹⁶⁰ Bridges advises Christians who struggle with this tension:

Don't be discouraged if you realize your motives have been largely merit-oriented. Just begin now to move toward grace motives. Begin to think daily about the implications of the grace of God in your life. Memorize and meditate frequently on such scripture passages such as Romans 12:1 and 2 Corinthians 5:14-15.¹⁶¹

Meditating on Christ's mercy ought to transform all the Christian's sinful, selfish motives into pure and holy ones.¹⁶²

Love for One's Neighbor

Another motive often discussed in Christian literature is that of love for one's neighbor. The pioneering missionary Hudson Taylor had two great motivations: his love for Christ and his love for the lost who were dying and going to hell.¹⁶³

Here again is a way of serving others that can look godly but in truth be sinful. Richard Foster, famous for his teaching on the spiritual disciplines, writes that much of so-called Christian service is done out of self-righteousness and self-seeking. The key to

¹⁵⁹ Bridges, *Growing Your Faith*, 31.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁶² Dave Harvey, *When Sinners Say I Do* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2007), 82.

¹⁶³ Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor, *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 125.

identifying self-righteous and self-seeking motives is to observe how much concern is directed toward rewards. If someone serves and demands an external reward, this may be proof of faulty motivation.¹⁶⁴ Love for God and fellow man should be at the heart of all Christian obedience, especially in serving one another. The more we love God, the more we should begin to love the others made in his image. “There is no better fuel for service that burns longer and provides more energy than love.”¹⁶⁵

Joy

John Piper, a Reformed Baptist pastor who has written extensively on motivations, points out that it was Jesus’ joy that motivated him to obey the Father.¹⁶⁶ Pascal, the French Christian mathematician, said, “All men seek happiness without exception. They all aim at this goal however different the means they use to attain it...They will never make the smallest move but with this as its goal. This is the motive of all actions of all men, even those who contemplate suicide.”¹⁶⁷ If God has truly hardwired all humans to seek personal happiness, it should come as no surprise if God intended his messengers to motivate people with this natural, instinctive desire. Piper further tells us that many missionaries, through their desire for joy in God, have been

¹⁶⁴ Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), 12-14.

¹⁶⁵ Whitney, 122-123.

¹⁶⁶ John Piper, “Joy and the Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World,” *The Supremacy of Christ in a Postmodern World*, eds. John Piper and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 71.

¹⁶⁷ Blaise Pascal, *Pascal’s Pensees*, trans. W. F. Trotter (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1958), 113.

motivated to suffer hardship for Christ.¹⁶⁸ One author summed it up by saying that a “spontaneous affection” for God should motivate our duty.¹⁶⁹

Samuel Bolton writes:

The godly man...parts with sin as poison, as an accursed thing which he desires to be rid of, and embraces holiness as his happiness. He thirsts to enjoy it and to be swallowed up by it...[T]he godly man does duty after the manner in which a healthy man feeds, not merely because he needs food, but because he desires it and delights in it. The one man engages in duty as if it were medicine, not food. He is reluctant to perform it; he has no pleasure in it...The one cries: “The good that I would do, I cannot do; the evil that I would not do, I do.” The other man cries: “The good that I have no desire to do, I do; and the evil that I desire to do, I dare not do.” The latter would sin, but dares not because of wrath; he does duty but has no heart for it.¹⁷⁰

Joy in obedience is a clear sign of true salvation. One’s own joy is an essential motive for Christian obedience.

Piper continues with this idea: “It is unbiblical and arrogant to try and worship God for any other reason than the pleasure to be had in him...Not his gifts, but him. Not ourselves, but him...[S]eeking one’s own happiness is not a sin; it is a simple [desire] given in human nature. It is a law of the human heart as gravity is a law of nature.”¹⁷¹ He goes on to explain that many Christians believe their desires for pleasure are too strong and that is why they sin so much; but, in reality, their desire for true pleasure is not strong enough. If Christians had stronger desires for true pleasure in God, this would go a long way in defeating sin in their lives.¹⁷² Piper even says that it is evil if we come to God

¹⁶⁸ John Piper, *Dangerous Duty of Delight* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2001), 35-36.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁷⁰ Bolton, 144.

¹⁷¹ John Piper, *Desiring God* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1996), 16.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 16-17.

without some “thirsting after the reward of his fellowship.”¹⁷³ Christians must be motivated to some degree by a desire for joy in God. Is there a tension between serving God for our joy and serving God for his glory? Piper says no. He says that as believers are motivated by their joy in God, the two motives actually become one. The Christian’s joy does not compete with God’s glory as a motive; rather, true Christian’s joy is found within God’s glory.¹⁷⁴

The pursuit of pleasure is an essential motive for every good deed... [I]f you aim to abandon the pursuit of full and lasting pleasure, you cannot love people or please God... [T]he proper “gain” to be motivated by is the happiness one gets in the act of love itself or in the good achieved by it...[T]he moral value of an act of love is [not] ruined when we are motivated to do it in anticipation of our own joy in it and from it.¹⁷⁵

This radical statement cuts against the grain of much popular wisdom. Even in sacrificially loving others, personal joy should be a motivating factor. The sin comes in seeking our pleasure alone in isolation, forgetting others. Christians illustrate true holiness when joy motivates them to share joy with others through acts of love.¹⁷⁶

Another way joy can motivate is when it is taken away. God disciplines believers in part to make them grieve over their sin so that they will never want to do it again.¹⁷⁷ God uses our delight in him, his Word, his law and his ways as a great motivator to obedience.¹⁷⁸ He can also use the joy we get from rewards he has given us to motivate

¹⁷³ Ibid., 97.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 253.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 97-100.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 100-101.

¹⁷⁷ Samuel Bolton, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2001), 122-123.

¹⁷⁸ Chapell, *Holiness by Grace*, 185-186.

future obedience.¹⁷⁹ Murray Brett, a pastor in Georgia, says that the greatest motive of all for repentance is the longing for the joy that comes from restored fellowship with their Father.¹⁸⁰ Donald Whitney, a former pastor and seminary professor, believes there are at least six different motives for Christian obedience. The first is that Christians should serve God merely because they desire to.¹⁸¹

Duty

C. S. Lewis, the Oxford scholar and prolific author, teaches that, at times, duty can be a right motive for obedience. It is not the best motive, but duty can serve as a crutch when love for God is weak.¹⁸² Richard Baxter, one of the Puritans whose works Christians still commonly read today, agrees: “Resolve to spend most of your time in thanksgiving and praising God. If you cannot do it with the joy that you should, yet do it as you can...rather than leave it undone...Doing it as you can is the way to be able to do it better.”¹⁸³ John Eldredge, another Christian author, gives a helpful warning that duty in and of itself is rarely enough to motivate true, heartfelt obedience. Often duty, as a motive, must be coupled with something else, such as the threats of the Lord.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 215.

¹⁸⁰ Murray Brett, *Growing Up in Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books, 2009), 90.

¹⁸¹ Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines For the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1991), 118.

¹⁸² Lyle W. Dorsett and Marjorie Lamp Mead, eds. *C.S. Lewis: Letters to Children* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 276.

¹⁸³ Richard Baxter, “The Cure of Melancholy and Overmuch Sorrow by Faith and Physic,” in *Puritan Sermons*, vol. 3 ed. Samuel Annesley (Wheaton, IL: Richard Owen Roberts Publishers, 1981), 278.

¹⁸⁴ John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 171.

Tension may seem to exist between the motivation to do one's duty and the motivation to seek one's own joy, but such tension should not exist in the life of a mature Christian believer.

There is no conflict between gratification of desire and the enhancement of man's pleasure...and fulfillment of God's command...[T]he operations of saving grace are directed to the end of removing the tension so that there may be, as there was with man at the beginning, the perfect complementation of duty and pleasure, of commandment and love.¹⁸⁵

The more a person matures in Christ, the more all of the legitimate biblical motivations for obedience will become one and overlap perfectly.

Extrinsic

Extrinsic rewards can be proper motivations for Christian obedience. John MacArthur teaches that it is important for Christians to believe and remember that God “deals out consequences for those who violate his righteous principles.”¹⁸⁶ John Piper shows that early Jewish believers, Moses, and Jesus, while on earth, were all motivated to obey by future promises of rewards.¹⁸⁷ Jonathan Edwards taught that believers should be motivated to live out proper Christian virtues by thoughts of the final judgment.¹⁸⁸ Chapell says, “We should fear the consequences of our sin. The avoidance of consequences (of which a loving God warns) is a legitimate motive for turning from wrongdoing. Still, we must be even more overwhelmed by the love of our God, or we cannot be holy.” God's discipline slows Christians from abusing his grace. God's

¹⁸⁵ John Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 38-39.

¹⁸⁶ John MacArthur, *What the Bible says about Parenting*, 79.

¹⁸⁷ Piper, *Dangerous Duty of Delight*, 49-51.

¹⁸⁸ Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 198-201.

discipline that believers rightly fear is truly rooted in his love for them and his desire to spare them the painful consequences of sin.¹⁸⁹

Sometimes unbelievers do good things totally for the sake of avoiding pain and gaining pleasure. So, what separates a Christian motivated by extrinsic rewards and consequences from a non-believer similarly motivated? Samuel Bolton, who served as Master of Christ's College and Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University, quotes John Calvin, the French theologian of the Reformation, as saying: "Glory is not the wages of a servant, but the inheritance of a son."¹⁹⁰ This summation may be the most helpful explanation of the distinction. For mature believers, it is fine to be motivated by heavenly rewards as long as they know that they are not purchasing rewards through their obedience.¹⁹¹ Bolton is insightful on this issue as well:

The principle that moves the one spirit to duty is slavish, the other childlike. In one case the man does things in a legal spirit, either hoping to get rewards by it, or fearing punishments if he omits the duty. The godly man...goes about duty for the sake of obtaining communion with God, and knows it to be his reward and happiness to have that communion, while the lack of it is the greatest punishment he can endure. The one man does these things as his delight, and the other as his burden...To the man who has to do with nothing but duty while he is performing duty, to him duty is tedious; but to those who have to do with God...in their duties, to them duty is a delight...[God] it is whom he has in his eyes, and whom he labours after in prayer, even if he cannot enjoy Him.¹⁹²

There is much insight in Bolton's words. Two instances of outward obedience may look identical and yet be very different because of their underlying motivations. Alone, a desire for rewards and a fear of pain are not Christian motives. They must be married to a

¹⁸⁹ Chapell, *Holiness by Grace*, 194.

¹⁹⁰ Bolton, 160.

¹⁹¹ Bolton, 190.

¹⁹² Bolton, 141.

love for Christ. Not that other rewards cannot be desired, but Christ must be the supreme desire and reward. The lack of experiencing Christ must be the primary pain the believer avoids as he matures.

Bolton further expounds the importance of keeping eternal rewards married to Christ by quoting Augustine:

They must not be held singly and solely, but conjunctively and jointly with God's glory; not absolutely, but subordinately to that glory... "Rather ten thousand times Christ without Heaven, than Heaven without Christ. But seeing that Thou hast joined them together, so that I cannot enjoy one without the other, then give me both...but not Christ for heaven, but Heaven, O Lord, for Christ." And Augustine has said: "He loves Thee not, O Lord, who loves something before Thee, which he loves not on account of Thee."...Heaven and glory...enliven us in our way and in our moving.¹⁹³

It is not wrong for a person to look intentionally to future eternal rewards as motivations for obedience, but the rewards must never be one's sole motivation, or even one's primary motivation. Christ and the enjoyment of him must remain front and center in the mature believer's heart in order to prevent idolatry. Piper makes a helpful distinction here. It would be wrong to be motivated by a future reward that had no natural connection to the act being done. It would be sinful to serve Christ, even though you hated Christ, just to go to heaven after death. Love and the enjoyment of Christ must be a part of a believer's motivation to obey Christ today. That love for and enjoyment of Christ is organically connected to a desire for the reward of knowing more of Christ in heaven.¹⁹⁴

When someone is first saved, the new believer may be primarily motivated by the fear of hell and the desire for heaven. God may use these things to draw the person to

¹⁹³ Bolton, 192.

¹⁹⁴ Piper, *Desiring God*, 117-119.

Christ and holiness. The fear of hell and the desire for heaven may initially be “his two great springs of action.”¹⁹⁵ But, as he or she matures, the new believer should begin to fall more in love with Christ and enjoy his presence, so that Christ himself becomes the believer’s primary motivation.¹⁹⁶

When speaking of eternal rewards in the next life, Bolton is very helpful. He shows how love for Christ, personal joy, and desire for future rewards fit perfectly together, with no contradiction, in the heart of a mature believer. He further says:

That which God has propounded as an incentive to obedience, we may rightly have regard to as we render obedience; and indeed God has so propounded it. If motives may be found in the Word to quicken us to obedience, then certainly we may keep them before us in our obedience. But God has without doubt presented glory and heaven as a motive to quicken us to obedience...[T]his eternal reward is the enjoyment of God, of Christ, of the Spirit. It is perfect freedom from sin, it is perfect holiness, it is indeed grace glorified.¹⁹⁷

Bolton quotes many verses to prove that God often motivates his people to obedience with the promise of future heavenly rewards, but he is careful to show how such promises ultimately center on Christ and grace. If someone longs for heaven primarily to prevent further temporal miseries, they are probably in sin. But if they long for heaven out a desire for more direct fellowship with Christ, they are certainly not wrong in their desires.¹⁹⁸

According to Bolton, merely knowing about eternal rewards is not enough; believers should be motivated by their interest in them. He uses Hebrews 10:34-36 as an example of how Moses compared future glory with temporal glory and made decisions in

¹⁹⁵ Bolton, 194.

¹⁹⁶ Bolton, 193.

¹⁹⁷ Bolton, 162-164.

¹⁹⁸ Bolton, 200.

light of his desire for the heavenly reward. Believers today should do likewise. Bolton teaches that this in no way impedes a Christian's freedom in grace but rather, "the hope and expectation of the glory which God has reserved for us, all conspire to quicken us in our obedience and thereby to make us free indeed in our obedience to God."¹⁹⁹ He insightfully points out that the Bible nowhere rebukes a person for loving eternal rewards too much, though it often rebukes people for loving the rewards of this present life too much. Preachers, then, should learn from this and emphasize future rewards as much as the Bible does.²⁰⁰

Randy Alcorn teaches that a main motivator for the sacrificial giving of money is the eternal rewards that are promised in return.²⁰¹ The idea of future rewards can be confusing to Christians. If Christ alone gets someone to heaven, how can I be rewarded based on my deeds? The Bible does teach that Christians will receive rewards for their good deeds, and it uses these rewards as a motive to encourage believers to take obedience seriously.²⁰² Bolton writes that future rewards can motivate obedience; he even states that they must. He believes that the promises of future reward are the primary promises God uses to strengthen us to suffer well in this world. "God gives us these in order to help faith against sense, to furnish faith with arguments against the carnal reasonings of the flesh, and to strengthen us in the greatest straits and distresses the world

¹⁹⁹ Bolton, 164-165.

²⁰⁰ Bolton, 199-200.

²⁰¹ Randy Alcorn, *Money, Possessions and Eternity* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2003), 123.

²⁰² Joe Wall, *Going for Gold* (Houston, TX: Xulon, 2005), 20-24.

can bring upon us.”²⁰³ Bolton uses Moses as an example of how future rewards should motivate believers to obedience. Moses thought about future rewards

to cheer him in his way and give him encouragement, lest he should think of the great things he had refused and lest the flesh should begin to tell him that he had made a hard bargain...By this he renews his strength and gets new and fresh encouragement to continue his journey. He does not make this a reason why he undertakes the journey.²⁰⁴

But it is urgently important to emphasize that when we obey to get a reward we have not merited the reward. There is a terrible pitfall here to avoid. Jerry Bridges helps “distinguish between a meritorious cause of God’s blessing and an instrumental cause. The meritorious cause is always the merit of Christ. We can never add to what he has already done to procure God’s blessing on our lives. The instrumental cause, however, is the means or avenues God has ordained to use.”²⁰⁵ It is not wrong for Christians to obey with the motive of getting a reward as long as they realize that they are not meriting or deserving that reward. They are merely walking in the way of the Lord, a path that God promises to bless through the merit of Christ. The desire for any reward must be connected to the desire for Christ and his glory. Chapell illustrates this concept, suggesting that God’s promises to use our lives to influence others for God’s glory should motivate us to obey.²⁰⁶

Piper warns that the motives of avoiding threats and gaining rewards can be used wrongly. Someone can pursue a relationship with God simply to experience blessing or personal gain, without love for Christ. So while Christ-centered preachers must learn to

²⁰³ Bolton, 201.

²⁰⁴ Bolton, 193.

²⁰⁵ Bridges, *Disciplines of Grace*, 178.

²⁰⁶ Chapell, *Holiness by Grace*, 212-213.

preach and use all the motivations of the Bible, they must also remember to keep Christ at the center.²⁰⁷ Chapell adds this warning:

Because God's eternal purposes may require the forfeiture of earthly benefits, we cannot make temporal rewards the chief motive of our obedience. Such rewards are not absolutely promises in Scripture and would be unsuitable as the chief aim of our lives. If Christians always received material blessing as a recompense for obedience, then it would be impossible to separate personal duty from divine bribery.²⁰⁸

Bolton agrees with Chapell's concern, especially regarding temporal and physical rewards, such as "health, comfort, food, raiment, house, shelter, riches, freedom, deliverance, and so on."²⁰⁹ He discusses this point at length and arrives at some healthy conclusions. Basically, he states that temporal rewards cannot be the primary motives for a Christian's obedience. They are mentioned in scripture, so they are to be used in some way, never as the "supreme grounds and ends in service [but only as the] subordinate grounds and ends."²¹⁰ They must be secondary to God and his glory in our hearts. If temporal rewards are at the forefront of someone's heart, then "he that will serve God for something will serve the devil for more. If he can increase his wages, he is for any master."²¹¹ Piper agrees that believers should not be motivated in their Christian service by a desire for temporal things but rather should be motivated by a desire for God himself.²¹²

²⁰⁷ John Piper, *When I Don't Desire God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 36.

²⁰⁸ Chapell, *Holiness by Grace*, 210.

²⁰⁹ Bolton, 163.

²¹⁰ Bolton, 166.

²¹¹ Bolton, 166-168.

²¹² Piper, *Desiring God*, 67.

Bolton further distinguishes the role that temporal rewards may rightly play in a believer's life. His summation is that they are not primary in a Christian's motivation but merely augment it. "The enjoyment of these good things in this life is not the ground of a Christian man's obedience. They are not that which sets him to do service to God, even though they may quicken him in service. They are not the spring of motion. At the most, they are but oil to the wheels to keep them in motion and to inspire motion."²¹³ He goes on to explain:

The enjoyment of temporal good is not the immediate end of a Christian's obedience, for, if so, it renders him servile and mercenary in his obedience, and no son-like and free...He has higher ends than these. He has a more noble spirit, a more free-born soul, than will permit him to make anything he receives from God the main end of his obedience to God.²¹⁴

In summary, on the topic of temporal rewards, Bolton says:

Things of this life are no part, not so much as a pin, of the workmanship of a gracious soul. They are too low to move one wheel of a Christian's frame. At best they are but oil to the wheel, and oil is not the source of motion, but merely a help in motion. The things of this world can neither be the reason nor the object of the obedience of a gracious heart. They neither set us to work, nor do they keep us working. The enjoyment of them may come in to quicken us to work and in work; but that is all...[W]e must distinguish between that which is the true motive of our Christian life as a whole, and that which may constitute the motive and end of a particular duty...[O]ur present wants may be the main and particular ground for performing a particular duty at a certain time. But, no hope of worldly and outward blessing can be the hinge upon which the whole frame of our Christian life moves.²¹⁵

Here again, some motives are higher and more important than others. Some motives may be fine to motivate a particular duty but should not be the fundamental motivation of an

²¹³ Bolton, 168.

²¹⁴ Bolton, 169.

²¹⁵ Bolton, 177-178.

entire Christian life. Also, many different motivations can work together in unison, providing motivation for an entire life of Christian obedience.

Further Motivations

Finally, Wayne Grudem delineates several Christian motives that few others mention, including “the need to keep a clear conscience before God,...the desire to be a ‘vessel for noble use’ and have increased effectiveness in the work of the kingdom,...the desire for a deeper walk with God,...the desire that angels would glorify God for our obedience,... [and] the desire for peace ...in our lives.”²¹⁶ Even these motives which are rarely mentioned in the Bible ultimately are rightly used only when they are centered on Christ as well.

Motivations via Preaching

The researcher will also explore writings about Christ-centered preaching, works on homiletics, and materials written for pastors. Because of the focus of this study, books written by men who seem to be committed to Christ-centered preaching will be primary. Texts that specifically address how a preacher motivates in sermons will receive significant attention as well. One of the main purposes of a sermon is to motivate Christians to live in a way that glorifies God.²¹⁷

One of the primary things that separates a sermon from a simple lecture is the preacher’s aim to motivate his listeners to obey God. Without that aim, it is hard to call the speaking preaching.²¹⁸ Michael Spencer warns Christian pastors: “Why Christians do

²¹⁶ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 757-758.

²¹⁷ Jay Adams, *Preaching with Purpose* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 31.

²¹⁸ Adams, 44.

what they do is just as important as what they do. Bad motives ruin good acts.”²¹⁹ John Piper echoes the importance of motivation by asserting that modern-day churchgoers expect a pastor to be a motivator.²²⁰ Daniel Doriani, a pastor and former seminary professor, also points out that different types of motivators motivate us in different ways. Often, the law’s requirements will motivate us in light of our duty, whereas God’s gifts motivate us in light of our character.²²¹

Chapell teaches that “there is no more powerful motivation to holiness than the love of God manifested in Christ’s redemptive work... When love motivates, then the Lord, his purposes, and his glory are our aim... Without this, no application challenges the believer to serve any object greater than self.”²²² He goes on to say that a pastor must show from the text how God gives grace that motivates obedience.²²³ “Our entire motivation for godly living must come as a response to his love.”²²⁴ This assertion is ultimately true, but there are multiple ways in which Christ shows his love to us and multiple ways in which he motivates us with that love. Chapell explains that even God’s discipline is really an expression of his love. Not only that, the more we understand

²¹⁹ Michael Spencer, “Lifestyle and Discipleship,” *Modern Reformation* 18:6 (September/October 2009), 20. John Piper, *Brothers, We are Not Professionals* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2002), 33.

²²⁰ John Piper, *Brothers, We are Not Professionals*. (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2002), 33.

²²¹ Daniel Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2001), 111. This is not a book on homiletics, but has important points for homiletics.

²²² Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 209.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 209.

²²⁴ S. B. Narramore, *No Condemnation: Rethinking Guilt Motivation in Counseling, Preaching and Parenting* (San Jose, CA: Resource Publications, 2007), 311.

God's love, the more God's discipline should properly motivate us.²²⁵ Spurgeon is helpful here:

We should not hide truth for a moment, but we should have wisdom so to preach it [and thus lead] brethren into the full circle of gospel doctrine... You can sicken a man with the honey with which you meant to sweeten his mouth. The great mercy of God has been preached unguardedly, and has led hundreds into licentiousness.²²⁶

A preacher must be careful never to preach a “synagogue sermon,” meaning a sermon that would work in a Jewish synagogue because of its lack of connection to the redemptive work of Christ.²²⁷ At the same time, even while connecting all passages to God's redemptive love, the preacher must faithfully use all the motives presented in the text. Spurgeon teaches that God's love is a lofty attribute among equals. Among God's attributes, it offers the best motivation for God's people, but, Spurgeon warns, “Do not extol the single attribute of love,...but regard love in the high theological sense ... [L]ike a golden circle, it holds within itself all the divine attributes; for God were not love if He were not just and did not hate every unholy thing. Never exalt one attribute at the expense of another...[B]e careful not to misrepresent your Lord.”²²⁸

Merit-Based Motives

Christian books on preaching warn of the wrong motives preachers too often encourage. “Pastors must instill obedience not from guilt, shame, or raw duty, but from trust in our all-knowing, truth-telling Lord. Here we are to remind listeners that God's

²²⁵ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 307.

²²⁶ Spurgeon, 190.

²²⁷ Edmund P. Clowney, “Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures,” in *The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Samuel Logan Jr. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1986), 164.

²²⁸ Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, 340.

mercy leads us to obedience and a desire to work out our salvation with fear.”²²⁹ Rules and commands in our teaching are necessary for guidance, but they cannot change hearts. Only the grace of God can change our heart’s desires and thus give us motivation to obey God’s law.²³⁰ One way to spot a wrong motive is to notice if it is based on the idea of earning any merit before God.

If we serve God because we believe he will love us less if we do not...then we are not worshipping God with our actions; we are only pursuing our self-interests. In this case, the goal of our lives is personal promotion or personal protection rather than the glory of God, and even our seemingly moral activities are a transgression of the first commandment.”²³¹

One may do the right thing with the wrong motive and thus turn a good deed into an evil one. Guilt alone is certainly a wrong motive. If the primary motive to obey is a fear that God will no longer love you, this may be evidence that you believe he first loved you based on your works.²³²

Debtor’s Ethic

Piper attacks pastors who motivate with a debtor’s ethic. He defines the debtor’s ethic as saying, “‘God has done so much for you; now what will you do for him?’...The Christian life is pictured as an effort to pay back the debt we owe to God.”²³³ The debtor’s ethic masquerades as a proper motivation of gratitude, but it is founded on the idea that people can merit something before God. God, “guards us from the mindset of a

²²⁹ Doriani, 226.

²³⁰ Ibid., 262-263.

²³¹ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 208.

²³² Doriani, 127.

²³³ Piper, *Brothers, We are Not Professionals*, 334.

debtor by reminding us that all our Christian labor *for* him is a gift *from* him.”²³⁴ Chapell describes the debtor’s ethic in this way: “‘Many view their obedience as the dues that maintain their membership in the kingdom.’...For such people guilty feelings and laborious obedience are penance they do not wish to be denied.”²³⁵

Piper encourages pastors to reveal the hidden pitfalls of various motivations. He suggests that pastors illustrate for their listeners how they can properly be motivated by something such as gratitude or fear, but, he continues, pastors should also show how their listeners might sinfully be motivated by those same things, if used improperly.²³⁶ Piper suggests that pastors direct their sheep’s attention “back on past grace and forward as well to future grace,” meaning, on God’s enabling power.²³⁷

Love for God and Proper Gratitude

As seen in earlier sections, there is a right type of love and gratitude that should motivate our sanctification.²³⁸ Walter Kaiser, a theologian, author and scholar, believes that love is the only right motive to fulfill God’s law.²³⁹ Many Christ-centered preachers believe that love for Christ is the main motivator of true Christian obedience. Chapell tells us that John Bunyan believes love for God to be a much more powerful motivator for obedience, over and beyond the fear of personal harm from God. He goes further to

²³⁴ Ibid., 35.

²³⁵ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 308.

²³⁶ Piper, *Brothers, We are Not Professionals*, 35.

²³⁷ Ibid., 38.

²³⁸ Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1979), 101.

²³⁹ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Old Testament in Contemporary Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1982), 55.

say that “logic and scripture both make it apparent that selfish fear is a greater menace to holiness than assurance of love.”²⁴⁰ The promise of God’s grace is a better stimulant to holiness than the threat of guilt. Preachers must remind listeners that they are already holy because God has accepted them. This truth will motivate them better than wrongly telling them they must work to earn his love and acceptance.

Telling people that God will bless them more if they obey more may be true, but it may not be the best motivator. Telling them, however, that God will not love them if they do not obey is not only false; in the long run, it also does not motivate well.²⁴¹ Explaining the gospel repeatedly and clearly to hearers will motivate people to strive to obey out of gratitude, thanksgiving, and praise. A clear, deep understanding and appreciation of the gospel will give believers a desire to obey. Thus, a good preacher must always explain the why behind obedience and not assume that listeners will adopt the correct motives on their own.²⁴² “When love motivates Christian obedience, the guilt we feel in spiritual failure is the remorse that we have forsaken the one who loves us enough to sacrifice his own son on our behalf. This ‘good guilt’ is not the selfish shame of rejection, nor the self-oriented payment of an emoted penance.”²⁴³ It should produce “renewed zeal for his purposes, a deeper sense of the measure of his grace, and a greater longing to glorify him with our lives.”²⁴⁴

²⁴⁰ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 303.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 304

²⁴² Ibid., 306.

²⁴³ Ibid., 307-308.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 308.

Extrinsic

Doriani summarizes extrinsic Christian motives for obedience: “Christians should live out their heritage, lest we miss the blessings and reap the curses of the covenant.”²⁴⁵ Piper further argues that God primarily motivates believers “with irresistibly desirable promises of enablement...and divine reward.”²⁴⁶ Graeme Goldsworthy, an Australian who has written a good deal on preaching Christ from all scripture, shows how Paul uses the fear of consequences and the desire for blessing as motives for “vigilance and faithfulness.”²⁴⁷ Here, Bryan Chapell, quoting a friend, provides a helpful warning: “There is a longing for heaven and a fearing of hell that is straight from Satan because it is nothing but sanctified selfishness.”²⁴⁸ One key way to keep extrinsic motivation pure is to keep joy in God, rather than love for self, at the center both of one’s desire for rewards and of one’s fear of threats. Preachers have “the right and the responsibility to challenge the impenitent with the necessity of change that will avert discipline,...[but] do not use the denial of love as leverage for holiness. The former cannot produce the latter.”²⁴⁹

Chapell goes further to show that motivating believers by warning them of the consequences of sin is actually a subset of motivating believers with God’s love.

If God did not love, he would not warn. Preachers should not interpret the consequences of sin that scripture reveals to be indications that God’s love is conditional. This instruction does not mean that we should avoid mention of sin’s

²⁴⁵ Doriani, 137.

²⁴⁶ Piper, *Brothers, We are Not Professionals*, 34-35.

²⁴⁷ Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 242.

²⁴⁸ Chapell, *Christ-centered Preaching*, 208.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 307.

biblical consequences. Instead, we should present biblical identification of sin's consequences as the gracious revelation of a loving Father."²⁵⁰

It is important to differentiate between the punitive consequences God gives to the damned and the loving corrections he gives to his children. Chapell explains that the desires to please God and to love others are biblical motives that are really rooted in love from God and for God.²⁵¹

Joy

Piper believes that God often uses joy to motivate, even describing gratitude as a "species of joy."²⁵² Piper also points out that Jonathan Edwards, who many regard to be the greatest American theologian of all time, believed "that the aim of preaching must be joy in the glory of God."²⁵³ Chapell teaches that "we may experience more of God's blessings and sense of his fellowship as a result of our obedience."²⁵⁴ John Broadus agrees: "The minister may lawfully appeal to the desire for happiness and its negative counterpart, the dread of unhappiness."²⁵⁵ Again, joy is powerful motivator, but it must be grounded in one's joy in Christ, never joy apart from him.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 308.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 308.

²⁵² Ibid., 36.

²⁵³ Piper, *When I Don't Desire God*, 80.

²⁵⁴ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 307.

²⁵⁵ John Broadus, *On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*, 4th ed., revised by Vernon Stanfield (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), 117.

Chapter Three

Methodology

This research has explored a variety of biblical motivations that Christian preachers can legitimately use to encourage their listeners to live godly lives. In this project, the researcher seeks to draw parameters for the legitimate and illegitimate motivations of Christian obedience.²⁵⁶ Christian preaching should be faithful to all motivations included in the biblical text, and pastors should not neglect any biblical motivation in the name of Christ-centered preaching. Faithfulness to all biblical motivations is a part of being faithful to the text of scripture. When used correctly, this faithfulness will enhance Christ-centered preaching and prevent many other pitfalls to which Christ-centered preaching is prone.

This chapter will cover the basic research methodology that shaped this study. It will overview the design of the study and show how the researcher selected the participants. Further discussion will describe how data was collected and analyzed. Lastly, the chapter will detail the researcher's position and the limitations of conducting such a study in the field of preaching.

Research Questions

Three main questions guided the research.

1. What motivations does the Bible use in its teaching, and how are they related?

²⁵⁶ Merriam, 59.

2. What different biblical motivations do Christ-centered preachers utilize in their sermons?
3. How do Christ-centered preachers relate the various biblical motivations to the motivation of love for God and Christ?

Design of the Study

This project is a basic qualitative study. Qualitative research balances the writings on an issue with people's actual practices, and it requires the reviewing and analyzing of data during the data collection process.²⁵⁷ In addition to these standard procedures, the current project also employed a small element of action research. The researcher investigated how preachers struggle to motivate their listeners with legitimate biblical motivations and at the same time avoid all illegitimate means of motivation. This is "a specific problem within a specific setting."²⁵⁸ Participants played an active part in the research, dialoguing during interviews about the problem and about several books related to it. The goal of this study was not merely to record raw facts but rather to interpret and organize the data into findings that can help preachers motivate their listeners for Christian living. The topic of motivations in preaching is not one that can easily be represented in numbers and quantities. Qualitative research was therefore a more fitting approach for this project, as it enables the researcher to explain in words, pictures, and examples how preachers emphasize different biblical motivations. Thus, the findings together create a "richly descriptive" product.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷ Merriam, xi.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 4.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 16.

The researcher employed the constant comparative method to analyze the participant data and to help compare and contrast different participants' answers during the interviews. Well-designed, open-ended interview questions allowed the interviewer to ask follow-up questions and ensured that the research efforts were effective.²⁶⁰ Patterns of agreement, as well as interesting instances of disagreement, were evident in the collected data.²⁶¹ The researcher sought to get as close as possible to preachers' thoughts, intentions, beliefs and practices in the area of Christian motivation. Part of that goal was also to understand how preachers "make sense of their experiences" in the pulpit.²⁶² In the end, the overarching goal was "insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis."²⁶³

Design Tools

Participant Sample Selection

This research employed non-probability sampling methods. The purposeful sampling method guided participant selection, with the researcher's goal being to select experts in this field,²⁶⁴ and participants were primarily chosen because of their common preaching style and focus. The participating preachers had to be committed to preaching Christ from all the Scriptures, which, for the sake of the research, narrowed the scope of possible variables in preaching characteristics. The participants also, in the researcher's

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 17.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 30.

²⁶² Ibid., 37.

²⁶³ Ibid., 42.

²⁶⁴ Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research* (San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2009), 77.

view, appeared skilled in applying varied motivations from the Bible in their sermons. The researcher determined whether potential participants were skilled in this area primarily by listening to their sermons. In this way, the researcher sought to collect data of the best practices. Participants had to have at least fifteen years of experience as full time preachers. All participants came from Reformed theological perspectives and are ordained teaching elders in the Presbyterian Church in America. For this reason, they were all male in accordance with that denominational polity. All of the men are currently or have been head pastors of PCA churches in the metro Birmingham, AL area.

The research included the review of five participants' interviews and four participants' sermons. The researcher listened to some of the sermons and read others from transcribed notes – at least four sermons each from four of the participants – in order to learn how these preachers use different motivations in their sermons. To provide the richest data, the researcher chose sermons that, in the researcher's judgment, were likely to reflect multiple biblical motivations.

Data Collection

The researcher interviewed five men separately, each for a span of one-and-a-half to two hours. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed.²⁶⁵ The researcher compared and contrasted all the participants' answers, using the constant comparative method for data analysis. The findings from these comparisons helped to answer all the research questions. The researcher listened to or read some of the participants' sermons in order to compare what the participants said in the interviews with what they actually practiced in preaching, providing triangulation for the interview data. This provided

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 109.

concrete, not abstract, case-study knowledge.²⁶⁶ The goal was to get as close to the “subject of interest” as possible.²⁶⁷ In reading and listening to the sermons, the researcher sought to discover patterns. The researcher could then compare what each participant said he did in the interviews with what he actually did in his sermons.

The interviews were semi-structured, and three main research questions guided them. The researcher interviewed the five different men over a two month period, from October to December, 2011, using the constant comparison method. The interviews did not include any “why” questions, though they did include some hypothetical, ideal position, interpretive and devil’s advocate questions.²⁶⁸ The researcher avoided asking leading questions and was careful not to ask multiple questions at once.²⁶⁹ As much as possible, the interviewer also avoided questions allowing a minimal answer of yes or no, although such questions occasionally introduced a new line of thought within the interviews.²⁷⁰ The interviewer used as many open-ended questions as possible. The questions did not necessarily flow in a standard order during the interviews; instead, they followed the natural flow of each interview.

Because the interviews followed a semi-structured format, the interviewer at times left out some questions or asked them in a different order, depending on the nature and direction of the interview. The researcher digitally recorded the interviews and transcribed them as soon after each interview as possible. The researcher studied the

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 44.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 46.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 97-98.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 99.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 100.

transcriptions of the interviews using a constant comparative method, which Merriam defines as follows:

The basic strategy of this method is just what its name implies—constantly compare. The research begins with a particular incident from an interview, field notes, or document and compares it with another incident in the same set of data or in another set. These comparisons lead to tentative categories that are then compared to each other and to other instances. Comparisons are constantly made within and between levels of conceptualization until a theory can be formulated.²⁷¹

During the interviews, the exact questions varied based on how the participants responded. The researcher sought to pursue topics related to the research and about which the particular participant was knowledgeable or passionate. Thus, to some degree, the participant's interests and responses guided the interview. The researcher's rarely interjected an opinion, to allow for maximum expression from the participant.

The following questions helped to base this research not only on biblical principles but also on the participants' preaching practices. They take account of what the participants actually do, as well as what they say they do. The interview protocol included the majority of these key questions, crafted to allow the interviewees freedom in their responses:²⁷²

1. What biblical texts do you think best balance the most motivations?
2. To what extent do you think the Bible uses love for God as a motivation in contrast to other motivations?
3. How do you motivate in sermons?

²⁷¹ Ibid., 159.

²⁷² Ibid., 90.

4. How do you emphasize love for God as the primary motivation without neglecting other motivations?
5. How do you properly emphasize the secondary motivations without making them primary?
6. How do Christ-centered preachers balance different biblical motivations in their sermons?
7. How do you identify motivations in a certain text?
8. How do you identify the best motivations for your particular context?
9. How have you found it difficult to balance different motivations in your sermons, if at all?
10. How much does your personal “motivational style” affect how you preach?
11. What do Christ-centered preachers see as valid motivations in sermons?
12. What motivations do you most like to use in your sermons?
13. What motivations have you used?
14. What motivations have you neglected?
15. What is the best summary of the most important motivation for believers?

The official interviews always began with the first question, in order to keep the focus on what the Bible prescribes and not on mere personal preferences. The second question almost always followed, though sometimes with varied wording, once the participants finished describing the biblical texts they had chosen.

The third question almost always came up in the interviews, but it often arose in conjunction with questions 10-14. The interviewer always asked question four and, if necessary, question five – though often, in answering question four, the participant

naturally answered question five as well. The interviews also always included question six, unless the participants had already addressed the question in their previous answers.

Most often near the middle of the interview, to refocus the participants on what the Bible prescribes, the interviewer asked question seven. Question eight followed, though the wording sometimes varied, as listed here: “How are you driven by needs you know to be present in your congregation to highlight certain motivations more than others?”

If participants had not already alluded to this difficulty, the interviewer posed question nine. Question ten, part of every interview, often included this question first: “How much do you think pastors have a ‘personal motivational style’ that influences how they preach?”

Question eleven, near the end of the interviews, often began to summarize the participant’s responses, though the interviewer did not ask this question if the participant had already made his answer clear through his other responses. But even if they had hinted at one or two answers to this question earlier, when participants heard the direct question, they often added more. The interviews almost never included question twelve because the answer to that question almost always came out in conjunction with question ten.

If time allowed and if it did not seem redundant by the end of the interview, the interview almost always asked question thirteen. Similarly, unless the respondent had already answered the question while discussing his ‘personal motivational style,’ the interviewer almost always asked question fourteen. Question always provided a good way to summarize and conclude the official interviews.

At times, the interviewer added or adjusted questions based on previous interviews. If an issue came up in one interview that presented a new line of thought about Christian motivation, the interviewer would often address that line of thought in the next interview. If a certain book, author or passage came up as controversial in one interview, the interviewer would then ask the other participants to respond to that issue.

To learn how helpful they would be in the research, the researcher tested these interview questions on professors who have also served as pastors and are known as Christ-centered preachers. The researcher changed a few minor words in order to adjust the emphasis of some questions. All the interviewees received the questions by email before their interviews so that they could review the questions ahead of time if they desired to do so. Four did review the questions. The interviews began with a little small talk and a brief reminder of the purpose of the research. After the participants signed their waivers, the interviewer taped each interview on a voice recorder. The researcher offered each participant a copy of the signed waiver, but all five participants declined the offer. The interviewer later transcribed the interviews on a word processor and studied them to distinguish the most helpful material.

The researcher read each interview transcription fully at least twice and highlighted pertinent answers. In addition, the researcher read at least three times the notes he took during the interviews, underlining answers that spoke most directly and clearly to the research. Themes, patterns and verses that arose from multiple interviews the researcher then categorized under the headings of the main research questions to prepare for writing chapter 4.

When possible, the researcher also read or listened to the participants' sermons. He invited the participants to share specific sermons they believed to be their best examples of Christ-centered preaching or of balancing different motivations in preaching. The researcher used online sermon databases to find and download the participants' audio or printable sermons.

Researcher Position

The author is a Christian who is evangelical and believes the Bible is the supreme authority for all Christian belief and practice. He subscribes to Reformed theology and believes Christ-centered preaching is biblically mandated. He also believes that the whole counsel of scripture should be proclaimed, including all biblical motivations. The researcher is a preacher as well and thus has experience and opinions in this field. He is also an ordained teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church in America and thus shares the majority of theological positions with all five participants. He has lived in Birmingham, AL for twelve years and has had extensive experiences with some of the men in the study. This unique context and the similarities between the researcher and the participants will largely help the researcher to understand and interpret the data. Because of the similarities and shared personal experiences, there is a danger of research bias, but it should not be significant because of the way the researcher posed the interview questions and reviewed the research. The interviews always started with the participants having to ground their initial answers in specific passages, to prove their points, so to speak. They were not allowed to simply discuss the motivations they enjoyed the most. As much as possible, the researcher sought to draw the participants back towards "biblical motivations," not just any motivations. The interviews stayed tethered to the Bible. As

the researcher reviewed the transcripts, he did not use answers that seemed to be based in thin air rather than the Bible. The goal in the interviews and in the reviewing was to preclude the slipping in of many personal opinions.

Study Limitations

This study is limited to Christian preachers who pursue the approach known as Christ-centered preaching in their sermons. There is a problem to be solved in this research, but an exhaustive answer will not be possible.²⁷³ A great deal of material about motivations is likely to surface in this research that can be used in other contexts or studies. Even if a person does not hold to Christ-centered preaching or Reformed theology, this study should be ripe with applications for motivating Christian lives, whether through sermons or other means. Yet, readers must test any generalizations in their particular contexts before applying the findings to another field. The reader bears the ultimate responsibility for what can honestly be applied to other areas and what implications can be drawn.²⁷⁴

There are many other factors that limit this research. First, the sample size is very small. Not only is it small in number but it is small geographically. All of the participants live and work in the same metro area. More than this, all of the men are in the same denomination. All of them minister to similar types of people socio-economically. All of the pastors come from the Reformed perspective. On top of this, all of them are from an older generation, ranging between the ages of forty and eighty.

²⁷³ Ibid., 58.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 179.

Even within this small sample size, the research could only go so deep. The research could consider only a limited number of sermons. The interviews could only last so long, and the interviewer could only ask so many questions.

On top of the aforementioned issues, the research is complex and thus precludes the proclamation of a simple definitive answer to the research question. Opinions conflict on many of the issues involved in the study, and many of these opinions have at least a plausible biblical basis.

Chapter Four

Data Report and Analysis

The purpose of this study was to determine how a person committed to Christ-centered preaching still addresses a wide range of biblical motivations in preaching. This will help to determine what motivations for Christian obedience are biblically legitimate for use in Christ-centered sermons. There are three main areas of interest that shed light on this topic. First, which motivations does the Bible itself use to prompt obedience? Secondly, what do Christ-centered preachers typically do in their sermons? Lastly, how do these preachers relate different motives together around a unifying theme? Three research questions guide this study. In search of answers to these questions, the researcher interviewed five pastors, who are either currently serving or have served as head pastors and who regularly preach and are committed to Christ-centered sermons. This chapter will introduce the participants of the study and present their insights concerning the study questions.

Introduction to Research Participants

While their names have been changed in order to protect their identities, this section will briefly introduce the five study participants. To best understand their comments, it is important to understand the context in which each man ministers. This introduction also provides helpful information for those serving in different contexts who wish to apply this research to their own lives and ministries.

All participants have a common preaching style and focus, each being committed to preaching Christ from all the scriptures. Each participant has had at least fifteen years of experience as a full-time preacher. All participants come from Reformed theological perspectives and are ordained teaching elders in the Presbyterian Church in America. For this reason, they are all male in accordance with that theological position. All of the men are currently or have been head pastors of PCA churches in the metro Birmingham, Alabama area.

Bo is the founding and current pastor of a church with over two thousand members that has contemporary worship services.

Henry is the current pastor of a church that is more traditional, with over four thousand members.

Fred is the founding pastor, who now serves as pastor emeritus, at the church where Henry now pastors.

Jim is the pastor of a church with several hundred members that has a blended worship service.

Al is the pastor of a church with a few hundred members and a high church liturgy.

All of these men have been at their current churches for at least eleven years and preach most Sunday mornings. Their churches all contain a good mix of older and younger believers.

Biblical Motivations in Preaching

Passages

The first study question asks what motivations the Bible uses to bring about obedience and how the Bible relates various motivations to one another. In answer to this question, the study participants shared many different verses and examples. Bo said that the passage he believes best balances the most motivations is Titus 2:11-3:8; it is the “most balanced passage that enables someone to teach exegetically, expositively, the fully orb view of a gospel driven framework.” Bo said that he prefers the word “integration” rather than “balance,” because balance is more of a mirage that one can never fully experience, but integration is a point that you seek. He also said that James 4:1-10 integrates different motivations well, then mentioned Numbers 21:4-9, 2 Corinthians 3:18 and Galatians 6 as additional passages that show different motivations. (Titus 2:13, for example, uses the motivation of “looking” forward to the “appearing” of Christ, which could be called a blessing in this life and the next. James 4:8 uses the motivation of deeper intimacy with God to motivate believers to “draw near” to God, a blessing in this life.)²⁷⁵

Fred’s main passage was 2 Timothy 2:8-13. He showed how this short passage motivates both with a warning about becoming apostate and with a reference to Christ’s love. In verses eight and nine, one sees “love for the Lord and love for others and then a warning...these different motivations all woven together.” Motivations that may seem like polar opposites are seamlessly woven together in the preaching of the great apostle. Fred also used 2 Corinthians 5:9-14, showing how it contains the motives of wanting to

²⁷⁵ When necessary the researcher will supply parenthetical information like this to show which motives are contained in some of the passages the participants referenced.

please God, desiring future rewards, fearing the Lord, and loving Christ. Another participant, Jim, also mentioned 2 Corinthians 5 and highlighted eternity, fear of the Lord, love, position in Christ, and the gospel as motivators. Fred also mentioned John 14:21. Two participants referenced 1 Peter 1: Al used 1 Peter 1:17 to show how Peter seamlessly presents God as father and as judge to motivate people to obedience. Jim also used 1 Peter 1 to show how eternity itself is a motivation, as are the cross and the character of God. But according to Jim, who was referencing the Greatest Commandment, the heart of all motivation is the love and glory of God.

Following is a chart to illustrate the primary passages to which the study participants referred and the primary motivations that they drew from each text.

Texts	Motivations	Interviewees who referred to them
Numbers 21:4-9	Blessings in this life.	Bo
Matthew 22:37	Love for God.	Jim
John 14:21	Blessings in this life.	Fred
2 Corinthians 3:18	Blessings in this life.	Bo
2 Corinthians 5:9-14	Pleasing God, future blessings, fear of Lord, love for God, eternity, position in Christ, the gospel.	Fred, Jim
2 Timothy 2:8-13	Fear of Lord, God's love for us, love for God and others.	Fred
Titus 2:11-3:8	Past grace, blessings in this life and the next.	Bo
James 4:1-10	Fear of God, blessings in this life and the next.	Bo
1 Peter 1:17	God's love for us, fear of God, eternity, the cross.	Al, Jim

Legitimate Motivations

Fear of the Lord

Bo mentioned that warnings are a biblical motivation, but that they are rare in the New Testament. He stated, “because God loves you, if you choose this path, watch out. It will be very unpleasant.” God’s love drives him to bring painful consequences to protect people from their “worst nightmares.” Further, Bo listed God’s discipline is another, separate motive to obey. But he insightfully added that God is always disciplining his people, for even Jesus experienced God’s discipline, as Hebrews 12 shows. So, God’s discipline may consist of the consequences for a particular sin, or it may simply be God bringing hardship into people’s lives to help them grow in holiness. Bo said that the fear of the Lord is a biblical motivation but that it does not in any way include being scared of God. All four other participants disagreed with this point. All others said that the fear of apostasy as seen in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 is a legitimate part of the concept of fearing the Lord. They agreed that implied in this threat is a legitimate reason to be scared of what God might do a professing believer. Augmenting this point, Fred mentioned Romans 8:13 as an additional warning against apostasy. Jim said that Christians should not fear wrath but should fear discipline. He wisely said that the cross removes some fears but develops others.

Henry used Nehemiah 7 and Matthew 7 as two passages that demonstrate different motivations. (These passages show motivations such as the fear of the Lord, the fear of apostasy, and the desire for blessings in this life.) He illustrated, using Philippians 2:12, that the fear of the Lord is a real biblical motive. The idea is that we ought to be very serious as we seek to grow in personal assurance of faith, as 1 Peter 1:10 teaches.

Like Henry, Jim also referenced Philippians 2:12-13, showing how the fear of the Lord appears side by side with assurance in the scriptures.

Rewards

All participants said that God's past love for his people and his promise of future rewards should motivate believers to obey. Fred said God's love for his people, his warnings, his enabling power inside of us that enables his people to obey his commands, and his blessings to his people in this life and the next are all legitimate biblical motives for obedience. Henry and Jim both agreed that the fact that eternity exists should be a motivator.

Rewards can be valid or invalid depending on how they are used. To be valid, a reward must be good for you but must primarily bring glory to God. Jim concluded his thoughts on this topic by saying that many of Paul's motivations and imperatives rest on the believer's "new creation" status and new position in Christ.

Proper Guilt

Al emphasized that there is a right guilt for Christians to feel for their sin because they have offended Christ whom they love and do not want to hurt. (There is a right type of guilt as well as a sinful type of guilt. The right type of guilt is similar to conviction. It is a negative feeling that occurs when one sins because one realizes that he or she has grieved the heart of God. The person also realizes that he or she rightly deserves God's wrath. Wrong guilt, on the other hand, is a negative feeling similar to condemnation that a believer should never feel. This sinful guilt is the feeling that is consumed with keeping a perfect record for the sake of one's own glory or name's sake and is not centered on God and his glory. "When love motivates Christian obedience the guilt we feel in

spiritual failure is the remorse that we have forsaken the One who loves us enough to sacrifice his own Son in our behalf. This ‘good guilt’ is not the selfish shame of rejection nor the self-oriented payment of an emoted penance.”²⁷⁶) Only with this right type of guilt can one really appreciate grace. Jim also believes that there is a right type of guilt that is a good motivator because it points one back to the need for Christ as Savior. Jim also believes that love for the church is valid motivator.

Illegitimate Motivations in Preaching

Bo also said that some Christians are motivated selfishly, merely thinking they do not want to get hurt. But such motivation can be devoid of the love and power of God. Bo said that being too focused on “getting future grace because of obedience” can easily degenerate into a performance mentality if it is used too often. All the study participants agreed that guilt by itself is not a legitimate motive. Guilt, by itself, Jim would call condemnation. All also agreed that the “health and wealth gospel,” which primarily focuses on temporal rewards, provides sinful motivations for obedience. Jim further said that any motive centered on self or personal improvement is wrong. Al agreed and said that if a motive terminates with something being done for a person, such as building a new church to make the pastor happy, that motive is sinful.

Christ-centered preachers should never use illegitimate motivations. But they should use all the legitimate motivations they can, and should see doing so as giving extra grace to God’s people. Jim says, “And I think if you stay with one motivation, you’re in the danger of truncating the spiritual life.” Jim said that rewards, guilt, and love for God can all be good or bad motives depending on how they are used. If one loves God only

²⁷⁶ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 307.

for one's own sake, it is sin. It is also sin if one wants gifts more than he wants the giver. And it is unbiblical to, as a Christian, be racked by condemnation.

Motivations in Preaching

When asked what motivations they saw as legitimate to use in their preaching, the participants answered similarly to the way in which they answered the first interview question about the Bible's use of multiple motivations. But when asked which motivations they each actually used in their preaching, the answers began to vary and become more personal. Their answers will be delineated in this section. Al made the important distinction that Christ-centered preaching does not just mean grace-centered preaching. He made the point that Jesus is the judge, so if a person is truly Christ-centered, the judgment of Christ will come out in his preaching and will factor into the way he motivates his congregation.

How to Find the Motives in a Text

Fred, Bo and Jim mentioned that studying a passage and looking for common themes is one of the best ways to find the main motives a text provides. Jim stated emphatically that all motivations for a sermon should arise from the text. While different texts may emphasize different motivations, every text must be preached within the greater story of the gospel, in which the whole Bible sits.

Henry offered helpful advice about where the search for motivations fits into your sermon preparations. "I think your first thing is to be faithful to the 'telos,' the purpose of the text. And then, what is God motivating us to do?"

Legitimate Motives in Preaching

Sorrow for Sin and Proper Guilt

Henry believes that sorrow over sin is a good motive because God hates sin and his hatred of sin should lead to humility in the lives of believers. Henry is also concerned primarily not about illegitimate motives being used but rather about legitimate motives being left out or truncated. He believes that many preachers refrain from mentioning legitimate motives such as heavenly rewards and the encouragement of others. Jim agreed with this concern, stating that if someone utilizes only one motivation, he truncates motivation in general.

Henry offered further helpful comments on limiting the use of certain biblical motivations.

Today, because of our Christ centered preaching, we think that the only thing that ought to motivate a Christian is their love of Jesus ...that is the primary, the foundation, the capstone, and the walls of everything, absolutely ... that's not the only motivation. I want to follow Jesus and be obedient because I don't want to sin. And the reason I don't want to sin is because I don't want to mess up my ...children's life ...[I]n preaching motivations to holiness, we're only preaching one element of the gospel called justification. And while it's obviously a key, it's not the gospel. The gospel includes regeneration, sanctification, adoption, glorification. Shorthand for the gospel is not justification ...[Some say] God doesn't want you to feel guilty, yeah He does. Guilt is a great gift from God to send you to the one who can forgive you.

Henry asserted that in the name of being grace centered, some Christ-centered preachers rarely or never use many legitimate motives from the Bible. In truth, these preachers are truncating the grace that God wants to give them.

Henry further commented on how godly sorrow and a hatred for sin ought to factor into the Christian's motivation for obedience.

[Y]ou ought to hate that sin because of what it's done to other people ...I don't think the problem is in the guilt feelings ...[W]e, in an effort to let sinners know

we love them and want to help them, have missed the fact that what you are is gracious to sinners. But what the church is doing today, in attempting to communicate grace, is we've become gracious to sin. ...I hate sin because I know it is killing people, it's killing the person who's doing it. I know it's killing their hope and dreams. I know it's leading to death. ... I hate sin because of what it's doing to culture.

Henry asserted that in attempts to give God's grace to people in preaching, God's grace is actually truncated by limiting motives such as proper guilt that may help a person fight sin. He later explained that the key to differentiating between proper guilt and false guilt is what you do with the guilt. If you take your guilt back to Christ and the atonement, the guilt has served a good purpose. But if it drives you back to your own performance, it is sinful guilt. Jim agreed. "Guilt, true guilt can be a motivation. True guilt is not a command that we make up but it's actually feeling the conviction of God ...a pricking of a conscious if you will." This type of guilt should come through in Christ-centered preaching regularly.

The Gospel, Future Glory, Loving God and Pleasing God

Al saw both a person's past salvation from hell and that person's desire for future glory as legitimate motives. According to him, the Westminster Confession of Faith teaches that the love of God and the pleasure of God are distinct and should both motivate believers. Bo said:

[T]he rubric behind every motivation is grace. So warnings are still grace. He says, "I will make all my *goodness* pass by." So no matter what motivation we're talking about, I think it flows out of God's goodness and grace. So warnings are grace. The promise of supernatural benefits is grace. If we see a loving God behind the law, then we recognize that His heart of love is trying to protect us from our worst nightmare (that's the warnings) and His heart of love is trying to draw us into our highest pleasure (that's the idea of benefits). There are consequences and benefits, but ultimately Christ took upon Himself all the curses and He's the one who provides all the benefits in union with Himself ...even

when we talk about the other motivations – that Christ is still the only one we need. If we look to Christ, the supernatural transformation will take place and it won't be so much that we're motivated by benefits and deterred by warnings. It will be that we're being changed supernaturally. So, talking about the warnings, there's a place for it – I'm preaching on Isaiah 2 this week and it's filled with warnings – but ultimately, I have to bring people back to Christ and say now listen, though there will be times where we blow it, you may be in those right now, your hope is that Christ ultimately took the greatest consequence of God's anger, God's wrath, even God's disappointment. God can be disappointed in actions; He's not disappointed in you because if you think He is, He always is. If you can think of a scenario where God is disappointed in your person then there's never a moment where He's not disappointed in you – because there's never a moment, you're always going to sin.

This last point Bo makes leads to a helpful discussion on the fear of the Lord and God's anger towards believers.

Fear of the Lord

Bo did not seem to use the fear of the Lord to motivate his hearers often. But he did say that in his preaching, he warns his hearers that if they are comfortable in their sin, then they are probably not Christians. He also said that when a believer sins, God's heart is grieved; God is hurt and heartbroken by sin. At the same time, all the participants agreed that the fear of the Lord and of consequences should never be seen in the context of punishment but rather should be seen as God's corrective measures. Henry said that a

Christian has to deal with God's anger but not his wrath. Old Testament and New Testament believers experience God's anger the same way. We are more aware of God's patience because of the cross and reconciliation ... people ought to know that their sin is not light and that it displeases God, and God's going to let them know it displeases Him. Because He loves them, that's why He's doing it. ... All of God's wrath for you poured out upon Jesus. But I do want you to know this, you do have to deal with the anger of God. They are not the same. God is angry with you. It's not an anger that sends away His love, and it's not an anger that brings back His wrath, but it is an anger that He will deal with you in displeasure, lovingly, to discipline you.

Henry used the example of God disciplining Ananias and Sapharia in Acts. But Bo disagreed. He believes that the experiences of an Old Testament believer are different

from those of a New Testament believer. He thinks that David and others experienced God's anger but that a believer after Christ should never know that experience. He provided no biblical support for this claim.

Al wisely pointed out from 1 Peter 1:17 that a father who judges is a good picture of "reverent fear... In our...contemporary theology...[when] most people bring up fatherhood, they are going to divorce that from fear." This is a weakness in some Christ-centered preachers. Al later pointed out that "Paul seemed to [at] the same time have a significant fear that he needed to persevere or he had no right to call himself a Christian. But he seemed to have an extraordinarily healthy view of assurance, and tended to speak in very assuring words to congregations in a very broad-based way and you know there were people in there that were" living in outright sin. He later said that in good theology there is a tight ridge that we are supposed to walk on, and we do not like it. We prefer to run to one side where it feels safer and flatter. But God wants his people to stay at the peak of the ridge, balancing, as it were, or integrating both the fear of apostasy and the assurance of salvation.

Al used Nathan the prophet as an example of how a Christ-centered preacher should apply this tension. Although David certainly had (and should have had) assurance of his salvation, that is not what Nathan discussed when he came to confront him. "What Nathan the prophet told king David was the equivalent of turn or burn ...I mean he didn't use those words but that's what he meant. And frankly that's what he needed to say. See, it's the difference. You can get truth out of the Bible by ... hard exegetical work. Wisdom is required [to determine] what truth to speak when." Al applied this to modern preaching, saying that when confronting someone in adultery you should not primarily

talk about assurance of salvation. “It’s true, but it’s not what you tell him. It’s not the need of the hour.” Regarding the tension between the assurance of salvation and the fear of apostasy, Al said, “I don’t resolve it, I just live with it.”

Al was helpful in pointing out one weakness of some Christ-centered preaching:

Sonship or harvest mission, I mean Tim Keller, there are a lot of expressions of it, and I think 80 or 90% of it’s great stuff, not just okay, good great stuff, needed stuff. But there is a subset of people, at least there is a subset of people in that movement that say, and in fact I think Jerry Bridges says this in one of his books, that God is always smiling. I don’t think that God is always smiling at me. Now, I know, let’s go back to the tension thing. Here’s what you say, if you say to a sonship person, look does God ever fail to love, have an emotion and an attitude of love toward the believer or toward the elect? Never does he waiver in his love. But God may well be pretty upset with me if my wife left town today so if I go home and get on pornography on the computer. God isn’t going to be smiling at me, I don’t think. If I go out to a bar tonight and get drunk, God’s not going to be happy with me, yeah grieving the Holy Spirit all that kind of stuff. So, you say that to the sonship guy and the sonship guy says, well if God is upset when I sin, I always sin so God is always upset and he’s never smiling. My response to that is that’s logical, but that isn’t true. See, logic will get you in trouble. I made 100% on my logic final at [college]... so I’m not anti-logical, but logic will get you in trouble. It will lead you into untruth, it will lead you into unbalance. Yeah, that’s very logical. If God is upset with me when I sin, if he is angry with me, if fatherly displeasure follows disobedience, then you’d think that God is always displeased with me, right? But in fact he wasn’t. King David always sinned, but it was certain sin, certain times that really encouraged the anger of God...now I don’t believe there’s any judicial wrath ever toward a believer, but I do think there is fatherly displeasure ...in chapter 11 (in the Westminster Confession) on justification by faith it says, “God does continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified, and although they can never fall from a state of justification, yet they may by their sins fall under God’s fatherly displeasure and not have the light of his countenance restored unto them until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon and renew their faith and repent of it.” And just think, there are a lot of people in the grace movement, sonship movement whatever, there are a lot of people that I just think don’t believe that. I think they say God’s always smiling and God’s always pleased with me and adoring me because of what Jesus has done for me and I just don’t agree with that ...does God send sins to hell or sinners to hell? I mean, is God pleased with people and angry with people or pleased with holiness and angry with sins?

With regard to biblical motivations for obedience, the temptation to overlook God's displeasure with sin is probably the greatest pitfall to which Christ-centered preachers are susceptible.

Bo seemed to have a harder time explaining God's displeasure over believers' sin. [W]hat happens is people, sensitive people, then develop this performance mentality that they never get out of ...I'm a covenantalist through and through, but we have to acknowledge that David, under the old covenant, stood in different relationship to God as regards the law than we stand in the new covenant ...In the old covenant there really were outward, temporal blessings and curses ...There are consequences, but I think those are different from blessings and curses. I think the blessings and curses are all taken care of in Christ. There are benefits and consequences, no question, but the fact is we know godly, godly, godly people who, if people believed in the blessings and curses, they would say, like Job's friends did, well there must be sin in your life. Because they're godly and there are so many bad things. Conversely, I know people that are idiots – I mean, I'm an idiot ...so I think we really have to be careful that we don't set people up for disillusionment ...did David, because he was under the old covenant, did he experience a little bit differently the anger of God? Well, I don't know. That's a tough one for me. But I've got to acknowledge that there is a difference. It's hard to define and a bit of a mystery.

It seems some Christ-centered preachers are so bent against saying that God can still get angry at believers, even while his love remains strong, that they refuse to do it even when the Bible seems fairly clear on the point. God's anger is a helpful motive, especially in times of deep sin, and it should not be ignored in sermons.

Jim offers the insight that the cross does remove the fear of God's judicial wrath. But he also offers the helpful insight that “a number of the reasons to fear God haven't been removed by the cross. They've actually been accentuated by the cross.” Jim offered the illustration of good children who both love and fear their parents at the same time. He further offered this helpful illustration:

What are you going to say to the husband and wife that let's say are Christians and she walks in and he's viewing pornography? Is she going to say, “Well dear

what you really need is a greater dose of the gospel. Don't stop; just keep believing God loves you, and when you get to the point where you need to stop you go ahead and stop"? It doesn't work that way in practical life ...sometimes with the folks who teach grace all the time...they almost attack the imperative because they're thinking is that we don't have the right motives to do the imperative. But there is never a command that we keep that we have pure motives in keeping it. Everything we do is stained by sin.

This is a helpful distinction. Instinctively we all know that there is a right place for righteous anger and fear, even in the closest, most secure, loving and intimate relationships. We must be able to preach in a way that upholds the reality of the fear of the Lord to God's people.

How Much Should One Seek to Integrate Motives in Each Sermon?

All participants said that the text should determine which motives a preacher should include in his sermon, as well as how to balance those motives. Henry said that a preacher should always start with the text first, and then, secondly, determine how it should land with his audience. The study participants agreed that a teacher has a responsibility to his sheep – a responsibility to help them understand how the different motives work together. Bo gave an example of how this might work.

[W]hen we talk about the benefits of gospel obedience, please don't think that you're always going to feel good. You have to have a long term view. And then ... I'll say, and even with your obedience, you've only done what's required of you. Your only boasting is in Christ. I think that preaches. I think that keeps the entire focus on Christ, but it also doesn't minimize my responsibility.

Bo said that when the sermons and motives stay centered on Christ, both the legalist and the lawless should be challenged. Bo also mentioned that all people and texts are "heavy footed" in certain motivations, meaning they lean primarily on a particular motivation or tend to use a particular motivation too much. Henry agreed and said the key is to know yourself and your tendencies so you can seek to balance yourself. A regular

diet of expository preaching, Fred added, helps you balance all the different motivations well.

Al was helpful on this point. He noted that there seems to be tension between different biblical motives and a good pastor should seek to explain and resolve that tension as much as possible for his people. There will always be some tension in this life that we cannot fully solve, yet there is no tension in God. The problem with humans is that we want to be God. Instead, we should seek to resolve the tension as much as possible but also be content to let it remain when we cannot simplify it any further. One great example of this is that to motivate Christians, the Bible often assures believers of their salvation, which evidences God's love. But for the same purpose, it also uses harsh rebukes and even warnings of apostasy.

Jim's reflections shed some light on the tension that exists between different biblical sources of motivation. He explained that when there is tension between two different motivations in a text it actually creates power in the sermon. The tension between God's love, our assurance of salvation and the warnings of apostasy certainly to seems to create a mystery that draws people into the tension. With the following example, Jim proposed that you do not always have to remind hearers of the most important motive. "You know when you tell your child to get out of the street, you don't always preface it by saying 'son you know I love you and care for you so get out of the street.' Or 'son you know I love you and care for you so clean your plate.'"

The Bible assumes that the reader understands a great deal without constantly restating relevant information, and the same should be true in good, Christ-centered, biblical preaching.

When discussing this tension, Fred noted that “you still have a sinful nature, and all through scriptures you have warnings, and God uses those warnings to motivate you. You use them with your children. You love your children, but you want them [to obey the warnings]... and those warnings are good, and they are blessed as they respond to them.” Even if it may be hard for some people to understand this healthy tension theologically or logically, most people intuitively understand it in natural human relationships, such as that the relationship between a parent and a child. Those Christ-centered preachers who tend to ignore the threats of God also do not seem to take the depth of our remaining indwelling sin seriously enough. Fred said that love for Christ should be the main spring that launches believers to obedience, while warnings are merely the “oil to the wheels” of our obedient motion.

Personal Style in Preaching

During the interviews, the study participants noted what most motivated their own obedience. For Fred, the primary motivation was gratitude for all God has done for him. When the interviewer asked him how he mainly motivated others in his sermons, he said, “Preach the love of God and His love and sacrifice for us... and then preach warnings, and then preach the fact that we have the power to do it and preach the fact that He promises blessings for our obedience both now and in the long run.” But probably most of all, to motivate others he encourages his congregants’ love for the Lord in light of all God has done for them. The motivation Fred uses second most often, he said, is probably love for others. The interviewer did note the use of these motivations in some of Fred’s sermons.

Henry said that he is most motivated by how God can use him, so he seeks to motivate others that way as well. In listening to the sermons Henry preached, this motivation was evident. Bo said that he has struggled with legalism, so he is most motivated by the grace of God towards him, and that came out in his sermons as well.

Henry noted that he struggles to be motivated by or to motivate others by the fact that God has “accepted” his people in Christ, yet he knows that it is a legitimate biblical motivation. Al said that he struggles to be motivated by joy and is personally most motivated by duty and responsibility. He knows that he does not emphasize joy enough in his preaching and struggles to live a joyful life.

Jim said that passion for God’s glory is a major motivator for him personally but that he also knows the fear of the Lord should play a more important role in his life. Thus, if he were to preach on 2 Corinthians 5, he would naturally spend more time preaching on love rather than fear. He said the best protection against preaching your own hobby horse is simply to continue to press the text.

Henry also commented on how to guard against preaching too much about the motivations to which you most naturally gravitate. “Wherever you find your defaults in motivation, you have to make sure the counter-balance is there by discipline. That doesn’t mean don’t go to them. If that’s your passion, God’s given you the passion. Just keep it in the context of the gospel.” This advice is helpful for pastors as they think practically through their preparations for a sermon. Again stressing the necessity of staying grounded in the text, Jim said he would strictly use the motivations included in the text. But he did say that when it came to the application portion of a sermon, he would let his personal motivational style direct some of his questions.

How Much They Are Influenced by Their Hearers in Preaching

Though some approached the effort in different ways, the study participants all valued connecting on a personal level with congregants during their sermons. To help pastors connect with their listeners, Fred suggested preaching from passages or books that deal with the issues with which you know your congregation is struggling. Then you can preach to their needs, which preaching directly and faithfully from the Bible. Nuancing Fred's suggestion, Bo said that pastors must be careful not to preach the warnings too much to those who have sensitive consciences, but Henry disagreed. According to Henry, the problem is not that some have sensitive consciences and feel too guilty. Rather, the problem is that they do not believe that God loves them enough. Bo made a helpful, clarifying point: "If you have the wrong mindset then you will take it to the whole idea that, okay, God loves me, but I still don't want to experience consequences, and you're still going to become performance oriented." So, a good Christ-centered preacher should be careful to speak to these types of people in the sermon, warning them against this sinful perfectionism. At the same time, he also said, "Jesus wasn't worried about being balanced. Sometimes he was unbalanced in his firmness and sometimes he was unbalanced in his leniency."

Al said that pastors should touch on their people's motives so that the sermon connects well with the people. This is not being man-centered but practical. Al mentioned John Piper's famous line, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him." He believes that this is true and sees God's glory and our joy as two sides of one coin. Yet it takes wisdom, he said, to know which motive to use at what time and which motive to use most often, depending on the hearers. There is a right way to motivate

people, he continued, by their felt needs such as their “satisfaction, security, significance, society, and sanctity,” while remaining God-centered.

Jim said that if a pastor is faithful to preach expositionally and to preach all the text has to say each week, that pastor will be better equipped to preach all the different motivations well. He explained that when the pastor comes to a hard text that some in the congregation might feel the pastor chose just to correct or challenge them, they will know that the pastor has a pattern of preaching straight through a book and not skipping anything and, therefore, they will receive the message with less offense. He further mentioned that most Reformed, Christ-centered preachers like to challenge legalists more strongly than the lawless, but that most of the people to whom Paul preached were antinomian.

Staying tied as closely as possible to the biblical text should be the best way to properly balance and integrate the different motivations. Some hearers will never be happy. Bo mused:

There are ...people...into cheap grace. God has ways to grab their attention, too. But if I'm preaching the gospel faithfully, accurately and biblically, here's what's going to happen...Same sermon, same hour some people come up to me and say, "...all you seemed to preach today was grace"...another guy comes up and says, "...all I heard today was law."

So, even when the Christ-centered preacher does his best, some hearers – from either end of the spectrum – will never be satisfied. But faithfully preaching Christ, Bo affirmed, will draw both types of people back to the center.

What They Actually Do in Preaching

Jim had this to say about where motivating fits into sermons, or rather where it should fit into sermons:

[P]reaching is, whether it's a calm type of preaching or whether it's a high level exhorted type, you know animated, whichever one it is you're really trying to grab people by the lapels, and you're trying to get in their hearts is what you're trying to do. However you present it, you're trying to get in their hearts ... I believe that motivation is not just something written in sermons, it's communicated non-verbally, and certainly verbally, but it's communicated through your own heart being motivated by what you worked on that week.

This personal motivation certainly came through in Jim's sermons. The researcher could tell which verses or points had personally impacted and motivated him as he studied during the week by how he pressed those points in his sermon delivery.

In his sermons, Henry seemed to motivate people mainly by how they could bring joy to their neighbors, glory to God, and change to their nation, and this was true whether he was preaching from Nehemiah or Acts. He mentioned more than once how much he is personally motivated to help other Christians grow. Using 1 Thessalonians 2:8, he preached a sermon on the things that should motivate Christians to evangelize. He said that there are two wrong motivations for evangelism, bad guilt and the desire for your own fame or gain. He then listed many positive motivations. First, from verse four, he mentioned that the fact that Christians are approved in Christ by the gospel should move them to share the gospel with others. Secondly, verse four also shows that believers should take their stewardship of the gospel seriously and strive to be faithful to God. Thirdly, he taught that a love for the lost, in light of their potentially having a better life now and in eternity if they are saved, should also motivate evangelism. From there, he showed how Christians' confidence in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, mentioned in verse 2, should itself motivate evangelism. Fifthly, our desire for God's glory to cover the earth should motivate Christians. We should also desire to hasten the return of the Lord through evangelism. Good guilt should get the Christian's attention

too, drive them to Christ and remind them to share the gospel. Lastly, in the sermon, Henry integrated all motives well by closing with the “motivation of all motivations that ties them together. The love of Christ compels and constrains us.” He explained how this should ideally work. Christ first loved believers, so they should love him. If one loves Christ, one should love what he loves and obey his commands. Believers should love the lost because Jesus does and, thus, be motivated to share the gospel with them. This sermon, of all that the researcher reviewed, seemed to integrate the most motives together.

Bo projected that most of his hearers would say that he primarily motivates them by the love and grace of God, and his sermons reflected those motives. In a sermon on Ephesians 4:17-24, while focusing on verse 19, Bo mentioned in almost the same breath that Christians should feel pain and shame in a godly way in their consciences because of their sin and that they should rest in the finished work of Christ. He did a brilliant job of integrating two motives, godly sorrow and Christ’s love, that can seem opposed or on opposite ends of the spectrum. Near the end of this same sermon, he used the promise of grace to motivate believers to fight for obedience.

In another sermon on Ephesians 4:22-32, Bo used the motivations of loving God and not wanting to grieve the Holy Spirit in a biblically sound way. Then, later, he set being motivated by God’s love against the motive of obeying to gain blessing in a way that the text did not seem to warrant. He was not careful enough at that point to distinguish between a self-centered pursuit of God’s blessing and a God-centered pursuit of God’s blessing. There is a grace-based way to seek God’s blessing; there is also a merit-based way to seek blessing. Bo seemed to disregard both in this sermon, although

in the interview he acknowledged the validity of being motivated by God's blessing on obedience. In the same sermon, he used Ephesians 4:25 to motivate his listeners with love for one's neighbor. He also showed, from verses 28 and 32, how this love for others springs from Christ's love.

In another sermon titled "Justification: Part 1," Bo referred to Philippians 3 to show how justification is the best motive for obedience. In "Justification: Part 3," he repeated the message from the same verses that God's love is the true root of holiness.

In a sermon called "Be not drunk with wine" on Ephesians 5:18a, Fred mainly used the dangers and consequences of sin, including apostasy, as sources of motivation, arising from the phrase, "wherein is excess."²⁷⁷ In a sermon called "Be filled with the Spirit," on Ephesians 5:18-21, for his source of motivation he focused on the benefits of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Neither of these sermons seemed especially Christ-centered, but both took their motivations straight from the text. The next two sermons were from Ephesians 5:21-33, on the topic of marriage. Fred used more motivations in these sermons, again all arising from the text. Reverence for God came up in verse 21. Gratitude and love for Christ came up as motivations for loving one's spouse. The gospel and all God has done for his people were further sources of motivation. The fear of the Lord and the consequences of sin were also mentioned. Love for others was used as well. He mentioned that believers should work to have healthy marriages, which can lead to opportunities to share the gospel. Lastly, he referenced Christ's love for his people. "We must call to mind what Christ did for us and what He calls us to do for Him." The second two sermons seemed much more balanced, but all four were directly tied to the scriptures.

²⁷⁷ Ephesians 5:18.

Love for Christ as the Primary Motivation

When the interviewer asked how all other motivations relate to the primary motivations, the respondents gave many different answers. Fred said, “I’d say love for Christ would be the supreme motivation, but it doesn’t have to be either/or it’s both/and.” This is again a helpful reminder not to pit any biblical motivation against another because the Bible never does so. Rather, all the varied motivations work in concert and harmony together. In general, the study participants all agreed that love from and for Christ should be the Christians’ primary motive. Fred said that the more a Christian matures, the more love for Christ should be the supreme motive in that person’s life. Al agreed that as a Christian matures, the desire for Christ’s glory should become more central and conscious in our lives. Al believes that love for Christ and a desire for his glory are synonymous. Al also said that our love for Christ will not grow unless our sense of our own sin grows, so that while love for Christ may be primary, a hatred for sin must also be growing as a source of motivation in the Christian’s life.

Bo said that all motives, such as gratitude and the fear of the Lord are actually just love for God seen from different angles. He agrees with Piper that if gratitude is one’s primary motivation, that motivation can quickly degenerate into the debtor’s ethic. If all a person is concerned with is avoiding discipline and there is no trace of a love for Christ in it, then Bo rightly says that person is just self-centered. Bo went further to say, “there’s nothing wrong with the motivation that I don’t want to experience the consequences of sin, but the even better motivation is that I don’t want God to be displeased with my life. See there are actions and attitudes that by definition please Him.” So, while all biblical

motivations are ultimately connected, some motivations are better than others. But this does not mean those secondary motivations should be thrown out either.

Al agreed that the right understanding of gratitude as a motive is to see it as a form of love. He went even further to say, “I don’t know that I would want to call them secondary motivations. I would want to call them aspects of the one motivation.” This is an important distinction that helps clarify how all the motivations relate to one another. He also said that in an ideal world, the desire to glorify God would be the only motive necessary. But we are not in an ideal world. So the preacher must appeal to people’s desire for “security, significance, and satisfaction. That can sound extraordinarily man-centered because I want to glorify God but I want to connect with people, and I know that every person I am talking to is a security seeker.” While doing this, the preacher knows that the glory of God is the root motivation behind it all, but that may not always be apparent to the hearer. The best preachers are those who can seamlessly blend the glory of God and man’s joy into one motivation. As Al said, quoting John Piper, “‘God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.’ That’s not two coins. It may be two sides to one coin, but it’s not two coins.”

Henry said that gratitude and love of Jesus are the primary motives in the Christian life, but that it is important not to forget the secondary ones. He believes many preachers throw out the secondary motivations all together in the name of heightening the primary ones. Further, he wisely mentioned that all the secondary motives come in the context of the primary ones. The main reason a preacher should not back off the secondary motives is that Christ did not. Al also thinks that gratitude is synonymous with the love for Christ. He does not like the way John Piper defines gratitude in *Future Grace*

because in the book, Piper talks about gratitude as “pay back.” Some people may see gratitude as pay back, but he does not think that most people do.

Bo said that he believes all the different motivations are actually rooted in God’s grace towards his people. Al agreed and said that he tries to preach the grace of God every week because he believes it is in every text, even if indirectly. Henry said that the love of Christ is primary and no other motive supersedes it. But also, the love of Christ is not the only motive, nor are the other motives disconnected from this primary motive. Christians should love Jesus but also thus love what he loves, such as lost people. Getting heaven and missing hell are good secondary motives, if they are connected to your love for and desire for Christ.

Fred comments on the place of these secondary rewards by quoting the *True Bounds of Christian Freedom* and commenting on it:

He says here, “some may distinguish between young beginners and grown Christians, the first entrance of the soul into the ways of grace and man looks upon heaven and hell, one to drive out of sin and the other to persuade to draw him into the ways of holiness. But when he’s truly entered into the ways of life, he finds so much sweetness in God and he now serves God in a more free and genuine spirit. Now he serves Thee not out of fear of punishment nor hope for reward, but because he sees such a beauty in Yourself, and so even if there were no Heaven, this were Heaven enough. He says thus too it is with the soul of the believer when he first witnesses sin, make me one of your hired servants like the prodigal, but then when he comes over to Christ and has tasted of God’s mercy imparted to him, now all he desires is to serve God for Himself, and the only question now is not what will God give me, but what can I give God. What shall I lendeth the Lord for all of his goodness” and so on. But you’ve got David saying, “Whom have I in Heaven but Thee, there’s no one on earth that I desire but Thee.” The enjoyment of God was the utmost of his desire, but he says “... you must respect Heaven in your obedience.” In other words, keeping my mind on Heaven will help me obey. It says would you submit to all God’s blessings and be strong to do and suffer and so on, would you rejoice in your sufferings? Well, if you would do these things you must have an eye for the recompense of the Lord.

So, when a believer is first saved, the rewards and consequences may weigh most heavily in his or her life. But as that believer grows, a desire to know, love, please, honor and glorify God will almost make those older motives fade to the background, though they are still there.

Al said that a person's love for God and desire for the glory of Christ should be the main motivator in the Christian life. He also said that all secondary motivators are merely some aspect of that first great motive. Jim made a helpful point, stating that "It's not important to draw distinctions between primary and secondary motives because the text doesn't do it. They assume even baby Christians know instinctively some things." If the Bible does not stop to indicate to the reader which motives are primary and which are secondary, neither should we feel the need to stop and do this. Jim also said that the greatest commandment is to

...love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and so I would say that is certainly at the heart of all motivations; love and also the glory of God is at the motivation of what we do. But to single out one single motivation over all would probably center around two or three things rather than one main one, you know like the writers of the Shorter Catechism, to glorify God and enjoy him forever, that's the heart motivation.

Jim later summarized the primary biblical motivation like this: "Through the love of Jesus for me I seek to love and fear God for His glory ...that's the indicative [of] what Christ has done. And then to summarize the two fold response of fear and love ...it's only the new creature that can fear and love the Lord in the right way, but so much of [Paul's] imperatives rest on our new position in Christ." Bo summarized the whole conversation by going back to the greatest commandments and saying that all the prophets are summed up in love.

Henry offers this final helpful summary.

I'd say the primary motivation is the love of Christ compels us. That's the primary motivation. The second thing I'd say is there are secondary motivations. The third thing I'd say is that all secondary motivations have to be carefully placed in context of the primary motivation. Then the forth thing I'd say is don't back off from secondary motivations, Jesus didn't ... I have multiple motivations, it's not *only* the love of Christ, it is because [of] the love of Christ now I have other motivations that are here. They don't supersede the love of Christ, they're not disconnected from the love of Christ, but they're not just the love of Christ... Because if you love Jesus you're going to love what He loves. And you're going to love the lost... I think it is a valid motivation to miss hell and hit heaven. It's just not a primary motivation.

The Bible and the Christ-centered preachers interviewed for this study are abundantly clear: there are multiple motivations that must be preached and integrated in Christian living. Though some preachers may disagree about which motives are valid, they all agree that more than one motive is valid.

Conclusion

All the participants agreed that in Christ-centered preaching there are many different, yet legitimate biblical motives. They basically all agreed on what those motives were, although they defined a few of them slightly differently. An example of this is that four of the participants would include warnings or the threat of apostasy as legitimate parts of fearing the Lord, but Bo would not.

These participants brought to light certain motivations that had not come out in the previous research, such as Henry and Jim mentioning eternity as a motivation and Jim mentioning God's character as a motivation.

All participants admitted being affected by their personal style of motivation as well as by what they suspected their hearers most needed to hear. But all also agreed that the text itself must be the primary source that drives the motivations that are included in

the sermon. The most common way to find the motives in a given text, as described by the participants, was to look for common or repeated themes.

Although some participants did not like the term “secondary motives,” all agreed that some motives were more primary than others. There are dangers when one treats a secondary motivation as central. Some secondary motivations may decrease in importance in a believer’s life as the new believer grows, whereas primary motives should always be growing, increasing and becoming more central in a believer’s life.

Each study participant defined the primary Christian motivation slightly differently, but all basically agreed that it was rooted in God’s love and God’s people’s love back to him. Some emphasized the fear of the Lord or God’s glory or pleasure more but would often say that these things were synonymous with love for God.

Much help and insight came from the participants’ thoughts on how best to balance or integrate the different motivations and handle the seeming tensions that arise while doing so. Perhaps the most helpful summation advice was to avoid pitting the motives against each other and instead let the biblical motivations work together in more of a “both/and” situation, rather than an “either/or.”

Chapter Five

Discussion of Findings

In this final chapter, I will seek to tie all the research together. Together, findings from both the interviews and the literature review will provide insight for how preachers can and should motivate their Christian hearers to obey. The overarching research conclusion is that all biblical motives should work in harmony to further glorify Christ. Biblically legitimate motives should never be pitted against one another but rather should be integrated to enhance and serve one another.

First we will briefly review why motives are so important in Christianity. We will also briefly rehash the sinful motives that should not be used. We will then highlight the primary motives that preachers should use in Christ-centered preaching. After examining the integration of primary and secondary motives in different texts, we will explain how such integration should affect sermons. Theologically, we will show that these motives are integrated in the text and pose no threat to Christ-centered preaching. We will highlight how some motives are especially necessary when one faces trials and temptations. We will compare and contrast intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. And we will end by showing the importance of some motives that at first glance can seem “negative.” After concluding the section on motives, we consider how these motives are to be preached, closing with some specific examples.

Scriptural Examples

Importance of Motives in the Christian Life and Preaching

This research is intended to help Christ-centered preachers preach even more effectively. Motives are central in sermons. Thus, weak motivations will lead to weak sermons. This section will show the importance of motives in preaching.

Motives are supremely important in the Christian life. Jesus called the Pharisees hypocrites in a harsh rebuke because they did the right outward actions of worship but had no heartfelt love behind their worship.²⁷⁸ Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 that if one does many great acts of obedience and yet is not motivated by Christian love for others, the individual will gain no reward from those actions.²⁷⁹ Further, Paul seeks to justify his ministry by justifying the motives behind his ministry.²⁸⁰

Many of the most influential writers on the topic of motives agree with Paul's conclusions about how important our internal motives are. Jerry Bridges teaches that our motives are as important as our obedience, if not more so.²⁸¹ John Piper and Saint Augustine show that an action is sinful if it does not contain right motives.²⁸² All of the men I interviewed agreed that motives are a crucial aspect of preaching.

Bad Motives

For Christ-centered preaching to be faithful to scripture, the preacher must always avoid sinful motives. Paul lists some bad motives in 1 Thessalonians 2:3-6, which include

²⁷⁸ Matthew 15:8-9.

²⁷⁹ 1 Corinthians 13:2.

²⁸⁰ 1 Thessalonians 2:3-6.

²⁸¹ Bridges, *Growing Your Faith*, 27.

²⁸² Piper, *Desiring God*, 101. Augustine, 215.

greed and the desire to please men. Other sinful motives are self-centered guilt, self-centered gain and self-centered fear. Sinful motives are self-centered, while godly motives are Christ-centered. Psalm 10:3-4 shows that the motives of wicked people are prideful, greedy, anti-God, and basically self-centered.

Sinful guilt is “the selfish shame of rejection...the self-oriented payment of an emoted penance.”²⁸³ Chapell is helpful also in explaining sinful gain:

If we serve God because we believe he will love us less if we do not...then we are not worshipping God with our actions; we are only pursuing our self-interests. In this case, the goal of our lives is personal promotion or personal protection rather than the glory of God, and even our seemingly moral activities are a transgression of the first commandment.”²⁸⁴

As Doriani further shows, a motive that is based in fearing the loss of God’s love reveals a performance mentality, in which the person thinks he or she has (or does not have) God’s love based on his or her own merit.²⁸⁵

Any motive having to do with attempts to earn merit in a Christian’s life run against a proper understanding of the gospel and are thus sinful. The debtor’s ethic, or the motivation that stems from a feeling that one must pay God back for all the good the he has done, is an example of this bad type of motivation.

Main Legitimate Biblical Motives

This section is intended to highlight the main motives discovered in this research. Several motives came up frequently in the Bible, in the Christian literature and in the

²⁸³ Ibid., 307-308.

²⁸⁴ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 208.

²⁸⁵ Doriani, 127.

interviews. This section should clarify these main motives with which Christ-centered preachers are likely to work on a regular basis.

The Bible gives many different motivations for Christians to obey. This research has primarily examined those used most often in scripture and in sermons. The glory of God is a supremely important motivation for believers because it seems to motivate all that God himself does; exercising this motivation is thus a way that believers can imitate God and become more like him (Isaiah 45:3-8; 46:9-10; 48:9-11.1 Corinthians 10:31). Early in their Christian walk, many believers may not be aware of this motive of bringing glory to God, but as they grow, it should grow in importance and centrality to them. It should literally lie behind and beneath all a Christian does.

God's love for us is similar in a foundational sense. The Bible teaches that there is nothing good, including motivations, in anyone apart from God's Spirit regenerating them.²⁸⁶ For that reason, if God does not initiate to us with his saving love, we will have no good motives in our hearts to move us to obey the Lord. The unregenerate only have the sinful motives mentioned above, thus rendering any seeming outward obedience null and void. So, the love God shows us in the gospel is foundational because it leads to, causes and enables every other good motive that could exist or operate in our souls. Christians should be motivated to obey God because he has loved us so well in Christ and through the cross (Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 5:14, 1 John 4:19).

From God's love for us flows our love for him in return. Jesus said that loving God is the greatest commandment. If this is true, then it stands to reason that love for God should stand as one of the great motivators of our hearts. Every time a Christian

²⁸⁶ Romans 3:10-18; 8:9-10.

does any act of obedience motivated by his or her love for God, that person is obeying the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:37-40, Luke 7:47, 1 John 5:2-3).

When someone asked Jesus to identify the greatest commandment, he did recite the greatest commandment, but he was not content to stop there. He went on to proclaim what he deemed to be the second greatest commandment, the command to “love your neighbor.”²⁸⁷ These two commandments, he added, are foundational for the entire Old Testament.²⁸⁸ John echoes this truth in 1 John 3:14. So, loving others should be a consistent motive in much of what a Christian does. In Jesus’ mind, it also seems inseparably linked to the motive of loving God. Some refer to the love for others as the desire to positively impact them.

Loving God can take many forms. One of these is a desire to please the Lord, a consistent and important biblical motivation in the Old and New Testaments (Psalm 51:16-17, 2 Corinthians 5:9, Ephesians 5:10, 1 Thessalonians 2:4). My interviews showed that some so-called Christ-centered preachers steer away from this motive. They are likely to use a mantra that God is always pleased with his children in Christ, and in doing so, they sweep away an obvious biblical motive. They may be well-intentioned, desiring to avoid any form of merit seeking before God in their motivations, but they are misinformed. It would be better for them to wrestle with this seeming contradiction in the scriptures and end up presenting a more biblically precise message about motivations. Gratitude is another biblical motive that some describe as a sub-set of love for God. It is thus similar to pleasing the Lord. Here is an excellent example of the fact that when

²⁸⁷ Matthew 22:35-39.

²⁸⁸ Matthew 22:40.

people ignore legitimate motives such as gratitude or the desire to please the Lord, they actually truncate the motive they are trying to exalt, love for the Lord. But if one will take the time to dig into the text and wrestle with issues like desiring to please the Lord and being motivated by gratitude, one should come out with a more nuanced and fully orbbed perspective on what exactly it means to love the Lord.

Another motive with which even some of study participants were uncomfortable was the motive of seeking joy. Pascal taught that this is the most natural, innate motive behind what all people do no matter what, whether we admit it or not.²⁸⁹ More importantly, the Bible shows it to be a good and legitimate motive (John 15:7,11 Acts 20:35, Romans 7:18,22, 1 Corinthians 13:3, Hebrews 12:2, 1 John 1:4). John Piper has written a lifetime's worth of books, clarifying and justifying joy as a supremely important motive in the Christian life that brings glory to God. Having our joy in Christ is another motive that helps clarify what it means to love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength.

The fear of the Lord is a motivation that receives plenty of emphasis in the Bible but a great deal of controversy outside the Bible. There certainly are many forms of sinful fear that can motivate Christians, and they should seek to steer clear of those types of fear. The key in sinful forms of fear is that they have to do with punishment. (Notice the emphasis on punishment in 1 John 4:18). The Bible teaches that Christ, on the cross, received all the punishment that believers deserved (Isaiah 53:4-6,10). So Christians should never move towards obedience because they fear that God will punish them if they do not obey. But Christians should be motivated by a right, godly fear of divine

²⁸⁹ Pascal, 113.

consequences, of fatherly displeasure and discipline. This difference may be experienced very subtly, but the distinction, theologically, is critical.

Some try to overdo this distinction, though. In Matthew 10:28, Jesus commands his followers not to fear men that can kill and hurt them. He then proceeds to command followers to fear God who can put you into hell. Matthew 10:5 shows that these instructions were given to the twelve apostles. Many who shy away from these biblical warnings to believers seemingly fail to notice that Jesus uses the same word for the sinful type of fear as he does for the godly fear.

Apostasy is a legitimate fear for believers. Paul had a strong assurance of faith and yet uses the fear of apostasy as a motivator (Romans 8:13, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27). Sinful fear is the fear of a slave towards an evil master, but godly fear is the fear of a child toward a stern, yet loving and wonderful Father (Psalm 130, Romans 8:15-16, 2 Corinthians 5:11, Hebrews 12:4-13). Four of the men I interviewed said that the fear of apostasy is a legitimate motive.

Similar to the fear of apostasy, and possibly flowing from it, is the motive of godly sorrow. Godly sorrow over sin is needed to drive one to repentance and life.²⁹⁰ The key distinction between godly sorrow and worldly sorrow is the person at the center of the sorrow. Godly sorrow grieves that God has been grieved, while worldly sorrow is centered on self and grieves only that one is caught and must suffer consequences (2 Corinthians 7:9-11). Christians should work hard to distinguish which type of grief is operating in their hearts during repentance. Many would call godly sorrow, good guilt. “When love motivates Christian obedience, the guilt we feel in spiritual failure is the

²⁹⁰ 2 Corinthians 7:10-11.

remorse that we have forsaken the one who loves us enough to sacrifice his own son on our behalf. This ‘good guilt’ is not the selfish shame of rejection, nor the self-oriented payment of an emoted penance.”²⁹¹ Godly sorrow and the fear of the Lord blend together, reminding us that our serious God motivates us for obedience in multiple different ways.

Another motive related to godly sorrow and fear of the Lord is the warnings of painful consequences in this life and the next. Apostasy has already been mentioned. Jonathan Edwards taught that believers should be motivated to live out proper Christian virtues by thoughts of the final judgment.²⁹² Again, the helpful distinction is to distinguish between judicial wrath or punishment and God’s fatherly chastisement towards those he loves. The Bible does use threats of discipline to warn believers and keep them in line (2 Corinthians 5:10, Galatians 6:8, Hebrews 12:9-16). All of these warnings are rooted in God’s love and preachers should remember them in that context and thus apply them.

Lastly, corresponding to the warnings just mentioned, the Bible frequently motivates believers towards obedience with the promise of blessings in this life and the next. Believers are not promised earthly blessings for all obedience, but blessings in the next life do seem to accompany all obedience (Psalm 34:12-14, 37:4, Proverbs 2:1-5, Matthew 6:1-21, Mark 10:25-30, 1 Corinthians 13:3, Galatians 6:7-9, Philippians 3:7-14, 1 Timothy 6:6, Hebrews 11:6, 24; 12:1-3). The sheer volume of texts promising blessings when we obey make this point difficult to argue with.

²⁹¹ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 307-308.

²⁹² Edwards, 198-201.

Other motives were discovered in this research such as eternity and the promise of divine enablement, but the ones that I found most often in my research and in my personal study of the entire scriptures have been highlighted here.

Dangers that Might Follow if Motives Are Pitted Against One Another

Motives are central to preaching. They are not an extra add-on for pastors to use when they feel like it. Motivating hearers to obey the Lord is one of the main things, if not the main thing, that separates preaching from other forms of teaching and lecturing. John Piper says that this is why many people come to hear sermons, to be motivated.²⁹³ This centrality of motives holds true for Christ-centered preaching as well.

Christ-centered preaching teaches that every text is ultimately related to Christ and thus should be taught that way.²⁹⁴ Texts that may seem obscure still have at least an indirect link to Christ and the gospel if one studies hard enough. Even a book like Esther that never mentions God, or Song of Solomon, seemingly all about sex and romance, is part of this thread of redemption. This is what Jesus taught the disciples in Luke 24.

Just as some entire books of the Bible seem indirectly linked to Christ, some biblical motives will seem very indirectly linked to Christ at first, as well. But they are nonetheless still linked to Christ and should not be left out because the connection takes a little more time to see.

Four of the five men I interviewed agreed that some Christ-centered preachers, in an attempt to keep Christ central, throw out any motives where they cannot easily and

²⁹³ John Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals*, 33.

²⁹⁴ Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 30.

directly see the link to Christ. Other articles have pointed to this trend as well.²⁹⁵ But just as one should not quit preaching on Esther or Song of Solomon just because the link to Christ seems hard to find, neither should one throw out biblical motives because the link to Christ is not immediately noticeable.

Based on the literature and interviews I reviewed as part of this study, I believe that preachers make the mistake of ignoring legitimate biblical motives because of an immature thinking process that convinces them they are better glorifying Christ by focusing exclusively on one or two primary motives. In reality, applying all the biblical motives serves to exalt Christ all the more as the supreme motive that ties all the others together.²⁹⁶ When Christ is rightly taught, applied and understood, the gospel will actually transform seemingly sinful motives into glorious ones.²⁹⁷ Apart from Christ, a man motivated by a desire for earthly rewards can easily love money and riches more than God. He may seek to obey God, even though he hates God, out of a performance mindset, just hoping he will earn God's blessing. This is obviously a sinful motive, contrary to the gospel. But once a man is saved, he can look on the biblical promises of earthly blessings for obedience as another sign of Christ's great love for him. This righteous desire for earthly rewards is combined with and swept up in a deep joy over Christ's love, which further propels the believer's obedience.

When one practices Christ-centered preaching in a simplistic and wooden way, one actually minimizes the impact of Christ-centered preaching. When the preacher only

²⁹⁵ Hood, 58.

²⁹⁶ Ernest F. Kevan, 55.

²⁹⁷ Dave Harvey, 82.

uses those motivations with which he feels personally comfortable, he is in danger of truncating his hearers' spiritual lives. Jason Hood says, "the volume and forcefulness of 'Christ-centered' admonitions may lead seminarians, pastors and laity away from deep reflection on the moral use of Scripture."²⁹⁸ One way this can happen is when the Christian assumes that only one or two motives are valid. Thus, when a pastor comes to a text that uses four or five additional motives, he may quickly overlook those motives or sweep them out of the way because they do not fit his preconceived notions. Instead, he should wrestle intently with the text to see how the seemingly "obscure" motivations might actually highlight the glory and centrality of Christ. A weak pastor seeking to preach on 2 Corinthians 5 might determine that the motives of fearing God and of seeking to please the Lord "feel" too legalistic for his tastes. Thus he might indiscriminately toss out those two motives and only emphasize the love of Christ to compel believers. When he does this, he is essentially judging himself to be wiser than God. Jim, one of the study participants, would say that this type of preaching leads to a truncated spirituality.

Preachers should be careful to be slaves to the biblical text. They must teach through the text. Jim emphasized the importance of keeping the text central at all costs. Let the text teach. Do not force the text to only say what you assume it should say. Many Christ-centered preachers who struggle with this may not go as far as to say that some uncomfortable biblical motives (like rewards in this life) are wrong or sinful (though some will do just that). Most of the men I interviewed said that some pastors, in the name of being centered on Christ, are tempted simply to ignore these motives in the text, skip

²⁹⁸ Jason Hood, "Christ-Centered Interpretation Only? Moral Instruction From Scripture's Self Interpretation as Caveat and Guide," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* (January 1, 2009), 58.

over them or breeze past them without allowing them to have the full weight that the biblical author intended. The slogan, “Christ-centered,” cannot be used to justify skipping the parts of the text that one does not like as much.²⁹⁹ The danger of misapplied or oversimplified Christ-centered preaching is the tendency to preach favorite motives like God’s love for us, to the exclusion of other legitimate motivations.³⁰⁰ Spurgeon summarizes, “Certain important doctrines of the gospel can be so proclaimed in excess as to throw the rest of truth into the shade, and the preaching is no longer the gospel in its natural beauty, but a caricature of the truth.”³⁰¹

When one seeks to put the full weight of Christian obedience on one or two favorite motives, to the exclusion of the others, one might find that those one or two favorites were never intended to bear the full burden alone.

Hebrews 4:12 promises us that there is power in all God’s Word, as does 2 Timothy 3:16-17, to change Christians lives. Far be it from us to skip parts with which we are uncomfortable. It seems most prudent to preach all of the scripture as faithfully as we can, even those motives that may seem “secondary” in our minds. Fred’s sermons were great examples of messages being tied tightly to their text, even in “secondary motives.” In his sermons, the secondary motives would receive more emphasis than the primary motives if that was how the text presented them.

God has promised that his Word has the power to sanctify. We must trust his Word and stay tethered to it as closely as possible in all points. If, based strictly on his

²⁹⁹ Hood, 59.

³⁰⁰ Henry mentioned this danger in his interview.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 189.

preferences, the preacher makes a habit of removing certain truths from a text by not including them in his sermon, what is to stop him from one day removing Christ not only from the center of the sermon but from the sermon all together if he so desires? Preaching all the text faithfully is a safeguard to keep Christ central in sermons, for that, according to Luke 24, is the way the Bible is written.

Spurgeon taught that every text has a road from it to Christ.³⁰² Some may be harder to find than others. Sometimes the road might only be found through a motive that at first glance does not appear to be Christ-centered. This is a point that Henry harped on in his interview. An immature Christ-centered preacher basically skips exegesis and goes straight to preaching Christ from the text. The mature Christ-centered preacher will do the hard work of exegesis to see how the Bible naturally and actually presents a legitimate road to Christ. Such a mature approach to sermon preparation leads to the creation of deeper, more powerful sermons.

The Christ-centered preacher should never pit one motive against another. If he believes that all of scripture is God-breathed, then he must believe that no biblical motives contradict or compete with each other.³⁰³ Rather, they are to function in harmony and concert together. The sound they produce when played aright is all the sweeter because of their mutual accompaniment of one another. The master preacher blends all together seamlessly with little to no hint of tension between two seemingly opposed motives. This is the great task for the Christ-centered preacher in regards to motivating

³⁰² Charles Spurgeon, "Christ Precious to Believers," in *The New Park Street Pulpit*, vol. 5 (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1860), 140.

³⁰³ 2 Timothy 3:16.

his hearers. His task is not to pick and choose among motives and eliminate those he does not personally prefer.

Paul, the great apostle, planter of the church, who wrote nearly half of the New Testament and said, “I resolved to know nothing ...except Christ and him crucified,” also said, “I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you...I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.”³⁰⁴ In Paul’s mind, the whole will of God is helpful for the church. All of my research has been to agree with Paul’s concern to preach the whole Word of God. If Christ-centered preachers only declare their favorite texts, motives and hobby horses rather than giving full vent to all the motives God’s Word gives us to use in our arsenal of truth, then they are in sin. Can they like Paul say they are innocent of the blood of all? Or, to summarize much of what Jim said, have they caused some to stumble by truncating God’s Word to fit their own likings and comfort zones?

The Bible sees no tension whatsoever in presenting Christ as one motive among many. Neither should the Christ-centered preacher. We should not over- or under-emphasize the Lord Jesus as a motive for obedience. Rather, we should give him the same degree of emphasis the scripture does. Different motives are sometimes needed in different seasons. As we will show later, sometimes in the worst trials and temptations, severe threats may be needed to jar a sleeping believer out of his or her slumber, even the threat of apostasy.

³⁰⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:2. Acts 20:20, 26-27.

How to Preach the Integration of Motives from the Bible

Some preachers only ever want to use one motive in their sermons. Others may be tempted to use only one motive at a time in their sermons. But the Bible and some of the best pastors and Christian authors are comfortable weaving many motives together at once. We are not wiser than the Lord. In order to preach well, we too must learn this art. Some pastors seek to balance certain motives against one another. Maybe it is best to discuss how the Bible integrates all the legitimate motives.

Categories

Some seek to classify motives as either primary or secondary.³⁰⁵ Others would say that ultimately all motives are simply different angles or aspects of one all-encompassing motive. Based on this research and for the sake of classification, it is probably best to identify the foundational motives, which underlie all other motives, as the desire to glorify God and the love of God towards us in Christ and his gospel. Most of the men I interviewed, as well as the authors I read, agree on these fundamental points. These foundational motives have their most natural and direct beginning in God.

After that, one primary motive for obedience would be our love for God, which encompasses our gratitude to God, our desire to please God and our fear of God. Much of the proper fear of the Lord has to do with a reverential awe that is similar to some aspects of love for God. These motives obviously center on God.

Secondary motives include love for neighbor, personal joy, and godly sorrow over sin. These secondary motives center on a person's enjoyment of God or lack thereof. A third tier of motives would include promises of blessings and warnings of consequences,

³⁰⁵ Bolton, 177-178.

both in this life and the next. These motives are focused on personal enjoyment of life in general. Again, these are not inflexible categories; some would label joy in God and promises of rewards as primary motives.³⁰⁶ It's best to not over press the distinction, mainly because other than Jesus giving the two great commandments, the scripture seems to rarely if ever do this. Jim's point was helpful when he noted that the scriptures rarely stop to tell us which are primary motives and which ones are secondary, so neither should we feel the burden to continuously do this in our sermons.

Theological Integration

Integrating the various biblical motives should not be seen as forcing something into reality that does not exist. The Bible naturally integrates them for us already. We need only seek to learn the patterns. This section will help us see how the Bible combines different motivations seamlessly.

One of the most helpful experiences for preaching the various motivations faithfully is to see how naturally they integrate in the Christian life. The conclusion of this researcher is that the more faithfully one integrates all biblical motives, the more enhanced the Christ-centered preaching will become. If Christ is not in the sermon at all, the sermon will become legalistic or licentious. Ultimately, God's love is the only motive strong enough to sustain us. But God in his love and in his knowledge of our weaknesses gives us many varied motives to keep us strong. God is an infinite God, and he loves to give multiple and overwhelming gifts to his people (Luke 6:38). So it should not surprise us that he delights to give us multiple motivations to help us in our battle with sin and obedience.

³⁰⁶ Piper, *Brothers, We are Not Professionals*, 34-35.

In Trials and Temptations

Some motives are more helpful in the hardest of times. This section will briefly discuss what those motives are and how they are designed to uniquely help Christians obey when sin seems the easiest.

In an ideal world, the glory of God might be the only motive I need to obey at all times. But I do not live in an ideal world, but rather in the middle of a battle zone with indwelling sin and the devil and a culture of temptation surrounding me. On my best day, when everything is going well and life is easy, the thought that God loves me may be plenty to motivate me to continue obeying, especially when the obedience called for is simple and easy. But what about when life is falling apart? It might take the promise of divine reward for me to pick up my cross and continue to follow Jesus. It seems there was some measure of this motivation in Christ's heart as he endured the terrors of the cross for us all.³⁰⁷ And we are called to imitate him in this. In this sinful world, there will always be things we do not enjoy, and extra motives help us persevere.

When someone is tempted with a particularly seductive sin, such as the sensual promises of delight that come with sexual rebellion, love for Christ may not be enough to sustain a man at all times. He may need the divine threat of pain that God lovingly gives to warn us and jar us out of seduction.

Again, it is best not to pit any biblical motive against another. Rather, we should see all working in concert and flowing from the heart of a loving and all-wise Father. Luke 7:47 gives a helpful picture of a woman truly motivated by her love for Christ. But it is easy to see from the context that her love for Christ did not stand alone as a motive in

³⁰⁷ Hebrews 12:1-3.

her heart. There was also good guilt or conviction of sin, godly sorrow, that made her deeply aware of how much she had sinned against her Savior. Married to this was an experience of Christ's saving love that drove her to love Christ as 1 John 4:19 explains. The more we see the connections these motives have to one another, the more beautiful, powerful, and thus helpful they are.

Godly sorrow is one of the most powerful motives to shake us out of our amusement with sin. Sin has a blinding, numbing and even intoxicating effect. Godly sorrow can be the medicine to awaken us. Godly sorrow is a function of God's grace in our lives. It is similar to how our nervous system works in our body. When we touch a hot stove, our nerves send pain messages to our mind. This can cause intense pain and even suffering, but it is a good thing. It is a loving function when God terrifies us in our sin with the threat of the painful consequences because it moves us to repent and return to him. This good guilt is a blessing of his love which we should thank him for, not view in a negative fashion. Without some degree of dreading God's displeasure, real repentance is not possible.³⁰⁸ What is the implication of this truth for those so-called Christ-centered preachers who tell their congregations week after week that God is always smiling at them, regardless of what sin they may be committing willfully? Good guilt and the fear of the Lord conspire together to drive us back to gospel motivation in a deep way that is missed when these two biblical motives are neglected. John Piper clarifies this proper fear: "Because we are all sinners, there is in our reverence a holy dread of God's righteous power;...this dread is not a paralyzing fright full of resentment against God's

³⁰⁸ MacArthur, 78-80.

absolute authority. It finds release in brokenness and contrition and grief for our ungodliness.”³⁰⁹

Extrinsic Motivations

Many of the motives the Bible uses to compel believers to obey are motives that come from outside of us and have to do with the consequences and results of our actions. These may not seem Christ-centered at first, but alas, they are in the Bible and, thus, they are Christ-centered.

Fear of hell may be a wonderful motive to bring someone to Christ, but few Christian authors and none of the men I interviewed believe it should be the primary motivation that keeps people serving Christ for the rest of their lives. If that is the only motive one ever has for obedience, it is doubtful if one is a Christian; furthermore, fear alone does not seem a strong enough motivation to keep believers walking steadfast over the long haul.³¹⁰

Extrinsic motivations should not be the primary thing that motivate Christians to obey, certainly not as they grow and mature. One reason for this is that extrinsic motivations can tend to wrongly overshadow the more primary intrinsic motivations, such as joy in God.³¹¹ But they do have a place in the Christian life that should not be ignored. If you only serve God for outward blessings, maybe you are serving the gifts and not the Giver. But sometimes, in the hardest trials, the promise of outward gifts married to your inward love for and enjoyment of God may help push you through the trial.

³⁰⁹ Piper, *Desiring God*, 80.

³¹⁰ Alan Deutschman, *Change or Die*. (New York: Harper, 2007), 93.

³¹¹ Pink, 2-47.

Daniel Pink teaches that clearly defined promises of rewards are the least motivating and most dangerous, as they have a tendency to become addictive and ruin the appeal of other, better motivators.³¹² Maybe this is why Jesus and Paul, although they promise rewards in the next life are somewhat vague on exactly what these rewards will be and exactly how God will determine who gets what.

To summarize, as the literature review revealed, outward promises of blessings are not bad motivators, but they are not the best motivators and are thus dangerous and must be used cautiously. The key is to ask oneself, “Do I desire the reward for self-centered reasons or for God-centered reasons?” One way to determine the difference is to try to discern how demanding a spirit one has for an outward reward that corresponds to one’s obedience.³¹³

The Bible never rebukes someone for desiring eternal rewards too much.³¹⁴ Earthly rewards are trickier, and preaching about them can thus be dangerous. The Bible does use earthly rewards at times, the Christ-centered preacher cannot honestly shrink away from all such use. Yet the danger is that if one serves God primarily for earthly rewards, he may turn and serve the devil if the devil promises more. Rewards are not bad if they are good for you and primarily bring glory to God. Rewards are an especially safe motive when believers remember that the greatest reward is always a deeper experience of God’s nearness.

³¹² Pink, 36.

³¹³ Foster, 12-14.

³¹⁴ Bolton, 199-200.

Bolton makes the helpful distinction between primary motives that serve as the “spring” to action, and secondary motives that serve merely as “oil” to keep the wheels turning after they are already moving.³¹⁵ Some secondary motivations such as these are given to help us especially when our faith is lowest and trials and temptations run highest. “God gives us these in order to help faith against sense, to furnish faith with arguments against the carnal reasonings of the flesh, and to strengthen us in the greatest straits and distresses the world can bring upon us.”³¹⁶ Moses is an example of using future rewards in this way. He thought about future rewards

to cheer him in his way and give him encouragement, lest he should think of the great things he had refused and lest the flesh should begin to tell him that he had made a hard bargain...By this he renews his strength and gets new and fresh encouragement to continue his journey. He does not make this a reason why he undertakes the journey.³¹⁷

Intrinsic Motivations

Not only does the Bible use extrinsic motivations, it also uses motives that are more inward in nature. These motives might seem more naturally related to Christ-centered preaching. Now we will consider how these can be integrated with the extrinsic motivations.

As discussed before, Pink shows that the desire for mastery is one of the best inward motivators. The desire for mastery is never fulfilled, so the goal is never short-term, nor is it ever past.³¹⁸ The goal is a reward unto itself. Sanctification is similar to

³¹⁵ Chapell, *Holiness by Grace*, 210. Bolton, 166-169.

³¹⁶ Bolton, 201.

³¹⁷ Bolton, 193.

³¹⁸ Pink, 56.

this. Christians desire to grow in holiness to please Christ, but perfect holiness will never be attained in this life. Sanctification, then, is an ongoing goal without the same challenges of short-term goals, which quickly lose their power.

As we have previously shown, gratitude is another tricky motive that works much better when married to other motives. If I forget the gospel, if I forget how much God has done, is doing and will do for me, gratitude quickly degenerates into the debtor's ethic, in which I feel I must work hard to pay Christ back.³¹⁹ It becomes a strange type of legalistic performance mentality. But when I constantly remember that the gospel is something God has done, is doing and will do for me, it is wonderful to be motivated by gratitude. All biblical motives flourish and work better and more naturally when they are woven together correctly.

When one is inwardly motivated to do one's duty, it can be hard to distinguish whether it is the begrudging obedience of legalism or the loving, joyful service of one who delights in God. Samuel Bolton says that one man obeys as someone reluctantly taking his medicine, whereas another obeys as someone joyfully eating the food he enjoys.³²⁰ As Christians mature, begrudging obedience should fade to the background and more and more joyful obedience should become the norm. Most of the men I interviewed agreed with this view. This is a key inward sign that one is becoming more God-centered in one's motivations. If there is never any joy in one's obedience, one is probably not a Christian. Piper is strong on this point. "It is unbiblical and arrogant to try and worship God for any other reason than the pleasure to be had in him...Not his gifts, but him. Not

³¹⁹ Piper, 33, 38.

³²⁰ Bolton, 144.

ourselves, but him...[S]eeking one's own happiness is not a sin; it is a simple [desire] given in human nature. It is a law of the human heart as gravity is a law of nature."³²¹

This is a great way to see how naturally God's glory and my joy are blended together as dual motives.³²² I love God, but I also love the benefits I receive from his nearness. The key is to see God as the great reward, and all lesser rewards as somehow attached to him or leading to him. Then the competition between gift and Giver begins to fade.

Our desire for our own joy is a gigantic motive that cannot be ignored. It fits perfectly and naturally into a God-centered worldview on motivations.

The pursuit of pleasure is an essential motive for every good deed... [I]f you aim to abandon the pursuit of full and lasting pleasure, you cannot love people or please God... [T]he proper 'gain' to be motivated by is the happiness one gets in the act of love itself or in the good achieved by it...[T]he moral value of an act of love is [not] ruined when we are motivated to do it in anticipation of our own joy in it and from it.³²³

Even in sacrificially loving others, personal joy should be a motivating factor. Sin is in seeking our pleasure alone in isolation, forgetting others. True holiness is found in being motivated by our joy to share that joy with others through acts of love.³²⁴ This shows how God's glory, my joy, and the love of others are truly so intertwined that it is virtually impossible to separate them.

This is the way God intended it to be: the various motives serve and advance one another rather than competing with and hampering the others. The deeper our

³²¹ Piper, *Desiring God*, 16.

³²² *Ibid.*, 253.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 97-100.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 100-101.

understanding of this truth, the greater is our ability to live in freedom of full motivation as we obey. Then we will be able to exhort others all the more powerfully to do the same.

“Negative Motivations”

Some motives initially seem “negative,” and yet they are proper and helpful. This section seeks to show how even these motives are a valid and necessary part of Christ-centered preaching.

There are sinful motives that we have already discussed. There is a sinful form of guilt. One way to identify sinful guilt is if it drives you back to yourself and your own performance, like Judas trying to undo what he had done. But good guilt is necessary to truly appreciate grace. Unfortunately, good guilt and bad guilt can often seem similar and thus people at times label them both as “negative.” Some weak Christ-centered preachers want to throw the baby out with the bath water. In guarding against bad guilt, they wrongly attempt to extinguish the pangs of conscience that accompany good guilt. Like Henry said, “Good guilt is a great gift from God to send you to the one who can forgive you.”

Even those motives that may seem negative at first glance really serve to exalt the more primary motives, God’s love and glory. In his love for us and in his desire for our greater joy, God can choose to take our joy away temporarily when we sin, causing us to grieve and making us tremble in fear of consequences. He does this all so that we will be further motivated to run back to his love, grace and mercy. He does it so that we can become more secure in him and can experience the full enjoyment of his love, grace and goodness for all eternity. When a Christian repents and grieves over sin, it should primarily be because he feels good guilt at wounding the Savior who has loved him. He

should also be sad that he is not presently enjoying intimate fellowship with his best friend, his Creator. A proper understanding of God's anger even at the sin in the lives of believers serves only to advance the work of grace in one's heart. Henry rightly said that a "Christian has to deal with God's anger but not His wrath." Great preachers will often make such nuanced distinctions to help their people understand the differences between right and wrong motives.

Duty, rewards, and threats can easily degenerate into sinful motivations if they are disconnected from a love for Jesus. When these three "lower" forms of motivation are centered on a desire for and an enjoyment of fellowship with God, they are wonderful motivators. In order to keep all motivations in right balance and integration, we must always hold Jesus himself as our supreme desire and reward. We must focus on getting the Giver as the greatest gift. Those who long for heaven, but seek a heaven without Christ, are deep in sin. Those for whom heavenly joy and rewards motivate them to obey are doing right if they primarily desire heaven for the fellowship they will have there with Christ. Here is another helpful way to distinguish between sinful and godly motives. The rewards desired must not be abstract or disconnected from the duty required. Rather, the rewards promised and desired must grow organically out of the duty required to obtain them.³²⁵

People may see duty and threats primarily as negative motivators that will fall completely away in heaven. But these "negative" motivators serve to help us when we are spiritually weak and bring us back to full spiritual vitality.³²⁶ For this reason, they

³²⁵ Piper, *Desiring God*, 117-119.

³²⁶ Dorsett and Mead, 276. Baxter, 278.

should not be despised but, rather, loved. Just because something is not best, does not mean it is evil. Just because something is merely temporal, does not mean it is not good in the moment. However, it is helpful to remember that these “negative” motives are rarely enough by themselves to sustain obedience over the long haul.³²⁷

Threats flow from God’s love as motives for our obedience. They are a gracious gift from God to hinder us from abusing his grace and thus experience less of his grace when we run afoul of his gracious commands. Preaching these motivations faithfully is an aspect of remaining truly Christ-centered. Jim told me that the cross removes some reasons to fear the Lord, but increases others. Instinctively, we all know that there is a place for righteous anger in the best of loving, committed relationships. When a young child knowingly disobeys and runs into highway traffic, the godly parent will have anger towards the child and his actions, but that anger flows from the parents’ deep love and commitment to the child. “We should not hide truth for a moment, but we should have wisdom so to preach it [and thus lead] brethren into the full circle of gospel doctrine... You can sicken a man with the honey with which you meant to sweeten his mouth. The great mercy of God has been preached unguardedly, and has led hundreds into licentiousness.”³²⁸ Emphasizing any motive too strongly over another in your sermon can cause trouble, error and confusion.

Mature Motives

As a believer matures, some motives seem to grow in importance and centrality. Others seem to fade to the background. It seems that the Lord has designed this reality to

³²⁷ Eldredge, 171.

³²⁸ Spurgeon, 190.

bring all the motives into proper balance and alignment in the hearts of his people. This brief section will examine such motives, drawing conclusions from previous research.

In the most mature believers there is no tension between duty and joy. Duty ceases to seem like duty and soon becomes a delight, although it is always the duty of a Christian to obey, even in heaven. It is similar to someone who works a job for pay, has a contract, and has to show up, but this person so loves and enjoys the job, he or she would be happy to work for free and would show up even without a contract in place. The more we mature as believers, the more all the biblical motives seamlessly blend in our lives. The best preachers present this clearly in their preaching.

Some motives may fade to the background as a believer matures, such as the desire for blessings, but this does not make those desires or motives sinful. Most children are probably most excited on Christmas day or their birthdays to receive gifts. There is not necessarily any sin in this. As they mature, they do not cease to enjoy the gifts but have probably grown to enjoy the relationships even much more. They are still thankful for gifts and happy to receive them and gain some degree of pleasure from them. But now, the more mature and primary joy is in their relationships. Being motivated to receive gifts and blessings God promises is certainly not sin. But as we grow as Christians, we see that God himself and God alone is more than enough gift and blessing for all eternity, and yet he still promises to give so much more. But all the best gifts are connected to him, because he is the giver of all good things.³²⁹ There is a grace based way to seek God's blessings because he has promised to give them to us.

³²⁹ James 1:17.

The main “gift” that can be lost in sin is the experience of God’s presence, fellowship and smile. His love for his children never changes and is based on their legal righteousness before him, given to them as a gift from Christ. But their experience of his nearness and favor is a blessing that comes as we repent and obey. It is often removed when a believer perseveres hard-heartedly in knowing, willful sin. The more believers grow, the more their experiences of the love of God grow. Corresponding to this, as believers grow, their love for God and his glory also grows, becoming a central, conscious reality in light of which they live.

The gospel is the key to integrating all biblical different motives. The better a person understands the centrality of Christ and the gospel, the more readily the motives become one in that person’s living and thinking. A quote from chapter two is helpful:

There is no conflict between gratification of desire and the enhancement of man’s pleasure...and fulfillment of God’s command...[T]he operations of saving grace are directed to the end of removing the tension so that there may be, as there was with man at the beginning, the perfect complementation of duty and pleasure, of commandment and love.³³⁰

The more a person matures in Christ, the more all of the legitimate biblical motivations for obedience will become one and overlap perfectly.

Practical Integration

It is complicated enough to see all the different motives in the Bible work together, much more to understand how they all work together theologically. Even more difficult can be the struggle to combine them in one sermon. This section will investigate that task, drawing conclusions from the previous research.

³³⁰ John Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 38-39.

Christ-centered preaching comes from the idea that all scripture is centered on Christ. Christ-centered preachers should be committed to preaching Christ from all scripture while staying faithful to each text. So, when the preacher comes to his text, he should use every motive the text gives to advance the cause of Christ in the lives of his hearers. He should be motivated to trust God, his Word and his power this way because God has promised to bless the faithful preaching of his Word. The preacher should furthermore so love his people that he wants to give them every honest motivation he can to help them hate and put off sin and persevere in holiness. He should do this in wisdom, knowing how hard the battle is against sin, the world and Satan. “It is right to present people with the divinely ordained consequences of their actions as motives for controlling their conduct. It is right to tell people that obedience to God and devotion to his glory and the good of others will effectively promote their own welfare.”³³¹

It is not just important for the preacher to properly motivate his hearers. It is ideal for him to show his hearers from the text where he sees the Bible using certain motives to teach them to think, read and study the Word on their own in such a way. This will bring exponential impact for their lives. The power is in the Word, so the more he can tether his people to the Word the better, in every aspect of the sermon.

One practical pointer that will assist in the task of properly motivating people from the pulpit is to never try to say everything in one sermon. For one, this is nearly impossible. But more importantly, the Bible does not teach this way. Often, the Bible is content to command obedience and use only one or two motivations. And every text does not always use a primary motivation. Do not feel the need to correct the Bible. Do not try

³³¹ Charles Hodge, *2 Corinthians* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1995), 171.

to be a better and more spiritual teacher than God himself. Some preachers seem to do this by leaving out motives that are clearly in the text or by importing motives into the text that are not there. The best preachers let the text preach through them. Fred said that the best safeguard for freeing oneself to preach each text strongly and yet keep proper balance is to teach regularly, expositively, and sequentially through entire books. This ensures that eventually the preacher will be touching on all the biblical motives, probably having placed a similar amount of time and emphasis on each motive as the Bible does. It takes wisdom to know when to emphasize one motive and when to emphasize another.

Bo told me that regardless of the preacher's best efforts to be faithful, there will always be those in the congregation who will feel like they hear too many negative motivations. Others will always feel that God's grace was overemphasized. If the pastor seeks not to please men but God, by staying as faithful to God's Word as he can, he should not have to worry at all about the opinions of men but rather can make the text his defense and alibi.

Bo also said that pastors should know the tendencies of their congregants. Thus, they should be able to foresee the pitfalls to which some of their hearers may be susceptible. If a pastor knows he has listeners who are prone to hear any talk of rewards as legalistic, he can be careful to show them that there is a grace-based way to pursue God's promised rewards, a way that rests in God's Word and God's love, not in our works. The preacher can show them the biblical motivations, but also show how those biblical motivations can be perverted.³³² He can explain to his listeners that the devil easily manipulates pure motives and makes counterfeits to trip up well-meaning

³³² Piper, *Brothers, We are Not Professionals*, 35.

believers. But at the end of the day, if the pastor fully and clearly explains the gospel faithfully and consistently, the love of God in Christ should naturally lead to all the right motivations.

Even if the gospel is not easily seen in a text, every text sits in the context of the whole Bible and, in this light, we should therefore preach Luke 24. All good motives are rooted in God's love and thus should not be neglected. This is true of the sternest warnings and harshest threats. "Preachers should not interpret the consequences of sin that scripture reveals to be indications that God's love is conditional. This instruction does not mean that we should avoid mention of sin's biblical consequences. Instead, we should present biblical identification of sin's consequences as the gracious revelation of a loving Father."³³³ Bo said that God gives warnings to guard us from our "worst nightmares."

Henry said that no biblical motive should ever be ignored for the sake of preserving Christ-centered preaching. Preaching all motives faithfully from the text will further clarify, exalt, and sweeten Christ as a motive for obedience. This will also help pastors avoid the pitfalls of licentiousness and legalism. Bo said that when Christ is truly central, he will draw both sides to the center and to himself.

Preachers should be able to weave together motives that initially seem like polar opposites. When need be, show and explain how the different motives work together and play off one another. Al said to resolve all the tension you honestly can between differing motives but realize from the start that it will be impossible to remove all tension in this life. It seems that, to keep us humble, God allows there to be some truths that we still see

³³³ Ibid., 308.

unclearly. Jim had great insight on this point, showing that the tension between motives in a sermon can create a mystery that sucks listeners into the sermon. He further instructed that we do not always have to say everything. The Bible assumes that even first time readers will intuitively see some truths, such as God's love for the Christian, and thus does not require a paragraph reminder about love every time a harsh warning is used in scripture. The same should be true of our sermons. Secondary motives are not bad; they are just not best. This does not mean that we should leave them out. Preaching all the motives is a practical way to give extra grace to help your hearers fight sin.

Furthermore, Jim wisely discerned that it is not always necessary to distinguish between primary and secondary motives, again because the Bible rarely does. But one should not go to the other extreme and think that all Christians will totally understand how the motives work together. A preacher's job is to make the truth as clear to his people as possible so that it will have the most powerful effects in their lives. The best sermons minister both to those mature believers who understand a great deal about motives naturally and to weak believers who have never reflected on the concept before. The pastor must diligently work to try to understand his hearers' motives and appeal to them in a godly way. Al suggested starting by appealing to desires for satisfaction, security, significance, society and sanctity. But one must draw people from those rooted-in-self motives to see that their desires are fulfilled by resting in and honoring Christ.

Although balance is a good goal, it is not the main goal. Honoring Christ and being faithful to the text should supersede it. Bo noted that Jesus rarely seemed interested in balance: he seemed to sometimes be overly firm and other times almost lenient. More

times than not, his words seemed out of balance because of how filled with warnings they were. But other times, he leaned more towards tenderness.

Fred wisely advises that if you believe your congregation needs a certain emphasis on one motivation, try to find the book of the Bible that emphasizes those motives the most, and preach through that book. That way, you are not just emphasizing your hobby horse but are working as a slave to the text, while using your God-given discernment.

Examples

Preaching from Luke 7:36-50, a pastor could show how several motives work in conjunction. The woman in the passage has obviously been convicted of her sin. She experiences the love and mercy of Christ. She loves him in return. She probably seeks to find her joy in being near Christ. Four motives are evident in one short, powerful story.

Second Corinthians 5:9-14 possibly highlights more motives than any other text in the Bible. The first motive is to please the Lord. The second is the judgment seat of Christ, which would include the threat of consequences and the promise of blessings in the next life. Thirdly, Paul mentions the fear of the Lord. Fourthly, Paul and others serve for the glory of God. Fifthly, they serve God out of love for the Corinthian believers. Sixthly, they are compelled by Christ's love for them. A good pastor should have no problem preaching on these six verses and mentioning all six motives. There is no tension in Paul's mind between them.

Philippians 3:7-14 is another example of Paul blending motives without confusion. He is motivated by his desire for more rewards. But he is not looking for earthly rewards. The reward he seeks is to experience Christ more. It is obvious in this

passage that Paul believes he is saved and sanctified by faith in the righteousness of Christ. He seems to feel no problem in proclaiming, mingled with his passionate “press on” and “win the prize.”³³⁴ When God promises a reward for certain types of obedience, it is not sin for a desire for that reward to motivate a person to obey, nor is it a sin to expect that one will receive the reward if one obeys. This does not indicate a merit-based relationship with God; it is taking God at his Word, as he wants us to do.

A preacher could preach an excellent sermon on right and wrong motivations from 1 Thessalonians 2:3-6. It is wrong to be motivated by man’s approval or greed. It is right to seek to please God. It is good to be motivated by the fact that God has already approved us. There is no contradiction in resting in God’s approval while seeking to please him with my actions. Those who feel too much tension between these two states show their immaturity.

Hebrews 12 is another passage that blends together many motives and roots them all in Christ. Christ’s work on the cross reminds us of his love but also serves as an example to motivate us. Our personal joy in God should motivate us. Gaining eternal rewards should motivate us in the hardest of times, as it did Christ. The author has no problem motivating believers with love and joy in one paragraph and then moving directly into motivation based on the threats of God’s loving discipline and painful consequences. The author of Hebrews is a mature, Christ-centered preacher. Verse 11 also shows that believers should be motivated, as they persevere and obey, by the promise of increased spiritual maturity in this life. There is also the promise of more intimacy with Christ, presumably in this life and the next. We should be motivated by

³³⁴ Philippians 3:14.

how our obedience can help other believers continue in the faith. Lastly, at the end of the chapter, the author again mentions gratitude for salvation, to reinforce all the other motivations. The best preachers will learn from this model that employing many motives will enhance, rather than diminish, each one.

Lastly, 1 Peter 1:17-18 weaves together motives that at first seem to be on opposing sides of the scale. Since we have a God who is a Father, we should obey him. Most readers, stopping there, are flooded with thoughts of love, grace, protection and intimacy that have already been given to us, never to be taken away. These are primary things that should motivate us. They are true, and it is not wrong to think this way. But Peter also reminds us that our heavenly Father is a judge. He draws the conclusion that we should live in holy fear. There are veiled holy threats here. Both God's love and severity should motivate us. When we proclaim to be Christ-centered, we must remember that Christ is not merely Savior, but also Lord, King and Judge. He is not only the God of the cross, but of the crown and of the bench and of the throne. We must center our preaching on him in all these ways. Right after mentioning the fear of the Lord, Peter returns to the gospel. Christ-centered preachers should be like Peter and have no problem in one sentence commanding people to fear God in holy awe, and in the next sentence reminding them of the sweet, tender, forgiving mercy of Christ that gives us our lives.

Further Areas of Research

While I have gleaned many insights from this research, it has also raised new questions. I would have liked to pursue other sub-topics relating to this research but was not able to do so under the framework of my thesis. First, it would be interesting to explore the difference between motivations used in the Old and New Testaments. It

would also be wonderful to be able to catalogue every motive the New Testament uses to inspire and assist Christian obedience.

Another area of further research would involve taking the categories I have used and refining them even further. Someone could also take the different genres of scripture and see how different motives are used in those genres. For example, are threats used more in prophetic books than in narratives? Which type of motive is emphasized in each genre? It would also be wonderful to have someone examine and compare how different authors use different motives. Does Paul motivate by the love of Christ more than Luke does?

Another area of interest would be to interview the hearers of sermons and see what they perceive as the most powerful motives used in sermons. Research could be conducted to determine what motives listeners thought about during the week in relation to what they heard on Sunday.

Conclusion

As far as integrating the various biblical motivations, the most important piece of advice may be to never pit one motivation against another. Fred taught that if a motive is biblically legitimate, one should never have to choose either that motivation or another, but rather, both that motivation and other biblically legitimate motivations are important. Certainly, the primary motivations should be exalted. But the overall goal should be to let all the motivations become one and work as one, both in one's life and preaching. Jesus never backed off the secondary motivations, and neither should we. The key is to keep them always in the context of the primary motivations, God's grace and goodness, from which they all flow.

The more mature in the faith a person is, the less fractured and competing the motives should seem. God's love towards us is foundational, a first among equals as a motive. "Do not extol the single attribute of love,...but regard love in the high theological sense ... [L]ike a golden circle, it holds within itself all the divine attributes; for God were not love if He were not just and did not hate every unholy thing. Never exalt one attribute at the expense of another...[B]e careful not to misrepresent your Lord."³³⁵ Any motive used in the Bible is proper to use today in the Christian life and in preaching to move believers to obey. Nothing about any biblical motive strikes at the centrality of Christ.

Multiple motivations "quicken us" to obey.³³⁶ In a sense, they free us more from the sin which so easily entangles. They enable us to more fully cast aside any and all doubts that obedience is always the best thing for our joy and God's glory. Obedience is the most rational decision at all times. God overwhelms us from all angles, screaming at us with the greatest of all loves to obey him. He does this partially by giving us many motivations to obey. We have no excuse not to be motivated. Ultimately, all of my obedience is still a grace motivated response to his love. The more we understand his love for us, the better all the other motives will work in conjunction to motivate us.³³⁷ Even the seemingly "negative" ones will be seen as things God lovingly gives us for our best.

³³⁵ Ibid., 340.

³³⁶ Bolton, 164-165.

³³⁷ Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching*, 307.

In the end, the critical task is to stare at Christ in and through the Word and thus be supernaturally changed from the inside out, as 1 Corinthians 3:18 promises we will. When we give him full vent to work in our lives, with all his motives, he can do far more than we can, even when we do not understand exactly how the motives all work together. When we humbly trust him and his Word, relying on his grace and Spirit, he will properly use the motives to shape us into his image.

God has given different men different passions and gifts. They should feel free to use those gifts and passions to move believers forward in grace. But they must always keep their gifts and passions aligned under the centrality of Christ and the gospel.

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