

Messenger of Truth

"Holding forth the Word of Life" (Phil. 2:16)

March 26, 2013

Issue No. 87 Mark Aites, Editor

Motives

"Never judge a man's actions until you know his motives." – Anonymous

"Actions are visible, though motives are secret." – Samuel Johnson

"The spirit from which we act is the principal matter." – Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

"The inner thought coming from the heart represents the real motives and desires. These are the cause of action." – Raymond Holliwell

It is rather interesting that the word *motive* is not even found in sacred writings, yet the idea is certainly there. Webster states that it is "something (as a need or desire) that causes a person to act."

A prime example would have to be the scribes and Pharisees as recorded in Matthew chapter six. Jesus referred to them as "hypocrites" (6:2,5; cf. Matt. 23). The motive is clearly exposed, with doing charitable deeds "to be seen" by men (6:1), standing in the synagogues praying to "be seen by men" (6:5), and disfiguring their faces "that they may appear to men to be fasting" (6:16).

There was another occasion when the Pharisees and Herodians tried to catch Jesus in His words (Mark 12:13). They wanted Jesus to answer whether it was right to pay taxes. "But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, 'Why do you test Me? Bring me a denarius that I may see it.' So they brought it. And He said to them, 'Whose image and inscription is this? They said to Him, 'Caesar's.'" And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' And they marveled at Him" (Mark 12:14-17).

At the Passover Feast, as a gesture of good will, Pilate gave the Jews an opportunity to choose Barabbas or Jesus to be released. Pilate said, "'Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?' For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them" (Mark 15:9-12).

In each of these instances we can see that what precipitated the various actions were not pure motives. People often act in a way that can seem noble, but in reality their reason or purpose in what they do is anything but good.

Scripture encourages us, "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:9-10). In light of our thoughts, we should strive to do good and for the right reason.