

## Articles and Sermons :: Look to Your Motives by Alexander Whyte

**Look to Your Motives by Alexander Whyte - posted by pastorfrin, on: 2008/1/30 21:06**

"Look to Your Motives" by Alexander Whyte

Introduction:

"The great schoolmen had a saying to the effect that all created things take their true goodness or their true evil from the end they aim at." (Whyte, First Series Bunyan Characters, p. 216) As we observe the world in which we live and the various things which men aim at (i.e. the love of money, honor and satisfying fleshly appetites) we often shake our heads in scorn at such low and selfish motives. However, if we (Christians) were to honestly examine our own hearts, could we agree with this assessment of Richard Hooker?

"Even in the good things that we do, how many defects are there intermingled! For God in that which is done respecteth especially the mind and intention of the doer. Cut off, then, all those things wherein we have regarded our own glory, those things which we do to please men, or to satisfy our own liking, those things which we do with any by-respect, and not sincerely and purely for the love of God, and a small score will serve for the number of our righteous deeds." (Whyte, First Series Bunyan Characters, p. 217)

In this sermon Alexander Whyte will show us that an acquaintance with our own hearts and motives is the beginning to a correct pilgrimage (sanctification) toward the Celestial City.

He will have us witness against ourselves, judge, and execute our incorrect motives. For if we do not go as deep as God's eye goes in searching our hearts, we do but harm and deceive ourselves. After showing us where we will never find true joy and satisfaction, we will realize that only in Christ is our true rest found. May God enable us to step into the higher motive of seeking Christ for the sake of His own worth and loveliness as well as for the benefits we receive from Him.

Sermon:

Look to Your Motives by Alexander Whyte  
With Mercy and With Judgment, pp. 44-56

"If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness."

(Matt. 6:22,23)

Look to your motives! - our Lord says to us over and over again in this chapter. Our Lord's words always go to the bottom of things. They always go to the bottom of our hearts. Our Lord's words are always quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow: they are discerners also of the thoughts and intents of our hearts. Our Lord's words strip our hearts bare of all affectation and pretence, display and insincerity, ostentation and hypocrisy.

"Thy word, O Lord, is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it." "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Our motives are the secret springs of our hearts. Our motives are those hidden things in our hearts that move us to speak and to act. Our lives all issue out from our hearts, like so many streams out of so many deep and hidden springs: and thus it is that we are so often told in the Word of God to "keep our hearts with all diligence." And thus it is that our Lord's teaching is so full of all the matters of the heart; and especially of the hidden motives of the heart. Take good heed of your motives, He says three times to us in this single passage. Be simple in your hearts, He says to us. Be sincere in your hearts. Be pure in your hearts. Be not men-pleasers. Be not eye-servants. Be not "hypocrites." Seek not to be seen of men. Seek secret places. Seek obscurity. Seek and keep silence. Do nothing for the praise, or for the approval, or for the rewards of men. Let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth. Live all your life in the presence of God. Lay open your heart to His eye alone. Seek to have praise of God. Work for His approval and for His reward, Who seeth in secret. "The light of the body is the eye: if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness."

1. Now, men alone, of all God's creatures on the earth, have motives. The sun, and the moon, and the stars all move. They all move with the motion which their Maker gave to them at the beginning, and which He continually conveys to them by His upholding and impelling hand. "In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun: which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." The fowl of the air also, the fish of the sea, all sheep and oxen also - they all creep, and walk, and run, and fly, each one of them after his kind - but it is never said of any of them that they have a motive in what they do, or in where they go. They eat and they drink: they lie down and they rise up: but they never say- "When I awake I am still with Thee!" The ox knoweth his owner, indeed: and the ass his master's crib; but all the same, they cannot enter into their master's mind with them. They do what by bit and bridle he compels them to do; but, with it all, they do not consider. They have no understanding. They have no power of contrary choice. They were not made in their Maker's image. Their chief end is never said to be to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever. They have all their appointed ends, and they all stand in the same ordinances in which they were placed at their creation; but they do not know their own ordinances, nor who ordained them. To man alone God saw it good to give understanding, - understanding, and conscience, and will, and a contrary choice. Alone, of all things that live, and move, and have their being in God, man is moved by his own motives.

2. And thus it is that God goes down to our motives when He would know us altogether, and would discover us, and would conclusively judge us. We ourselves make every effort to get at men's motives when we would know them, and would judge them. But we cannot wade with any security into that deep sea. Men's motives lie deep down beyond our discovery and jurisdiction. God's eye alone can see and search out a motive. We all feel that we are not truly known till our motives are known. We all feel that we are not yet fully and finally judged till our motives are laid naked and open. I may do what seems to your judgment right or wrong, praiseworthy or blameworthy - but hold your peace about me till you are quite sure that you have all my motives laid out under your eye. When you praise me, you pain me and humiliate me, if my motive was not a pure motive: and when you blame me, I appeal from your judgment to His before whose tribunal all my motives lie bare:

"For I am ware it is the seed of act God holds appraising in His hollow palm: Not act grown great thence as the world believes, Leafage and branchage vulgar eyes admire."

What I am in my motives, that I really am: that, just that, and neither more nor less. And it is the prerogative and glory of God to hold all my motives, "appraising them" in His righteous hand. "Talk no more so exceeding proudly," Hannah prayed and said, "and let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed." "God weigheth more," says Thomas, "with how much love a man worketh: He weigheth the motive more than the actual work. He doeth much in God's judgment who loveth much." And we all have by heart Paul's fine passage on motive under the name of Charity in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians.

3. Now from all this, it follows as clear as day that our true sanctification, our true holiness of heart, our true and full and final salvation, all lie in the rectification, the simplification, and the purification of our motives. The corruption and pollution of our hearts - trace all that down to the bottom, and it all lies in our motives: in the selfishness, the unneighborliness, the unbrotherliness, the ungodliness of our motives. We are all our own motive in all that we do: we are all our own main object and our own chief end. And it is just this that stains and debases so much that we do. It is just this that so pollutes our hearts in the sight of God: and it is this that makes all we do so polluted in our own eyes, when we look at ourselves with the eyes of God. It is this that makes so much of our very righteousness to be filthy rags; and it is this inward bondage to bad motives that makes all God's saints to cry out with Paul under their utter wretchedness. Our Lord's blessedness, amid all His labors and burdens and sorrows, arose out of this that His motives in all that He did were good. His eye was single, and therefore His whole body full of light. He pleased not Himself. He pursued not His own ends. He had all His motives outside of Himself, and above Himself, He was always, even in His early youth, "about His Father's business." He worked for praise, and for approval, and for reward indeed - but it was never the praise or the approval or the reward of men, but always of His Father. And thus it was that He had a clean heart, and clean hands, and a clean and a peaceful conscience in all that He did; and, after His work was finished - because of the simplicity, and the purity of His motives in all parts of His work - He had such a reception awarded Him in His Father's house as no other son or servant of God has ever had. Now, where our Lord was pure and perfect, we are still impure and imperfect. Where His eye was single, our eye is double; and where His body was full of light, our body, at its best, is but twilight and darkness. There are all degrees of purity and of impurity in our motives. But it is he whose motives are purest, and whose eye is singlest, who is most prostrated and humiliated and overwhelmed with the impure, selfish, ungodly mixtures of his own motives. In all he does, when he does his very best, in almsgiving, in fasting, in praying, in preaching, and indeed in all his actions and words and thoughts - so deeply is it all infected with the deadly taint of himself that his motives are a constant source of self-despising, self-hatred, and self-despair. And just as his Master will never be pleased with His disciple till all His disciple's mo-

tives are as pure as His own, so neither can the disciple of Christ ever be pleased with himself till he is pure as his Master is pure.

"Saints purest in God's eyes Are vilest in their own."

4. "The one thing needful," then, in all that we think and say and do is a good motive. The new birth that we must all every day undergo, the one all-embracing change of heart that God demands of us and offers us in His Son every day, is a completely new motive. The fall of man took place when God ceased to be man's motive and man's end, and when each man became his own motive and his own end. And the supreme need of all men is just the restoration to their hearts of God as their true motive and their chief end. Every human heart cries with Augustine - every human heart in its own language: "Thou hast made me for Thyself, and I know no rest till I find my rest in Thee. Thou hast made us to be moved by one motive, and to be directed by one intention, and to rest, with a perfect rest, in one end: and both our motive, and our intention, and our rest are in Thee." "Capable we are of God," says Hooker in one of his magnificent passages- "capable we are of God both by understanding and by will: by understanding, as He is that sovereign Truth, which comprehendeth the rich treasure-house of all wisdom: by will, as He is that God of goodness, whereof whoso tasteth shall thirst no more... Under man, no creature in the world is capable of felicity and bliss. First, because their chiefest perfection consisteth in that which is best for them, but not in that which is simply best, as ours doth. Secondly, because whatsoever external perfection they tend unto, it is not better than themselves, as ours is. How just occasion have we therefore, with the prophet, to admire the goodness of God! 'Lord, what is man, that Thou shouldest exalt him above the work of Thy hands' - so far as to make Thyself the inheritance of his rest and the substance of his felicity." "Whom have I," exclaims Asaph the psalmist- "whom have I in heaven but Thee! And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."

5. Now, all serious-minded and self-observant men will surely say to all this that they know all this already and have long known it: they accept all this, and delight to hear it; but the longer they live, the more they fail to attain to it. They see purity of motive, and simplicity of end, and directness of intention, and godliness of life - all shining like the sun and the moon and the stars high up above them, so high above them that they despair of ever rising up to them. My brethren, be patient: be instructed. The new heart of a saint of God was never yet attained at a bound. A new life of motive, and of disposition, and of intention, and of aim and end is not the growth of a day or of a year. All this present life is allotted by God to His saints to make them a new heart. This inward work will fill up your whole life to its last moment, - God, till that moment, working in you to will and to do, to rectify your motives and to protect and purify your ends to the last. Believe that, and the great work of your life is already half wrought. Believe what God's purpose with your life is. Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief! Believe nobly. Believe magnificently. Believe with Christ the greatest Believer, and the chiefest Saint. Believe that all your life is laid out, and filled up - not and never for any earthly and temporal end, but always for a heavenly and an everlasting end! Not to give you rest, and pleasure, and satisfaction, where those ends are not; but to give you, and to prepare you for, these ends where they alone are, where they are worthy of you, and where you will be both capable and worthy of them. Threescore years and ten, with all their deep providences, ordinations from everlasting, searching exercises and subduing and weaning experiences of heart, means of grace, and foretastes of glory - are all not for one moment too much for the perfect sanctification and everlasting and secure salvation of an immortal soul. Ask yourselves then, amid all those things divine and human, earthly and heavenly, outward and inward - ask yourselves if the one work of your life, the one undertaking and achievement of your life, is making progress. And you have a sure test of your progress just in this question: "What is my motive in this that I now do? And in this that I now suffer? In the light of God, and under His eye, why do I do this and that? What is my motive? What is my intention? What is the end I have set before myself in this and in that?" And then we shall no longer be as the horse and the mule that have no understanding. We shall say in every enterprise, What would my Master have me here to do? And we shall answer ourselves: "O Lord, I am Thy servant: I am thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid. Thou hast loosed my bonds!" At the same time, it is by no means necessary to torture ourselves and to be in continual bondage to the letter of the law. We do not stop at every step of a journey and ask ourselves what place we are going to, and why we are going to that place. We weigh our motives well before we start, and if they are right we set out; and if they are not right, we turn back. But once having made up our mind and started, we go on, enjoying the way, conversing about many things by the way, refreshing and resting ourselves by the way, and setting out again on our journey. And let the love of our heart be once rightly placed; let our treasure once be in heaven; let our motive once be God and our neighbors and not ourselves; and with many halts, and many hungers and thirstings, with many stumblings and falls even, yet our faces are still steadfastly set to the end of our journey, and the path of the just will lead us at last to our journey's end. Walking under the finger-post of the golden rule, walking in the light of a single eye and a right intention, we shall more and more walk at liberty, till all we think, and all we do, is pleasing in God's eyes.

(1) Now from all this there follow two or three plain lessons. And this very plain lesson to begin with, - that we cannot, by

any possibility, know, so as to judge, our neighbors' motives. God has not given us the ability. He has reserved that divine ability to Himself. And at his peril, therefore, let a man intermeddle with another man's motives. Every human being holds secrets in his heart that the day of judgment shall for the first time publish abroad. Every human being holds in himself a whole world of mystery to all his fellows; and most of all to those who know him best. Attempt to judge no man's motives, then, for you cannot do it. You are a wise man, and a true man, and a good man if you can judge your own, and yourself on account of them. Judge yourself, then, and you shall not be judged; but judge other men, and with what measure you mete it shall be meted out to you again. Leave all judgment of other men's motives therefore to the Judge of all the earth, - to Him Who will judge you and all men by the thoughts and the intents of the heart.

(2) Again, it is surely a great comfort to a good man to know that a good motive makes the smallest act both great and good in God's heart-searching sight. Splendid deeds that are blazoned abroad by a thousand trumpets are but "splendid sins" in God's judgment, unless they are done out of a secret motive of true and genuine goodness. Unless love to God and to man, unless self-forgetfulness and self-conquest, lay at its root, the most far-sounding deed that ever any man did was but dust and ashes, and far less than that in the sight of God. Whereas, - one single cup of cold water, one visit, in passing the door, to a sick-bed, a salutation on the street, a shaft of love and honor and goodwill shot in secret over the city or over the sea, for love's sake, and for Christ's sake: "Come, ye blessed of my Father: inherit the Kingdom prepared for you!"

(3) And to come back to this chapter for our last lesson: - Three times it is told us, - and it must therefore be a lesson of the last importance to us to learn, - three times over our Lord says of the Pharisee: Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. And the third time - Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. And then, over against that, our Lord says to His disciples, and through them to us: "Give all your alms in secret: fast and pray in secret: seek out secret places: and hide yourselves, and all that you do, with your Father in secret, and your Father which seeth in secret will reward you openly. And, blessed are ye, when men, not knowing your good motives, shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake." As much as to say: Go down, if need be to your grave, unknown and undiscovered, hated, despised, misjudged, misrepresented, misunderstood: only, keep your heart hidden with Christ in God: and when Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory!"

**Re: Look to Your Motives by Alexander Whyte - posted by crsschk (), on: 2008/1/31 9:46**

*"Where His eye was single, our eye is double; and where His body was full of light, our body, at its best, is but twilight and darkness. There are all degrees of purity and of impurity in our motives. But it is he whose motives are purest, and whose eye is singlest, who is most prostrated and humiliated and overwhelmed with the impure, selfish, ungodly mixtures of his own motives."*

**Re: - posted by pastorfrin, on: 2008/1/31 12:03**

Quote:

crsschk wrote:

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Hi Brother Mike,

Once again we see from Whyte's writings the importance of our heart hid in Christ Jesus and looking upon none other than He.

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The cost:

"Go down, if need be to your grave, unknown and undiscovered, hated, despised, misjudged, misrepresented, misunderstood:"

This cannot be too much to ask of one who has truly hid their life in Him.

In His Love  
pastorfrin

#### Look to your motives - posted by crsschk (), on: 2008/1/31 16:08

*Our motives are the secret springs of our hearts. Our motives are those hidden things in our hearts that move us to speak and to act. Our lives all issue out from our hearts, like so many streams out of so many deep and hidden springs: and thus it is that we are so often told in the Word of God to "keep our hearts with all diligence." And thus it is that our Lord's teaching is so full of all the matters of the heart; and especially of the hidden motives of the heart. Take good heed of your motives, He says three times to us in this single passage. Be simple in your hearts, He says to us. Be sincere in your hearts. Be pure in your hearts. Be not men-pleasers. Be not eye-servants. Be not "hypocrites." Seek not to be seen of men. Seek secret places. Seek obscurity. Seek and keep silence. Do nothing for the praise, or for the approval, or for the rewards of men. Let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth. Live all your life in the presence of God. Lay open your heart to His eye alone. Seek to have praise of God. Work for His approval and for His reward, Who seeth in secret. "The light of the body is the eye: if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness."*

pastorfrin, it's really not speaking season but ... some articles are just specimens, jewels, Whyte's writings it seems are always of this caliber.

#### Re: Look to your motives - posted by pastorfrin, on: 2008/2/3 20:24

Quote:

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Amen!