

Religion

“I obey – therefore I’m accepted.”

Motivation is based on fear and insecurity.

I obey God in order to get things from God.

When circumstances in my life go wrong, I am angry at God or my self, since I believe, like Job’s friends that anyone who is good deserves a comfortable life.

When I am criticized I am furious or devastated because it is critical that I think of myself as a ‘good person’. Threats to that self-image must be destroyed at all costs.

My prayer life consists largely of petition and it only heats up when I am in a time of need. My main purpose in prayer is control of the environment.

My self-view swings between two poles. If and when I am living up to my standards, I feel confident, but then I am prone to be proud and unsympathetic to failing people. If and when I am not living up to standards, I feel humble, but not confident—I feel like a failure.

My identity and self-worth are based mainly on how hard I work. Or how moral I am, and so I must look down on those I perceive as lazy or immoral. I disdain and feel superior to ‘the other.’

Since I look to my own pedigree or performance for my spiritual acceptability, my heart manufactures idols. It may be my talents, my moral record, my personal discipline, my social status, etc. I absolutely have to have them so they serve as my main hope, meaning, happiness, security, and significance, whatever I may say I believe about God.

Gospel

“I’m accepted – therefore I obey.”

Motivation is based on grateful joy.

I obey God to get to God—to delight and resemble Him.

When circumstances in my life go wrong, I struggle but I know all my punishment fell on Jesus and that while he may allow this for my training, he will exercise his Fatherly love within my trial.

When I am criticized I struggle, but it is not critical for me to think of myself as a ‘good person.’ My identity is not built on my record or my performance but on God’s love for me in Christ. I can take criticism.

That’s how I became a Christian. My prayer life consists of generous stretches of praise and adoration. My main purpose is fellowship with Him.

My self-view is not based on a view of my self as a moral achiever. In Christ I am *simul iustus et peccator*—simultaneously sinful and lost yet accepted in Christ. I am so bad he had to die for me and I am so loved he was glad to die for me. This leads me to deeper and deeper humility and confidence at the same time. Neither swaggering nor sniveling.

My identity and self-worth are centered on the one who died for His enemies, who was excluded from the city for me. I am saved by sheer grace. So I can’t look down on those who believe or practice something different from me. Only by grace I am what I am. I’ve no inner need to win arguments.

I have many good things in my life—family, work, spiritual disciplines, etc. But none of these good things are ultimate things to me. None of them are things I absolutely have to have, so there is a limit to how much anxiety, bitterness, and despondency they can inflict on me when they are threatened and lost.

Ephesians 2:8-10

1 John 4:7-11

Isaiah 53:6
Romans 3:23

Psalms 23:4
John 16:33
Phil. 4:11-14
Hebrews 12:1-13

Romans 10:4
2 Cor. 5:21
1 Peter 3:18

Philippians 4:4-7

Romans 10:4
2 Cor. 5:21
1 Peter 3:18

Philippians 3:8-9
Mark 10:45
Phil. 2:1-11

1 John 5:11-14
Psalm 73

adapted from Tim Keller, “Preaching the Gospel”

Three Kinds of Men

C.S. Lewis's short essay, "Three Kinds of Men," from his collection of essays, *Present Concerns* (pp. 9-10).

There are three kinds of people in the world.

The first class is of those who live simply for their own sake and pleasure, regarding Man and Nature as so much raw material to be cut up into whatever shape may serve them.

In the second class are those who acknowledge some other claim upon them—the will of God, the categorical imperative, or the good of society—and honestly try to pursue their own interests no further than this claim will allow. They try to surrender to the higher claim as much as it demands, like men paying a tax, but hope, like other taxpayers, that what is left over will be enough for them to live on. Their life is divided, like a soldier's or a schoolboy's life, into time "on parade" and "off parade," "in school" and "out of school."

But the third class is of those who can say like St Paul that for them "to live is Christ." These people have got rid of the tiresome business of adjusting the rival claims of Self and God by the simple expedient of rejecting the claims of Self altogether. The old egoistic will has been turned round, reconditioned, and made into a new thing. The will of Christ no longer limits theirs; it is theirs. All their time, in belonging to Him, belongs also to them, for they are His.

And because there are three classes, any merely twofold division of the world into good and bad is disastrous. It overlooks the fact that the members of the second class (to which most of us belong) are always and necessarily unhappy. The tax which moral conscience levies on our desires does not in fact leave us enough to live on. As long as we are in this class we must either feel guilt because we have not paid the tax or penury because we have. The Christian doctrine that there is no "salvation" by works done to the moral law is a fact of daily experience. Back or on we must go. But there is no going on simply by our own efforts. If the new Self, the new Will, does not come at His own good pleasure to be born in us, we cannot produce Him synthetically.

The price of Christ is something, in a way, much easier than moral effort—it is to want Him. It is true that the wanting itself would be beyond our power but for one fact. The world is so built that, to help us desert our own satisfactions, they desert us. War and trouble and finally old age take from us one by one all those things that the natural Self hoped for at its setting out. Begging is our only wisdom, and want in the end makes it easier for us to be beggars. Even on those terms the Mercy will receive us.