

The Wednesday Word, July 6, 2011: Selfish Salvation? Part 1

Have you ever heard someone say, "I 'm concerned about the motives that led me to seek Christ; they were very selfish. I was not seeking the glory of God"?

Selfish? Not seeking the glory of God? Yes indeed, that's probably true. Most if not all of us were like that, we were concerned only for ourselves when we first trusted Christ for mercy. When we saw our wretched lostness, neutral feelings about our condition tended to melt away.

Through the gospel, the Holy Spirit often imparts a sense of impending and imminent trouble that causes us to turn to God. Although these motives for self-preservation do not qualify us for salvation, they most certainly do not disqualify us from the same. Our first trusting in Christ is usually motivated by self-interest. But is this wrong? Some might say that a man who fled from a burning house was selfish or self-centred, yet others of us would say that he had good sense. Similarly, when the Spirit of God gives us impending wrath, it is a great motivator to flee from imminent doom by 'selfishly' crying out for mercy. There's nothing wrong with that!

God, in His grace, often gives us fear and indeed uses fear in this matter of salvation. Noah for example, was moved by fear and built an ark for the saving of his house (Heb 11:7). Was that selfish? Was that self-serving? I suppose one could argue so, but, again, others of us would call it wisdom.

The Lord in His grace often uses fear to get our attention. For example, He appeals to our fears when He says, "*Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die (Ezk 33:11)?*" Furthermore, in the most famous gospel promise of all, there is the mention of perishing (Jn 3:16). Surely the thought of perishing motivates a sobriety in our thinking. To act upon such God given motivations could strictly speaking be called selfish, but to not act upon them, would be rank folly. Some people really need a good dose of God given fear, or as Paul says, "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Corinthians 5:11). In no way is it wrong to fear perishing and to flee to Christ for refuge.

Don't let anyone fool you. When people talk of 'higher motives' in finding Christ it is just more hot air. Those who say that in coming to Christ we should be prompted only by the glory of God or a love for Christ are talking through their baseball caps. Among all the millions of believers who have ever lived, just how many began their Christian life by some supposed higher motive? Certainly not the Philippian jailor! He cried out in a fit of selfishness, "What must I do to be saved"(Acts 16:30)? He was motivated by an imminent sense of personal danger. And did the apostle rebuke him for this? Did he ignore his question and say, "Don't be so selfish"?

No. He answered immediately, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*" (Acts 16:31).

There is nothing wrong with these so called 'selfish' motives in this matter of coming to Christ. When your body is in pain, is it selfish to want the pain to go away? - No!

Since when has it been selfish for a sick man to go and see the doctor? -----Never!

Likewise, it is not wrong to flee to the Great Physician, the Lord Christ, to hide ourselves in Him from the wrath that is to come. It is not wrong to dread hell, desire heaven and to determine by God's grace, to avoid God's verdict of condemnation.

Don't let Satan ensnare you with the deceptive nonsense that to cry out to Jesus for mercy is an

unacceptable act of selfishness.

The Father will never rebuke you for coming to Him in this way.

And that's the Gospel Truth