

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XXVIII

December 30, 2018

No.52

The Power Of Incentives

(Jerry Fite)

The business world grasps the power incentives generate in the market place.

Sales personnel work harder, and the public gathers in greater numbers when incentives of reward or savings are attached to a product. An incentive stimulates and encourages action. Does it have a place in our relationship with God?

God thinks so. He reveals the following regarding faith: “...and without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him” (Hebrews 11:6). God connects the incentive of “reward” with the action of “seeking Him.”

Are you motivated to seek God by the incentive of reward? This is the moment we might feel uncomfortable and quickly respond with what many would consider a “more spiritual” motive: “No, I seek God because I love Him, not because of any personal reward.” Knowing God has revealed His mind regarding faith and seeking after Him, is it really “more spiritual” to serve God out of the incentive of love instead of reward?

Consider the following scenario: Your mother wants you to clean out your cluttered closet this coming Saturday morning. If you do, she promises to take you Saturday afternoon on a shopping spree and early dinner at your favorite restaurant. How would your mom feel if you say, I will clean up the clutter, but I do not want to receive anything from you for doing it? Might your mother feel a little insulted, despite your selfless reasons?

In desiring to be “spiritual,” could it be we are manifesting “pseudo-spirituality” by failing to consider God’s incentive laid out before us to seek the reward He offers? Our God uses the incentive of reward to affect distinctive conduct in living the life of the Christian. “...if we endure, we shall also reign with Him” (2 Timothy 2:12). “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). Paul certainly did not hide the reward of the crown connected with living the righteous and faithful life (2 Timothy 4:7-8). Was he less spiritual for saying, “...henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that

day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved His appearing.”?

God also uses the incentive of “fear” as a persuasive stimulus. “And if you call on Him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man’s work, pass the time of our sojourning in fear” (1 Peter 1:7). Knowing the Lord will judge us in the last day, Paul exhorted others: “Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men...” (2 Corinthians 5:11).

Yes, “love” is a powerful incentive in our relationship with God. “Know therefore that Jehovah thy God, He is God, the faithful God, who keepeth covenant and lovingkindness with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations...” (Deuteronomy 7:9).

“Reward,” “fear,” and “love” are powerful incentives, motivating us to live wisely before our God. The true spiritual person will be affected by all three incentives offered by God, instead of promoting one incentive above all others.