

Our Motive Makes All the Difference

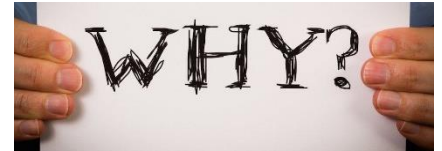
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One's motivation for doing a thing in religion makes the difference between either being accepted or rejected by God. For instance, Jesus taught in Matthew 5:16 that Christians are to let their lights shine in such a way that others **"may see your good works,"** and as a result, **"glorify your Father in heaven."** But, in Matthew 6:1, He warns **"Take heed that you do not your charitable deeds before men to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven."**

At a first glance these two verses seem to contradict each other, but this is not possible, because both are the word of God, and God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). The difference lies in the motivation of the one performing the acts.

If one's motivation for doing "good works" that are seen by others is to bring glory to the heavenly Father, then it meets with the approval of God. But on the other hand, if one's motivation for doing good deeds that are seen by men is for the purpose of bringing glory to himself, then there is no reward from God (and such works certainly are not acceptable to God).

It is possible for one to be doing a thing authorized by God, but doing it **"to be seen by men"** (Matt. 23:5). The Pharisees of Jesus' day had authority from God to wear things **"as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes"** (Ex. 13:9). These things called "phylacteries" were to remind them of the goodness of God. But the Pharisees' motivation for wearing them, and even making them broader and larger, was **"to be seen of men."** They are condemned by the Lord.



Unless we tell others why we are doing certain things in religion, they have no way of knowing. But we know, and God knows! Not only must a thing be right, but the motive for doing it must be right. **"For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart"** (1 Sam. 16:7).

Things that are being done in the name of religion for pomp and show are an abomination to God. Let us therefore not only do what our Lord instructs, but do it also with a proper motive.

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