

Man is responsible for the motives from which he acts, because he selects them and submits to their influence. Man is free not only in acting, but also in choosing the motives from which he acts. He is not at the mercy of motives. They do not operate on the human will like physical causes. If they did, man would be a machine and not a moral agent. They only influence or incite to action; and they influence or incite to action only as man allows them to do so. He has the power of holding them before his intelligence, considering and weighing them, and preferring that he shall act from one rather than from another. This is true freedom. Man has no freedom at all as a moral agent, if he has not this freedom. Paul assumes that we have power over motives, may discard wrong motives and choose right ones, when he exhorts Christians to do nothing through strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind to esteem others better than themselves.

Unsaved man, if you allow the love of gain, or of pleasure, or of human applause, or the fear of persecution, or of being thought singular, to influence you, so that you reject God's gospel of salvation, you are to be blamed. You ought to consider and weigh these motives in your understanding, and ask if it be proper for you to allow your soul to be swayed by them, and thus resist the Spirit and allow the devil to lead you captive at his will. Consider the claims of God on your homage and obedience, the value of your soul, the danger to which you are exposing it by your sin and unbelief, the love of God to you in Christ, and the love of Christ in dying in your room to open up a way for your salvation. Let these mighty considerations influence your heart, yield to their moral power, and allow yourself to be drawn to God and to the path of rectitude by his mighty love.

Christian, this subject may enable you to see that you are responsible for the progress you make in sanctification. The Spirit is the sanctifier. But he does not sanctify in such a way as to supersede all necessity for a consideration of the truth, on your part, and of the motives which should constrain you to walk in the way of purity. Consider the glorious gospel, and the motives that are folded up in it for your growth in grace. You will see in it your indebtedness to the God of salvation, and the loathsomeness of sin. Take these views into your understanding, and yield to the impressions which they make on your heart. Thus will you be led by the Spirit in the way to heaven, and increase in goodness, and god-likeness and usefulness.