

THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

Church of Christ
371 W. Main Street
Greenwood, IN 46142
(317)888-8288

www.churchofchristatgreenwood.org

VOLUME 8 NO. 4

March 27, 2011

BECAUSE IT IS **RIGHT**

By Jim Everett

Reward incentive motivation permeates our society. People respond to rewards just like little puppies do. Some parents think only in terms of rewarding their children, and, they even reward them for being bad. When a parent says to a little child, "If you will quit throwing a temper tantrum, we will go get an ice cream as soon we get away from the Doctor's office," he is rewarding bad behavior and the child quickly understands how to get what he wants. The "in thing" now in many churches is to offer physical rewards for being religious. That ranges from the "gospel of health and wealth" that says, "If you give \$100, God will give you \$1,000," to appealing to the fleshly appetites of entertainment to get people to come to "church."

Whatever happened to doing right because it is right? Surely, Jesus offers men

rewards but those incentives have nothing to do with the sensual desires. In fact, he condemned those who followed him because they were fed -- "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life" (John 6:29). The reward for righteousness is eternal life with God. God expects right behavior, because he is holy and we must be like him to share in spiritual life (1 Peter 1:15-16).

Christians are committed to a way of life that is righteous, because it is the right way to live. Sometimes the righteous life may offer a material advantage but that isn't why the Christian lives that way. At other times, being righteous may be a difficult road and the righteous may be mocked and persecuted. The disciple of the Lord does right when people speak well of him and when they do not -- his motivation is doing right, because it is the right thing to do!

2

“. . .Better Than. . .”

Selected Article

It is not at all unusual for children to be concerned with one thing being *better than* the other thing. "My team is *better than* your team," "My bike is *better than* your bike," "My vacation fishing with Dad was *better than* your trip to Florida." On and on it goes! Sadly, some individuals never progress past the *Better-Than Stage* of life. In fact, in many people it is developed past thinking that one thing/activity/etc. is *better than* another possession or the other person's occupation or project. Those affected with the *Better-Than Virus* apply the competitive reasoning to individuals or groups of individuals. Soon parents infect their children with the virus and then there are individuals growing up thinking that "Since I am white (Caucasian, European) I am better than the one who is black (African, Asiatic, etc.)." The virus is so powerful that it also infects subcultures. Not only does the white man think that he is better than the Mexican, the Native American, etc., but he also thinks that he is *better than*

the white man who lives down south, out west or back east.

Thus far I have been picking on (using as my example) the white man. In today's culture this is acceptable (politically correct), but the white male does not have a monopoly on prejudice or being infected with the *Better-Than Virus*. In fact, this virus is world-wide and knows no boundaries, and is just as potent in the black as the white, the European as the American, and the Asiatic as the Occidental. The Mexican is insulted if called a Puerto Rican (in fact, nearly all Spanish speakers are insulted in called a Puerto Rican), the Columbian will tell you in a flat second that he is not Mexican, etc. The Pima (Akimel O'odham) is quick to point out that he is not Maricopa, nor even Tohono O'odham (once the Akimel O'odham [River People] and Tohono O'odham [Desert People] were one tribe), and the Hopi would not hesitate to let one know that he is not Navajo. If you want to get the attention of one who is Japanese just call him a Korean. In India the divisions are over caste and/or native language. On and on it goes!

That such is true in the world is not surprising. It bothers me, but I have come to expect it. What bothers me more is that there are those who claim to be Christians (followers of Jesus Christ) who think they are *better than* other Christians. In this article our primary concern is not on how one becomes a Christian. Suffice it to say that joining a denomination, or merely saying, "I believe in Jesus," does not constitute one a member of the spiritual body of Christ, His church. Faith alone is the faith of demons (James 2:19).

Think of someone whom you consider to be a Christian. If you think that you are *better than* that individual (or any other individual whom you recognize as a Christian), you are a **sinner**, and stand in need of **repentance**. Jesus Christ commands His followers, through the writing of the Apostle Paul, to count "**other better than himself**" (Philippians 2:3). Instead of being *better than* others, the follower of the Lamb will count his/her brother/sister (each and every one)

"better than himself." Hell awaits the one who thinks that s/he is *better than* any other Christian.

Does this apply to groups? Does this apply to the practice of thinking that being Japanese makes one better than another who is Korean? Listen to Paul: **"What then? Are we** (Israelites or Jews, wvb) **better than they** (Gentiles)? **No, in no wise: for we before laid to the charge both of Jews and Greeks, that they are under sin; . . ."** (Romans 3:9). If Paul, a **"Hebrew of Hebrews"** (Philippians 3:5), could write such concerning Jews and Greeks/Gentiles, how dare the Apache (or any other tribal member) think that s/he is better than the Hopi (or any other tribal member)? On what basis could the Spanish speaker consider himself/herself superior to the Hindi speaker? The Swahili speaker?

The only superiority I have noted in those infected with the *Better-Than Virus* is that they are superior in **ignorance!** No, I do not believe that Americans are better than Germans, nor do I believe that the French are better than Americans (or anyone else).

Admittedly, I believe that one who is truly converted to Jesus Christ is better than the pagan, the unbeliever (disobedient), the half-converted, Sunday only Christian. Yes, I believe that the one in Christ is better than the one out of Christ . . . and this because of his/her relationship with Jesus Christ.

"Jesus died over 2000 years ago. Nobody has ever referred to him as the late Jesus, not even the heathens. Nowhere has He EVER been referred to in the past tense! He is the Living God!"

"The will of God, nothing less, nothing more, nothing else".

"Souls are starving for the "bread of life" while modern churches offer fellowship dinners."

"Some folks aren't hard of hearing;

they're hard of listening."