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TICKLING OF EARS

Some years back there was a cartoon that showed a man, dressed in a suit standing before a vending machine. He was reaching into his back pocket for some money. The label on the machine was not "Coca Cola" or even "Pepsi" rather it proudly advertised "Relige-O-Vend". I got to thinking back to that cartoon recently when thinking about what motivates people. It is truly fascinating to consider what stirs one into action but may not even raise the eye-brow of another. It has been stated that money is the universal motivator, but that may be too simplistic. But for the sake of argument, let's agree that at the base, mankind is motivated by money. The only issue is how much does it take to motivate someone. Someone will only be spurred into action, if the price is right. Paul touched on this to some degree in Romans 16:18. *"For such men are slaves not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting."*

What is fascinating in the just cited passage is that two types of motivation are seen. One the part of the false teacher the motivation is quite evident, whereas on the "unsuspecting" one needs to look a little closer. One who is unsuspecting is one who is somewhat trusting; which isn't all that bad. However, the implication is more along the lines of one being naïve. Pull in yet another, those who are willing to stand at the "Relige-O-Vend" motivated by having their ears tickled.

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires." (2 Timothy 4:3)

Notice where the motivation is directed in the verse above. It is all about serving of self, regardless of what that might be.

Now comes another twist that is interesting. The false teacher, in order to please those who are motivated by wanting their ears tickled, adapts the message to exactly what they want to hear. In turn, they give him what he desires; surely you have heard of quid pro quo. As direct result the message does not get based on truth, but that which is "politically correct" and corresponds to popular culture. Pandering to the people in order to keep them contented.



Paul in his letter to the brethren in Thessalonica, did want them to be content in their assumptions. It would have been easy for him to let their holding onto a false notion simply slide on by. However, being motivated to uphold truth, he felt compelled to correct them (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13ff). There was also the motivation to correct the brethren because he had their best interests in mind.

When it comes to matters of the salvation of one's soul, the motivation of securing that must be paramount. As individuals we need to aware, not unsuspecting. Motivated to search out the Scriptures to make certain that what is being taught is true. As did the Bereans (see Acts 17:10-12) and that on a daily basis. You have nothing more precious than your soul.

Let's face it, the cartoon referred to in the first paragraph of this article is an apt commentary on the religious world today. Which is something we clearly need to rise above. A mind set needs to be adopted like seen in Romans 8:6-7, *"For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so."* Or like the merchant in the parable Jesus set forth who was seeking the pearl of great price as found in Matthew 13:45-46. He made careful search and when he found it, sold all he had in order to get it, anything less would not satisfy. (wbe)