



Daily Verse and Comment

[Jeremiah 31:31-34](#)

(31) Behold, the days come," says the LORD, "that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, (32) Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which covenant of Mine they broke, although I was a husband to them," says the LORD; (33) "But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days," says the LORD, "I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (34) And they shall no more teach each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD;' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," says the LORD. "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more."

A Faithful Version

The ultimate fulfillment of the process implicitly mentioned in [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#) will culminate when we are completely composed of spirit, and God's law will be our first nature, not just second nature. But, while we are in an embryonic stage, the process has already begun in us, incrementally, as [God](#) gradually displaces our carnality and [sin](#), replacing it with His Holy Spirit, leading to righteous behavior and godliness. Actually, no human being is completely converted, but many people are in various stages of conversion.

Conversion, then, is a life-long process in which we move from a reactive approach to lawkeeping—motivated by rewards and punishments—to a proactive approach—motivated by a deeply placed inner desire to yield and comply to the law's principles, knowing intrinsically from experience that

they work for the good and harmony of all. (*Proactive* is a term author-speaker Steven Covey uses to distinguish internal motivation to do or accomplish something as opposed to external motivation.)

As the process of conversion begins, God must use carrots and sticks to keep us moving in the right direction. The blessings and curses of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 served as carrots and sticks to encourage righteous and godly behavior in our Israelite forebears. God uses carrots and sticks in the early part of our calling—for instance, the carrot of the Place of Safety and the stick of the Tribulation—and literally drives us into a frantic study of prophecy. Carrots and sticks have motivated our educational system in the forms of gold stars, grades, praise, trophies, extra homework, and detention.

Recently, Dr. Alfie Kohn, in his book, *Punished By Rewards*, questions the long-term effects of external motivators, such as grades, financial incentives, gold stars, or tokens, to sustain learning behavior. He supplies some surprising evidence that carrots and sticks—reflecting the philosophy, "Do this and you'll get that"—actually become detrimental in the long run, diverting the focus away from the learning outcome onto the reward or punishment. Dr. Kohn, Dr. Jerome Bruner, and a host of other educators suggest that internal motivators, such as satisfying curiosity, imitating role models, and attaining competency, work better to motivate over the long term than do G.P.A.'s, scholarships and grants, and other external incentives.

To illustrate this, one of the supreme tragedies in the music world occurred when the government of Finland supplied composer Jean Sibelius a guaranteed pension and a large mansion in the woods near Jarvenpaa. After this huge reward, an external motivation, not one musical idea—not one note!—emanated from his pen. Likewise, our spiritual growth and maturity will become stunted if our motivation for righteous behavior is externally determined rather than internally determined.

To an individual truly endowed with God's Spirit, the laws cranked out yearly in Washington, DC, our state capitals, and our local city halls should strike us as juvenile and elementary—or as one minister would call it—knee-pants stuff. Consider the carrots and sticks used by lawmakers to control litter: up to \$1,000 fine for littering, or a sign reading, "This segment of highway adopted by Yourtown Jaycees."

These examples ignore the heart and core of the problem. Until the law gets from stone-tablet pages of the Scripture, or the statute books of a local, state, or federal assembly, into our hearts and minds—unless the motivation for doing what is right comes from the inside out—we are no more converted than a donkey. On second thought, a donkey at least behaves as it is programmed to act.

— David F. Maas

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