

What Prompts you to Generosity

2 Cor.8:1-9

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During the holiday season, people tend to be much nicer to others. (Except on black Friday lines). During holiday season we witness generosity take place. **Have you ever wondered what motivates people to be generous? What motivates you to give of your money, your time, talents?** For some people it is compassion, for others competition, jealousy, guilt, pride, or the spot light.

When you read the Bible, the book of Acts, you find how the church was so generous despite severe persecution and trials. The trials and the persecution did not stop their generous hearts. **What motivated them to be like this?**

Around 55 AD Paul wrote a letter to a church in Corinth to encourage them to set aside money according to their income to help the needy. Famines and persecutions were common in the first century and the believers from local churches would help each other out of their means. The Corinthian church was very generous, it was always willing to help those who in need. However, something happened a year after Paul wrote them the letter. They must have grown cold in their generosity, for Paul had to write them another letter to remind them of their previous commitment they had agreed upon. **Paul was trying to encourage them to get back on track and finish what they had started.**

2 Cor.8:1-11

The example of the Macedonian churches to encourage the Corinthians.

-Paul visited the province of Macedonia around 49-52 AD. There were some important churches in this province. Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea. These are the churches Paul is referring to here when he said: *“we want you to know to know brothers about the grace of God that has been given the Macedonian churches.”*

-Their condition (v.2) *severe affliction; extreme poverty; (They abounded in joy despite their condition)*

-Sacrificial giving (v.3) *They gave beyond their means. (v.3) (they gave willingly, they had the desire to give. They did this on their own. (v.4) They begged to take part in this service.* This is amazing. In most churches you must beg and plea with people to do service. The Macedonians pleaded with Paul to let them participate in the act of giving.

1) Generosity is a matter of the heart rather than the circumstances.

-Everything about the situation of the Macedonian churches would have suggested that it wasn't a good time for them to give since they themselves were hard pressed for the situation. Nevertheless, they were willing, and they asked

for the opportunity to participate in this ministry. **What was it about the Macedonian churches? What were they so generous?** Verse 5 sheds light into what motivated them to generosity. **And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.** NIV ***The Macedonian Christians gave themselves first to God and then to others.*** They surrendered their agenda to God. The believers will always be more determined to generosity when they give themselves to God first. When you love God, then you will love God's people.

Paul used the example of the Macedonian churches to encourage and motivate generosity in the Corinthian church.

(v.6) Paul urged Titus to bring to completion what was started a year ago in the church.

So we have urged Titus, who encouraged your giving in the first place, to return to you and encourage you to finish this ministry of giving. NLT

The Corinthian church was a good church in many areas. (v.7) Paul said they excelled in many areas: *Faith*

-Speech =word, utterance

-knowledge

-earnestness= diligence, enthusiasm

-love

They were lacking in the area of giving and Paul encouraged them **to excel (abound)** also in the grace of giving (act of grace)

(v.8) This was Paul's advice to them. He wanted to test how genuine their love for others was. *I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.* Your diligence in the matter will show that you really love others. The Corinthians needed to put in practice their faith and their love through their recommitting themselves to the collection. Paul sent Titus to finish in them what they had started; to encourage them to be generous. **Show me that you truly love people by being generous.**

Someone said, *"people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."* Theodore Roosevelt

2) The example of Jesus (v.9)

You know the grace of our Lord Jesus. For your sake, he became poor, so that you might become rich. Paul stated this chapter reminding the Corinthians about the grace God has given to the Macedonians; *the Macedonians experienced the grace*

of God in their giving for they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to others. Paul now reminded the church about Jesus' grace. Jesus being rich, became poor, so that we through his poverty might become rich. He gave himself for others. He humbled himself and became obedient to death on a cross.

Giving is an act of grace. When you understand the grace of God, you are more willing and determined to give. The Macedonians were motivated by the grace of God and it was shown in their generosity despite their circumstances. When people have a tough time giving or being generous is a sign, they have not understood the grace of God. It was God's grace the determining factor for the believers in the first century; that was what prompted them to give generously of their possessions. *When you understand God's grace, you won't have problem* being generous because you understand how generous God has been toward you. God so loved you that he gave you his only Son, so that you could be saved through him. **You can give without love, but one of the ways you show love to others is by giving.** Do you know the grace of our Lord? He should always be what motivates us, what compels us to serve others, to give of our time and money to help others. When you give yourself first to the Lord, you will abound in generosity toward others.