

Generosity drives generosity \* 2 Corinthians 8:9

May 17, 2020 \* Langford Community Church \* Graham Gladstone

If you're like me, you've probably gotten a lot of requests for money in the mail these last few of months. I swear, it was like a week into the lockdown and emails started trickling into my inbox: "Donate now to fight COVID-19." Then the trickle turned into a stream and then the paper copies started arriving in the mail – "Give now to turn the tables against coronavirus." Even websites have these banners now that say "Click here to give."

Which kind of begs the question – why? Why SHOULD we give? And more specifically, why should WE as Christians give? What motivates us as believers to donate money?

Is it guilt? We feel bad if we don't give? Is it because it's a nice thing to do? It's a Canadian thing to do? Do we give because we feel it's our duty? Because it'll get us a tax receipt and a good feeling at tax time? As 'religious people,' StatsCan says that we are more likely to give and to give MORE<sup>1</sup> but what is it that motivates us as believers to give in the first place? What should drive our giving?

Well, it just so happens that Paul answers that question in 2 Corinthians chapter 8. He too was facing a humanitarian crisis in his day – a famine had taken hold of Jerusalem - and so he was collecting money for famine relief among the poor in that area. Paul asked people to give as he traveled around the ancient Mediterranean world and the church at Corinth pledged to pitch in.

Now was the time to make good on that pledge and so Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 8 to encourage them to 'complete this act of grace' by giving. (Neat to think that 'giving' is considered an act of grace). And here's what he says should motivate them: 2 Corinthians 8, verses 8-9:

8 I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.

9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich (2Co 8:8-9 NIV).

That's your motivation to give right there – We give generously because Christ gave so generously to us!

All the resources of heaven and earth belonged to Him and yet He did not selfishly cling to them to use them for His own benefit. He gave them all away in order to enrich us. On the Cross, He gave up His spiritual riches to become spiritually poor so that we who were spiritually poor could become spiritually rich!<sup>ii</sup>

And that act of spiritual generosity – where we who deserved nothing got absolutely everything – that act of *spiritual* generosity should drive our *material* generosity. How do we show that we appreciate spiritual realities? By expressing it in material terms - we give financially because Christ gave so generously to us!

David Garland puts it like this - When we have been the beneficiaries of such undeserved grace, how can true Christians shut their hearts or purses to brothers and sisters in need or begrudge every penny they may share with others (see 1 John 3:16-20)? God's lavishness in the gift of grace and the depths of Christ's sacrifice requires that Christians be liberal in their giving to others. A halfhearted response ill befits the total sacrifice that Christ made for us (376).

We give generously because Christ gave so generously to us.

Generosity motivates generosity.

I remember living in France and meeting an American businessman at a church spaghetti supper. It was one of the first good meals I'd had in a long time and as I shared my story with this guy, he invited me to come to stay with him. I'd been living in hostels for weeks and so a free room all to myself sounded like a real good thing. I got there and turns out he was leasing a Parisian diplomat's suite overlooking the finest part of Paris there way. I went from stinky old hostels to top of the world overnight. And this is the same guy I told you about before – he lent me like fifty bucks when I first met him – and I tried to pay him back when we parted ways – only to discover that he'd snuck like five hundred into my backpack.

That's overwhelming generosity. And imagine how it made me feel? Overwhelmingly generous. I felt compelled to give to the many poor people living on the streets of Paris and I WANTED to do it, because I myself had been the recipient of such lavish generosity.

And that, Paul says, is why WE give as Christians. We have received a rich spiritual gift from Christ, and we respond by giving to others. We give generously because Christ gave so generously to us.

So, what does this mean for us? Well, I'll say this. The next time you are asked to give, pause for a minute and consider – WHY should I give? Out of guilt? No. Out of duty? No. 'Cause it's a nice thing to do? Well, I guess, but as Christians, there's something even deeper driving us – and that's the lavish love of God. If the cause is worthy (and especially if it advances the Gospel) and you're ready to give, then I'd say – go for it. Friendship House, Blessings Centre, Compassion Canada, I'm sure they could all use some help these days. Give generously because Christ gave so generously to you.

17. 2 Th. 2:16-17 - Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

---

<sup>i</sup> <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-008-x/2012001/article/11637-eng.htm#n10>

<sup>ii</sup> Gregory of Nazianus, a church father from the fourth century puts it like this: Christ was made poor that we through His poverty might be rich. He took the form of a servant that we might regain liberty. He descended that we might be exalted. He was tempted that we might overcome. He was despised that He might fill us with glory. He died that we might be saved (in Garland, NAC, 378).