

# MOTIVATED BY GRATITUDE

“Help me find my motivation!” was the plea from a reader of a website devoted to health and fitness. Other comments were, “Can’t find the motivation to exercise!” and, “I’ve lost the motivation to diet!” Over and over the same appeals cropped up, pleading for help in finding the inspiration to do what was needed, in this particular case exercising and eating well.

It seems that Americans are frequently looking to be motivated. A Google search over the internet for the word “motivation” will yield more than 4 million results. There are websites on motivation to work, motivation to exercise, motivation to lose weight, motivational lyrics, motivational quotes, motivational videos, and a site that seems to sum it all up: Just Motivate Me dot com.

Unfortunately, we as Christians sometimes fall into the trap of seeking motivation from these and other human-based resources. We long to love Jesus more, and serve our fellow man better, so perhaps we look for a certain type of preaching, songs, Bible class, or church service to motivate us. When we fail to gain the right amount of inspiration from these avenues, we blame them or those involved with them for our lack of enthusiasm.

Where does a Christian get his or her motivation to serve God? Luke, in his gospel, tells of an incident in the life of Jesus that helps us find the answer. Jesus had gone to the house of Simon the Pharisee at Simon’s invitation. As Jesus reclined at the table, a woman in the town who had lived a sinful life approached him and began to weep. As her tears wet Jesus’ feet, she wiped them with her hair and kissed his feet repeatedly. She poured perfume on them from an alabaster jar she had brought with her for this purpose. Jesus, knowing the unkind thoughts in Simon’s mind regarding both Jesus and the woman, told him this parable:

"Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" (Luke 7:41-42)

Simon answered that the one who had the bigger debt forgiven would love the moneylender more. Jesus affirmed his answer. Then He went on to draw a stark contrast between the actions of Simon and the woman.

Simon, as Jesus’ host, should have seen to it that Jesus was greeted with a kiss, his feet washed, and his head anointed with oil, all common courtesies of that time and culture. Simon showed his lack of respect and love toward Jesus by offering none of these considerations.

In contrast, the ‘sinful’ woman, by her ministrations to Jesus, showed how grateful she was to Him for the forgiveness of her sins. “Her many sins have been forgiven,” Jesus said, “as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.” (Luke 7:47)

It was not Jesus’ intention to state that Simon sinned less or required less forgiveness than the woman. Indeed, Jesus’ claim, illustrated by the parable, is that both debtors were unable to pay their debts, making them equally guilty and equally in need of forgiveness. He was pointing out that Simon’s failure to realize his indebtedness for his sins made him judgmental and arrogant. His refusal to see his hopeless condition without Jesus’ forgiveness showed itself in his lack of even the smallest act of service.

We must take care that we are not “Simons”, unaware of the enormity of our sin debt to God and as a result becoming judgmental toward others and lukewarm in our service to God. Rather, all of us must recognize that we are debtors without hope except for Christ Jesus, who has given us his righteousness. Praise God for his mercy!

What has Jesus done for you? If you are a Christian, then he has rescued you from hell and everlasting torment, he has placed you in a spiritual family for fellowship and care, he has

brought you peace of mind that comes from assurance of salvation, he has purchased your freedom from the bondage of sin, he has promised never to leave you or forsake you, and he has given you eternal life with the Father, where with him in heaven there will be no more death, mourning, crying or pain.

How can we thank such a friend? Paul tells us, “In view of God’s mercy...offer your bodies as a living sacrifice.” The whole of a Christian’s life will be given in service to the Lord, offered in thanksgiving to the One who has saved us. Like the woman in Luke’s story, we cannot help but kneel in humble worship and adoration at the feet of such a Savior.

It is gratitude for forgiveness of sins that is the Christian’s motivation to serve God. We need not look to websites or rely on the right mix of songs, sermons, and preachers to serve as incentives to love him. Just as the sinful woman’s gratitude spurred her loving actions toward Jesus, our thankfulness to him will move us every day to serve him with all of our being.

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is true worship.*

Romans 12:1

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