



THE WIDOW'S MITE

By Pastor Stephen Bohr

As I drove across the Bay Bridge from Oakland to San Francisco some time ago, I was intrigued by a financial institution's billboard advertisement, which asked the question: "What's better than money?" The answer was immediately below the question: "More money."

As I drove into the city, I couldn't help but think how this billboard epitomizes the priorities and central focus of American life. When we really stop to reflect, it is amazing how much of our life revolves around money. We expend money for food, shelter, clothing, utilities, entertainment, "toys," travel, taxes, charitable contributions, etc. We talk of the "American Dream", which, upon serious reflection, has more to do with dollars than freedom. Our currency bears the slogan, "In God We Trust", but I wonder whether it is God in whom we trust or the currency upon which the slogan is inscribed. We speak of the "Almighty Dollar" and "religiously" read the stock market report in the Wall Street Journal. We elect or reject candidates based on the economy, and then explain, "It's the economy stupid". We max out our credit cards to purchase things we do not really need, and thus we become slaves to our creditors.

Furthermore, foreign countries join the United States in the battle against terrorism, not primarily out of love for the United States and its principles, but rather because the economy of the United States has a direct impact upon the financial stability of the world economy. Is it just possible that money has become the idol of choice for this generation? Is it the case that masses of people are bowing in worship before the shrine of mammon? As Seventh-day Adventist Christians who are living in the last remnant of time, what should be our philosophy of money?

In Deuteronomy 18:8, God told Israel: "But you shall remember the Lord thy God: for it is He that gives you power to get wealth." I once read this text to someone I was studying with, and he retorted, "What do you mean when you say that God

gave me power to get wealth? I worked hard for my money.” But upon further and deeper reflection, what God said to Israel is literally true. You see, God gives us life, intellect, strength, time, and talent, and by daily work, we convert these intangible assets into tangible money. Money, then, is the visible and tangible fruit of our investment of life, intellect, strength, time, and talent. Understood from this perspective, we can see that money is life. When we give money, we give the part of our lives we invested to get it in the first place.

Money as a **means** to meet the needs of others is a fountain of great blessings. But money as an **end** in itself is a great curse. The apostle Paul made this clear when he stated that “the love of money is the root of all evil.” (1 Timothy 6:10).

Frequently, the most unlikely people in the world also teach us the greatest lessons. Consider the story that is told in Mark 12:41-44:

“Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. Many who were rich put in much. Then the poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.”

Three things stand out in this story: First, the widows brought her offering in spite of the fact that Jesus had just warned that the Scribes “devour the widow’s houses.” She chose to be faithful to God, no matter how the money was spent after it reached the treasury. Second, the “might” of the widow’s contribution was not measured by the amount she **gave** but by how much she had **left after she had given**. That is to say, sacrifice is not measured by **how much we give** but rather by **how much we have left**. Third, the widow’s priorities were right: God’s cause came first.

Dear friends, the time is swiftly coming and is even now at the door when our money will be totally worthless. When the decree goes forth forbidding God’s people to buy and to sell, those who have hoarded wealth will bitterly lament their course. Tllen White describes their lamentation:

“I saw that if any held on to their property and did not inquire of the Lord as to their duty, He would not make duty known, and they would be permitted to keep their property, and in the time of trouble it would come up before them like a mountain to crush them, and they would try to dispose of it, but would not be able. I heard some mourn like this: “The cause was languishing, God’s people were starving for the truth, and we made no effort to supply the lack; now our property is useless. Oh, that we had let it go, and laid up treasure in heaven!”
Early Writings, p. 57

In that day people will cast their gold and silver into the streets. Then real estate, bank accounts, stock, bonds, and other assets will be useless. But the money we have invested in God’s cause will be translated into precious souls who will shine in God’s kingdom throughout eternity.

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