

MAN, HIS MONEY AND HIS MASTER

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Money is a generally accepted medium of exchange, a measure of value, or a means of payment. The accumulation of it in large or extraordinary amounts is interpreted as wealth; the absence or severe shortage of it is usually associated with poverty. It can be secured, saved, spent, squandered, or stolen. The possession of it is a matter of stewardship. As a blessing it can be bestowed by the Lord. The sage statement of Moses to Israel yields this truth, “And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day” (Deut. 8:17-18). God gives power to get wealth.

Serious problems arise when people operate outside of the biblical directives concerning money. Paul, the apostle, said, “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (I Tim. 6:6-10). He did not say, “Money is the root of all evil” as some are prone to think; he said, “The *love* of money is the root of all evil.” See the difference? The rich receive special instructions later in the same chapter, “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (I Tim. 6:17-19). Riches properly used may be cashed in for a good foundation upon which may be built great hopes for eternal life.

In Proverbs, the wise man pled for a balance of this world’s goods. He wrote, “Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain” (Prov. 30:8-9). He hoped to avoid poverty and was not seeking wealth, just his “allowance” as the Hebrew for “convenient” suggests.

Paradoxes appear in the New Testament where those in poverty are presented as examples to persuade proper performance pertaining to possessions. For example, the “certain poor widow” Jesus was observing at the Temple treasury who cast in two mites which make a farthing being the smallest units of copper coinage of the day; it took two of them to make a “cent” (from the Greek *lepton*). She was in “severe poverty” according to the meaning of the word “penury,” yet of her Jesus said, “Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance [superfluity, ASV] cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury [want, ASV] hath cast in all the living that she had” (Luke 21:3-4). Present-day health and prosperity preachers would never look to such a person as interesting in relationship to money. High-powered fundraisers would not spend the price of a postage stamp to communicate with a needy widow-woman with absolutely no net worth. Yet, Jesus placed her in the forefront of exemplary people in relation to finances. Why? Her use of very meager funds singled her out in sacrifice to God. She “cast in all the living she had.”

Another memorable example from the first century emerges from the churches of Macedonia. They were in a state of “deep poverty,” yet observe their complimentary use of a very small amount of money to firmly establish their sincere stance as saints of God: “Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also” (II Cor. 8:1-6). Today the mega-churches sometimes with millions of dollars contributed in one day are the coveted model.

Clearly, Jesus was looking for loyal followers who knew not to “trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (I Tim. 6:17). So, spiritually speaking an examination must be made that goes beneath the surface of macro and microeconomics and understanding how money works. Wisdom exercised in regard to money is essential. Man must manage his money with maturity in order to magnify his Master.