

## **MONEY MATTERS!**

P.T. Barnum, the great circus pioneer, once said “Money is a terrible master but an excellent servant.” Anyone who owes money could tell you that. It is much better to have it on hand to spend when you want than to always be working just to turn and give it to someone else. Is money your master or your servant?

Now, we all need money. Gone are the days when you could trade your own services or products for another service or product that you needed. Credit is very easy to come by, nice things are easy to buy, and money is readily available; but is it your master or your slave? Such passages as 2 Thessalonians 3:10, “If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat”; Ephesians 4:28, “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need”; and 2 Corinthians 9:7, “So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver”; all plainly teach that we should take care of our families, be able to help those who are needy, and give to the work of the church. Based on these passages alone, do you feel like you or your money is the master?

Are you being a good steward with your money? It is certainly appropriate to apply the message of the Parable of the Talents here (Matthew 25). We have each been given a certain amount of talent (time, money, ability) to work with, and the Lord expects a return for it, not for us to hide it or waste it away. Do you spend more than you make? Are you so deeply in debt that you are just living pay-check to pay-check? Perhaps you are a slave to money. Can you afford to feed someone or buy gas for someone in need? If not, perhaps you are a slave to money. Do you give generously and cheerfully to the church? If not, you are probably a slave to money. There is nothing wrong with having nice things, but when we have nice things at the expense of sharing and giving to others, we do have a problem: we have become slaves to money. Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters; for he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24). Which do you serve?

Is it wrong to be poor? Of course not. Is it wrong to be rich? Not at all. Is it wrong to borrow money? No, but care is necessary. It is wrong, however, to have your priorities messed up. If you are more interested in making money or acquiring more stuff than in spiritual things, your priorities are messed up. “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). If you have obligated yourself to the point that you cannot fulfill the duties of a Christian, your priorities are messed up. If you are not being a good steward of the things that God has given you, your priorities are messed up.

Note some of these Proverbs to find some words of wisdom regarding your money: “Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death” (11:4) “The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.” (11:25) “Wealth gained by dishonesty will be diminished, but he who gathers by labor will increase.” (13:11) “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver or gold.” (22:1) “The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.” (22:7) “A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.” (28:20). Let us all strive to order our lives (yes even our financial lives), so that we can serve the Lord better.

**MJW**