

Victory Through Surrender

"I know it's not much, and I don't know if it will do any good, but this is my entire paycheck for the week and I want to give it if you think God can use it."

Dr. Stephen Petcher, Doug Townsend and I were recently visiting with a group of very inspiring and hard working students at Berry College in Rome, GA laying the groundwork for a Berry College mission trip to the Amazon. After making a slide show presentation and telling some of the stories of the people we have had the privilege of meeting and ministering to around the world, one young lady, who did not think it was important that we knew her name, made the above statement and gave us \$9.62 (one \$5.00 bill, four \$1.00 bills, two quarters, one dime and two pennies). Her gift, her tears, her sacrifice and the desires of her heart blessed our lives, encouraged our ministry, set an example and replicated a story in the Bible that needs to be retold.

*"Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a **poor widow** came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, 'I tell you the truth, this **poor widow** has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything-- all she had to live on.'*"

I have an actual 'widow's mite' that my brother gave me years ago. I have to say, it is unimpressive, very small, rough, oddly shaped and just does not look like it would mean much to anyone. Even when Jesus witnessed this giving of the two mites 2000 years ago, they were only worth a fraction of a penny. Yet, Jesus said that the poor widow put more into the treasury with this small offering than all the gold and silver that the rich put in the plate that day! What made her 'little' more valuable than their large and impressive offerings?

Jesus was not impressed by the total dollar amount she gave, but the heart and the amount she gave as it related to what she had. It was her love for God and her faith in God that enabled her to give everything that she had to Him, and then trust Him to meet her needs. Jesus said though the rich gave a lot more money than the widow, they gave out of their abundance—what they had left over and that would not change their standard of living. In contrast, she gave all that she had to the Lord—not knowing how she would live or when she would see her next meal. If the Lord did not come through, her life would be in jeopardy.

My guess is that some of these were devout Jews who were being obedient to God's commands of giving at least 10% (a tithe) of their income back to God. Many others probably gave some amount as they felt comfortable, but only the poor widow gave all she had, putting not only her lifestyle, but her very life in the hands of God. She did not give just the 10% that God commanded, she gave it all! She gave herself and all she had to His service.

Her heart, her faith, her compassion, her generosity and her willingness to totally surrender herself and all of her possessions to the Lord is what made her small offering worth more than all the gold and silver given that day. The two mites she gave are still talked about today, while the amounts of all the gold and silver given by the wealthy are not even recorded.

God still used their gifts, but he recorded, recognized and was blessed by the one who gave her all.

Scripture says: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (LK 12:24). When we totally surrender ourselves and our possessions to be used by God as He pleases, we find peace and security that does not depend on our wealth, possessions, social status or worldly success. Only when we 'surrender all' will we treasure what God can do in and through us rather than what we can accumulate, what we can do for ourselves, or even what we can do 'for God'.

When our greatest treasure is our relationship with the Lord Jesus, we will obediently serve Him, our hearts will be satisfied and He will accomplish His will through us, whether He blesses us with two mites or with billions of dollars. If our lives and all our possessions belong to Him, then we have nothing to lose, even if we become penniless or die in the process. If we and all we have are His, then it costs us nothing to use whatever He has put in our hands to do His will of meeting the spiritual and physical needs of others.

I think the young lady at Berry College and the widow who both gave all they had, exemplified the same faith that Paul expressed in Romans 14:8 when he said: "If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord." Paul had found the key to peace and contentment. He had surrendered himself and everything he had to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and had complete peace knowing that if he lived, he was going to live to serve the Lord Jesus to the fullest. If he died, he was going to be with the Lord Jesus. So bring it on, whatever happens he belongs to, will live for, and will one day spend eternity with the Lord Jesus in paradise.

We experience complete and eternal victory only when we surrender all to Him!