

THE LAST GENERATION GIVES ALL

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Most of us give from our abundance. We give from the surplus of our means. We take seriously the promised blessing of Malachi 3:10 and from that which is poured out to us beyond our needs we share with others and with the cause of God. We know that the work of God at the time of the apostles and at the time of the pioneers of the Adventist movement began in sacrifice. We also understand that the work will be finished in an environment of sacrifice. But just what is sacrifice? Is it "giving till it hurts?" Or is it "giving till it feels good?" We all want to be involved at the end of time on the right side of things. So what are we to understand about sacrifice?

I believe that we can define sacrifice when we look at the three legitimate uses of money. We have been told, "Money has great value, because it can do great good....But money is of no more value than sand, only as it is put to use in providing for the necessities of life, in blessing others, and advancing the cause of Christ."(*Christ Object Lessons*, p. 351). God always blesses us first. And then it is from the surplus beyond our needs that He asks us to help others and to contribute to His cause. All things being equal, as we say, this would be a very appropriate way to be faithful in our stewardship. However, as we near the close of time, the generation that takes the gospel to all the world will be giving with a significantly different approach. Here is how I believe the change to sacrifice occurs.

If we use God's regular portion - the tithe and our systematic offerings for the final thrust of the gospel that is really not a sacrifice for us. In like manner if we use the portion of our discretionary funds that we have been using to help others to more directly advance the cause of God that still is not a sacrifice to us personally. It appears to me that only when we are willing to

allocate funds that we would normally have spent on ourselves and even do without some things that we are accustomed to having are we beginning to sacrifice.

God has not only told us that this is true but he also demonstrated it. He says, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." If we take up our cross *daily* this type of self-denial is not just an occasional or one-time thing. It is a lifestyle! Jesus modeled this for us. He not only gave to us from His abundance, He *sacrificed* by giving His very life. And the life He lived on this earth was "lived to bless others."

One day Jesus was sitting in the temple, near the treasury. He noted that the rich were coming by and sharing of their abundance. Then a poor widow came along and threw in two mites. Jesus called the attention of His disciples to this experience and stated, "Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her *want* did cast in all that she had, even all her living."(Mark 12: 43,44). This story is very fascinating to me because the only offering that Jesus ever commended was given by a poor widow to a church that was just about to crucify Him!

Why did He commend her? Not because of the size of her gift. No doubt it was the smallest amount that was given that day. He commended her offering because she gave from her *want*. She sacrificed to assist what she believed was the church of God.

I personally believe that we are very near the end of time. A time when each of us should be not only giving of our abundance but giving of our *want*. We should be divesting ourselves of our assets and placing the proceeds into the cause of God so that not much of our stuff will be burned up at the end.

The Bible gives a very descriptive account of the Second Coming. As the cloud upon

which Jesus is riding nears the earth, Jesus stands up from the throne and asks Gabriel to blow his trumpet and then He shouts, "Awake! Awake! Awake ye that sleep in the earth!" Then as the righteous dead are raised to life to join the righteous living that have finished the work and gone through the time of trouble, Jesus gives the command to the eagerly waiting angels, "Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice."(Psalm 50:5). I plan to be in that group, don't you?