

The Work Must Go On

"The show must go on" is a well-worn phrase in the theatrical world. It is a call to keep the show going no matter what happens. If the star falls and breaks an arm in the first act or the orchestra leader passes out due to heat exhaustion or the props start falling apart, the actors must continue to say their lines and act their parts. "The show must go on!"

As this article is being written, our country is in the throes of an economic downturn. Unlike some negative prognosticators, I don't happen to believe this is the death knell for the U.S.A. We've been here before and most likely will be again. During this downturn though, the Gospel still needs to be taught by means of the airwaves, the internet, correspondence courses, faithful Gospel preachers and whatever other scriptural means that are being used to spread God's Word. In short, "The work must go on."

For the Lord's work to continue in this world, faithful Christians need to continue to provide the necessary financial support. We're all familiar with the instruction in I Corinthians 16:1,2 to "lay by in store" on the first day of the week. We readily call to mind Paul's exhortations concerning giving in II Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9. We're also aware of the New Testament examples of brethren contributing of their means to the work of the church (Acts 11:27-30; Romans 15:26; Philippians 4:15-17). Nowhere is it stated in these or parallel verses that generosity with our material goods is based on a society's economic conditions. The work of the church must go on.

I'm not an advocate of the "prosperity gospel," in which it is taught that the more money you give the more money you get. Most of the time (all of the time?) the one preaching this "gospel" makes sure his listeners understand that the money they give needs to come to him. These charlatans will pay dearly in eternity for their deception (Romans 16:18). I do, however, believe the words of Paul when he wrote, "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." (II Corinthians 9:8). This statement was made in the context of a lengthy discussion of giving. It means that we cannot outgive God. Our generosity will be rewarded in kind. Does that mean that if I give \$100 I will receive \$200 from the Lord the next week? No, but what it does mean is that when we give generously, we will be blessed generously. Keep in mind when you read this that being blessed is not always about money. There are many ways that God blesses us. The promise in this verse then is, "always having all sufficiency in all things." If we give generously and in simple, trusting faith, even during economic difficulties, we will have all that we need; not a mansion or a yacht or a sports car perhaps, but all that we need.

When gas prices and food prices started going up and you decided it was time to tighten the purse strings, what was the first expense that you looked at cutting? That's a good question, isn't it? Did you have the cable turned off? Did you cut back your nights out at the restaurants or movies? Or did you cut back on your contribution? I know that I'm getting pretty personal here but we all need to think about this. The cost of living may stay at this inflated rate for a while which means that not only will our cost of living be higher, but so will the cost of living of Gospel preachers and missionaries. The post office and the printing shops will pass the higher cost of living on to us in their stamps and printed materials such as correspondence courses. The television and radio stations will pass the higher cost of living on to us by means of increased rates for airtime to broadcast the Gospel message. Shall we cut these people and programs out? No, brothers and sisters in Christ, "the work of the church must go on." Please consider this carefully as you "purpose in your heart" for your contribution this and every week (II Corinthians 9:7).

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