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THE TALE OF A HAPPY DOLLAR

By AUSTIN CROUCH



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

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It is all so strange and wonderful that I can hardly realize that it is true. Just think! Here I am in Africa, thousands of miles from the place of my origin. Remarkable as it may seem, I am not homesick, but I am perfectly contented and happy.

Perhaps I should tell you something about myself: I am a Baptist Co-operative Program Dollar, and I belong to a mighty, enthusiastic, and consecrated band of Co-operative Program Dollars. This Band is engaged in Christian work, financing a number of Christian activities. The various kinds of work which we are doing may be grouped under the following heads: State Missions, Home Missions, Foreign Missions, Christian Education, Ministerial Relief, Hospitals, and Orphanages. This Band has its headquarters in the Southern part of the United States of America.

Has Ups and Downs

I have been a member of the Band for nearly two years. I was coined in 1914. I have had my ups and downs; my bright days and my gloomy days; my honorable tasks and my dishonorable tasks; but I shall not tell you about these. However, I will say that the past two years have been the happiest years of my life.

Did you ever think about the life of a dollar? If you have, then you know that it is one of perpetual slavery. There are frequent changes of masters—some good, some bad—but slavery always. The dollar is always subject to orders. It must obey its master whether the task assigned is pleasant or disagreeable.

For the first twenty years of my life I had a checkered career. I did not know from one day to another what character of service I must perform. I lived in constant dread that I should have to do something inconsistent with the principle which I proclaim—"In God we trust." For the past two years, however, I have been free from anxiety. I have known that I would not be commanded to do anything that would be displeasing to me, or that would be detrimental to men. In the past I have at times been a curse to men—much to my regret—but for two years now I have been a blessing, as many will testify.

It may be interesting to you to know how I became a member of the Co-operative Program Dollar Band. At the time, I belonged to a member of the Baptist Church at, Tennessee. My owner had never, up to that time, believed strongly in giving dollars away. It is true that he gave to the church, not according as the Lord had prospered him but according as the other members gave. A few months before the time of which I speak, the church had secured a new pastor who was full of missionary zeal. On the second Sunday in November, 1934, the pastor preached on the Co-operative Program of Southern Baptists. It was what a dear old deacon called "a powerful effort." It was indeed "powerful" in effect for it reached the consciences of the listeners and stirred their emotions.

An Earthquake Tremor

I was lying there in the pocket of my master, wondering how the sermon was affecting him. At first he was indifferent, but in a few minutes he was listening with interest. I felt a commotion, like a small earthquake tremor. Then I realized that my master was sobbing aloud. At the close of the sermon the pastor announced that the Every-Member Canvass

would be put on that afternoon, and urged each and every member to make a worthy pledge to the Co-operative Program. Imagine my surprise when my master arose and asked for the privilege of making a statement. He said: "Brethren and Sisters, I have never before understood this Co-operative Program; I did not realize until now that it includes all the causes, State and Southwide, that our beloved denomination is fostering for the glory of Christ. Pastor, I thank you from the depths of my heart for your sermon today. I am ready to sign a pledge for \$2.00 a week, for this coming year, and, as I did nothing last year, I am giving \$100.00 now to make up for my shameful neglect." There was a thrill, I tell you, in that little country church that day.

Goes on Long Journey

I was one of the hundred dollars given by my master. Within a few days the treasurer of the church sent us to Nashville to Dr. John D. Freeman, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the Executive Board of the Tennessee Baptist Convention. We arrived in Nashville on November 29, 1934. There we fell into company with more Co-operative Program Dollars—ten thousand of them. We did not have much more time than to get acquainted with each other before we were divided into equal groups of five thousand each. One group was called State Causes and the other Southwide Causes. I was in the Southwide group. On December 3, our group was sent to the office of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention. Before we were put in the bank that day, at noon, we were told by the book-keeper (who was greatly pleased to see so many of us) just which one of the Southwide causes each of us was to serve. I was assigned to the Foreign Mission Board.

For one day we had a good time in the bank, visiting and talking about our various tasks. There we met several thousand more Co-operative Program Dollars from other states, who, like ourselves, had been assigned to their fields of work. The very next day the groups were to separate. After bidding each other Godspeed, we started on our journey, December 4, to the agencies to which we had been allotted. I made the journey, with several thousand others, to the Foreign Mission Board, Richmond, Virginia. There we found other thousands of Co-operative Program Dollars who had arrived before us. We were given a hearty welcome at the Foreign Mission Board, but were told that we could not remain there long as we were all needed out on the various fields.

Cheers the Hearts of the Missionaries

In a few days all of us who had gathered in Richmond were on our way to our fields of labor. After a pleasant ocean voyage, I found myself, with my companions, here in Africa. It thrilled our hearts with joy to see how happy the missionaries were that we had come. They talked until away into the night about what they could now do, with us to aid them. As I listened to the missionaries it was the first time that I fully realized our importance, and I realized that we Co-operative Program Dollars were not going to be idle. In fact, it seemed to me then that the missionaries expected too much of us. They said that they could now preach the Gospel to people who had not heard it; could give New Testaments to hundreds who had never read it; could help some sick people; care for some poor people; look after some orphans, and could give training to many new converts. In the two years since I have been here, I know that with our help the missionaries have done all they planned.

I shall not undertake to tell in detail all that is being accomplished by the Co-operative Program Dollar Band, but I do want to say a word about our attitude toward each other and toward our work. I have talked with thousands of them and they all say that they were never so happy since their coinage as now. We come from a wide territory and from churches varying widely in size and in wealth, but there is no class distinction among us. There is no envy or jealousy among us; neither is there a feeling of superiority on the part of any because of origin, of previous owners, or of tasks engaged in. We are equals all, and we are all pleased with the tasks assigned us. We, as a united band of equals, are engaged in a crusade of vital service. No one among us asks anything for himself except the joy of blessing humanity and of knowing that he pleases the Master to whom he now belongs.