

Recession without depression

2 Cor 8:1

“We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, 2 for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.

3 For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, 4 begging us earnestly for the favour of taking part in the relief of the saints— 5 and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.”

Background

Written to the church in Corinth at a time of major economic crisis. Famine across Eastern Mediterranean.

Paul writes from Macedonia to the Corinthians to take up an offering and cites the Macedonians as Godly examples.

Current situation

- **50 small businesses a day are closing**
- **BT announced 10,000 redundancies**
- **And house repossessions have increased by 70%**
- **Construction and retail sectors are in decline.**

How should we respond?

1. Grace Gift

1We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia,

Scripture suggests that not just individuals but whole groups of people, even whole areas can receive a grace gift in times of pressure.

2for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. 3For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means,

Paul uses two phases to describe the Macedonians situation:

- “severe test of affliction’
- “extreme poverty”

Their ability to respond to need in a time of need wasn't from their financial reserves, it was a specific gift of grace for their situation.

2 Cor 9:8 “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work”

We can either try to cope in a time of recession through our own resources or through a grace gift.

2. courageous loyalty

Vs 4 says they begged earnestly for the

“favour of taking part in the relief of the saints”

- Decide ahead of time you will do all you can to help others in the church family

- Gal 6:10 “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially those who belong to the family of believers”

3. joyful generosity

Verse 2 says.

“their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.”

The maths of God’s kingdom

Severe trial + overflowing joy + extreme poverty = rich generosity.

Biblical generosity is always freely given.

“Paul didn't hold the Macedonians up as examples of love just because they gave generously. He held them up because their giving was the overflow of abundant joy in the grace of God. Benevolent action that does not flow from our joy in God's grace is not love.

The only thing that the apostle Paul will call love is the labor of Christian Hedonism—namely, the benevolent action of people who have found their satisfaction in God and now seek to expand it by sharing it with other”

John Piper

Summary

1. Grace Gift
2. courageous loyalty
3. joyful generosity

Further Reading/Resources

- John Hosier on Christian response to recession
http://www.cck.org.uk/Articles/131329/Church_of_Christ/Resources/Blog/How_to_live.aspx
- Jesus and giving: Terry Virgo
<http://www.janga.biz/terryvirgoblog/?p=251//www.janga.biz/terryvirgoblog/?p=251>