



## **“Help in Troubled Times”**

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**It’s clear that we are in hard financial times.**

**But, this is not the first time that God’s people have faced the challenge of economic shortage.**

**How do we face such times?**

**I believe we have answers from the early church. They certainly didn’t have it easy.**

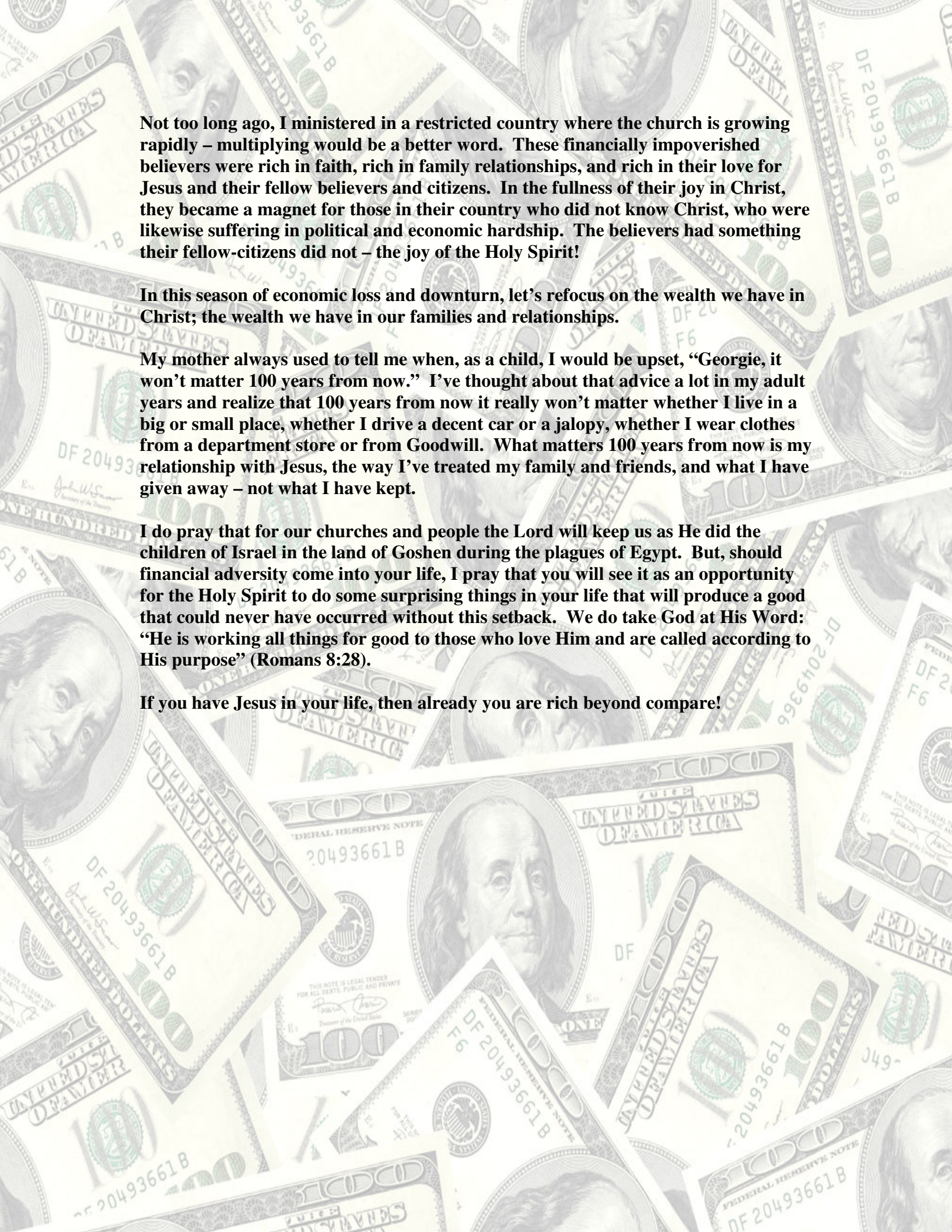
**Here are some things they did.**

**1. They did not suspend fulfilling the Great Commission. The early church had little financial resources, but they didn’t let that keep them from sharing the good news of Jesus both far and wide. We must not let this economic downturn diminish our witness for the Lord, either on a personal or a church-wide level.**

**2. The early church cared for one another. On a congregational level, we must keep a lookout for those in our midst who have lost employment or are lacking shelter, clothing, or food. The press is already reporting instances where fathers have killed their families and then themselves because of the tremendous economic pressures. The early church cared for its own – notice how the early church cared for its widows (Acts 6), distributed funds from those who gave out of their excess (Acts 2), took offerings for the poor saints in Jerusalem – both from the Antioch church (Acts 11) and from the missionary churches (1 Corinthians 16, and 2 Corinthians 8 and 9). In times like this, we have opportunity for those within our church family who have economic resources to bless those who don’t. This season of economic adversity gives us opportunity to be generous. Look at what Paul tells the Corinthians about the example of the Macedonian churches in their concern for the suffering Jerusalem saints: “For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then us in keeping with God’s will . . . see that you also excel in this grace of giving” (2 Corinthians 8:3-7).**

**3. The early church learned the secret of contentment even in times of persecution and poverty. Hard times do not need to make us hard on the inside. To the poor saints at Philippi, who had repeatedly sent him offerings, Paul said, “I have learned to be content whatever my circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 1:11-13).**



The background of the entire page is a collage of US 100 dollar bills, oriented in various directions and overlapping each other. The bills are faded and serve as a decorative backdrop for the text.

**Not too long ago, I ministered in a restricted country where the church is growing rapidly – multiplying would be a better word. These financially impoverished believers were rich in faith, rich in family relationships, and rich in their love for Jesus and their fellow believers and citizens. In the fullness of their joy in Christ, they became a magnet for those in their country who did not know Christ, who were likewise suffering in political and economic hardship. The believers had something their fellow-citizens did not – the joy of the Holy Spirit!**

**In this season of economic loss and downturn, let's refocus on the wealth we have in Christ; the wealth we have in our families and relationships.**

**My mother always used to tell me when, as a child, I would be upset, "Georgie, it won't matter 100 years from now." I've thought about that advice a lot in my adult years and realize that 100 years from now it really won't matter whether I live in a big or small place, whether I drive a decent car or a jalopy, whether I wear clothes from a department store or from Goodwill. What matters 100 years from now is my relationship with Jesus, the way I've treated my family and friends, and what I have given away – not what I have kept.**

**I do pray that for our churches and people the Lord will keep us as He did the children of Israel in the land of Goshen during the plagues of Egypt. But, should financial adversity come into your life, I pray that you will see it as an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to do some surprising things in your life that will produce a good that could never have occurred without this setback. We do take God at His Word: "He is working all things for good to those who love Him and are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).**

**If you have Jesus in your life, then already you are rich beyond compare!**