



Financial Disaster

Hits Hard ...

A 6-Day reading Plan

COMPASS - FINANCES GOD'S WAY

When Financial Disaster Hits Hard

8 economic disasters in the Bible

When Financial Disaster Hits Hard

**... Economic disasters in the Bible and
what we can learn from them ...**

By Peter J. Briscoe



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Compass - finances God's way - European office
Amersfoort, The Netherlands

www.compass1.eu

info@compass1.eu

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Introduction

When Financial Disasters Hit Hard

We will look at six economic disasters, recorded in the Bible, which resulted in severe famine. Famine was both an ending - the result of disobedience and sin - and also a beginning, a potential turning point toward a better, more faithful future. Financial problems form an opportunity for change and a chance for a new beginning. What can we learn from these economic disasters for our own situation today?

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1: World Famine

Read the Bible: Acts 11:27-30; 1 John 3:17-19; James 2:14-18

A new church was started, Christians were just getting started in their mission to take the gospel to the ends of the earth - and then disaster struck!

A prophet called Agabus came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Through them the Spirit predicted a famine throughout Rome during sign of Roman emperor Claudius, who ruled from 41-54 AD.

What did they learn?

The disciples realised the need to help, not only by preaching the Word, but also practically. Christians started to care for one another. They loved one another in a very practical way,

The body of Christ was suffering, but this produced unity. Believers in Judea were being persecuted for their new faith in Jesus. Persecution of believers in Antioch, a large prosperous city, had not yet begun. Suffering can divide the world but can unify the Body of Christ through sharing of resources. according to their ability. The apostle John said later that, ‘when we see our brother in need, but do nothing, God’s love is not in us.’ James confirms this by saying that faith is demonstrated by helping people in need.

Barnabas and Saul took the gifts from Antioch to the believers in Judea. These gifts must have been financial because Antioch is about 800 km from Jerusalem.

We ought to serve one another and share ... pass Gods blessings on. The world will be full of fear and panic. We can deliver hope.

This famine was perfectly timed to bring the Church together. It taught believers to invest in each other.

To those suffering through a financial disaster, make sure your need is known. You don’t need to solve your problems alone. Be vulnerable and share your problems within your church or with other, trusted believers.

God delivers His solutions to financial disaster through His people!

2: Down and Out!

Read the Bible: Genesis 47:13-26; 1 Corinthians 6:20; Proverbs 3:9,10

There was no food in the whole nation. People were suffering from hunger. It lasted seven years.

All the Egyptians went to Joseph, Pharaoh's right-hand man, saying that they had no more money to buy grain. This resulted in them having to sell their livestock, which was enough to see them for a year.

After that year, not only was their money gone, but also their livestock. They had nothing else left to sell but their land and even themselves as slaves. They had to sell all their means of supporting themselves and even lost their freedom.

When they were completely down and out, having nothing left, Joseph stepped in. "Look, today I have bought you and your land for Pharaoh. I will provide you with seed so you can plant the fields." There was a condition

attached. They had to give 20% of their income to Pharaoh and live off the rest.

The Bible story of Joseph gives us a shadow of the life of Christ, pointing us to the redeeming work of Christ. There are many instances in Joseph's life which show great similarity with that of Jesus. Joseph was sold for the price of a slave; so was Jesus. Joseph provided bread; Jesus is the Bread of Life! Joseph bought the people; Jesus bought you and me.

It seems that we must be brought down almost to our hands and knees, to be at our wits end, before we submit to the Lordship of Christ - just as the Egyptians had to be thoroughly humbled before Joseph.

God can use financial disaster to 'bring us to our knees' so that we can acknowledge our need for Him. We need to realise that we have been bought - a takeover has occurred. We are no longer our own. When we are on our knees, we can cry out; "I can't- but You can!" Pride comes before a fall, but humility comes before being raised up.

Just as Joseph then provided for the people, Jesus can provide for us. However, this also comes with a condition. Seek His interests first, give Him the first of our income to acknowledge that we are merely returning what is His in the first place. Honour Him with your money by giving Him the best part, and He will respond by providing all you need.

3: How God used Financial Disaster

Read Bible: Ruth Chapter 1

A famine caused a husband and wife to leave Bethlehem and relocate to Moab.

The move to Moab seems to help the family. Elimelech and Naomi, with their sons Mahlon and Kilion and their daughters-in law, Orpha and Ruth were quite happy in Moab. However, disaster struck again some years later.

First Elimelech died and then both sons died, leaving the three women in a desperate situation. In the society of that time, death of supporting male family members greatly impacted the women, economically. The situation seemed hopeless, and they concluded, “the hand of the Lord has gone out against us.” They suffered again from lack of food.

Naomi leaves Moab hoping to find food in Bethlehem where she had heard that the famine was over. The town was excited at seeing them again, but Naomi said, “Call me

Mara, because the Almighty has made life very bitter for me. Why call me Naomi when the Lord has caused me to suffer and the Almighty has sent such tragedy upon me?”

She went on to say, “God has brought me home.” She sees all these unfortunate events of famine and death as somehow a work of the Lord.

The story has a happy ending. Ruth meets Boaz and they get married. Boaz acts a kinsman- redeemer! They have a son and name him Obed. Obed is the father of Jessie who is the father of David, and these are mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

We see that God was using these economic conditions to physically move people to the locations they needed to be and to meet people they needed to meet.

God uses economic difficulties to prepare people for His glory. Those situations are painful, but in all things, we see that God uses the waste products of life to make something beautiful! God is in the re-cycling business!

What begins as a tragedy of death and sorrow ends in the birth of new life and the resurrection of hope. This story mirrors the gospel!

4: Suffering under Corrupt Leaders

Read the Bible: 1 Kings 18; Matthew 6:21-24

This famine lasted 3 1/2 years and was very severe. Rain had stopped and the economy had stopped. The people were suffering under corrupt leadership of Ahab and Jezebel.

The famine got so bad that Ahab sent his palace manager Obadiah to scour the countryside for any grass available to feed his own livestock. Ahab was thinking only of himself.

Now, Obadiah was a devoted follower of the Lord. He has previously found enough money to feed 100 prophets who had hidden from the cruel king and queen in caves.

Obadiah found Elijah who went to King Ahab and told him that the reason for the famine was the refusal of the

king to worship the Lord. Instead, he worshipped the images of Baal.

Elijah demonstrated the power of God with a pyrotechnic display, ‘so that all people will know that you are God and that you have brought them back to yourself.’”

God was using economic pain and suffering to bring people back to worship the one, true God. People acknowledged God to be in control of fire, rain, and the economy! Neither Ahab, Jezebel or Baal were able to change their circumstances.

These days, we have a very strong temptation to serve the wrong god. Jesus said that we cannot serve two masters and unmasked a power behind money which competes for our devotion. This power behind money was us to serve and be devoted to him; it would have us believe that money is the solution to all our problems. If only I had more; if only my employer would raise my salary; if only I didn’t have to pay so much tax; if only I could get a better paid job; if only someone would help me pay my debts and so on.

Money will not solve economic problems. It may alleviate the symptoms for a short while but the problem lies deeper - within our hearts. Jesus said that ‘where our treasure is, our heart will be right there.’ That means that if we focus on money as the solution - our heart will be on a financial solution. If we focus on God - then our heart will be focused on His way of dealing with financial crises.

5: The Worst Famine Ever

Read this portion of the Bible: 2 Kings 6:24 - 7:20

This was a severe famine under invasion by a foreign power. The siege was so long, and the famine so bad, that a donkey's head sold for 80 shekels of silver (about 1 kg.) Dove dung which consisted of undigested seed pods for 5 shekels. Unheard of hyper-inflation was being experienced! Hunger was so terrible that people were even eating each other!

A woman cried out for help to the king; they wanted to kill and eat their babies. People could not even surrender due to the war because they would be killed.

The King tore his robe and had no idea what to do. The King could not solve the problem and was even angry with God and wanted to kill the prophet, Elijah. Elijah sent a message to the King, predicting a fast economic improvement.

The King needed to look to God, who was using economic pain to help people realize that God controls the economy. Elijah said, ‘Hear the Word of the Lord.’ His words are more valuable than money! Elisha brought a solution. ‘At this time tomorrow, flour will sell for one shekel ... at the gate of Samaria. He predicted the exact time, exact commodity, exact price, at the exact place economic upturn would happen. No-one knew the price of commodities, but the man of God did.

Then the captain on whose hand the king leaned (the chief advisor) said to Elijah, “If the Lord himself should make windows in heaven, this can never happen!” The advisor was saying, ‘We are in hyperinflation and at war - God cannot do it!’ Elisha looked at him, pointed between his eyes, “God can do exactly that. You will see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat it.”

Elisha was bold confident because he knew God.

This famine showed the end of self-reliance. When in dire straits, we cannot get out ourselves. It is like trying to pull ourselves up with our own shoelaces. It cannot be done. We need a power outside of ourselves to pull us out of the mire.

Everything came to be and happened the next day by Gods miracle. The advisor was trampled at the gate as people crammed back into the city. Who do you trust rational man or God, who can do wonders?

6: Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?

Read the Bible: Habakkuk 1-3; Psalm 37:25; Hebrews 13:5

Habakkuk complained to the Lord. Firstly, “How long, O LORD, must I call for help?

But you do not listen!” Then, his second complaint was, “will you overlook those who get rich over our backs?” Simply put: “God, where are you?” “Why are you letting this happen?”

It is like he is asking God, “Why do bad things happen to good people?”

The Lord’s answer to Habakkuk’s first question was basically, “It is all part of my plan which you cannot see yet. I am using people ‘whose own strength is their god’ for my purposes.

God answered Habakkuk's second question, summarised, "Their greed, and piling up riches at the expense of the lives others will be their downfall."

Habakkuk chose to listen to what God is saying to him and how He answers Habakkuk's complaints. He acknowledges the Lord's power and control over all circumstances and decides to wait patiently to see how the coming crisis will unfold. This was to be a crisis caused by invasion from Babylon which would also manifest itself by severe agricultural problems. There was to be no food available!

He decided to drive a stake into the ground and stand firm in the middle of a severe crisis. He doesn't let his emotions control him, even though he was righteously angry. He made a commitment. Read verse 17 and 18 of chapter 3 of Habakkuk. "Whatever happens, even if the business fails, and we cannot produce food, I will find joy in you and trust you for the outcome."

We don't like to be patient when times are really tough. The Lord has a perfect plan and will act in His time. Until then, we must trust and obey.

This means we have to learn to be content with what little He does provide. In times of financial crisis, we should learn to cut our expenses as much as possible. We have to accept that we cannot buy what we want. We have to learn to find joy in God's provision, thanking Him for what we do have, however much we think that it's not enough. He will

never allow us to go hungry if we look to Him first. He is control.

About the Author



Peter Briscoe (1950), has been in International business all his life, first in industrial chemicals, then in consulting and coaching, and finally leading a space projects business. He is founding member of the International Association for the Advancement of Space Safety, Europartners - a European association of Christians in business, and the European Economic Summit. As a follower of Jesus, he has been especially interested in discovering, applying and teaching what the Bible has to say about business and finance. He is a founder of Compass - finances God's way in Europe. At home he is married for 50 years with Didie and have three married daughters and six grandchildren.

About Compass

Compass - finances God's way is a global, non-denominational movement teaching financial discipleship and generosity.

The purpose is to serve churches, businesses, ministries, schools and other organisations by providing biblically based solutions on handling money and possessions.

Compass' mission is to help people everywhere to learn, apply and teach Gods financial and business principles. We are looking for three major outcomes.

1. To know Christ more intimately as we trust and obey Him, experiencing Christ at work.
2. To become free from worry, fear, stress and anxiety and then be free to serve and love the Lord and our neighbours.
3. To contribute to fulfilling the Great Commission by passing on what we have learned to others and making 'financial disciples.'

Compass has developed a wide range of resources in a wide variety of formats, such as workshops, small group studies, e-books and online learning.

There are teaching resources for all ages, from small children through students to adults; with application to areas of life such as business, church, marriage and family.

To see our resources, please visit the web site at www.compass1.eu

