

March 2009

Dear North Shore Fellowship,

Did you catch this headline in the Sports Section of Tuesday's *Chattanooga Times Free Press*? **Grace Trounces Buffaloes**. Makes perfect sense – as a sports headline.

**But – Grace trounces?!** I was surprised by the peculiar appearance of two dissimilar words, **grace** and **trounce**, in this short headline. How is it that traits related to **grace** (*generosity, mercy, kindness*) have any reasonable relationship to the characteristics of **trounce** (*thrash soundly, punish severely, and defeat decisively*)?

“Sarah! What’s up with this?” Sarah came to my rescue: “The oddity you see in this little headline is yet one more enlightening portrait of the gospel. It is **grace** – things just like generosity, mercy, and kindness – that transforms things – not sound thrashings, severe punishment, or decisive defeats. Grace is the only thing that ever does! **Grace** is the source of **trouncing**.” Fascinating!

I wonder – would it be possible that another headline might appear in the *Times Free Press*? **Generosity Trounces the Economy!** Perhaps this story described a church in the middle of Chattanooga that was experiencing trials and afflictions brought about by a fragile global economy. Oddly these trials only triggered an abundance of joy that overflowed in a wealth of generosity. People not only gave according to their means – but way beyond their means. Reports circulated of people who begged for the privilege of giving. Their joy overflowed across the city – then the South – then the nation – then... Remarkable! The dismal economy was **trounced by grace!**

Can you see this? **Generosity Trounces the Economy!** I know what you’re thinking: “Dick is taking too many pain killers for his recent hip surgery! What’s he thinking? This is absurd?” **NOT** if you believe the gospel! **NOT** if you believe II Corinthians 8: 1-7!

Yes – these are the most challenging economic times in our collective memory. Yes – we are all tightening our financial belts. Yes – North Shore Fellowship is tightening its budget belt (\$63,000 cut from budgets thus far). **BUT...**

Never has there been a greater opportunity for North Shore Fellowship to be – through its excessive generosity – another blazing picture of the gospel on the North Shore, in Chattanooga, and around the world. So let’s encourage each other: “But as you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you – **see that you also excel in the grace of giving.**” (II Cor. 8:7)

**Yes!** Let’s tighten up our personal budgets and attempt to live within our means. **Yes!** Let’s give according to our means for the sake of our spiritual vitality. **But!** Let’s give beyond our means for the sake of the gospel.

Peace and Joy as you are transformed by your adventures in generosity,

*Dick*

Dick Allen