

Feast or Famine?

BY PASTOR DAVID GUZIK



“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord GOD, “That I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, but shall not find it.” Amos 8:11-12

We see the pictures from time to time—heartrending pictures of thousands suffering under the tragedy of famine. In such desperate times, people around the world often mobilize to bring food to these troubled regions, and often disaster is prevented from becoming catastrophe.

The prophet Amos reminds us that there is another kind of famine: ***“I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD.”***

Notice carefully the nature of this famine. It is not a lack of God’s Word, but a famine of *hearing* the Word of the Lord. It isn’t that God’s Word isn’t available, but that it is not listened to. It is not a case of God withholding His revelation, but of people being in such a state that they do not see it; they do not hear the words. Of course, it is true that there may be times when there is a famine of God’s Word, either through the neglect or the unfaithfulness of those who have the responsibility to present God’s Word. But that isn’t what Amos means here. This is a problem with the *hearer*, not with the *preacher*.

First Thessalonians 2:13b describes the right way to hear the Word of God: ***When you received the word of God which***

you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. The Thessalonians received the Word, welcomed the Word, regarded it as the Word of God, and allowed it to work effectively in their lives. That is effective hearing.

The great English pastor, evangelist, and writer F. B. Meyer posed a challenge to us

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at this point: “We may question ourselves, whether we feed enough on God’s Word. If we would grow strong, we must feed, not on condiments and sweetmeats, not on tidbits and scraps, not on versicles [recited prayers] and pious sentences; but on the strong meat of the Word, on the doctrines, histories, types of Scripture. Oh for more hunger and thirst for these!”¹

Amos continues his warning: ***“They shall wander ... seeking the word of the LORD, but shall not find it.”*** When we push away God’s Word for a long time, we may come to the place where we shall not find it even if we want to. This makes us remember that the ability to hear God’s Word and to *benefit* by it is a gift from God, and it is a gift that should not be despised.

Jesus alluded to this principle in the Parable of the Soils and the Sower: ***“Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him”*** (Mark 4:24b-25). When we seek God, it generally becomes easier to find Him. When we push away God, it generally becomes more difficult to hear and to receive His Word.

Is there famine in your life right now? Perhaps you find it easy to blame the pastor, and you think that if only he preached better sermons, you would enjoy a great spiritual feast. But have you looked at your own life, your own attitude? Maybe the famine in your life is a famine of *hearing*. You owe it to yourself to seek God on the matter. It would be terrible to stay in a problem and

to blame others when the problem might actually be with you.

Since it is true that ***“man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God”*** (Matthew 4:4b), then it is true that a famine of hearing God’s Word can be as catastrophic as a famine of bread. The bread is out there—adjust your hearing and enjoy the feast. ☞

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¹F.B. Meyer, *Our Daily Homily* (Westwood, New Jersey: Revell, 1966).