

Famine or Feast? part 2

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Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.

Psalm 1:1-2

We looked last time at the children of Israel and God's judgment upon them in the form of a famine—not a “*famine of bread ... but of hearing the words of the LORD*” (Amos 8:11). Because the Israelites had grown indifferent and contemptuous toward God's Word, He removed from them the ability to hear it.

How can we, as individuals, avoid bringing this type of judgment on ourselves? And how can we, as the church, avert this kind of judgment from coming upon our nation and our communities?

Psalm 1 reads, “*Blessed is the man ... [whose] delight is in the law of the LORD*” (verses 1-2a). That is the attitude we must maintain constantly: cherishing God's Word. There's nothing like it, and we can never overestimate its power and importance.

Verse 2 says we show our delight in God's Word by meditating on it day and night. If I really delight in the Word of God, I will naturally saturate my life with it. But what does that mean, practically?

Read. Tragically, many people today feel they don't have time to read God's Word. But these things “*were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope*” (Romans 15:4b).

Meditate. To meditate means to stop, pause, and ponder. Discuss the Scriptures with others and the Lord. Ask yourself questions: What does this passage mean? How does this apply to me now?

Study. The help of pastors, teachers, and commentaries aids us immensely in this. Studying involves understanding the historical background, or context, of a particular book; and frequently, looking at the original languages. Could you tell someone the theme of Romans? Do you know its primary emphasis? Who was the author, and what was his primary point? There is so much in God's Word, so much to discover. I've been through the Bible several times, but there's still so much I need to learn.

Memorize. Commit God's Word to memory. David said, “*Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You*” (Psalm 119:11). Don't you love meeting people whose conversations are laced with Scripture? You become that kind of person as you memorize God's Word. But we must also live it out. We want to be doers of the word, not hearers only (James 1:22).

And then this is what results: “*Behold, the days are coming,*” says the LORD, “*when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it*” (Amos 9:13).

This description of abundant blessing follows Amos' previous chapter's promise of judgment. In Amos 8, God had said He would bring a judgment, consisting of a famine for His Word, on those who disregard His Word. But here in chapter 9, He promises that afterward, there will be blessing—and the connection to the blessing is receptivity to His Word.

So the title, “Famine or Feast?” really sums it up; and notice, it's a question. We, to a large degree, determine the answer. If we are people who love God's Word, cherish it, and feed upon it, we will have a perpetual feast. We will constantly bear fruit, as we read in the first psalm: “*Blessed is the man ... [whose] delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water ... whose leaf also shall not wither;*

and whatever he does shall prosper” (Psalm 1:1-3). See the connection there, the promise of blessing. Hearing, believing, and obeying God's Word brings life and blessing.

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Not long ago, I participated in an outreach in Watts in Los Angeles, CA, where a church has recently begun. Talk about a community where there is confusion, chaos, oppression, depression, misery, etc. Interestingly, though, in Compton, CA, and many surrounding communities, there is a church on practically every corner. Many of them, however, don't believe and teach the Bible. But where someone is faithfully proclaiming and believing it, there is beauty in the place of ashes; lives are being transformed. I had many conversations with men whose lives were devastated by sin. One man had spent 40 years in prison: in and out for 20, and in straight for 21. He was 73 years old, yet he shared how God had saved him and changed him. As we talked, he kept quoting Scripture to me, and I thought, *This is so powerful*. Later I said to my wife, “I thank God that these men have gone in to that community and planted a Bible-teaching church.” It's not enough just to go in and preach the Gospel. People must have a place where they can be fed God's Word, because that is how transformation takes place.

So let's not take God's Word for granted, but cherish it. By doing so, we may avoid famine in our own lives and prevent judgment on our communities and our culture. May we see a perpetual feast as people feed upon the Word of God. ✚