

“9 And it shall come to pass in that day,” says the Lord God, “That I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight; 10 I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist, and baldness on every head; I will make it like mourning for an only son, and its end like a bitter day. 11 “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. 12 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.

13 “In that day the fair virgins and strong young men shall faint from thirst. 14 Those who swear by the sin of Samaria, who say, ‘As your god lives, O Dan!’ And, ‘As the way of Beersheba lives!’ They shall fall and never rise again.”

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

“Feast or Famine.” Isn’t that the way life is in this world? You either have one or the other. If you own your own business you have months where you have so much work you can hardly keep up, and then you go through months where you hardly get enough work to survive. Retail stores are all revved up for the next two months of feasting, knowing that there will be famine in the months of January and February.

This is also true in a spiritual sense, it’s either **Feast or Famine**. In the economic landscape, we have little or no control over whether we have a Feast or a Famine. However, when it comes to God’s word we have total control over whether we will have a Feast or a Famine. God shows us:

1. The Famine comes when You Neglect God’s Word.

2. Feast on His Word to Prevent the Famine.

So what will it be for you, **Feast or Famine?**

God graciously gives us His Word. It is the only way that we can know Him and know His love and mercy and the only way of salvation. If God takes that word away from us, we are hopelessly lost. As we said earlier, if we don’t have the word, we don’t have Jesus, and without Jesus there is no salvation. We are left in the dark. That’s why God says, “I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight.” Without God’s word we would be groping around in the dark, searching for meaning and purpose in life but never able to find it.

God describes the result of such a famine in the last two verses of our text. “In that day the fair virgins and strong young men shall faint from thirst.” Even though it is not a famine of bread or of “Thirst for water,” it will leave even the strongest young men and women fainting from thirst? That is a spiritual thirst for God’s grace and mercy; a thirst for inner peace and security in life. He also says, “Those who swear by the sin of Samaria, who say, ‘As your god lives, O Dan!’ And, ‘As the way of Beersheba lives!’ They shall fall and never rise again.” Those who worship any other god “shall fall and never rise again.” Without the Word of God, no one can be saved.

The worst part is, God says, “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.” When God takes His word away, you cannot find it. What a dreadful judgment, leaving people hopelessly in the dark.

And notice that God says, “I will send a famine on the land.” “I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight.” Why would God take away His word? It was God’s judgement upon the people because they didn’t want to listen to His word. In the first part of this chapter God describes the situation. verses 1&2. “Thus the Lord God showed me: Behold, a basket of summer fruit. And He said, ‘Amos, what do you see?’” So I said, “A basket of summer fruit.” Outwardly the nation of Israel looked like a beautiful basket of summer fruit. They were enjoying a period of peace and prosperity. The capital city, Samaria, became a showcase of royal splendour. Houses were decorated with exquisite ivory carvings. The nation of Israel was politically

successful, materially prosperous, culturally advanced, AND religiously active. But, what looked like a beautiful basket of summer fruit outwardly, God revealed was full of worms and rotteness. Like some peaches we got this past summer that looked beautiful and ripe, but when we cut into them they were mushy, brown and tasted horrible.

That's what Israel was like. The people were worshiping God, but God tells us where their heart was. They were saying, "When will the New Moon be past, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may trade wheat? Making the ephah small and the shekel large, falsifying the scales by deceit, that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals—Even sell the bad wheat?" (Verses 4-6) Their worship was a sham. They went through the motions but they couldn't wait for it to be over so they could get back to making money. They didn't care what they had to do to get rich. They found ways to cheat. They took advantage of the poor rather than helping them. God says they "swallow up the needy, and make the poor of the land fail." They honoured God with their mouths, but their heart was far from Him. They greedily lived only for themselves.

For centuries God had patiently sent His prophets to call them to repentance, but they rejected the prophets. So God said, "OK, you don't want my word, you won't have it." The Famine of the word comes when you Neglect or despise God's Word.

There have been many famines of the word throughout the ages. There were several recorded in the Old Testament, during the days of the Judges, during the reign of Josiah in Jerusalem. There was a severe famine of the Word in the centuries leading up to the Reformation. The Roman Catholic Church was no longer teaching the true word. They were teaching a false way of salvation through works. The worship services, including the bible readings were done in Latin, which most people in Germany and other lands did not understand. AND they placed the Bible on a list of books that were forbidden for the people to read! So for many centuries the people did not hear the word of God. The people were starving for the Gospel.

God tells us why that happened. In 2 Thessalonians 2:10 It was "because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved." The people allowed the word to be taken from them because they didn't love the word, they didn't care enough to make sure they kept the word, so they had a 4 or 5 century famine of the word.

What is happening today? We are quickly entering into another famine of the Word. The situation in Israel at the time of Amos, sounds a lot like our day doesn't it? Our nation looks like a beautiful basket of summer fruit. Outwardly our country is enjoying unprecedented prosperity. We are materially prosperous, perhaps to a greater extent than ever before. We are culturally and technically advanced, AND religiously active. We are an affluent, productive society by every standard except spiritually. Just like Israel, people are more interested in making money and enjoying it with all the toys and activities available, than they are with the word of God. People feast on their prosperity and treasure their possessions rather than treasuring and feasting on God's word.

It is interesting, there are more Bibles in the world today than any other book, yet the vast majority of people really don't know what the Bible is about. Notice that God says it is "a famine of HEARING God's word." People don't have a love for the Word. They don't care enough to read and study the Bible themselves. They have let the false teachers tell them what to believe. Most liberal churches have rejected the Bible as the verbally inspired Word of God that is true in all points. So they discard the things they don't want to believe or listen to. They generally focus on two main things: They use God's law to show people how they can improve their life by keeping His law, and they focus on how God promises to always be with us and never leave us or forsake us. But they do not talk about God's wrath against our sins or our need for repentance. They may speak occasionally about God's forgiveness and how we should forgive one another, but that forgiveness is given regardless of whether we repent or turn away from our sins. The message that is received is we don't need to worry about sinning because God forgives us. It's great, we can worship our

pleasures and still count on God to be with us! So even though they have the Bible, they don't ever "Hear" the Word of God or the true message of salvation through Jesus' sacrificial death in our place. And in our day there are so many corrupted messages that are supposedly from God, that people who may be searching for the truth, don't even know where to find it. Many conclude that we can't really know the truth. So, even though there are more Bibles in the world than any other book, there is a true famine of hearing the word today.

There is only one solution, **Feast on His Word to Prevent the Famine.**

As God shows us, it is our own apathy that brings on the famine. If we love and treasure the word in our heart and eagerly read and hear it, we will never have a famine of the Word. That is really what the reformation is all about. See how the world was in the dark for centuries without the word of God. When God finally brought that famine to an end through Martin Luther and the Reformation, the people were overjoyed to have the Word of God once again and they truly treasured it.

Martin Luther noticed during his own lifetime how the people began taking that word for granted already. He wrote:

"When the Word was first proclaimed twelve or fifteen years ago, the people hearkened to it eagerly. Everybody rejoiced that it was no longer necessary to plague oneself with good works. People remarked: "Thank God, we now have water to drink!" At that time they were thirsty, and the Gospel doctrine tasted good to them. We drank of it; that was a precious teaching. But now we are sated and tired of the drink. Therefore God will have to forsake us and let us die of thirst, for He remains only with those who feel their wretched condition. But few are aware of this. The majority pervert the Gospel into carnal license. (LW 23:269)

Let us all learn the lesson of the reformation. When we don't love and keep God's word we will lose it. False teaching corrupts the truth and our Salvation by Grace alone through Faith alone is lost. Those precious truths depend on having His word. Therefore let us repent of our apathy toward the word and all the times we put other things ahead of hearing or reading God's word. Repent of the worship of our modern idols—setting our work or our pleasure above God and His Word.

When God said "I will make the sun go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in broad daylight," does that ring any bells for you? That is a description of His judgment upon the people for their rejecting His Word and thereby rejecting Him. By taking away His word He left the world in utter darkness. But it can't help but make us think of the day when God literally did make the sun stop shining at noon and darkened the earth. That was when He punished His own Son for all our sins including our apathy which chooses other things over Him. Because Jesus suffered that darkness of God's wrath for us, we have forgiveness and God's steadfast love and mercy with us. That is something to truly treasure, and we find that only in His Word.

Thank the Lord for restoring His word to us through the Reformation. Carry on the Reformation by Feasting on that Word to Prevent a Famine in your own life and proclaim His Word to the world to bring this famine to an end in the lives of those around you. Treasuring God's word also means to put it into practice in our life and follow it with all our heart. As Jesus says, "Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it."

Amen.