

Famine of the Word

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[0 : 00] Now, of course, we're making much of our nation today. People make much of our nation today. The nation of Australia. Yet our nation is in trouble.!

Desolate. And we see the barrenness, the barrenness of our churches. What is missing? The word. The word is missing. That's the problem.

The word is missing. It's the word that is missing. We have a problem with reception. Now, we've got some reception problems here, haven't we, some technology.

I know when you get your phone out sometimes, you think, oh, there's a reception problem.

Something's not working. There's a problem with the signal. And we have a problem with reception, the reception of the word I put to you.

In Amos 8, verse 11. Amos 8, verse 11. The prophet says, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread or a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.

[1 : 25] And they shall wander from sea to sea. And from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord and shall not find it.

Australia. Australians. Our nation is in trouble because we will not come under the law of God, the rule of God. And it's forsaken God and his word.

This nation is in trouble. As I say, as your phone gets out of signal, out of reception, out of range, there's a reception problem.

Australia has a problem with reception. We've closed up our ears, our hearts, our eyes to the word of God. And yet we see the opposite in the word of God about the people of God, how they treated the word of God.

In Jerusalem, there was a good reception. There was a good signal. In Acts 2, 41. No, as Peter preached. Acts 2, 41.

[2 : 27] And we'll see some other verses through Acts. Acts 2, 41. It says, In Jerusalem there was a good reception. It says, Then they that gladly received his word were baptized.

And the same day were added unto them about 3,000 souls. Notice, Souls saved. Souls trusted Christ.

And that's the message. Our brother has a heart for souls in his nation. This nation has souls perishing. And we should be worried about souls. We should have a heart for souls.

We should have a concern for souls. And notice that souls trusted Christ. Why? They gladly received his word. They gladly received the word.

And this pattern is repeated through Acts. You see in Acts 8, verse 14. Acts 8, 14. The same again. Samaria received the word of God.

[3 : 25] The pattern. Samaria received the word of God. Then in Acts 11, verse 1. The Gentiles received the word of God. Same thing. And then in Acts 17, 11.

You might want to turn there. God calls us to receive the word. As the Bereans did. Bereans. They were more noble, it says, than those in Thessalonica. In that they received the word with all readiness of mind.

And searched the scriptures. Daily. Whether those things were so. Now some would think, well, I take my Bible to church.

Or I open the Bible in church on a Sunday. No, not on Sundays only. But daily. Day by day.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, through the whole week. Daily they searched the scriptures.

They received the word with all readiness of mind. And they searched the scriptures daily. Whether those things were so. Talking of Paul's ministry. They tested the preacher. He was under scrutiny by the congregation.

[4 : 27] Is it in accordance with the word? They received the word with all readiness of mind. Why is there no revival? No reception.

No reception. Why are we not seeing souls saved? In dramatic instances? Reception. That's the problem. The reception is a problem. And our part. Each one. Each individual soul. We had to answer for our own reception of the word.

We know the sower's, the parable of the sower. The man who went to sow the seed. And it says that the seed was the word of God. And this man had this seed bag.

And he threw the seed on different kinds of soil. And it's a picture of how the word of God goes out in printed, preached form. It's spread. It's distributed.

[5 : 23] It's published. And the different kinds of soil have a different response to the seed, the word. And of some it says in Mark 4 verse 20, where the seed was sown on good ground, such as hear the word and receive it and bring forth fruit.

Some 30 fold, some 60 fold, some 100 fold. When we receive the word, there will be fruit. Amen. There will be fruit. He says it will bring fruit.

How are we to receive the word? We read that we are to receive the word with meekness and with action. See that, for example, in James 1.

James 1 verse 21. You might want to turn there if you've got time to. James 1. James 1 says, wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, which essentially means wickedness.

Lay aside filthiness. Lay aside wickedness. And receive. There's that word again. With meekness. The engrafted word. Which is able to save your souls.

[6 : 34] Receive the word with meekness. Humility. With an openness. A humbleness of heart. Humility of heart. Receive it. And it's the engrafted word.

Such that we think of grafting. Of trees being grafted and joined together. Of something being implanted and infused and indwelling.

This engrafting of the word. That it becomes a muscle of the fibre of our being. Such that it lives and manifests within us and from us.

It's engrafted. Which is able to save your souls. Then he goes on. But be ye doers of the word and not hearers only. Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only.

Be deceiving for ourselves. So how are we to receive it? With meekness and with action. The action. Be doers of the word. The word effectually works in those who believe.

[7 : 34] We see 1 Thessalonians 2.13. 1 Thessalonians 2.13. It says, Paul writes to the Thessalonians. 1 Thessalonians 2.13. For this cause also thank we God without ceasing.

Because when ye receive the word of God. Which ye heard of us. Ye received it not as the word of man. But as it is in truth the word of God. Which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

So Paul says as they preached it. As the apostles and prophets sent by God to give that word. They received it as the word of God.

And of course now we have their words and writings. Their ministry. Their message in printed form. In these pages. Between the covers of this book. We have the word of God.

We should receive it. And it says those who receive it. Receive it as the truth. As the word of God. It effectually works in us.

[8 : 35] Amen. This word works in us. It's not something that is inactive. It is active. Effective.

And the word must be received by faith. And then acted upon. It effectually works in those who believe. As while helping you. You are the spiritually mature.

Who want to receive his word. He promises it will be effectual in you that believe. Promises it will save souls.

He promises it will work as his word. Will produce fruit as that fruitful ground. And I know some of this might be a little overlap with what I mentioned.

Perhaps a little reinforcement doesn't hurt. But as I took this morning brief. He is the word. He is the word. And the indwelling Christ. The word himself. Can reside within us.

[9 : 40] And friends we need that don't we? We need the word. We need him. We need Christ who is the word. Word of God. We need him. Himself. Residing within us. And his word in us.

For the meantime our nation is in peril. Spiritually. We might be applauding the nation. And there's a certain national pride and such. But really our nation is in peril.

And yet it is a day of opportunity for us. Because we love our nation. We love our land. We love the people of this nation. And we see the darker the night.

The more the need of the light. We see the darkness. As we see the demise. As we see the decline. As we see the falling away in churches. In churchdom.

In the general apathy and complacency of Aussies. The darker the night. The more the need of light. We are that light. The light of the world. We are the light of Australia.

[10:40] We need to be standing firm in this shifting world. When the church conforms to the world. When it seems like there's no standards. When it seems like the spirit of God is driven out. With this carnality.

This fleshliness. We must seek after the word. To be a word filled people. Word hungry people. The Bible tells of a time. As we started with a famine.

A famine in the land. A famine where people won't hear the word of God. They won't seek for it. Or if they seek for it. They won't find it. The Bible tells of such a time. And in Amos 6.

And we see. Amos 8 rather. And we see that this. The light to the days we're getting in now. I'll put to you. Where we have people who they're looking for it.

The word. But they will not find it. There's people searching for churches. Searching here.

Searching there. And they're going to some churches where they scarcely refer to the Bible. They scarcely give a Bible verse.

[11:38] They scarcely refer to the Bible. Or if they do. It's in some paraphrased form. Then it's scarcely the Bible anymore. And they wonder.

Where is the Bible? Where are the words? The words. And in some quarters. They go to such churches.

Where the preacher does a lot of talking. And may talk about revelations. And visions. And supernatural bragging on about this or that.

And so-called prophecies. Or latter-day revelations. These sources of revelation that are outside the word of God. And at times contrary to it.

And ideologies and teachings that are not valid. And this sounds like Australia today, doesn't it?

This sounds like our nation. This sounds like churches by and large in our world are a place.

[12:39] And it's another problem today. We have the words of preachers. It's the words of so-called prophets. But we must have the word of God. That must be what we must have. We must have that.

And no wonder we're a spiritually starving nation. We have the words of life. And thank God for Bible schools. Training men and women up. To know the word. To live the word.

To live out. To minister the word. We must have the word. We must have the word. We must receive the word. And we must impart the word to others. When many fail to receive nourishment.

We can point them to this life source. Our Lord and his word. These are the words of life. Now the disciple says, to who shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.

We are God's people blessed with this book. This precious truth. There's none other like it.

So-called holy scriptures and so-called holy books.

[13:35] But this stands unique and alone and above and beyond anything that we could compare it to. Amos is telling of a time when people are searching.

Searching but not finding the word. And we have that call. Each one, each believer, each man, each woman of God here today. We are called to be messengers of that word.

And this is no light thing to do. I know we referred this morning to standing on the doorstep of a man who said, I know there's something, someone out there. What if we are his messenger to you?

And we are. Because that is what the word says we are. And we are ones who should be urging people to thirsting after God, to searching and finding, to knowing him.

We must endeavour to be a people hungry for the word, thirsting for righteousness, hiding his word in our hearts, serious about searching the scriptures.

[14:35] And be as the Bereans were that they committed to searching to the scriptures to see whether those things were so. That we're willing to measure up as a church.

That the ministry of this church is measured. That it's evaluated. It's critically analysed. And criticised in a good way. That we should be open to critical scrutiny.

Does it measure up with the word? Is it the word? Is it biblical? And do that with me. And tell me if I'm erring because I'm a human and fallible just like the rest of humanity.

And I'm not big noting or saying I'm above correction. Rather we ought to have a heart that we want to hunger and thirst. We want to ask valid questions and get biblical answers.

As much to oppose the reception. Living in a world that hates the word of God. Hates the truth of God. And the Lord tells of, in the stories of the sower of the seed, tells us some of the seed that's choked with the cares of this world.

[15 : 41] The love of this world. Some of that seed showed some sign of life. And yet the word was choked.

The love of the world, the love of riches, the cares of the world, the world's standards, the world's loves have choked the seed such that it dies.

Can't bring forth fruit. And we're seeing this today in our land. The spiritual malnutrition. The spiritual lack. This brain of spirituality.

And this, you know, our brother talked about the idols of Myanmar. Well, Australia's a nation full of idols too. And we have programs called Australia's Idol.

We are an idol worshipping nation, aren't we? We are a pagan, heathen nation. A godless, god forsaken nation. But God has not forsaken us to that extent.

[16 : 40] That there's still his people. There are his own people. And we are the communicators of this word. It's truth that our world needs to hear. There's a lack of hearing.

Of hearing the words of the Lord. Like, I know some dear people in my family have got a hearing impairment. You've got to say it a bit louder, don't you? Sometimes we need to hear it a bit louder, don't we?

To hear the word of the Lord. I know I was told off this morning for maybe being a bit too loud. But then Julie said, no, preach it. And my mother-in-law, yeah, preach it. We shouldn't be holding back.

We shouldn't be afraid to speak this word loud and clear so everyone can hear it. People are not interested in strong, solid preaching though, are they? They'd rather have the ear tickling.

You know, I'll scratch you where you itch and then maybe you'll come back next week. Or, you know, the preachers are kind of toning it down and making it mellow and making it comforting.

[17 : 38] And it is comforting but such that there's no challenge, there's no conviction, there's no rebuke, there's no stirring up. And the psalm, they're listening to the lyrics of the band or the hype of the popular preacher but there is something missing deep down.

It's the word. The word's missing. We've lost the power. People are mostly playing church and the preachers are pandering to this wishy-washy spirit to make the Christianity more palatable, to be a, oh, we don't dare to be politically incorrect, that we might actually offend somebody.

But yet the hard truths must be told. That's not to say we're out to bring condemnation or to heap law on people but there is that sense where there's a diluted gospel.

We've gone too soft and we've become too, you know, the sensitive new age guys are the ones behind the pulpit. But we need to be careful of that, don't we?

That we don't water down the word. That we don't become so fearful that we're just consciously on about not hurting people's feelings or losing numbers. But to rather have a Christianity that's forthright and biblical and we see the prophets of old such that they dared to stand and to speak and to herald and to proclaim and to forth tell such that they didn't care where they ended up, whether it be in jail or at the death row.

[19 : 09] We ought to have such a heart that it doesn't matter what it's going to cost because we'd rather be on God's side. We must get a hungering and thirsting after God. Enough of shallow Christianity.

This is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and to the Greek. The power of God unto salvation. We must have the gospel soundly declared.

This is our hope. This is what our nation needs. This is Australia's need, Australia's hope. How we need that outpouring. That we would be a word-filled people, a word-founded people, a word-based people, a biblical, Bible-based church.

That what we have and how we worship and how we serve and what we stand for is biblical. It's solidly biblical. It's founded on the Bible. And we need an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Where does the Holy Spirit act? In accordance with his word. His divine power is not removed from his word. It's integral to his word.

[20 : 13] The Holy Spirit is integral to the word of God. The Spirit of God and the word of God work in tandem, in unison, in alignment.

And why is there no power? Because there's no word. Why is there no Holy Spirit revival? The real. Because there is no word. The word is not there. And why do we see the devil laughing and

scorning and disrupting?

Evil spirits will scatter when the word of God is in the center point. That's what we must have. Such that the devil will tremble at this book. The word of God will have free course and be glorified. That's what we need. That's my hope. That's my hope. My earnest prayer. And I trust for you too. That this word of God will be unleashed as a mighty stream, as a mighty force, a flowing river. A mighty force that it be released, that it be published. That God will be powerfully at work. How so? As his word is powerfully seen and imparted, delivered and received.

[21 : 26] And so, brothers, sisters today, we're all called to this work. We're all called to this mission, to this ministry. It's not just for the preacher or those who might minister publicly. It's for every believer, everyone who is here, who knows him.

You are his messenger and you have a message to deliver. Now, what if you were a postman and you thought, look, I'll leave some of those letters to post another day.

Now, you hear some posties that get lazy and throw the post in the bin. I know I used to be a contract letterbox deliverer and I heard about letterbox deliverers when they just think, oh, I've done enough streets, I'll throw the rest in the bin.

Not that I did that. But you hear some, they've got a message to deliver. They've got a leaflet to deliver. They've got a mail to deliver. But the message doesn't get through because they are lazy. It doesn't get delivered. We are called to hold fast the faithful word. Hold it fast, to hold it forth. To declare it, to deliver it, to relay it.

[22 : 37] Today they call Australia Day. Where is Australia? Where are we? It's, by and large, it's lost its way, if it ever had its way.

You know, there was some Christian foundation elements in those early stages of settlement. And we know the sad events too that are not of God.

But friends, our nation has a lot to answer to. And we're pagan at our roots. And becoming more so, I put to you.

It's a darkness and it's enveloping our land. There's a hardness of hearts. Hardness of hearts in many. Thankfully not all. We've seen responsiveness too in the witnessing team.

But there's a moral corruption in our nation. And friends, nation is in need of healing. We are a broken, damaged nation. Sin has damaged our land.

[23 : 41] And the Bible says he sent his word and he healed them. This is Dr. Jesus' prescription for this nation. The great physician.

The doctor, the Lord Jesus Christ. And I'm not meaning to demean him or make it sound irreverent or such. But he is the doctor, isn't he? He's the doctor. He is the heart healer.

Luke 4. It says in our Bible that he's the healer of the broken in heart. Broken in heart. And he binds up our wounds. Here's the great doctor. And his prescription is here.

In our hands. This is the prescription for our healing. He sent his word and he healed them. And when we hear about our nation, we hear about the people who live in these streets all around us. We hear of broken hearts. We hear of broken homes. We hear of fragile, wounded, dysfunctional families and smashed lives. We hear of people resorting to drugs and substance abuse.

[24 : 46] They lift them. And yet they just have a hangover and it's an emptiness. It's a deadness within them. Only God can bring that healing. That healing of soul. God heals and his word is that refreshing.

What if you had the cure to cancer? You knew someone was dying. Terrible. Wouldn't you want to share it? Wouldn't you want to tell them?

Wouldn't you want to pass it on? Or would you hide it behind your back? Oh, I'll tell them another time. I'll tell them later.

Well, you may not have later. You know people, don't we? It's kind of a picture form of cancer of sin. Cancer of unbelief. Cancer of the peril of that lost soul.

And we withhold the answer. Let's not do that. Rather be laughed at and tell them than to not tell them.

[25 : 53] Amen? Rather that. Rather that. It doesn't send angels. It sends humans. It sends men and women just like you and me in all our failings and frailty.

And you will be scorned. They will laugh you to scorn some of them, but some, they will receive the word. Wow.

They'll be saved. Wouldn't that be glorious? And sometimes you encounter that when you're talking to people and the immediate response is, not interested. But when you start talking, actually, yes, I am interested.

I am interested. I need that. I needed that. And can we seek after God such that he will move within us, move through us? Of Daniel, it says he made a commitment.

Daniel 9 verse 3 says, I set my face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplications with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. He says, I set my face unto the Lord God.

[26 : 59] That's a good place to set your face, isn't it? Set your face unto the Lord God. Set your face unto him to develop that spiritual discernment, that perfect fellowship.

Where are we at? Australia. We could be in another land today, couldn't we? We could be sitting in a building in Myanmar. We could be sitting in a building in some other land where it might be harder to be a Christian, where it might be harder to speak out, where it might be harder to tell another.

Are you ready to die? That can be the reality for some of our brothers and sisters in other nations. And is the one who needs the message ready to die? Maybe they're not. Maybe they don't know Christ. It's imperative that we tell them, isn't it?

God told Jeremiah, Is not my word in your mouth like a fire? The sense where we're breathing fire. There's a sense where it's in our bones and it's breathing out of us.

[28 : 11] As this burning, this vital, glowing, bright and beaming light out of your mouth, this fire.

You have the words of life and you are the ones to communicate it. You are his channels. You might say, Oh, look, okay, I'm a Christian but I'm a quiet Christian. I'm a, just a, I'm a, some people call it, I had one man say, I'm in, I'm in the secret service.

You know. No, we're not. There's no secret service in Christianity. Got to be all out. And God will help you to have that heart.

God will help you. He'll help you to open your mouth and share your testimony. A simple testimony of our brother tonight. Of what God has said, what God has done in my heart.

How he's changed me. He's turned me from idols to the living God. You've got a story to tell and it's your story. God wants to loose the bands of wickedness.

[29 : 19] To undo the heavy yoke. Break every yoke. Take the burdens. You're the one to tell. Now when a surgeon probes with his lance in your bones and body, it hurts.

But it's necessary. I know it makes me think my fear, my greatest fear of sorts is the dentist, you know. They start probing and scratching and digging and buzzing and hurting.

Friends, sometimes the hurting is good, isn't it? Sometimes I've got to tell people, don't do that. It's hard for me as a preacher. It kind of goes against the grain to come down heavy on some people.

Sometimes I have to. And I know some might think maybe I'm a bit of a softie. Well, you don't always see how I do come down hard. And it's called for. The word of God is sharp.

It's two-edged sword. It's piercing for the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. Of the joints and marrow. It's a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. This is sharp.

[30 : 23] Ouch! You might get a paper cut out of this book. Amen? It might cut you in the heart. You might say, preacher, ouch, that hurt today. You dug it right into me today.

Well, that's a good thing, isn't it? If I'm the surgeon, as it were, if God helping me, I'm working for Dr. Jesus and there's a bit of operation to do by his spirit, by his sword, by that scalpel of his sharp and two-edged sword, then that's a good thing for your soul.

You might thank me afterwards. But for the moment, it might not be so pleasant. But brothers and sisters, this word is sharp. It's a two-edged sword. And God helping me, it's going to hurt me too.

Believe me. But we must seek after the word, don't we? We should seek after the word. Now, there's a blessed scripture, the entrance of thy words giveth light. Giveth understanding unto the simple.

Entrance of thy words giveth light. And you can have an entrance that's shut. Or you can have an entrance. Let's rather be open, amen? Let's open the doors. Let's have a receptivity.

[31 : 30] The entrance of thy words. It can't get in if the entrance is shut. But the entrance of thy words. Open your heart to the scriptures. It's like Lydia. God opened her heart.

Isn't that a blessing? Some people's hearts are shut. They're bolted. They're like Fort Knox. Don't talk to me. Don't come in. God opened the heart of Lydia.

God opens the heart. And he gives entrance to his words. It brings light. Thy word is a light, a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. May we receive the word.

Receive the word. Brother, sister, simply that. This simple truth. If you can just grasp this one fundamental message. You know, sometimes it's good for a preacher, a teacher to have one fundamental message.

And the fundamental message is three words. Receive the word. That's all. That's it. Receive the word. Gladly.

[32 : 28] With a readiness of mind. To search it. Diligently. Daily. And obey it. Such that you do it. And sometimes his word will challenge us. And yet, in Micah 2 verse 7 in part it says, Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly.

This word will do you good. Even the bits you don't like. Amen. He says, Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly.

Micah 2 verse 7. God's word does us good. And I know I referred in passing to Ephesians 5.

Husbands, love your wives.

Even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it. That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.

Wow. That he might present it to himself. A glorious church. Not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

[33 : 30] But that it should be holy and without blemish. I'm looking forward to that, aren't you?

That one day, God helping us will be part of that number of the glorious church. He'll present unto himself without spot, without wrinkle or any such thing.

No blemish. It'll be holy. But in the meantime, it's not quite there yet. But God helps us to be such a people.

God's word does us good. It speaks to our need. Let us receive the word. Simply that. And how so? How can I apply this? You know, the Bible says, Be not hear us, but do us.

Hear us only, but do us. How can I do this? Can I do this? Word. Save it.

Search the scriptures. Daily. That's a challenge, isn't it? Can I put some time aside? Can I put some time?

[34 : 38] I'm talking to me. I'm not what I should be. Not as diligent a student of the word as I should be. And the Bible says, search the scriptures daily.

Put time aside. Make time. Lock it in. Make it an appointment in your diary. Appointment when you and God.

That's how we receive the word, isn't it? Receive it humbly, eagerly, and obediently.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you that your word is precious to our soul. Lord, we pray for our nation.

Pray for Myanmar as a nation. Pray for our brother here and his heart to take your word to his nation.

We pray you'd engage him, Lord, in greater acts of service, for provision for students, for the teaching materials, for the many lives that this ministry can impact in Myanmar.

[35 : 47] And Lord, for our little part of your vineyard, this little border of your harvest field, help us to be messengers of your word.

We pray, Lord, that each one will know what it is to be that good ground where the seed is received. Lord, where we receive the word. And we see when they received the word gladly, they were saved.

They were saved. They were baptized. It was life-changing. And Lord, we know your word still is life-changing. It's transforming.

And Lord, it's enlivening. It's quickening. It makes us alive. It makes us live. It's full of life and truth.

Lord, help us to be messengers of it, to not take it lightly. As your word tells us, we should tremble at your word. We should take heed of it. We should treat it with seriousness and with respect and reverence.

[36 : 48] And Lord, with honour. As you put your word even above your name that it is such a precious book for our soul. And Lord, as we would reverently seek your face in some fashion, Lord, yet you are the doctor of our soul.

Lord, you've got the ultimate prescription for life, for everlasting life, for an abundant life, a life more abundant. Well, we pray if there's any yet to trust you, that even now they might say, Lord Jesus, I trust you now.

I receive your everlasting gift of eternal life into my soul. I receive your work of salvation on my part, that you gave your life for me.

And I give my life to you, Lord, in service, in adherence to your word. Help us, Lord, to be such a people. Lord, help us, help this nation, this land, this dark, dark land of Australia, that we might be the light that our nation needs.
In Jesus' name, amen.