

Reversing the Greatest Famine in the Church Today

In Amos 8:11, the Lord speaks about a famine of hearing the Word of the Lord. This was referring to a time in the life of the nation of Israel when there was rarely a true prophetic word spoken.

I believe that we are now living in similar times. There are many dubious so-called prophetic voices, but of greater concern is the existing trend to dumb down and cut back on the preaching of the Word of God to make church attendance attractive to all.

Preaching the Word of God is extremely important and cannot be overstated! Paul the apostle wrote that God manifested His Word through preaching that was committed to him (Titus 1:3). He also clearly indicated that the inspired Scriptures are essential for the training and equipping every believer (2 Tim. 3:16).

Truly, the church today has gone from preaching “theological” messages to preaching “therapeutic” messages, which fail to carry the full import of the power and profundity of Spirit-filled, Scripture-saturated preaching. If there was ever a need to re-discover the Word of God (like when King Josiah found and read the book of the law to the people causing a wave of repentance in the nation), it is now (2 Kings 22-23).

Many “attractional” churches commonly structure a 60-to-75-minute service with a 20-to-30-minute “feel good” message or sermon. This format contributes to the dearth of scriptural or biblical literacy and the lack of true discipleship in the body of Christ. This type of preaching is insufficient because most people no longer attend a mid-week teaching service, nor do they participate in small groups for deeper bible study.

Hence, the only messages these churches ever get are these short, soundbite, motivational sermons that fail to ground people in the faith.

The typical justification for these short, pithy, winsome messages, long on superficial hype and short on theological depth, is that people today have short attention spans. However, if this is true, then how come so many people spend hours playing video games, binging on streamed shows or watching their favorite sports team?

My own experience, when preaching the Word under the anointing of the Spirit of God, is that people are riveted by the authority and power of prophetically induced preaching. Their attention is held for 45 minutes or longer without any issues. Often, I have tried to end at an allotted time (usually 45 minutes), and the audience yells out that they want me to continue teaching!

A famine of hearing the Word results in the lack of depth in the faith; one of the primary reasons so many young evangelicals are deconstructing. They do not have the biblical chops or the knowledge of God necessary to get them through extremely challenging times.

Ezra, the scribe, read from the book of the law from early morning until midday. The necessary shift came to the people enabling them to rebuild the city and the temple in post-exilic Jerusalem (Neh.8:3): "And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose."

When reading about some of the true awakenings of the past few hundred years, we find that preachers like Charles Finney rarely preached for less than an hour; on many occasions, they

preached for one and a half hours or more.

Consequently, my belief is that God wants to bring a revival of His Word to the earth. He will also raise “pulpiteers” instead of “puppeteers”: prophetic preachers who will bring forth the word of the Lord every week with great power and authority. A revived people will hunger and thirst daily for the word of God; they will continually meditate on the word of God according to the Scriptures in Psalm 1 and Joshua 1:8-9. “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night...”

Preachers will be so saturated with the word of God that it will extemporaneously flow out of their mouths seamlessly as they communicate the sacred text. Failure to recapture the power of the Word of God in pulpits will cause any named revival to be short-lived in those not rooted and grounded in the word (according to the teachings of Jesus in Mark 4:3-9).

We must restore great expository biblical preaching, or the evangelical church will continue to decline in North America, and syncretism will increase in the global south where Christianity is exploding. The church must embrace a love for the Word of God and for the preaching of the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). It is only then that the church (the pillar and ground of truth (1 Tim. 3:15)) and society at large will avoid catastrophic moral decline.

☒ Unfortunately, many pastors only do “topical preaching,” which deals with popular subjects but ignores some of the weightier matters of the Word, such as holiness, knowing God and Christlike spiritual formation—while others focus on one or two areas of Scripture such as eschatology, faith, healing, grace or pet peeve themes such as the so called NAR conspiracy, political engagement, racism and social justice. This lack of scriptural insight does not convey an understanding of the mind, heart and will of God.

The church must remain mindful of its mandate to feed God's people with the Word of Life until they understand that the Scriptures are a living spiritual portal whereby the Holy Spirit transforms us all by faith from glory to glory, from the inside out.

Editor's Note: This is part one of a two-part series. Stay tuned next week for Part 2.

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