

In the 2 Kings 6, there is the story of a tragic time in the history of Israel's Northern Kingdom. King Benhadad of Syria brought his massive army and surrounded the capital city of Samaria. The shrewd king recognized it was unnecessary to risk the loss of soldiers with a full-scale attack on the city. All he had to do was cut-off the city's supply lines until eventually the weakened people inside the walls would starve or surrender. The plan was working just as Benhadad had hoped. For verse 25 says, "There was a *great famine* in Samaria."

Many churches and Christians today are suffering from a great famine as well. It is not a famine for bread or a thirst for water. This famine is a spiritual one. What causes spiritual famine today? It is the same thing that caused natural dearth in the days of the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 11:13-17, God told His people that if they obeyed, loved, and served Him with all their heart, He would give the first and latter rain. He promised the earth would yield to them bountifully. He also warned that their idolatry would shut up the heavens, the land would be desolate, and they would perish quickly from the land He had given them.

Perhaps the only thing worse than deprivation itself is not realizing that the famine exists. Such is the sad state of many Christians today. They are starving and have yet to realize the pains of their hunger. How do you know dearth has come to your home, your church, or your city? What are the signs of famine?

The famine in Samaria was so great that the citizens were eating any thing they could find and paying quite a premium at that. Donkey heads and dove's dung were among the delicacies the Israelites carefully sought out. The first sign of famine is *Unimaginable Digestion*. When men and women are starved spiritually they will consume things they would never have considered otherwise. The leaven of the Pharisees or the poison of the cultists may taste sweet when one has been so long without feasting on heaven's manna.

There may well be a message in the menu of the Samaritans. The donkey is a stubborn and self-willed animal. He does not move until he is ready. His head, then, represents that mindset. Spiritual want produces such stubbornness in the heart of Christians. Motivating laity to worship or to work in the church grows increasingly difficult for church leaders. Throughout the Scripture, the dove is a type of the Holy Spirit. The dove's dung, though, represents not where the dove *is*, but where the dove *was*. In spiritual famine, many feast on what used to be. God may have done great things in their lives at one time; but if He is not still doing great things in them, perhaps their testimony is only a celebration of dove's dung.

The second sign of famine is *Unspeakable Desperation*. One woman wandered through the streets of the city looking for something to save herself from starvation when she happened to notice King Jehoram walking atop the city walls surveying the devastation. Hear the *hopelessness of the laity* in the cry of this woman. "Help me!" she tearfully pleaded. Jehoram's response was as empty as was her stomach, "If the Lord doesn't help you, how can I?" There is a feeling of utter *helplessness among leadership* in starving churches.

The king was quick to point out that he did not have the right resources to meet her needs. "From where shall I help you? From the barn floor or the winepress?" A third sign of famine is *Unmistakable Depletion*. There is no textual evidence that the palace coffers had been drained, only that the barn floors were empty and the winepresses dry. Many churches may boast their most prosperous fiscal years, but admittedly their money will perish with them. *The barn floors are empty*. Empty threshing floors are a sign that there has been no harvest. Churches that refuse to take seriously the Great Commission will discover that with no laborers in the field, there will be no nourishment in the house. *The winepresses are dry*. Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in the life of many Christians today. "Gladness is taken away, and joy

out of the plentiful field; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting: the treaders shall tread out no wine in their presses.”

With food reservoirs barren, the woman in our text admitted she had boiled her son and ate him the day before. The horror of hearing such news sent the king home in sackcloth. A last sign of famine from our text is ***Unthinkable Destruction***. With food disappearing fast, the inhabitants of Samaria resorted to the only method of survival they could fathom. They began eating one another. The Apostle Paul cautioned in Galatians 5:14-15, “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.” In spite of this clear warning, in churches suffering from spiritual famine the *cannibalism of fellow-believers* is the norm. The most tragic detail in this account is the fact that this Samaritan woman actually killed her own offspring. We see the *carnage of the future* in many churches suffering spiritual destitution. There is irreparable harm done to young people in starving churches. The future of our existence is at stake and yet some have sacrificed the next generation.

God offers good news in the midst of spiritual famine. It is found in 2 Chronicles 7:13-14: “If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

In the previous issue, we looked at 2 Kings 6, and examined the great famine in Samaria. We noticed four ***signs of famine*** that exist in many spiritually impoverished churches today. This month, let us take a look into the next chapter of 2 Kings. As we examine the familiar story of the four leprous men, we will discover four ***steps to feasting***.

2 Kings 7:3-9 And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? ⁴If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die. ⁵And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there. ⁶For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. ⁷Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life. ⁸And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it. ⁹Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household.

The Samaritans enjoying their best meal in many months began with some men making an ***honest assessment***. Four men were willing to sit down and make a genuine evaluation of their situation. As they took *a look at their person*, they discovered they were sick, they were separated, and they were starving. How many Christians could begin their journey to wellness if only they could admit they are not as healthy as they would have men to believe! Could it be that as we drift away from God, we indeed become isolated from the fellowship of His saints? How courageous for these lepers

to admit they were so close to starvation. Many Christians refuse to admit just how malnourished they are until it is too late.

The second part of their host assessment had to do with taking *a look at their predicament*. Perhaps they began asking some questions that led them to action. Will we make a change? We do not have to be content with the way things are. Do we have a choice? Sitting here until we die may seem like a viable option for some, but not those who know there is more. They recognized they only had one chance. Lord, let us see the one way to victory!

The lepers' second step to feasting was their *humble alliance*. It is important to note that *alliance is built on humility*. Someone once said that humility is ground in which unity grows. Notice in the text that none of the men's names are recorded and no credit is given to one individual for the idea of falling into the hands of the Syrians. *They* said to one another. Notice also, that no dissension is recorded. There is no record that even one of the lepers disagreed with the decision.

Alliance is also built on cooperation. We are laborers *together* with God. Alliance is also built on reliance. Watching each other's back is something that is conspicuously missing in body of Christ today. We should be able to depend on each other as we can depend on God.

Some *holy assistance* was also necessary in their steps to feasting. *Our effort is extremely beneficial*. If the lepers had sat where they were, they most assuredly would have perished. We have a part to play—we are *laborers* together with God. In spite of all our best endeavors, however, we still fall short. That is why, *His grace is absolutely essential*. God honored these lepers for their unwillingness to remain idle when they said, "We can't do much, but we've got to do something." Every step they took, it was as if God stepped with them. God amplified the volume on their footsteps so much that the Syrians thought these four men were a mighty invading army.

When these four leprous men had eaten until they were full, they realized had not done well. They were full, but their brethren in Samaria were still starving. The fourth step to feasting is *heartfelt affection*. There was *genuine consideration* for those who were perishing inside the gates of Samaria. How our hearts should ache for those who have long been without the taste of His goodness! But, let us not just have our heart affected. Let us be stirred to action. After they had remembered the plight of their city, there was *gospel circulation*. See these four men spread the good news around their town. Let us be as swift to share the message of hope to the hungry.

There is bread enough and to spare in the Father's house.