

Will You Surrender?

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Father, we just thank You, Lord. We just thank You. Mystery of the Kingdom, the mystery of the love of Christ for His Church. The mystery of holiness. So much about You is mystery, Lord. All of eternity, we will be discovering the incredible mystery of Christ, God in Christ. Even this night, Lord, as we look into Your Word, I pray Your Word will look into us. When we look into us, we hardly see anything everything is fine but when Your Word looks into us, Your Living Word looks into us, we see the hand of God showing things in us which we never saw before – the mercy of God, forgiving; the grace of God, equipping. We know we are loved. I pray everybody who is hearing in their homes, they would feel loved by God, never doubt the love of God. For the Cross stands there as an eternal symbol of how much God loves us. So, this evening, Father, I pray, even as we look into Thy Word, You would speak once again. You would teach us once again. You would prepare us once again. You would open our eyes once again. Open eyes, Lord. Speak, Father. For in Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

First, I want to turn to,

1 Corinthians 10:32

³² Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the Church of God

That's not the text for today at all but God divides the world into three. The Jews, the Gentiles and the Church of Christ. When this was written, Islam wasn't there. So, Islam would, kind of, fall among the Jews because it's the law. In some way, a little manipulated but still, the law. So, you have the law, the Gentiles and the Church. The problem is this. The Bible says very clearly that the god of this world has blinded the eyes of the Gentiles. So, they cannot see at all. As far as those who are under the law, the Jews are concerned, Scripture says, they are not blinded but whenever they read the law, there is a veil over them. So, there is the blinded people, the ones with a veil over their face. And then, there are the third set of people who see with open faces. So, there are three sets of people – the blinded, the veiled and the open. That's a good title, right? Very rarely you get a title in the beginning of a Sermon but don't go there because that may not be the message at all.

So, we saw, a little before in the Nepali Service, we see Jesus talking about in,

Matthew 24:3-4

³ Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

And the first thing Jesus said was,

⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you..."

The first warning and the most repeated warning in His discourse, the Olivet discourse, the signs of the last days is – beware of deception because people can take the sign and use the sign to deceive you. Like, simple – we have the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is only an emblem of His body and His Blood. You can take that emblem and go to the extreme and say that when you eat it, it becomes the Body of Christ and when you drink it, it becomes your blood. So, as far as you are in the Eucharist, you are safe. This is symbol is so important.

Then, the other side also there - which says it doesn't matter if you are judged or not judged; as long as you partake of the Communion, the emblems, you are safe. Then, there is the middle ground which says – judge yourself, body and the blood. Then, partake of it. You will be strong. Illness doesn't have to come in and you will be awake. So, symbols and signs also can be misread. That's why, before He talks about any sign, He said, "Be very careful because people will misuse the sign and you will get deceived." Always beware of deception. The actual problem about the deception is this – only the people in the Church can be deceived. The people outside cannot be deceived. They cannot be deceived because they've already been deceived. They are blinded. They are not deceived; they are blinded.

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The people in the world are blinded. Like the illustration I used in the Nepali Service was – if I give a blind man a hundred-rupee note, he doesn't know whether it is fake or genuine because he is blind. But if I give a hundred-rupee note to a man who can see, I need to be very, very sure the hundred-rupee note is as good as the original. The other one, I just have to see the texture is kind of in the same shape and he is not able to see. But because of that, he is not very sure. So, remember – deception happens within the Church. So, that's why we need to know the Old Testament – because that is a shadow, but we need to know the substance. We cannot leave the shadow out. Because before the New Covenant came, the Old Covenant was there. The Old Covenant reveals the New Covenant. We understand the New Covenant better when we study the Old Covenant. So, that's what we are looking at. If you come down,

Matthew 24:7-8

⁷For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, ^[b]pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these are the beginning of sorrows.

I like the other translation, which is “the beginning of labor pains.” In labor pains, there are two things; one is there pain; and there is joy. There is pain because there is labour. There is pain and there is joy. Because you know, at the end of the labour, there is something that is going to happen and you've been waiting for that for a long time. That's the conservative woman who gets pregnant. Not the liberals who are waiting to abort the baby. For them, conception itself is a pain. We are not talking about that; we are talking about the natural order of God where having a baby is a beautiful thing. So, here, labour pain. So, there is pain but there is joy. So, we are not denying the pain. We are all going through, all of us are going through pain, in the sense, we can't go home. I haven't gone home for so many days. I haven't gone home at all. And everybody knows, there are issues. A lot of issues. So, there is pain. But for the people in the world, there is only pain and fear. For us it is pain and joy. That's the important part – do we have the joy? Because we see the sign. Even if we don't have as a joy, we should, at least, take it as a warning. God is giving us a time to prepare. It's a preparation. Like couple of our sisters in the Church, I think it was the last baby, Priyanka? I'm not very sure. Like almost a week, ten days early, her labour pain began. And she went and then, she came back home. But it was a sign – the baby is coming. She got a warning to be prepared. Though it didn't happen that day, she got a warning. So, some people are not prepared. They love the Lord and all but they are not prepared for this eventuality. So, for them, it's a warning. To those who are prepared, there is a pain you go through but it is also a source of joy. So, look at that. And in there, God talks about,

Matthew 24:7

⁷For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.

Like I said, in this week already, there were two earthquakes that were reported. Many take place every day. But that which damaged – two were reported. Two earthquakes were reported. So, in the middle of a pestilence and famine, that is, the shortage of... Famine is basically the shortage of resources. So, we are having three things coming together. There's a term which is called 'convergence'. Convergence is when a series of events that have been prophesied come together, be careful. Nations rising against nations. Hostility begins against nations. And famine, and pestilence, and earthquake – all these things coming together (not far apart), the labour pains coming closer and closer; these are all labour pains. Not only is famine alone labour pain. Unlike the labour pain of a woman, all the pains are similar. But in this case, different pains are coming in together. You call it 'convergence'. Be careful. It's getting closer than we think. So, there is something there called 'famine'. Let's go to,

Psalms 105:16

Moreover He called for a famine in the land; He destroyed all the provision of bread.

Now, we have to look at God as a source. You want to take God out of picture? It's not going to work. Who called upon for a famine? He called upon for a famine? And what did He do? He broke the whole staff of bread. He's the One. He called upon for a famine. So, there is famine. There is shortage. Supermarkets are all empty; grocery stores are all closed, empty. A lot of famines. Many countries. The poor are sitting on the roads and by God's mercy, in the middle of this, not only could we feed people with the Word, we are also able to feed a lot of people with food. I'm excited because you see, there are a lot of things we hear and we know it is faith. But we cannot prove it physically until that event happens. If you ever asked Abraham, “Exalted father? Father of many nations? What are you talking about?” It's until Isaac is born. So, he goes through a lot of

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doubt and confusion and funny looks and all these things until that happens. A lot of things which God told me, now, we are excited because it's happening. Like when I hear Pastor Vijay preach, I'm not boasting or anything. I'm telling you honestly – he's better than me. He knows his Word much better because of the nature of his research and because he's got this gift of languages and all that. So, he actually goes much deeper than me. I've always been trying to bring him down a little so that his spread can be more. And then, there is no jealousy here. If he does well, there is joy for me. When all my sons do well, it is joy for me. But the fact is that, when 8 years, 9 years ago, when I heard that, "He is the one who will take over from you," I hardly knew him. I hardly heard him preach. Had he preached by then? I'm not sure. He just started then. So, now, when I see what is happening, it's a source of great joy. Not only that he is doing so well but the fact is that, "I thank You, Lord, that all the things which I heard and I stuck by it all these years in spite of everybody against me," and hardly anybody believed the stuff I was doing. Because they say, "It's very lonely at the top." In so many ways, it was very lonely because I had to take those decisions because it's the nature of our Church. We are not a committee-based Church or anything like that. We are a Church which started with me. God used me to start it. So, there are a lot of decisions which I have to personally take, which nobody would understand why I'm taking these decisions. Now, I see things falling into place, everything falling into place. It will only show when famine hits. When these things happen, when you go through trials and testing, that is when you know – what is inside comes out. In good times. That's why God says He took them into the wilderness and humbled them, caused them to hunger, to show what was within them. Till then, they were singing and they thought, "We are cat's whiskers! God called us because we are better than others. But God says, "No, you are not better than anybody else. Actually, you are worse than a lot of people but I had pity on you and picked you up." That's when things inside start coming out. So, about famine there.

...He called for a famine on the land

When God calls a famine upon the land, what do we do? What is the protection for us?

Job 5:17-20

¹⁷ "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty. ¹⁸ For He bruises, but He binds up; He wounds, but His hands make whole. ¹⁹ He shall deliver you in six troubles, Yes, in seven no evil shall touch you. ²⁰ In famine He shall redeem you from death and in war from the power of the sword.

Did you see that?

²⁰ In famine He shall redeem you from death and in war from the power of the sword.

We go back to verse 17 but what is the key?

¹⁷ "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects...

Are you happy when God chastens you?

...Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty.

Because if you learn from the chastening of the Lord, then at the time of famine, He will redeem you. So, keep that in mind. Remember. In *Hebrews 12:8*, that word in the original KJV is a little hard.

Hebrews 12:8

⁸ But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

No mincing of words there. We try to be very politically correct and make it 'illegitimate' and all that. To use KJV, there are a lot of legitimate bastards within the Church. They are born again but will not take Jesus in. They hate the chastening of God but they are God's. They don't like chastening and God says, "You got a spirit that is illegitimate. You need to get rid of that spirit." Though you have gone through the whole thing of getting born-again and baptized and all that, you still haven't gotten rid of that illegitimate spirit. Not an orphaned spirit. That's a different spirit altogether. This is the illegitimate spirit who will not receive its chastening. And God's hand has to be hard on us.

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On the other hand, happy is the person whose receives correction from God. Man, woman, child – anybody; he’s a happy man, if he understands chastening and learns through chastening. Then, when these things come, God will redeem you. God is able to redeem you because he has learnt the lesson.

So, we are looking at famine today because pestilence, famine – they all come together. If you look in the Old Covenant, there are 8 primary famines. There a famine during the time of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob; then, Joseph – each generation. Then, *Ruth* begins with a famine. *Ruth 1:1* begins with a famine. You have another famine in the time of David. *2 Samuel 21:1*; you have a famine there.

2 Samuel 21:1

Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years...

There was a famine in the days of Elijah. You have a famine in the times of Elisha. Eight famines are there. Primary famines. These famines are very, very important. All these famines are lessons because along with these pestilences come famine. Famine is lack of anything. If you are lacking something in you that you need physically, it's a physical famine. If you lack something which you need spiritually, it is a spiritual famine. So, when God shuts us in times like that, it's a good time to introspect, check what is happening and see.

So, the first famine mentioned in the Bible is found in *Genesis 12:10*,

Genesis 12:10

¹⁰Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land.

That's the first famine mentioned in the Bible and it is mentioned with the father of believers – the man who left everything and came into the Promised Land. He is in the Promised Land when the famine begins.

Now, if you look in *Acts 7:2-3*, we will go in order. This is Stephen talking to the Sanhedrin and if he hadn't spoken, this part of Abraham's life, we would have never known. We would have read the whole *Genesis* account wrong.

Acts 7:2-3

²And he said, "Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, ³and said to him, 'Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.'

So, when he was in the Ur of the Chaldeans, God had appeared to him. So, everything begins with God. It begins with God. So, God has spoken to him first the promises and we all know *Genesis 11:32* and *Genesis 12* onwards.

Genesis 11:32

³²So the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran.

He came with his father, came to Haran and he died.

Genesis 12:1-5,7

Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. ²I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."⁴So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him...

So, one in Haran. Now, if you come to *Genesis 12:7*. He's moved into Canaan. God met him there.

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⁷ Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your ^[c]descendants I will give this land.” And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

So, three times, God has already appeared to him and has given him the same promise. And then, famine comes. So, do you believe the promises? Three times in his lifetime – in Ur, in Haran, in Canaan. Three times, He has given him the same promises. “This is the land you are to be in and these are the promise connected with the land.” And then, Scripture says, “There was severe famine.” Let’s go to,

2 Peter 1:1-4

¹ Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

So, he is speaking to all who are true believers in Christ.

² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, ³ as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness...

So, whether you are in famine, lockdown or free, His divine power, the power of Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit has given to us everything that we need for both life and godliness; for this life and for the coming one. But how do we get it?

...through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

It comes through the knowledge of God.

⁴ by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises...

Incredible promises have been given. And you take those promises, and through these promises, what should happen? How do you know that the promises are real? The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

These promises, when you partake and it becomes real, you start partaking of the divine nature of God. That is what I’ve been trying to hammer in in all languages and in all places – don’t go to the law. Don’t go to the other side of grace, there is only one life which we dislike. This side, it’s in our own control. That side also, flesh is in control. But in that side, only God is in control. The walk of faith is dying to self daily. We want to partake of the divine nature and to be in control. It doesn’t happen. Jesus came in the flesh, partook of His Father’s divine nature and God gave complete control to Him. That is the walk of faith. *Faith comes from hearing.* Our issue is not with the Word of God; our issue is with hearing. If somebody were to tell, “This is all you need and you don’t have to hear and read from the Spirit of God,” when you read, then there is no issue. Then, you don’t have to worry about each day.

There are only men sitting here. If all the men were told, “All you have to do is get married,” and you just give a set of instructions to your wife and that’s the only time you need to talk to her. And that is married life. What kind of a married life is that? Paul compares our life with Jesus Christ as a marriage. And he says, “Marriage is a mystery.” It’s a mystery. So, you partake of His divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world through lust. So, how do you know you are partaking of the divine nature? As you partake of the divine nature, there is a constant escaping from the world. What is the process through it? Through the promises – the promises, the knowledge of God. And when you partake of His promises, you are partaking of His life by faith and you are escaping the corruption of the world. For three times, God appeared to Abraham and gave the promise to Abraham. And then, the famine came. Now, go to *Genesis 12:10*. Now, he got the promises and he has got this choice, through these promises to partake of the divine nature of God and escape the corruption that is in Egypt. It’s the world there.

Genesis 12:10

¹⁰ Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there

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So, the promises are there. You cannot deny the promise. He heard it in Ur. He heard it in Haran, after the father died. He heard it in Canaan. There was an altar and God appeared to him too. He gave him the same promises. All the three promises. When he was far away from Canaan, the promise was connected with Canaan. When he was in Haran, close by, the promise was in Haran. When he was in Canaan also, the promise is about Canaan. So, He is very clear – location, GPS is very clear. There is no doubt about the GPS. And then, to test, the famine comes. The question is: will you stay or will you move? And we know from different famines, Abraham moved, Isaac stayed, Jacob was told to move. The question is: what will famine make us do?

Now, let's go to *Amos 8:11*. Because everybody, in some way, is caught in some physical famine, except those who are fasting.

Amos 8:11

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.

This is a dangerous famine, the most dangerous famine. Abraham was caught in a famine; Isaac was caught in a famine; they were all caught in a famine. Now, if you turn to,

Genesis 26:1-2

There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines, in Gerar. ² Then the LORD appeared to him and said: "Do not go down to Egypt...

So, he had no famine of hearing the Word of God in the midst of the physical famine. It's a physical famine and there is no spiritual famine – you are safe. The outward famine does not matter as long as you don't have an inward famine. The issue is not the outward famine. What you are facing outside is not the problem. That's what the Church is not facing. What the Church is facing is the inward famine of hearing. That's what I was trying to tell them in Nepali – "I hear all these things, saying, 'every prayer chains from World Counsel Church', from the Pope down to everybody. They are praying for the Corona Virus. My question is: how is your prayer different from Hindus' prayer or the Muslims' prayer or Buddhists' prayer or anybody? Everybody is praying the same. What is that? "God," whichever god it is, "God, take this corona virus away, this pandemic away." But what did Jesus tell us about a pandemic or pestilence is? It is a sign of the Kingdom coming, right? So, what have all the Churches been praying for 2000 years in formal religion or anything? "Our Father who art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come." And when the Kingdom is coming, we are telling it to go away. You are contradicting your prayer. This is the problem with religion when you don't hear. And that is what all the news and all the Pastors put across. It's not that you shouldn't pray in this kind of situation, but what should you pray? Have you heard? Abraham did not hear and he went in the way of Egypt. And a lot of Churches have not heard and they have gone in the way of Egypt because the Buddhist's prayer, the Hindu's prayer and the Muslim's prayer and the Catholic's prayer, the Protestant's prayer and the Pentecostal prayer – all are the same. And they don't hear. It's the same. I'm not saying we shouldn't pray and the epidemic should not go. Yes. But more than that, "Lord, have mercy." Eyes should open. "Eyes should open to the reality of who You are."

So, Isaac heard.

2 Samuel 21:1

Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David inquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered...

So, the famine is not the issue. First year, okay. Second year, okay. Third year? This guy has got discernment. He said, "Okay, hang on. Three years in a row. There's something wrong over here. This is not natural; this is spiritual. There is a block in the spiritual realm. That's why it's happening in my Kingdom." Famine. So, he enquired and the Lord answered. Forget about the answer. We will look at that another day. But He answered. So, there is a famine outside and you enquired and you heard.

If you go to,

1 Kings 17:1-4

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And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word."

He is declaring famine. And then,

² Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ³ "Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. ⁴ And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there."

So, there is going to be a famine but you are taken care of because you heard. You have heard.

2 Kings 6:25

²⁵ And there was a great famine in Samaria; and indeed they besieged it until a donkey's head was sold for eighty shekels of silver, and one-fourth of a kab of dove droppings for five shekels of silver.

This is called 'hoarding' and 'black marketing', happening from that day till today. Nothing has changed.

2 Kings 7:1

Then Elisha said, "Hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the LORD: 'Tomorrow about this time a seah of fine flour shall be sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley for a shekel, at the gate of Samaria.' "

He has heard. So, famine is not the problem; the problem is with hearing. The problem is not with pestilence; the problem is with hearing. That's what God was telling through Amos. "I will send a great famine. Greater than the famine in the world, which the world is facing now is the famine within the Church – of hearing. That's why everybody is praying the same prayer and everybody is panicking. So, Scripture says,

Genesis 12:10

¹⁰ Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land.

So, severe famine never happens overnight. He never enquired. We have to excuse him because he is a new believer. So, we have to go to the spiritual side of what God is teaching His children through Abraham, the first prototype of a believer; not Noah, Enoch and all – they fall under a different category. The first prototype of a believer, justified by faith, father both Gentiles and Jews will come to God through Christ. He is the first prototype. So, he is a very young believer. He may be 75+ years old but a kid. Baby.

Let's go, again, to, *1 Kings 17:1*. How does famine come?

1 Kings 17:1

And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word."

When these both happen, you are in serious trouble. No rain, no dew and then, you get, what? The result of it is famine.

Deuteronomy 32:1-2

"Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. ² Let my teaching drop as the rain, My speech distill as the dew, As raindrops on the tender herb, And as showers on the grass.

So, that's why there is famine of the hearing of the Word – you miss this. This is when the famine comes.

"Give ear, O heavens and the earth." This is not Moses; this is God. There were one third of fellows who did not hear carefully. How should My teaching drop? As rain? Let it drop as rain. of angels and earth

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...My speech distill as the dew...

He is very careful how He handles the Word of God – *distill as dew*.

...As raindrops on the tender herb, And as showers on the grass.

Pastor Vijay will take it and he will, now, put it under an electron microscope and give it to us. So, I'm not getting into that. I will give him the subject and he will put it under the microscope and give a good analysis of it. But, now, you see where we are getting at? How does the famine of the hearing of the Word come? It's got something to do with how we take the Word when it comes to us. The Word is coming to us from heaven. That's what Paul will commend the Thessalonians. "When the servants of God, we came and spoke, though we were men, you received the Word from us as if from God." Therefore, it has the power to work in those who believe. The Thessalonian Church is commended. And then, he says, "The Bereans were more noble than the Thessalonians." Because they were distilling it. You know what 'distilling' is. Distillery. It's after the distilling that you get that spirit. To get that spirit. That's why it's called a 'spirit' after the entire process of distillation. You have a distillery, distillation; you have a spirit. Meaning – the Bereans got the Spirit of the Word out. They got it. And he says, "The Thessalonians were noble. The Bereans were even more noble." I wish we ever had a letter called 'The Epistle to the Bereans'. Kya Bhaat hain! You didn't get it. They didn't need a letter. Probably, they would have written a letter to Paul and said, "This is what we understood about your message. Is it right?" "Yes, absolutely. You got it."

So, Abraham did not see, he did not seek and he did not enquire. He just, straightaway, went to Egypt. He was a young believer. *1 Peter 2:2* will say this to many young believers who are listening today.

1 Peter 2:2

²as newborn babes, desire (NIV will use the word 'crave') the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,

There has to be a desire within you. There is a craving within you. You guys wouldn't know, except the fathers. But I hear from all the new mothers, when their baby doesn't drink milk, it upsets the mother very much. "The baby is not drinking!" And what do we always tell Abel and Priyanka? "This is buffalo milk! We don't believe! This fellow is having buffalo milk! We don't believe, Priyanka. This fellow is having buffalo milk!" He is craving and drinking pure buffalo milk. Look at this fellow! So, there is a craving. And when the craving isn't there, the mother is upset. The mother knows. So, the question is: is there a craving for the pure milk of the Word of God in new believer? Is it there? It's a sign. There has to be a craving at every stage. Is there a craving? Why should you crave? Why are all these things important? Because it's not an outward thing. Inwardly, we are all building. Jesus talked about two houses that were built. The storm hit both the houses – one stood and one fell. The storm is hitting the whole world and many spiritual houses are crashing. I was looking at some of the Church websites. I didn't know there were so many ways you could pay, the options – RuPay, PayPal, Paytm. Everything to send into your offerings. They don't even have two Services a week. "Just send your money in." You built such a huge infrastructure which will only run on money. So, when the system closes like this, you are panicking. The websites are only about how you can send in your money. House is built on sand. Not that you will crash now but learn your lessons. The problem is – I always say – it is very easy to preach to a new believer but difficult to preach to a believer who got all the wrong doctrine, to preach the truth because first, you have to take the junk out and you will fight every inch of the way till you take it out. It's impossible. Almost impossible. It's the most difficult part – to take that junk out and then, give him the truth. You can't stay there as newborn babies. In *Hebrews 5:11-14*, very familiar but for those who are hearing – get these principles in, work on it. Otherwise, once the famine is over, you wouldn't realize – the next one will be bigger.

Hebrews 5:11-14

¹¹of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.¹²For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.

Now, I'm not saying that all of you are not teachers. Everybody may not have the gift of teaching with words but some of you may be able to write very well. Paul not have been a great speaker but he was an incredible writer. He could get the ideas of God and put it in words. That's what Peter was talking about. He says, "Boy, he uses words which I find difficult to understand." You may have other different gifts through which you actually teach. You may not have the gift of speaking but

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that's not the only way in which people teach. There are different ways and formats in which you teach. But you should have been teachers.

...you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God...

It means you have gone back to being a baby.

...and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.

So, the baby is asked to crave for the milk of the Word, but if you are always drinking only the milk of the Word, then you are totally unskilled because this is the Word of righteousness. You cannot grow. *Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.* The Kingdom, the scepter of the Kingdom is righteousness and the crown is the crown of righteousness and you cannot handle the Word of righteousness? And as long as the child is a child, even though he is the heir of all things, he is no better than a servant. So, you don't inherit though it was yours. He will be put under the guardians. These are the problems. It's all got to do with hearing.

¹⁴ But solid food belongs to those who are of full age (spiritual maturity), that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

They understand how to read the Word of God. They are getting the meat, the Spirit of the Word of God. Paul in,

1 Corinthians 3:1-3

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. ² I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;

How do you know you are a baby?

Everybody reads the same Word. Everybody hears the same Word but how do you know?

³ for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you...

That means you are a baby.

...are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

You are just a child, throwing tantrums. Are we getting it?

This is the problem – if you are not spiritual, then you become carnal. There is no in between called 'secular' in the Kingdom of God. You are either spiritual or carnal; and all your choices in every situation become carnal. Abraham took off. He looked at the ground and he took off.

Hosea 10:12

Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek the LORD, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you.

Just because there is no rain, that should not mean you should not break your fallow ground. Break your fallow ground. Sow yourself in righteousness. You will reap in mercy and the Lord will come and reign righteousness on you. That's what Abraham did not do but that's what his son did because he heard – he broke the fallow ground and he reaped a hundredfold because he broke the fallow ground in the midst of famine. The problem is not with the famine; the problem is not with the ground; the problem is with the hearing. Break the fallow ground; sow what for yourself? Righteousness and what will you will reap? Mercy. And then, He will come and reign.

Now, listen to Peter again in *1 Peter 2*. We heard about in *verse 2*, "Crave," but let's read *verse 1*.

1 Peter 2:1-2

Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, ² as newborn babes...

So, that is the breaking of the fallow ground. You have to get rid of a lot of stuff and reap the milk of God. If you try drinking the milk of God without breaking the fallow ground, you are wasting the seed. If you throw the seed on the ground without breaking the fallow land, it's a waste. So, the writer of Hebrews and Paul; the Holy Spirit, through all of them, is sounding a warning. And I believe God is warning the Church by shutting down and practically, the entire world – have you built so far? Will it last? At least, now, will you take a break and start plowing the fallow ground?

A fallow ground is the ground that has not been plowed for quite some time. Like I said, it's a waste to sow a good seed on fallow ground. It must be broken up because if it doesn't grow, then we will not get a harvest. Fallow ground was once, probably, produced a good harvest but it's like the *Book of Judges*. Once upon a time, what happened? You went there. And then, one judge comes, defeats the enemy, the judge dies; and again, the ground becomes fallow. The Philistines take over and they have to cry out. And again, another judge comes. The problem with fallow ground is that – it's not that it does not produce anything, but it produces thorns and thistles. Have you noticed? They grow in fallow ground. *Matthew 13:22* tells. What does the fallow ground produce? Thorns and thistles.

Matthew 13:22

²² Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.

Two things are mentioned there. What is that? It's an incredible combination – cares or worries of the world. You know what happens as this famine is going on, or anything that is going on? You are a believer, you hear the Word and you got so many problems in your life and all the time, even in your prayer, you have decided that, "If I had money, I could have handled this." That's the deceitfulness of wealth. The cares of even the Churches, "Taxes have to be paid. All these have to be paid." They put up all the ways how to pay your money. The cares and the deceitfulness of wealth. What is the deceitfulness of wealth? Wealth offers a substitute God and faith for you. The crooks will come and say to you, "You can use faith to get money." It's not God. That's why I was talking about Elijah. Lack of rain causes drought, and the result of drought is famine. But there is drought and there is famine but Elijah is not affected by the famine because he hears. Whether he is in Cherith or Zarephath, famine avoids him, though the whole land is under drought. Because he hears. The whole area can be under drought but you are still escaping the famine because you heard. Ravens bring him food and the brook brings water. When it finishes, God says, "Go over there." It doesn't sound logical at all but he because he obeys, the famine goes over him. The pestilence goes over him. The judgment goes over him. Because he heard. This is why it is so important where Scripture says, "*Faith comes from hearing and hearing from the Word of God.*"

Fallow ground produces thorns and thistles. Not only that,

Hebrews 12:14-15

¹⁴ Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: ¹⁵ looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;

Fallow ground produces bitterness. Why is Naomi so bitter and Ruth is not though both came out of the same situation? One is fallow ground and the other broke the fallow ground. You can see from their words. Both are in the same situation; both are widows; both have no husbands and no children. Both widows. Terrible situation to be caught in at a time like that – a widow. One is bitter; one is not. Bitter men and women. What causes that – root of bitterness? It's a fallow ground. You never broke it. Worries of life and deceitfulness of wealth. You have so many problems, yet you are not breaking the fallow ground for the seed of the Word to go in. You are still hoping – if only you had money. "If only I had money, I could have solved my problems." So, even when you turn to God, you are not turning to God; you are turning to the god of money and saying, "Can you send me some money so I can handle my problems?" God says, "No, I will handle your problems. Will you listen to Me?" No. Why was Joseph never bitter? He was fruitful wherever he was. No thorns and no thistles.

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So, God is teaching us through Abraham. Go back to *Genesis 12*. When famine comes, how is our ground? It's a spiritual truth we are looking at through the life of the first recognized official believer.

Genesis 12:10

¹⁰ Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there...

He was not willing to break the ground though he had heard the same promise three times. And it came to pass. As he was close to entering Egypt... this is the Promised Land, all was fallow ground but he doesn't want to dig. He hasn't even enquired of the Lord. And that is Egypt. As he is getting closer to Egypt, Egypt is getting closer into him. That's what the Bible says.

Genesis 12:11-14

¹¹ And it came to pass, when he was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife

Now, what is he talking? He is talking the language of Egypt. He is not talking the language of Canaan. He is talking the language of Egypt. That's the problem with fallow ground. When we haven't dug the fallow ground, we start moving closer and closer to the world and start speaking the language of the world – how to solve problems.

...“Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance.

¹² Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, ‘This is his wife’; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. ¹³ Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you.” ¹⁴ So it was...

Did you see how everything changed?

...when Abram came into Egypt, that the Egyptians saw the woman, that she was very beautiful.

Compromise begins and it begins with the thought life. It begins here. You start conforming to the pattern of the world. And the world always looks at the Church and finds the Church beautiful and the world always wants to seduce the Church. That is why, always, the first people who go worldly anywhere are the Christians and not the others. Because the enemy out to seduce Sarah because Sarah is beautiful. The Church is beautiful. The devil is after the men and women in the Church.

Genesis 12:15-16

¹⁵ The princes of Pharaoh also saw her and commended her to Pharaoh. And the woman was taken to Pharaoh's house. ¹⁶ He treated Abram well for her sake. He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female servants, female donkeys, and camels.

A lot has been obtained. So, you have traded integrity for safety and prosperity. That's why you have all kinds of Churches all around the world, especially where there is persecution. One is called 'overground'; the other is underground. The over ground Church has traded their integrity for peace and prosperity. The others refused. Where did it start with? With Abraham. So, the question is: what has Egypt done to us? What has famine done to us? That's the Laodicean Church. "I'm rich. I've need for nothing." God says, "You are neither hot nor cold. You have no clue. You are very close to being spat out. You are blind. You have compromised completely." And Scripture says, after that,

Genesis 12:17

¹⁷ But the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

Now, God is involved in it to protect Sarai. Not Abraham. We don't even know what this man did. Did he pray? Did he fast? All he is looking at are all his camels and cattle and everything. Like the old illustration which I keep on saying. Over time, it looks repetitive but it's the truth. You see Abraham in his massive tent with all his servants and slaves and everything and you look at and ask Abraham, "Whose are all this?" "Mine." "All these cattle?" "Yes, all of them." "Boy, you are a rich man! Are you happy?" "No." "Why?" "Because my wife is in somebody's house." "Have you slept well?" "No." At what price did you buy your peace. At what price did you get your prosperity? Didn't God say He will bless you? The devil also can bless you but he blesses you at the cost of your integrity, But when God blesses you and never makes you lose your integrity.

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Daniel also was blessed. Joseph also was blessed but they did not lose what was important in the Kingdom of God. So, we are not after blessings; we are after God.

So, God plagued Pharaoh to get Abraham out of Egypt and Israel out of Egypt. It's connected with Sarah.

We saw today in the morning session in *Isaiah*, right?

Isaiah 51:1-2

"Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness..."

"If you are following righteousness, listen to Me."

...You who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, And to the hole of the pit from which you were dug.

² Look to Abraham your father, And to Sarah who bore you...

That's why God plagued Pharaoh's household because He had already decided that through Abraham and Sarah, Israel will come and through Israel, Christ will come. He plagued. If you go to,

Exodus 2:23-25

²³ Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage.

Why did they cry? Because of the bondage. They were only upset because of the bondage. There were two things of Egypt; one was the pressure; the other was the pleasure. They did not like the pressure but they liked the pleasure. Two things in this world – one is the pressure; the other is pleasure. The problem is – most of us are like them. We cry out to God because of the pressure. We do not cry out to God to rescue us from the pleasure. Under pressure, Moses gave in. Now, neither the pressure is gone nor can he enjoy the pleasure of all this prosperity. That is what the devil deceives.

If you go to, (this is Moses)

Hebrews 11:25

²⁵ choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,

He is the only one to make a choice. He said, "I will take more pressure and say 'no' to pleasure. I will take more pressure." When you say 'no' to the world, the pleasures of this world, you are going to get more pressure. And you are not going to compromise.

Daniel was pursued all the way to his old life. They tried everything and said, "Okay, at least, we can get him in his prayer life. If we can't get him anywhere." Everybody complains about the pressure at work but is anybody complaining about the pleasures of world? Honestly. We are not talking about the world. We are only talking to believers. All these days, did anybody say, "Lord, there are too many malls in Hyderabad"? Did we complain. "Too many malls, Lord. Please. Too many theatres!" How come nobody complained about those things? We complain about too much of work hours, too much of distance that we have to travel. The Word is too long. We never complained about the malls being too many. Too many pubs. We all even brought Jesus into in, God into the picture with the pubs – Thank God, it's Friday! They wrote 'God' there.

You have heard of the Welsh revival. When the Welsh revival took place, it was like today – every pub, every theatre, everything is shut down. The government didn't have to do anything because there were no people going. Everybody had been touched by the Holy Spirit. Nobody had to say anything. The Holy Spirit did the work. Everything shut down because there were no more customers. Everybody got saved; everybody got filled with the Holy Spirit. It was a spiritual locked down. This is a government lockdown. This is what we are talking about. This is a government lockdown. But the question to believers is: do you need the government to lock you down?

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Turn with me to the *Book of Acts 16:25*. Very familiar portion. Two people – Paul and Silas have done an incredible act. They did a deliverance. They got beaten, stripped, thrown into jail; hands tied, probably; legs in the stock. And verse 25 talks about what these guys were doing. They were singing.

Acts 16:25-28

²⁵ But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

It was in the midnight hour. This is not only lockdown but locked in and chained in. What are they doing? They are praying and singing hymns to God. And the prisoners were listening to them.

²⁶ Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.

We have preached about others, when you really worship, how you get liberated in the office? We'll leave that all alone. All the doors were open, prison doors. Everybody's chains were loosed.

²⁷ And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. ²⁸ But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here."

What did he say? "We are all here." We can understand Paul and Silas, but all are there. All the doors are open. Did you see? All the doors are open. All the chains are loosed. Nobody left. They didn't need a lockdown to gather around Paul and Silas. The doors are open. They are free to go. If the jail doors are open and the chains are loosed, do you know how the prisoners flee? Everything is open and nobody is going. Probably, all of them are around Paul and Silas. They heard him singing. Now, they are saying, "Can we hear you preaching?" This is the question God is asking. God's children do not need carnal lockdowns because they are always locked down to the world. You don't need it. A lockdown like this should not make us feel that our life has changed. Our life should have always been this way. That's the question I'm asking. Are we caught by surprise by the lockdown? Or is it okay? Under lockdown, actually, if you look at our own case, our work load has only increased. From 2-3 meetings to 14-15 meetings a week. It's increased. My question is this; don't worry about the lockdown. Let us say, today is 26th; suddenly, if WHO declares pandemic under control and Prime Minister, Modi says, "On the 30th, lockdown is released," the 1st of April, will your lives change drastically again? Did you learn the lessons of lockdown? What will happen? The chains are off and doors are open; what will you do? Back to the pub? Back to the mall? Back to the theater? Back to life as before? Then, you didn't understand what God was trying to teach you. The chains were off and the doors were open but nobody left. The question is: what will we do? Would our lives have changed drastically or will we go back to normal? My question to you is that – if we preached every evening, would you still have so many people listening, though you are free? Once the lockdown is over. Are you listening now only because of the lockdown? Once the lockdown is over, will you revert back to default settings? Then, we didn't learn the lessons. I'm not saying we are going to preach every day. We are not going to do that. That's not the point. The point is – did we get the lessons God was trying to teach us through famine?

We like to hear the story about Isaac's famine. How famine affected Isaac because everybody goes gaga over it because he made a hundred-fold. So, we always think about it in monetary terms. That's why we love Isaac's famine. We don't like Abraham's famine because though he got rich but we feel guilt. He got rich but at the price of something more precious than all those riches. We don't like that famine but we like Isaac's famine very much.

I don't want to look at this last closing one. We will look through the other days what God did with the famine through Jacob and Isaac and all. We will leave Abraham here because Abraham goofed up big time and he needed the hand of God to come directly and pluck him out. That's the story of all of us – He pulled us out of a mess. But let's go through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and come to Joseph. And we see the purpose of famine. You have to go all the way to *Genesis 47:11*,

Genesis 47:11-13

¹¹ And Joseph situated his father and his brothers, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded. ¹² Then Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's household with bread, according to the number in their families.

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Leave that, what Joseph did with his family. His family is history. Now, let us go to see what Joseph did. Let's go to *verse 13*. Joseph is a type of Jesus Christ.

13 Now there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine.

So, all the people came to Pharaoh and Pharaoh said, "Go to Joseph." You cannot go to God other than through Jesus. Go to Jesus. Don't circuit that order. There's an order that is given – come through Jesus; not Mary or anybody else. Through Jesus. There is no other way. Pharaoh said, "Go through Joseph (Jesus)." And what did he do? He opened up the granaries

Genesis 47:14-26

14 And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, for the grain which they bought; and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house.

Smart guy. What did he do first? Joseph took all the money. Come further down.

15 So when the money failed in the land of Egypt...

God will bring us to a point where money will fail us in this world. Understand the spiritual significance. He sends a famine into our lives which cannot be answered with money. Money will fail. So, when money failed in Egypt,

...and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, "Give us bread, for why should we die in your presence? For the money has failed."

Joseph said, "It's okay."

16 Then Joseph said, "Give your livestock, and I will give you bread for your livestock, if the money is gone."

They said, "Okay."

17 So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for the horses, the flocks, the cattle of the herds, and for the donkeys. Thus he fed them with bread in exchange for all their livestock that year.

It was 7 years of famine, remember. Not 1 or 2 years.

18 When that year had ended, they came to him the next year and said to him, "We will not hide from my lord that our money is gone; my lord also has our herds of livestock. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our lands. 19 Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants of Pharaoh; give us seed, that we may live and not die, that the land may not be desolate." 20 Then Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for every man of the Egyptians sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. So the land became Pharaoh's. 21 And as for the people, he moved them into the cities, from one end of the borders of Egypt to the other end.

What did Joseph do? They belong to him now – the money, flocks, the herds and the land – everything belongs to him. He bought all of them for the Pharaoh. Once he has done that, he moves them into the cities – from one end of the borders of Egypt to the other end. You getting it?

23 Then Joseph said to the people, "Indeed I have bought you and your land this day for Pharaoh. Look, here is seed for you, and you shall sow the land. 24 And it shall come to pass in the harvest that you shall give one-fifth to Pharaoh. Four-fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and for your food, for those of your households and as food for your little ones." 25 So they said, "You have saved our lives; let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants." 26 And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt to this day, that Pharaoh should have one-fifth, except for the land of the priests only, which did not become Pharaoh's.

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Did you get the picture? Famine is coming and people are hungry. So, they come and say, "We are hungry." He says, "Okay, I've got plenty of grain. Buy it." There's a strange portion, if I'm right, in Isaiah, "Buy from Me." Though it's free, buy from me. So, he said, "Buy." So, they bought and they ate for a year. They said, "Money is over." "Good. What do you have?" "Livestock." He says, "Okay. Bring it." They ate for a year. Again, famine is there. They came back and said, "We have no money and no livestock." "What do you have?" "Our land and our selves." He said, "Fine. Sell it." So, their land, now, belongs and they also belong. He said, "Okay. Now that everything belongs to Pharaoh, I will give the land to you and seed to sow. And when you get the harvest, you can keep 4/5th. 1/5th, you give to the Pharaoh but don't forget – you and all that you have belongs to the Pharaoh."

You know what God is trying to do through the famine? At the end of famine, we should belong to God completely. Everything that we are is His. That's the purpose of famine. That's what Joseph is doing. This, only believers understand this spiritual truth before the famine. As the famine goes and we give and realize – I surrender this part of my life; I surrender this to my life and when you have completely surrendered, God says, "Okay, you have surrendered. Now, I can move you. I can tell you where you need to go, where you need to serve, where you need to work." He started moving them everywhere according to Joseph's desire.

Until we are completely surrendered and belong to God, God cannot move us. Elijah was told, "Go to Cherith. Go to Zarephath. Go to Mount Carmel." Because he entirely belonged to God and he never lacked. This is the purpose behind the famine. God's purpose behind famine and man's purpose behind the famine and how we read it are completely different. So, when these famines are coming into our lives, God is asking, "How much have you surrendered?" So, at every stage, you will see, there is more surrender. The more you surrender, the more blessed you become. Instead of dying; you are not dying; you are living. But people dislike to surrender, because they think if, "We surrender, we will lose." God says, "Nobody has lost by surrendering to Me." He gives seed to the sower. When everything is over, he said, "Okay, fine. Take the seed, plant and harvest." How much does the Pharaoh want? 1/5th and the remaining 4/5th is yours. People think it's bondage, it's slavery but it's freedom. If the land belongs to the Pharaoh, the Pharaoh protects the land. You don't have to fight for the land. You just have to work in the land. He protects the land. You don't have to fight for your health because He fights for your health. You don't have to fight for your peace because He fights for your peace. That's why God says to such people, "The battle belongs to Me, not yours. I fight the battle because you belong to Me." If I don't belong to God, then how do my battles belong to God? You know, when famine comes, how some people arise and they abound? There is the one who giveth – giveth, what? Of himself and he abounds. There's one who keepeth and he becomes poorer. There is this principle in the Kingdom of God. That is why Paul will say something which Jesus said. We do not know when he said it but – *it is more blessed to give than to receive*. How is it? Learn from famine. God is no man's debtor. Otherwise, we will miss fundamental principles of God's Kingdom. This is how it works. Jesus humbled, humbled. What is He doing? Giving, giving and gave over completely. And God raised Him up, raised Him up and made Him above everything else. Did He lose by giving? No. Paul said, at the end of his life, "I am being poured out as drink offering. Last dregs of my life, it is finishing. All on the altar. This is how I ran my life. And it has finished. But what do I see? I see a crown of righteousness." God is no man's debtor. No man has lost by giving to God.

And famine is like, what you say in these chemical experiments, what is called, a catalyst. Famine is like a catalyst. It should speed up our surrender. I look at it and I'm like – what is the point; your money has failed? I don't need money. I need God. Money has failed.

Your cattle? What am I going to do with cattle? Give it to God. You still eat.

Cattle is gone; money is gone. What do I have? My land. What are you going to do with the land? "Here, Lord. Take the land and here I am." God says, "Good. Now, I will do one thing – you work, I will give you the seed." Suddenly, you realize, "I have peace. I don't have to worry. I'm just a laborer in the Lord's vineyard. I don't have to worry about any issues in the land because the land belongs to the Pharaoh. I just have to be a good servant. He gives seed to the sower and He will send the rain in its appointed time." Do you understand what famine is supposed to do? That's why I said – let's go over all the other famines and hit Joseph. Because Jacob's family has to be dealt with. That family and the famine is a completely different story. The famine has been deliberately targeting them to bring them to repentance. That's the whole thing – to bring them to repentance. This famine will bring 10 brothers to Joseph (Jesus) and they have to be redeemed from their blood guilt. They have sinned against their father and their brother. "Love your father with all your heart and love your neighbor." They have

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done evil in both and they are covering it up and walking nicely after everything is over. The famine will bring what is inside out and reveal it. The famine is for another thing there. Their famine is different and this famine is different. What He is doing in the midst of all this is a different story altogether. So, we are going through a famine. That's my issue. Once the prison doors are opened and chains come off, what will we do? Did we learn the lessons of famine? Will we come back and say after 21 days, are we asking each day, "Lord, is there anything still left there that I need to give over? Anything still left, Lord? Show me, Lord. My sleep, my food? Do you like my food habits, Lord; my sleeping habits, Lord; my praying habits, Lord; and my praise? Is there anything, Lord, I need to give over?" Because when we give over, He gives it back to you. He doesn't keep it. But when He gives it back to you, it's a different thing. That's what He did. Can God move you? Once you are given over, it's very easy. You go. You know how difficult it is for God to move people? Because when He wants us to move, we decide where to move – Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Oman. Nobody wants to go anywhere. Nobody wants anybody. But that's how we plan our moves, right? We don't plan our moves like God, or receive it as God speaks. "Go to Cherith." "But what ministry can I do at Cherith?" Elijah didn't ask any questions. "Go to Cherith." "Lord, what will I eat?" "Ravens will feed you. Just sit there. Eat bread and drink water. Sit there." He could be moved.

So, when you look at these principles and see Joseph moving people, what made them to the point where they could be moved? What will bring us to the point where God could move us? That was Jesus who came, Son of God; humbled Himself. Brothers came and said, "If You really have come for public ministry and all, you should buy advertisement van and all – put Your pictures over there. Go to Jerusalem and have music and all." He said, "Your time is always but My time is not." Did you see? He could be moved. He kept back and moved as God. God kept on moving Jesus until He moved Him onto the cross. The cross was not up; it was down. This is the fundamental principle of famine - when famine comes, then only we realize what all has failed in our lives.

Now, we will have a place. Thank God for that. But let's say, we've run out of food. How much will it affect us? How do we factor that in? We lost our freedom to move out. Has it upset us? Honestly, for us, it makes no difference. Life is always the same. Actually, we feel we are working too much now; too much now. Not too much. Never too much. More now. That's my fundamental picture that this is not a physical thing but this is a spiritual thing. When this famine has come in, you realize – nothing major changes you need to make. That's what Paul says. Paul uses an incredible statement, "I know how to abound and I know how to abase. And in all things, I've learnt the secret of being content." He says, "It doesn't matter if it's famine or a harvest. My life doesn't change drastically in either situation. It's always the same because my contentment comes from God." That's the question I'm talking about. Once the chains go and the doors are open and the jailor is about to kill himself, Paul doesn't say, "We, two, are here." He says, "We all are here." Nobody has left. Arrested by God. We are all here. Will famine change us? At the end of 21 days, we realize, "Lord, is there anything still left to give over?" Anything still left? And then, God says, "Because you have given over everything, now I will give you the seed (Word). You can start sowing. I will give you the seed. I will give you the Word. The Word is the seed. I will give you the seed. You can sow. I will give you the seed."

It's a simple message but it's not as simple as it looks. It's the giving over that people struggle with. At every level, you will realize – this principle hits us. How much have I given over to God? You know why we struggle? If you look into our lives, all the areas we struggle are the areas we haven't given over. In every area we have given over, there is peace because He is in control. It's like yesterday, I talked about the hardened heart. Our heart may not be hardened. There are portions that are hardened. In the same way, wherever we have peace are the areas that we have handed over. Where we haven't handed over, we still struggle. See the principle behind famine? Got the principle? It's not as simple as you think. It took them through the 7 years of plenty, Joseph gathered everything and stored it all. And the famine came. The people said, "We are hungry." They said, "Go to Joseph." Joseph said, "Okay." The salvation was free. For surrender, you will have to buy it. Your growth is not free. Your sanctification is not free. You will have to buy it. "Buy from Me," He tells the Laodicean Church. "Your salvation was free. I paid for it. After that, you have to be willing to pay. Are you willing to pay?" Didn't He say? He didn't say, "I will give it to you for free." People say sanctification comes without a price. No, it's never free.

Revelation 3:18

¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire...

Refined gold is very expensive. It's not 18-carat gold; but 24 carat. To get that gold, you will have to sell everything you have.

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¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments...

You have to buy white garments also from Him. I thought white garments were free. The initial righteousness is free. The growth in righteousness is not. The vest you buy inside that covers your nakedness is free. The shirt, you have to buy. The vest, He will give you. That is free. Did you see how everything changed? That's what Joseph is doing. That's what God is asking us to do. That's why this whole principle about why this way is difficult. Buy. Are we ready to buy? Are we willing to pay the price? That's why I said – the actual willingness will come after the lockdown is over. Right now, people have nothing to do. When you want to do something, you can't do anything. You just have to sit inside. And if you are living in a crowded colony, if you come out also, the police will beat you. You are forced to sit inside. But this stage will be over. Once the stage is over, will you have inculcated the habit of actually sitting before God even if there is no sermon? Now, you are buying the gold.

That's what we are talking about. Like in Nepali Service, I was talking about the Pastor whose house was burnt. And then, when he went, he found the clay cup which he used to drink his coffee from. The next Sunday, he preached with the coffee cup. He said, "Do you see this coffee cup?" They said, "Yes." "This is the only thing I got out of my house which was burnt down." He said, "Do you know why? Because it has already been through fire; the second fire couldn't do anything to it." Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had bought it with fire – their integrity, their righteousness. They had bought it with fire. So, when they were thrown into a man-made fire that was 7 times hotter, it didn't touch them because they had bought gold refined in fire. How many times? Seven times. How is your Word? Refined seven times. That's what the Bible says. What kind of Word we need to eat? That was the last thing they were told. What should they do? "Don't boil it in water; don't eat it raw; roast it in the fire." Has the fire of the Holy Spirit fallen upon the Word which you have eaten? That's what it is saying.

Psalm 12:6

The words of the LORD are pure words, Like silver tried in a furnace of earth, Purified seven times.

Wait a second. Does that mean the Word of the Lord need purification? No, it is the vessel. It is the preacher who preaches who needs to be purified seven times over. When that man comes and preaches, the Word is different. John the Baptist was purified 7 times over. So, when he preached, the whole crowd went to the wilderness to hear him. The Word does not have to be purified but to get that Word, the man of God has to go through all that trials. That is what Zarephath means – Furnace (purified). Cherith means cutting away – the flesh is being cut away. Now, he's being purified. Why? Because, one day, Elijah is supposed to stand all alone on Mount Carmel before all the powers of darkness. Because he has been purified 7 times, he doesn't buckle. He stands all alone from morning to evening, without buckling. Why? Because he was purified seven times over. In the midst of all this opposition – the king, his army, the people and 450 prophets of Baal, one man is standing alone there. How do you think he was able to stand alone over there? It's because he had been purified seven times over.

What is coming is going to be worse than this and God says, "They, who know their Lord, will do great exploits. They will stand and they will not go down under pressure." But it does not happen like that. You have to be willing to pay the price and buy it from Him. And He is the only One who can sell it. Nobody else can sell it. Only Joseph sells it. There is no black market. No backdoor over there. Nothing you can do. No jugaad, online ordering; nothing. Only Joseph (Jesus) sells it.

So, when you go to Him, He will ask big demands of you, "What else do you have that you can sell?" Everything over. "Us and our land." He said, "Okay, fine. Sell it. I want everything – your wife, your children, your cat, your dog, your affections; whatever you are attached to, I want it all. Everything, I want." Once that is done, He is able to move us. That movement is movement. Now, God is moving us where He wants us. Otherwise, we make plans and add God into the big picture and we say, "God moved me." As if God was very moved by your movement. This is the story of famine.

So, this evening, the Word of the Lord are pure words. That's what we want. That's why I told them – roast it. That's when they got offended. "You have to eat My flesh and drink My blood." Flesh and blood is a man's life. He says, "Until your life is exchanged for My life, you will not enter into the Kingdom of God." The walk of faith should end where my life has completely ended and His life has come in. You live by faith alone. So, Paul says, "I no longer live; yet, I live but the life I live now in the faith, the Son of God and He lives through me." Once everything is sold, everybody is doing the same work in the same field. But it is not the same; their body, soul and land – everything belongs to the Pharaoh. It's not the same. Though outwardly, He may not move you at all. He may keep you in the same job, same house but you know it is not the same; you now belong to Him. Outwardly, it looks the same. Nothing seems to have changed. Fine, I ate for 5 years. My land is back and I got seed to sow but you don't realize something. That's what Paul is saying, "I'm a free man," but he begins with, "I'm a bond slave of

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Jesus Christ. I belong to Him. He hadn't put that line in *Romans 1*, we wouldn't have known. And then, when you see that line and then, you see his letters continually all the way, you realize – this is a slave speaking; meaning – he has waived off his rights, what to say and what not to say, where to go and where not to go. He has waived off his rights. Therefore, God is able to speak to him more than any man ever lived, other than His Son. And his very words become Scripture. Why? Because he was completely sold out to God. So, God says, "When Paul speaks, I speak." Nobody ever said like that before. You need to understand, for Moses to get the law, he had to sit with God for 40 days and 40 nights and then, he got it. Paul? No. Everything he said was Scripture – from *Romans* all the way to *Philemon*, if *Hebrews* was also his.

God is saying, "I want you to look at this man's life and see what fruit came out of his life and says this is what I can do with each one of you." You think giving to God you lose but nobody has lost by giving to God. "This is what will be the outflow of your life if you give yourself completely to Me. Then, I will live through you." You have no clue what happens when God lives through a man. That should be the end result of famine. You know how Paul came out like that? He came out like that after three years in the wilderness of Saudi Arabia. He said, "When this happened, I did not consult with flesh and blood. I went to the deserts of Arabia and then, came out. What I received, I received not from man but I received from God." He went into a self-imposed famine and sold himself completely to God in those 3 years and came out a different man. "12 years later, I went to see Peter and James." He didn't need to meet anybody. And then, when they go and say, "Whatever our brother, Paul, said, we also agree with." These are all senior fellows. "We have nothing to add to what he says." Peter will write it in his last later, the final letter, "I am ready to put my tabernacle away." And the end of his life, meaning; at the end of his spiritual trajectory where he is finishing his race, he says, "I don't understand what Paul says." Think about it. At the end of his spiritual race. That's when he spiritually reached that peak where you really understand. He says, "I actually don't understand many of the things our brother, Paul, writes." He's not saying this at the beginning of his ministry; he's saying this at the end of his ministry. We have to see everything in spiritual light and in the light of eternity. That's why God tells this man, "You fool, you made all these physical things. What is going to happen to you? Tonight, you will die." That's what Jesus said, "You can store up riches in heaven."

That's what God is talking about. You have to look at it through it all and be fascinated with the Kingdom of God and the King. Never fear. I always keep telling – there is this fear that is gripping. All these things should break that fear. Look at that. For those people who are watching, you people who are watching, you don't realize – all that you see happened in the last few weeks. Somebody donated to us this carpet. Out of the blue, it came. Somebody donated us this. This came. Somebody donated us this. And then, for one Sunday, we did not get the Church hall. So, we had to move to another hall. And then, because we thought we will shift all the sound system later in the week, we brought the whole sound system here. And then, the shutdown begins. Then, suddenly, this curtain was donated. So, suddenly, this was given by somebody else. So, suddenly, we have a beautiful setting which does not make any difference to us but it makes a lot of difference to the camera. And the sound system is here. When the lockdown comes in, we've got the Church sound system sitting here. We should be sitting 10 kilometres away. During this lockdown, we cannot even go and pick anything and we got all these situations sitting here. The background looks good. We have this. We have everything and then, suddenly, God says, "Go live-streaming." That is one side of it. The physical, material side of it, God provided. For years, we have been sitting together, studying, stocking. Now, famine has come. God says, "Come out and give twice a day. Two hours. Four hours." So, it's not taxing. It's taxing our body but it's not taxing our soul. And how did it all fit in? What we always did as a system, as a Church is that – always feed the poor. And in this complete lockdown, you know how many calls we got, today, saying, "There are so many hungry sitting on the streets because of the lockdown?" They knew who to call. They said, "We will do it. You just make the food." We said, "Fine." We did. We made packets and sent it. In the evening, that's the first thing I got after the session is – "Poor have been fed." So, did the lockdown, did the famine in any way affect us? No. It hasn't affected us in any way. We are thriving in famine. That is why you have to do things by faith and when the famine comes, you realize what you did was real or not. Nothing. Everything we did is working well. And even our little children, the special needs children. Before the flight is being blocked, one day; hours – 13 or 14 hours before that, the mother lands. And then, she gets her paper work all done and she is flying to done. Last minute, that also, she managed. Air India managed to reach Delhi.

Now, remember, let me tell you this – the first two parents who came for that child was from Italy. The child threw a tantrum. So, they refused. That little child said, "I don't want that parent." So, she threw a tantrum. So, the child rejected the parents literally. Now, imagine if she had said 'yes' and God hadn't move her to say 'no', the child would have been in Italy now. All we can do is pray, "Lord, we have no control over this. These are government children. Whoever takes her, she goes." Look at that. The child would have been in Italy. And then, this particular parent is not from US too. Because in US, it is difficult. In the US, you have to do the whole process over here. You have to get an Indian Passport. You have to go and wait for the visa

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but if it had been the US, everything is shut down. Passport, you have to go wait for the visa. But if it had been that, everything is shut down. US visa services, everything is shut down. And this is from another country, a Scandinavian country where you don't have to go through any of this process. Even as you get the adoption papers, you get that country's passport here. All you need is an exit visa and it happened in one day. Before the borders of international flights were closed, 6 hours before that, the parent flew out. She came in like that and went out like that. Isn't that God? I was looking at the other one sitting over there and thinking, "O Lord, this child has been saying 'Grandpa, when will I go?'" I said, "Honey, if not anything, grandpa is there." And as soon as this one went, within the next day, that one also went." So, now, we have only severely challenged kids. All the normal kids are adopted and gone and everything, just before the lockdown. And then, it happens. The lockdown happens. You want to say these are all random things. That every ministry of yours – everything is taken care of. God has taken care of it all. God is saying, "I'm in control. You don't worry." The famine does not matter. What matters is the famine inside. There is a famine He is sending on the world. It is the famine of the hearing of the Word of God. Guard your heart from that famine. That's the dangerous famine. It's not the famine that is outside. Everyone who heard during the famine, whether it was Isaac, whether it was Elijah, whether it was Joseph, whether it was Elisha, they came through famine untouched because they heard. Even David. Only thing, he got deceived because he should have always remembered – Gibeonites are deceivers. So, he should have given a solution and not ask them for a solution. In their solution, they flattered him, put him in a bind where he couldn't go back on his word. Then, they got seven sons of Saul to hang. So, the Gibeonites are always deceivers. He should have got that in his head. "Oh, these are Gibeonites. I need to be very careful with them." Isn't that what they did with Joshua 500 years ago? These guys don't change. Deceivers are deceivers unless they come to Christ.

So, that's how it works. So, we look at all the small little things like this and look at the small little things. Because I get, "Where is this place? It looks so cute." I said, "You have no idea. It was made cute only two weeks back." Really. We don't need this. We feel hot in this but everybody says it looks good in the camera and we went live-streaming, which we never, ever thought we would.

And you know what? I'll tell you another thing which is even more funny. I was thinking that I will take this pulpit to the Church and bring the small pulpit back. But the thing is that it didn't happen because of the lockdown and because of the livestreaming, this pulpit covers a washbasin that is behind. I'm telling you – God has got jokes. Any other pulpits, the wash basin would have been seen through. People don't realize that this is a normal, sitting room with a wash basin over there and there's a pulpit nicely covering the washbasin. So, you hear the Word; you are convicted in your heart and your mind and you wash your works. That's all. Just to make you laugh. We will bring to a close. But I'm telling you – you can trust God in the small details of your life and the big things of your life when you give over yourself to Him. That's what Joseph did during the famine. And you know what he did? He took it all and handed it over for whose sake? For the Pharaoh. What did Scripture say? Jesus will subdue everything, bring it under His feet and then, give it to His Father so that God will be all and in all. That's what Jesus is doing in Heaven – creating famine in everybody's life until everybody is surrendered. When everybody is surrendered, He says, "Here's Your children, Daddy. They are all Yours." And God will be all. You know the beauty of Scripture? So, don't be afraid to surrender. Please don't be afraid to surrender. It's only scary in the beginning but the more you do it, you will realize that you understand the joy. More than the joy, it's the liberty that comes, the freedom that comes with surrender. Liberty comes only through surrender and a surrendered person is a free person. Where the Spirit is Lord, there is liberty. When you come under that, you are free. Let's pray.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we just come to You, O Lord, in the Name of Jesus. We just thank You. We just praise You. We just worship You, Lord. Thank you, Father. From the little details to the big one's – every day, You are taking care of, Lord. Everything, You are taking care of. We just want to thank You. Thank You, Lord. You said in Your Word, "I was young and I'm old. I have never seen the righteous beg bread, but they give freely." These are all words, O Father, that we need to know because our freedom in giving is never determined by the good times; it is determined by the famine. Because if Your truth has gone deep in and it is still working in the time of famine, we give more and not less. Because You work through us. That's all we pray, Lord, all these days of famine, help us to give out more and more, Lord. Help us to be faithful servants who take the resources of the Father and pass it out on to the needy, the hungry souls, waiting for the Word; the famished soul waiting for the meat of the Word; the hungry infants waiting for the milk of the Word. Nothing will go waste, Lord. And I pray and I speak comfort into every soul that is hearing. It doesn't matter because you are not going to a cruel master; you are going to your Father and your Father loves you. He loves you with an everlasting love. So, it doesn't matter how much of your time we have wasted; He is

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giving you time now to redeem that lost time. Because, as a father, He longs for your spiritual success that you finish the race as an overcomer. So, I pray, Father, that every one of them will repent; every one of them will go into the path of restoration; every one of them will go to the road of redeeming their time and You would start speaking to them. But above all, keep us humble, Lord. That's Your first requirement, Lord. Keep us humble always. We thank You, Father. We thank You for today. We thank You for all the three services and all the people who heard, Father. We just thank You. It's our honor and our privilege to serve You always, O Lord. If the land belongs to Pharaoh, then our bodies, souls and spirit belongs to You, Lord. Everything that we have is Yours. You give seed to the sower and we believe that You will give us tomorrow also, the seed to sow, Lord. Tonight, we will rest and if You give us one more day in the land of the living, when we come back here, You would have given us the seed to sow in Your field because these people who are hearing are Your field, Lord. Thank You, Father. We praise You. We worship You. We glorify You, Lord. We bless Your Holy Name. Once again, Lord. Though we are tired, yet, we will proclaim – Thine is the Kingdom, the power and glory, forever and ever. For in Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

Benediction:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, rest and abide in each one of us, Amen.

SUMMARY

Famines

reason

Abraham

Isaac

David

Joseph

Paul in prison

Paul and Silas were in prison in chains

There was an earthquake