

When Spiritual Famine Invades the Church

by Brad Allen

Brad Allen's sermon addresses the pervasive issue of spiritual famine in the church, highlighting its symptoms and offering hope for revival and restoration.

Duration: 39:45

Scripture: 2 Kings 6:24

Topics: "Spiritual Famine"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a story about a miraculous healing of an old Chinese lady named Sister Keo who had not taken a step in 20 years. This event serves as a reminder that God is capable of performing miracles. The preacher then invites those who have never been saved to come to Christ and receive eternal life. He also encourages others to seek the filling of the Holy Spirit. The sermon then transitions to a discussion of spiritual famine invading the church, using the story of the famine in Samaria from 2 Kings chapter 6. The preacher emphasizes the importance of the Holy Spirit in informing the church about the conditions of the world and warns about the dangers of the Holy Spirit being absent from the church. He concludes by offering hope and reminding the congregation that even in times of spiritual famine, there is always hope.

Transcript

I'd invite you tonight to turn in your Bibles, if you want to read along the Scripture, turn in your Bibles to 2 Kings, 2 Kings chapter 6, the title of the message tonight, When Spiritual Famine Invades the Church. 2 Kings chapter 6, beginning with verse 24, And it happened after this, that Ben-Hadad, the king of Syria, gathered all his army, and went up and besieged Samaria. And there was a great famine in Samaria, and indeed they besieged it, until a donkey's head sold for eighty shekels of silver, And depending on the translation you have, one-fourth of a cab, that's about one pint.

One pint of dove's dung was selling for five shekels of silver. Then as the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried out to him saying, Help, help my lord, O king. And he said, If the lord does not help you, where can I find help for you? From the threshing floor or from the wine press? Then the king said to her, What's troubling you? And she answered, Well, this woman said to me, Give your son that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow.

So we boiled my son and ate him. I said to her on the next day, Now give your son that we may eat him, but she's hidden her son away. Now it happened when the king heard the words of the woman that he tore

his clothes, and as he passed by on the wall, the people looked, and there underneath he had sackcloth on his body.

Then he said, God do so to me and more also if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat remains on him today. But Elisha was sitting in his house and the elders were sitting with him. And the king sent a man ahead of him, but before the messenger came to him, he said to the elders, Do you see how this son of a murderer has sent someone to take away my head? Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door and hold him fast at the door.

Is not the sound of his master's feet behind him? And while he was still talking with them, there was the messenger coming down to him. And then the king said, Surely this calamity is from the Lord. Why should I wait for the Lord any longer? Then Elisha said, Hear the word of the Lord.

Thus says the Lord, Tomorrow about this time a measure of fine flour shall be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel at the gate of Samaria. So an officer on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God and said, Look, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, could this thing be? And Elisha said, In fact, you will see it with your eyes, but you will not eat any of it. Across the nation of America tonight, famine has invaded the churches of America.

It's everywhere. Illustration. As I've told you, and you know, that I'm a Southern Baptist preacher, we have across this nation, round figures, 50,000 Southern Baptist churches.

Seventy percent of those churches have either plateaued or they're declining. Last year, those 50,000 Southern Baptist churches, last year, 12,500 Southern Baptist churches reported zero baptisms. I told Life Church Sunday morning, I believe, when I was preaching, I didn't know.

I'm just dumb. I didn't know. I thought any Baptist church anywhere in a year's time could just trip one person and push them into baptistry.

I didn't know. 12,500. Zero baptisms.

The Methodist church in America is only a shadow of what John Wesley had in mind. The Presbyterian church in America would absolutely horrify John Knox of Scotland. The Episcopalian church in America, they're busy fighting their own internal wars over homosexual priests.

The Roman Catholic church in America today, they're busy with a severe war with renegade priests who are sexually abusing little boys. Famine has invaded the church. It's everywhere.

It's happening everywhere. In the text that I've read, the king of Samaria, he was in his capital city of Samaria. I've walked around the ruins of Samaria located there on that hilltop in the northern kingdom of Israel, and suddenly the armies of Syria, the neighbor, invaded Samaria.

They came against it. It was a horrible time. You've read, and you know, that in that day and time, Samaria was like most cities.

It was surrounded by a high wall for defensive purposes. And here came the Syrian army. They didn't try to scale the wall.

They didn't try to batter down the gates to the city. They didn't try to set the gates on fire and burn them. The Syrian army surrounded the city of Samaria, set up camp.

They did not allow anybody to leave the city. They didn't allow anybody to come in. They just sat there and waited.

Time went by. Finally, inside the city, famine came. No food.

The text, it doesn't sound right. It doesn't sound right to we who are in America. We've got grocery stores on every corner.

We've got refrigerators full of food. We're all fatter than a bunch of town dogs. We don't understand famine.

We don't understand it. But in Samaria, a donkey's head was selling for 80 bucks. A pint, a little pint of dove's dung was selling for \$5.

They were eating that. And if that's not bad enough, finally it became so severe that the people began to practice cannibalism. They started eating their little children.

How horrible could it get? As I studied this passage of Scripture, I got to taking this famine in Samaria, the physical famine, and trying to draw some correlations with the spiritual famine that has invaded America. I want to just share about five or six things with you. First of all, when spiritual famine invades the church, the young are the first to go.

Every time. You march me into any church in America, and I can tell you almost immediately if spiritual famine is living in that church. Where there is spiritual famine, there are no youth, no children.

They've vanished someplace. Youth will flee the atmosphere of death every time. Where spiritual famine lives, you go into that church building, and what you find is a group of silver-headed, just a little huddled up group, like a huddle on the 50-yard line, silver-headed senior adults, sitting there in a little huddle singing, Revive us again.

Fill each heart. No youth. But where life abounds, there is a vibrancy, a thrill, a joy, and children and youth will flock to that.

The people of Samaria begin to eat their children. That's what a dead church does. It eats its children.

It's young. It swallows them up in a dead orthodoxy, dead worship, dead singing, and dead preaching. Another thing.

When spiritual famine invades the church, stubbornness becomes the dominant characteristic of the people in that church. In Samaria, they were eating donkeys' heads. You answer me back.

What's the chief characteristic of a donkey or a mule? Stubborn. You ever heard that term? Stubborn as a mule. And that's how people get where spiritual famine is living.

The people become stubborn about everything. First, they become stubborn with God. Time after time across the years, I've heard people say, Well, you know, Brad, I know the Bible says that, but this is how I feel about it.

I was pastor for 17 years at the First Baptist Church of Duncan, Oklahoma. Never will forget it. We were sitting in a deacons' meeting.

We had 75 ordained deacons in our church. We were sitting in a deacons' meeting, and I don't remember what prompted this. I just remember that the senior adult deacon who was sitting next to me right here on my left, all of a sudden, he said, and I quote, He said, Well, I tell you what, I think we ought to get it back like it used to be where the deacons run everything.

Now why I did what I did next, I don't know unless it was low IQ. I just turned to him. I had my Bible on my lap.

I just turned to him, and I said, Would you show that to me in the Bible? And he said, I don't care what the Bible says. That's just how I feel. Well, it's hard to argue with logic like that.

People become stubborn with God. Stubborn, stubborn. This is how I believe.

But not only that, they become stubborn with each other in church where spiritual famine lives. Stubborn with each other. I don't know how it is down here where I travel, especially I know in Southern Baptist churches, the biggest battle going on right now, Nathan, in Southern Baptist churches is church music.

Church music. You heard that? Senior adult said, I don't want no words up on the screen. I want to sing out of a Baptist hymnal.

Paul carried a Baptist hymnal under his arm. Young people, young adults, they say, We want to sing praise music. We want to sing some new music.

No, we want to sing that old music. The hymns, that's all we want to sing. And there's a battle going on.

I cannot understand why in the world, why in the world believers in Jesus Christ, why senior adults cannot sit in a pew and look down the pew at the young people and say, You know, your type of music isn't my type of music, but I thank God you're here worshiping Jesus Christ. And I don't understand why young people can't look down the pew at old silver-haired senior adults and say, You know, those hymns, that's not my kind of music, but I thank God that you've set the standard for all these years. Stubborn with God? Stubborn with each other? Stubborn with their leaders? Stubborn.

Stubborn. You see, where spiritual famine is living in a church, there's no fellowship. There's no idea about being a servant of Jesus Christ, of being a slave to Jesus Christ.

You walk into any church where spiritual famine lives, and the Holy Trinity is no longer the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity is me, my, and mine. What's good for me? What are you going to do for my family? How are you going to address me in America tonight? There are thousands upon thousands, multitudes of church members who are feasting on donkey's heads.

Stubborn. Another thing. When spiritual famine invades the church, the Holy Spirit becomes a thing of the past.

In Samaria, a pint, a little pint of dove's dung was selling for \$5. A few years ago, I preached a spiritual awakening conference at a church in Wyoming. I preached this message early in the conference.

On the last night of the conference, a lady, when service was over, and I walked out into the vestibule to greet some people, a lady said, she said, I don't know if you'll be able to use this in the future in conferences, but I got it, and I want to give it to you, and she handed me a Ziploc bag filled with dove's dung. I didn't keep it. Can you imagine eating that? That's what the people of Samaria were eating.

Now, a question, you answer me. In the Bible, the dove is a symbol of what? I hear words, peace, a lot of people. The dove in the Bible is a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit of God. Now, you can forget everything I say tonight, but you remember the next sentence. The dove's dung does not represent where the dove is.

It represents where the dove used to be. The dove is gone. And in a church where spiritual famine is living, the dove is gone.

The Holy Spirit is gone. He flies away. We grieve him.

You see it all over this nation, church members who are feasting on past glories. Oh, we had a great revival in our church. When? 1948.

Maybe nothing's happened since then. Church members feasting on past glories, eating the leftover of blessings, acting like everything is all right, but the blessed dove is gone. I got to thinking about this, so I got to studying through the Bible to find out what the Bible had to say about the dove.

First thing I found, the dove informs the church of conditions out there in the world, what it's like out there in the world. You remember Noah? He got on the ark, 40 days, 40 nights of rain. Stopped raining.

The water began to recede. What did he send out of the ark to find out if there's dry land out there? A dove. A dove.

The dove showed Noah the conditions out there. And the blessed dove, the Holy Spirit, does that for the church today. But what if the dove is gone? What if the Holy Spirit is gone from the church? The church has no idea of what's happening out there in the world today.

That's why the church in America today is so confused about so many things. Lottery, alcohol, drugs, homosexuality, abortion. You got church members all over this nation who see nothing wrong with those things.

In Oklahoma, we have the lottery. You know how we got it? Baptists voted it in. You know how I know that? You don't have anything in Oklahoma if Baptists don't vote it in because we're a majority in Oklahoma.

So Baptists, nothing wrong with the lottery. Go ahead. There's nothing wrong with alcohol.

Church members got it in their cabinet. They drink it all the time. There's nothing wrong with drugs.

There's nothing wrong with homosexuality. It's just an alternate way of life. That's all it is.

No, it's sin. I've had church members say, Oh, there's nothing wrong with abortion. It's a woman's right to choose.

There's only one thing wrong with abortion. It's murder. It's murder.

That's it. It's murdering a living human being. Another thing I found out the dove does, the dove guards the church against deception.

Hosea chapter 7. Ephraim, now Ephraim was one of the 12 tribes of Israel. Ephraim is like a silly dove without any sense. Now this phrase, without any sense, it can also be translated from the Hebrew no heart, no heart.

When the Holy Spirit leaves a church, when the blessed dove leaves a church, that church has no sense about spiritual matters. Jeff, I've sat in finance committee meetings in church and some guy will say, Well, I'll tell you what I think. I think we ought to run this church like a business.

Well, God help us if we ever run it like a business. It's not a business. It's an organization established by Jesus Christ.

It's a spiritual entity. Everything in a church where spiritual famine lives, everything becomes cold, hard facts. Everything becomes ritual and tradition.

I can't remember exactly. I had been pastor at First Baptist Church, Duncan, six, eight months. I can't remember exactly.

I preached one Sunday morning. The invitation was finished. Closing prayer was said.

I stepped down off of the platform. My foot just hit the main floor and right there in front of me, right in my face, was one of our senior adult deacons and his wife. I got the best chewing out they ever got in the ministry.

They chewed my hind leg off. You want to know what my sin was, what I had done? I had changed the order of service in the bulletin. I had dared trample on Holy Writ, the bulletin.

I'm living for the day. When I go to a church somewhere that has a bulletin and the order of service all printed out, and we never get around to it because God comes. The Holy Spirit comes and does His work and what He wants done.

Another thing. You see, deception in the church, it's so easy. Maybe you're here tonight and you've been feeding on droppings of the Holy Spirit, something you've heard from the past, maybe something your grandparents told you.

You've never seen revival yourself. You're just living on someone else's reputation, someone else's memory because the dove is gone. Something else I think is important.

The dove reveals Jesus Christ to the church and then in turn out there to the world. That's the blessed dove's responsibility. You remember when John the Baptist was baptizing in the Jordan River? He looked down the dusty road and he saw a man coming and he said, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Jesus was coming. And then John said it not once. He said it twice.

He said, I did not know him. I did not know him. What? They were cousins.

They grew up together. They chummed around together when they were teenagers. What do you mean he didn't know? John meant, I didn't know he was the Messiah.

I didn't know that. And then John said, He who sent me said to me, Upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. He said, When you see the dove coming down on a certain man, that's the one.

Jesus Christ. It's the dove who reveals Jesus Christ to the church. And then in turn, we're to reveal Jesus Christ out in our community to other people.

Don't live in a world of droppings. Don't try to live on past reputation, past glories, past revivals, past church camps. God's dove is for today, right now.

Another thing, when spiritual famine invades the church, biblical roles get all messed up. They get all reversed. In Samaria, the king of Samaria, he's up here in his palace.

The prophet Elisha is down here in his house. The king of Samaria, he gets all of his entourage together to go down and talk to Elisha. He thinks Elisha can probably put a stop to this famine.

And they're going down there. There are soldiers with the king. And one of them that the Bible mentions, it's, some translators say a lord, an officer.

It says, on whose arm the king was leaning. We don't know if the king was old, if he was crippled, but he was leaning on this officer's arm. And the word for officers here is a word which means a general of the third rank.

We would call him a three-star general. This three-star general, he's kind of helping the king down to Elisha's house. And Elisha says, hear the word of the Lord.

At this time tomorrow, 24 hours from now, you'll be able to buy all the grain you need cheap, right in the gate of Samaria. And this three-star general, he said, and this is the Brad Allen translation straight out of the Hebrew. This general said, uh-uh, he corrected the prophet of God.

He said, if God was to open the windows of heaven and pour grain out, how could such a thing be? And Elisha said, you'll see it, but you won't eat a bite of it. When the dove is gone from the church, when spiritual famine sets in, biblical roles get all reversed. Preacher doesn't get to tell anyone anything.

Deacons maybe tries to call the shots in the church. I've heard it a thousand times. Well, have the deacons voted on this? Have the deacons approved this? In the Bible, the deacons never voted on nothing.

They just served the church. That's all they did. Another thing that I'd mention to you, when spiritual famine invades the church, the prophet always gets blamed.

That's what happened with Elisha. The king, either the king thought Elisha had started the famine, or he could put a stop to the famine, and he did. He blamed the prophet of God.

That's what happened in the church today, where spiritual famine lives, the church will always put the blame on the pastor. It's his fault. Church isn't growing.

It's his fault. He's supposed to get new members in, not us. Usually, usually the solution for any church where spiritual famine lives is not to repent.

It's to fire the pastor and just go on in their famine. Just go on, go on. The results of this has been staggering in America.

Staggering. They did a survey. Here's what they found in the survey.

For pastors, 70% of pastors in this survey said they constantly fight depression. 71% of pastors said they are in financial trouble. 65% of the pastors say that they have thought about quitting the ministry in the last 30 days.

It's also staggering for the people. Where spiritual famine lives in a church, what does it do to the church people? It's staggering. Church members end up, they say, nothing's going on here, and they drop out here and they wander around from church to church trying to find a church where they can kind of be happy or else church members just drop out and forget the whole deal just as a bad deal.

They just quit. I would be derelict in my duty if I didn't preach the last point in this sermon. People are always glad to hear me say, last point.

When spiritual famine invades the church, there's always hope. Bless God, there's always hope. Let me tell you what happened in Samaria.

There was this big high wall around Samaria right here outside the wall, at this spot right here, at this spot. Every day there sat four old dirty, nasty, ragged lepers. The reason they sat right here every day, this was where the people of the city came and threw their garbage over the wall, and that's what the lepers ate, was the garbage.

There's no garbage now. The people in the city are eating everything they can get their hands on. The morning after Elisha talked to the king, the morning after, these four old lepers were sitting there.

One of them said, why sit we here until we die? Maybe we could go into the city. There's no food in the city. They won't allow us in the city.

We're lepers. We can go out to the camp of the Syrian army out here. Maybe, perhaps, they might give us something to eat.

They may kill us. But there's one thing for sure. If we stay here, we're going to die.

These four old lepers got up, dirty, filthy, rags for clothes. The leprosy had taken its toll. One of the lepers, all of his fingers were gone.

Another one, both ears were rotted off. Another one, his nose was rotted off. Another one, his feet.

He just kind of walked along on stubs. And they made their way out to the camp of the Syrian army. They got out there.

There were all the horses, camels, sheep and goats. There were all their tents. They went into the tents.

The tents were lined with Persian rugs. Went into another tent. Here was all this barley and wheat, this grain, and not a Syrian soldier in sight.

What had happened? Well, during the night, God had caused the sound of a great charging army, and the Syrian soldiers just got up and ran into the night. These four old lepers, they started eating. They ate and

ate and ate and ate.

Do you all have golden corrals here? Huh? You know what a golden corral is? It was golden corral time for these lepers. When they filled up, one of them said, we do not well if we don't go in and tell them in the city. They went in and they told them about all this food.

They sent people out there to bring all the grain and the sheep and the goat, all this food right into the gate of Samaria. And word began to spread that there's food down here at the gate of Samaria. And the people began to run down the narrow streetway of Samaria, running toward the gate.

This three-star general, he heard about it, and he ran and ran, and he got out in front of the crowd, and he was in charge. He was a general. And he got out in front and said, stop, and they just ran over him.

And he died. He saw the food, just like Elisha said, but he never ate a bite of it. There is hope, my friends.

There's hope for spiritual awakening. There is hope, and hope for the end of famine. First of all, it's always a miracle from God.

It's always a miracle from God. Another thing, hope for the end of famine will always come from the most unlikely source. Whoever thought it would come in Samaria with four old lepers? I have sneaking suspicion that if revival comes to a church, usually it doesn't come through weak preachers.

It'll come from some layman or laywoman back here who knows God. There's a church in Florida that experienced great spiritual awakening, and it started with the church janitor. That's where it started.

Most unlikely sources. In the 1930s, our Southern Baptist mission work in China, it was pretty strong, going pretty well in the 1930s. We had several missionaries in China.

One of them was a lady missionary named Mary Crawford. Mary Crawford said, she said, I came to China in 1923, and she said, for several years, she said, I did the best I could to learn the language and to witness to the Chinese people. But she said, the millions of lost people that were just surrounding me just made me feel hopeless.

I didn't know what to do. And she said, in 1927, another missionary asked me if I had ever been filled with the Holy Spirit. She said, nobody had ever asked me that question before.

She said, I wasn't for sure I knew what she was talking about. She said, I started searching the scriptures. And she said, a few weeks later, while I was in prayer, I asked the blessed Lord to give me the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

In 1931, God did one of the most miraculous works he's ever done in the Shantung province of China. If you've never read Dr. Culpepper's book, The Shantung Revival, you need to read it. Just a little paperback.

He was one of the missionaries, Dr. Charles Culpepper. 32 of our Southern Baptist missionaries were filled with the Spirit of God. Then Chinese leaders began to experience the same thing in one of the little old precious stories.

On June the 15th, 1932, in one of the Chinese villages, the Chinese preacher got up to preach Sunday morning. He got up to preach. And as he stood to preach, the entire congregation got up and filed out of

the church building and left.

That'd make a preacher feel good, wouldn't it? You know why they left? He went outside, looked. What the congregation was doing, they had lined both sides of the road and they were watching as old Sister Keo, an old Chinese lady, was walking home from church, and they were watching her. Well, the thing that was so remarkable about that, old Sister Keo had not taken a step in 20 years.

And God healed her. And they just were out there watching her walk home. Walk home.

There's a miracle about to happen here tonight. There's some people here tonight who have never been saved. You've never invited Jesus Christ to come into your life and save you.

And he's ready to give you eternal life, forgive all of your sin, reserve a home in heaven for you. You just can't beat a deal like that. I'd invite you to come to Christ and be saved tonight.

You come to Christ. There are others of you here tonight that you want to come and say, God, do something for me. Fill me with your blessed spirit.

There are others who might want to come to the altar and say, Lord, send revival to me, to my church, to my town. Do it now. Nathan's going to sing.

It's a great song. It's true. He is here, hallelujah.

He is here, amen. He is here, holy, holy. I will bless his name again.

He is here, listen closely. Hear him calling out your name. He is here, you can touch him.

You will never be the same. Would you stand and come right now.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/25/SID25149.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/brad-allen/when-spiritual-famine-invades-the-church/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net