

# AP

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THOUGHT  
FOR  
CHRISTIAN  
LIVING

## Today's Quick Word Amos 8:11-12

*By Bruce Christian*

**AMOS 8:11-12** - *"The days are coming," declares the Sovereign LORD, "when I will send a famine through the land - not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD. Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it."*

There is an old Philip Bliss hymn called 'Almost Persuaded' which has as its first verse: "Almost persuaded' now to believe; 'Almost persuaded' Christ to receive; seems now some soul to say, 'Go, Spirit, go Thy way, some more convenient day on Thee I'll call.'" It is based on Acts 24:25 and 26:28 where Governor Felix and King Agrippa each cut Paul short in his testimony because he was becoming too convincing. In the KJV, Felix wants to put him off to a 'more convenient season', and Agrippa is worried that he is 'almost persuaded' to become a Christian.

In Jesus' ministry there were people whom he moved to follow him, but who had family matters they wanted to attend to first (Luke 9:57-62). In none of these cases are we encouraged to think that they eventually came to faith. Sadder still, we learn

from Hebrews 12:16-17 that Esau, who "for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son", but later, at a time when presumably he found it a bit more convenient to consider things from God's eternal perspective, he "could bring about NO change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears."

In our own society and culture there is very little interest in, or concern for, the truths God has graciously revealed to us in his written Word. This is exactly how it was in Amos' day. But the prophet had to warn them that it was not a case of their deciding just when it would be 'convenient' to take God seriously! He is sovereign in all things - and especially in salvation. He is not only able to withhold rain as a 'warning shot'; he can also send "a famine of hearing the words of the LORD". Yes, we can be so thankful for his grace, and that he is the God of the second chance; but we must never presume upon his grace. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "I tell you, now is the time of God's favour, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2b). Tomorrow may be too late!

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## Today's Quick Word Luke 4:1-2

By Bruce Christian

**LUKE 4:1-2** - *Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.*

We can be pleased that Dr Luke included this little note in his Gospel. It is a good reminder to us that when Jesus, the eternal Son of God and Second Person of the Trinity, became a Man, he really did become one of us in every way.

As the Author of Hebrews tells us, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin." (Hebrews 4:15). I think of the words of the well-known/loved hymn: "Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged; take it the Lord in prayer. Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows SHARE, Jesus KNOWS our every weakness, take it to the Lord in prayer." That KNOWLEDGE is not just a theoretical/academic one, but an experiential one. And HE KNEW what it was like to FEEL the gnawing pain of an empty stomach after nearly six weeks of going without any food!

When the Apostle Paul wrote: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of COMPASSION and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles,

so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God." (2 Corinthians 1:3-4), he was sharing a very important principle. We are in a much, much better place to help others who are faced with trouble and strife when we have been in the same place ourselves. Even if we can't SOLVE their problem, they find it especially helpful to know that we UNDERSTAND because we have been through it ourselves, and have experienced GOD's comfort in the midst of it.

Luke tells us a few verses later that "Jesus returned to Galilee in the POWER of the Spirit" (14), just as he had pointed out that Jesus was "FULL of the Holy Spirit" and "LED by the Spirit" when he faced this ordeal. This same Jesus has promised all who follow him: "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor [Comforter] to be with you for ever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." (John 14:16). This promise is much more meaningful to us when we are reminded that Jesus is promising us something that he KNOWS from his own experience. "Jesus knows all about our struggles, he will guide till the day is done; there's not a Friend like the lowly Jesus, no not one, no not one." (Johnson Oatman Jr.)

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## Today's Quick Word 1 Chronicles 18:11, 13b

By Bruce Christian

**1 CHRONICLES 18:11, 13B** - *King David dedicated these articles to the LORD, as he had done with the silver and gold he had taken from all these nations: Edom and Moab, the Ammonites and the Philistines, and Amalek. ... The LORD gave David victory everywhere he went.*

From our side of the Cross and the teachings of the Lord Jesus, an OT chapter like 1 Chronicles 18 makes very difficult reading. It describes a lot of the victories of Israel over the surrounding nations, under the leadership of their honoured and well-loved King, David. The loss of human life, including collateral deaths, and the occurrence of much seemingly unnecessary animal cruelty, do not sit comfortably with our culture.

But, then, I need to remind myself of WHY all this was happening - to recall the LORD's instruction through Moses at the beginning of the conquest of Canaan: "But be assured today that the LORD your God is the one who goes across ahead of you like a devouring fire. He will destroy them; he will subdue them before you. And you will drive them out and annihilate them quickly, as the LORD has promised you." (Deuteronomy 9:3); and of the general 'big picture' view of our sinful, fallen world given through one of the LORD's faithful Prophets: "The LORD is angry with all nations; his wrath is upon all their

armies. He will totally destroy them, he will give them over to slaughter." (Isaiah 34:2).

All this helps me to understand two important realities: firstly, the reality of what Jesus, God's One and Only Son, was prepared to suffer in my place so that I don't have to face God's righteous wrath against the Sin of Mankind in which I participate; and secondly, the reality of how disastrous it will be on the Day of Judgement, when Jesus Returns, for all who have failed to take refuge in God's Grace in Jesus.

What I find helpful and encouraging in today's verses is the way David attributed to the LORD ALL the honour and glory for what was achieved, dedicating the spoils of battle to the LORD. If only our confused world today would recognise these realities and turn to the Lord as the rightful Ruler and Judge, and the ONLY One who is able to get us out of this mess, and save us from the horrific consequences of it! We used to sing a chorus: "Draw your swords, use your swords, for the battle is the Lord's. Trust in his unfailing arm, and you will wave the victor's palm." And our 'sword' is "the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." (Ephesians 6:17). Let us use it wisely, prayerfully, and well, as we wait in hope for the Coming of the Lord.