

# Luke 15:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

## Analysis

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**And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land** (δαπανήσαντος δὲ αὐτοῦ πάντα ἐγένετο λιμὸς ἰσχυρὰ, dapanēsantos de autou panta egeneto limos ischyra)—The aorist participle dapanaō (δαπανάω, having spent/squandered) indicates complete depletion. Then external disaster compounds personal folly: a 'strong famine' (limos ischyra, λιμὸς ἰσχυρά) arises. God's common grace had preserved him while he rebelled, but now even natural provision fails.

**And he began to be in want** (καὶ αὐτὸς ἤρξατο ὑστερεῖσθαι, kai autos ērxato hystereisthai)—The verb hystereō (ὑστερέω, to lack, be in need) describes desperate poverty. The prodigal who sought abundance now experiences destitution. This is sin's trajectory: initial pleasure, progressive enslavement, ultimate poverty. Yet this want becomes the crisis that drives him home (v.17). God uses even famine redemptively.

## Historical Context

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Famines in the ancient Near East were catastrophic—crop failures meant starvation, death, and social collapse. Without family networks or covenant community, foreign Jewish exiles faced particular vulnerability during food shortages. Local populations prioritized their own, leaving outsiders to perish. The son's self-imposed exile from his father's house now meant exile from the safety

net that sustained others. His rebellion's consequences became viscerally, desperately clear.

## Related Passages

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**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## Study Questions

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1. How does God sometimes use the natural consequences of sin—the 'famine' that follows squandering—to bring you to repentance?
2. In what ways is spiritual poverty (being in want) sometimes God's severe mercy to awaken you to your need?
3. What does the timing—famine after total loss—reveal about God's redemptive use of circumstances to drive rebels homeward?

## Interlinear Text

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δαπανήσαντος	δὲ	αὐτὸς	πάντα	ἐγένετο	λιμὸς	ἰσχυρὸς	
had spent	And	when he	all	there arose	famine	a mighty	
G1159	G1161	G846	G3956	G1096	G3042	G2478	
κατὰ	τὴν	χώραν	ἐκείνην	καὶ	αὐτὸς	ἤρξατο	ὕστερεῖσθαι
in	G3588	land	that	and	when he	he began	to be in want
G2596		G5561	G1565	G2532	G846	G756	G5302

## Additional Cross-References

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**2 Chronicles 33:11** (Parallel theme): Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.