

# Amos Devotionals & Sermon Illustrations

## Amos 1

### The Prophet Amos

Amos was not a prophet by profession (7:14).

Amos was not a prophet by parentage (7:14).

Amos was a prophet by providence (7:15).

What better credentials does any man need?

**Vance Havner**

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**Illustration** - Those of us who constantly and extensively travel on our highway systems know there are some roads that are to be avoided. Consequently, to reduce tension, to save time, or for our vehicle's sake, we purposefully choose other routes. Likewise, the way of "Spiritual Declension" is a road that we must definitely shun. The Shepherd's "paths of righteousness" (Psa. 23:3) are always the best paths! Wise are the people who follow in His steps! If, perhaps, we have become sidetracked, may God help us to return to "the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein" (Jer. 6:16). - Tom Hayes

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**Amos 1:2** - "The people of Israel were now at the summit of worldly prosperity, but were rapidly filling up the measure of their sins. The mission of Amos was, therefore, rather to threaten than to console. He rebukes, among other things, the corruption of their manners, which kept pace with their prosperity; he charges the great men with partiality as judges, and violence towards the poor; and he foretells, as a punishment from God, the captivity of the ten tribes in a foreign country..." - The Bible Handbook, Angus and Green

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**Amos 1:3** - [Threshing sledges](#) with iron prongs or teeth are probably a figure of speech implying extreme cruelty and utter thoroughness in the treatment of those who opposed." (Hubbard)

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ILLUSTRATIONS TO CHAPTER 1 - Amos . Station in life. Low station is no obstacle to God's favour. St John was the son of a fisherman; recommended to our Saviour neither by refinement of education nor by honourable employment, he was diligently engaged in the labours of an humble occupation when chosen to accompany his Lord. For those, indeed, whom it hath pleased God to place in the higher states of life it is right that they should endeavour to perform the duties of their stations, by a due cultivation of their talents, by the acquirement of suitable accomplishments, and by acting up to the rank in society to which by the good providence of God they are born and designated [Bp Manton]. - [Homiletical Commentary](#)

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Amos 1:11KJV - Cast off pity. Bonaparte carried the town of Jaffa by assault, and many of the garrison were put to the sword. But the greater part fled into mosques, implored mercy from their pursuers, and were granted their lives. But Napoleon expressed resentment at the conduct of the troops, lost all pity, and to relieve himself of the care of his prisoners, ordered nearly 4000 to march on rising ground to be shot. When Bonaparte saw the smoke from volleys of musketry and grape, it is said that he could not contain his joy.

Pity is the virtue of the law,  
And none but tyrants use it cruelly.

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### God Can Use Us

There are many reasons why God shouldn't have called you. But don't worry. You're in good company.

- Moses stuttered.
- David's armor didn't fit.
- John Mark was rejected by Paul.
- Timothy had ulcers.
- Hosea's wife was a prostitute.
- **Amos' only training was in the school of fig-tree pruning.**
- Jacob was a liar.
- David had an affair.

- Solomon was too rich.
- Jesus was too poor.
- Abraham was too old.
- David was too young.
- Peter was afraid of death.
- Lazarus was dead.
- John was self-righteous.
- Naomi was a widow.
- Paul was a murderer.
- So was Moses.
- Jonah ran from God.
- Miriam was a gossip.
- Gideon and Thomas both doubted.
- Jeremiah was depressed and suicidal.
- Elijah was burned out.
- John the Baptist was a loudmouth.
- Martha was a worry-wart.
- Mary was lazy.
- Samson had long hair.
- Noah got drunk.
- Did I mention that Moses had a short fuse?
- So did Peter, Paul—well, lots of folks did.

But God doesn't require a job interview. He doesn't hire and fire like most bosses, because He's more our Dad than our Boss. He doesn't look at financial gain or loss. He's not prejudiced or partial, not judging, grudging, sassy, or brassy, not deaf to our cry, not blind to our need.

As much as we try, God's gifts are free. We could do wonderful things for wonderful people and still not be...Wonderful.

Satan says, "You're not worthy."

Jesus says, "So what? I AM."

Satan looks back and sees our mistakes.

God looks back and sees the cross

The Fourth Dimension, November 1998, p. 5 (From 10,000 Sermon Illustrations)

## **Amos 1:1–2 Today in the Word**

To be an "outcast" or "untouchable" in India's oppressive Hindu caste system is to be cut off from power and to struggle for daily necessities. Recently, these "outcasts," now more frequently called Dalits, have responded to their plight by building a black granite temple in honor of "Goddess English." They believe that learning English can be a gateway to economic and educational opportunities they wouldn't otherwise have. In short, they are putting their faith in English for liberation and social justice. One leader said: "If your child learns English it's as if he or she has inherited 100 acres of land."

As we'll see in the book of Amos, God cares deeply about social justice. But it can't be found merely by trusting in a language to change your life. It comes from trusting God to change our lives. In this second book in our study of three minor prophets, we find again the themes of justice, judgment, blessing, and worship.

Amos was from the southern kingdom of Judah—his hometown of Tekoa was just south of Jerusalem—but most often his prophecies were directed to the northern kingdom of Israel. His name means "the Lord upholds." Though he called himself a "shepherd," he seems to have been more of a rancher or agricultural businessman, with large-scale operations involving sheep and orchards. His knowledge of history and literary skill mark him as an educated person and probably someone of higher socioeconomic status. Given the kings and earthquake referenced in Amos 1:1, his book can be dated around 755 B.C. Although the northern kingdom of Israel would be taken into captivity in 722 B.C., at this point both Israel and Judah were fairly stable and prosperous (see 2 Chronicles 26).

Spiritually, however, things were a disaster, and idolatry, sexual immorality, corruption, and oppression of the poor were common. The people believed their status as God's "chosen" would protect them no matter what. Thus, Amos's announcement of judgment would've come as a shock and would've been a difficult message to accept (Amos 1:2; cf. Joel 3:16). God sent His prophet to expose ugly spiritual realities and spur the people to repent of their sins.

Apply the Word

While God can use circumstances to get our attention, as with the plague of locusts in Joel, it is also true that circumstances can numb our ears to what God wants to say to us. Because things were going well economically and militarily, Israel and Judah did not take their sins against God seriously. In light of this, today might be a good day to pray for the spiritual state of our own communities and countries. We might be economically prosperous, but that does not mean we are holy!

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## **Amos 1:3–12 Today in the Word**

The sin of slavery looms large in American history, recently demonstrated again in an excavation of a famous “slave jail” in Richmond, Virginia. Slave trader Robert Lumpkin operated it during the 1840s and 1850s, trafficking tens of thousands of slaves. They called it the “Devil’s Half Acre,” and many people died there from abuse or disease. Since 1998, Richmond has been rediscovering and documenting this part of its history, including not only the jail but also a nearby “Negro Burial Ground” and the city’s slave marketplace. In today’s reading, Amos condemned the slave trade of his day, among other social evils.

The opening prophecies in this book would have been well received by the Israelites, because they were directed against the nation’s enemies, including Damascus, Philistia, Tyre, and Edom. Each oracle of judgment begins with, “This is what the Lord says.” The first was against Damascus, capital of Syria (Amos 1:3–5). They were guilty of “threshing” Gilead (part of Israelite territory), meaning they had kicked

them when they were down, taking unfair advantage at a time of weakness. While this was normal behavior in the culture of that day, it was unacceptable to God. The formula “for three sins ... even for four” means that the sins named here were just samples; in fact, they were guilty of much more. As a result, the fire of judgment would destroy Syria’s military strength and its people would go into exile.

The second oracle was against Philistia (Amos 1:6–8). They were guilty of selling captives into slavery, again, a culturally familiar practice that was unacceptable to God. The third oracle was against Tyre and Sidon (Amos 1:9–10). They, too, were guilty of profiting from the slave trade, in specific violation of a negotiated treaty, an act that showed a lack of integrity as well as a lack of respect for human life. The fourth oracle was against Edom (Amos 1:11–12). They were involved in the slave trade as well, and they were also condemned for treacherous actions toward Israel. In all three cases, the judgment was the same as for Damascus—a destroying fire.

### **Apply the Word**

Slavery remains a world-wide problem that God’s people should fight against. Sexual trafficking of women and children happens all over the globe, including in the United States. Debtor slavery is another form of oppression in which farmers or laborers are given no opportunity to erase their debt. Christian organizations like International Justice Mission work with domestic and international law enforcement to free captives and bring traffickers, pimps, and oppressors to justice.

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## **Amos 1:1-8**

### **TODAY IN THE WORD**

#### **The LORD roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem. - Amos 1:2a**

Nineteenth-century Anglican pastor Charles Bridges made this observation concerning the effect that sin has upon the nation: “No nation is so low, as not to sink under it. While in the mightiest people, it is a blot ... that no worldly glory can efface.”

We know that God is deeply interested in the righteousness of His people. But what does He expect of unbelievers? The book of Amos provides us with the answer. He shows us that everyone is accountable to God.

The introduction of the book of Amos indicates that the primary focus of the prophet’s ministry was directed toward the Northern Kingdom of Israel (v. 1). The book opens on a note of warning, with the Lord pictured as one who roars like a lion and shakes the earth like thunder (v. 2). As a result, there is widespread devastation from the lowest valleys, where the sheep were pastured, to the mountain heights. All had been blasted by drought. According to Amos, this was far more than a meteorological event. It was an act of divine judgment emanating from Israel’s God.

Yet instead of reproving the people of Israel for their sin, beginning in verse 3, Amos addressed Israel’s Gentile neighbors. Damascus and its ruling dynasty were condemned for using military tactics, which was so brutal that Amos compared it to a threshing sledge with iron teeth (v. 3). Gaza, Israel’s Philistine neighbor to the south, was singled out for selling entire communities of Israelites into slavery to Israel’s long-time enemies, the Edomites (v. 6). In each of these cases the predicted penalty would be a similar fate. The Lord promised to destroy their rulers and “send fire” upon their cities and fortifications (vv. 5, 7–8).

## TODAY ALONG THE WAY

If the Lord expected those who did not acknowledge Him as their God to treat their enemies with respect, what must He expect from those of us who know Christ? Jesus gave us the answer when He commanded us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:44). How have you been treating those you have trouble getting along with? Make a list of these people and use it as a basis for prayer. Pray sincerely for each person listed, and ask God to enable you to treat the difficult people in your life with respect and love. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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### Amos 1:1

F B Meyer

#### Our Daily Homily

Amos 1:1 The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekos.

God does not hesitate to employ a herdman, if only his heart is pure and devoted to his service. He calls such an one out of the midst of his fellows, designating him for his sacred ministry. And when the fire of God burns within, very common clay becomes luminous and transparent. An ox-goad, a ram's-horn, a sling of stone, will serve his purpose. It is not what a man has, but what he is, that matters.

As we look through this strong book of ancient prophecy, and notice how it abounds with references and imagery peculiar to a herdsman's life, we feel that a noble spirit of devotion to God may elevate the meanest employments and dignify the most ordinary subjects. The common incidents of the farm may convey the Divine meaning not less than the sacred scenery of the Temple, which was familiar to Ezekiel. There is nothing which is intrinsically common or unclean. We profane things by a profane spirit. But if we view all things from the Divine standpoint, we shall find that a sacred light will beat through them, like that which transfigured the coarse garments of Christ so as no fuller on earth could whiten them. The glory streamed through from his heart! It is comparatively seldom that God calls one of the upper classes of society to conspicuous usefulness. "Behold your calling, brethren, how that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God chose the weak things,... the base things,... and the things that are despised." Here and there a noble of great authority, a Zinzendorf, a Shaftesbury: but most often fishermen and publicans; Luther, the miner's son, Tersteegen the ribbon-weaver, Carey the cobbler.

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### Amos 1:9-15

#### TODAY IN THE WORD

But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you. - Luke 6:27

During one of his military campaigns, Napoleon's troops mounted an assault on the Russian city of Smolensk. In an effort to deprive the French general of the pleasure of his imminent victory, the inhabitants abandoned the city and set fire to it. When Napoleon asked his aides what they thought of the sight, one of them replied, "Horrible, sire." Napoleon snorted in disgust and snapped back, "Remember, gentlemen, as one of the Roman emperors remarked: The corpse of an enemy always smells sweet."

The prophet Amos disagrees. Today's passage points out that all is not fair in love and war. One of the chief complaints about Israel's neighbors in this chapter was that they had treated their enemies inhumanely in warfare. Amos 1:9-15 continue the litany of charges leveled against the pagan nations.

Israel's Phoenician neighbor Tyre is singled out for trafficking in the spoils of war because they had sold captured slaves to Edom. By engaging in this kind of business Tyre was "disregarding a treaty of brotherhood" (Amos 1:9). This may be a reference to Tyre's previous business relationship with Judah. The King of Tyre had supplied Solomon with lumber for the temple (1 Kings 5:1-12). Now Tyre enriched itself as a result of Israel's misfortune.

## TODAY ALONG THE WAY

We can sometimes be so intent on achieving our aims that we fail to consider the people that we have used in an effort to attain our goals. Think of a goal that you recently achieved. How did you treat others while you were in pursuit of it? Are there people you should thank or to whom you have not given due credit? Are there some that you owe ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

## Amos 2

### Amos 1:13–2:16 Today in the Word

In today's reading, God promised to crush Israel "as a cart crushes when loaded with grain" (Amos 2:13). A modern equivalent would be a monster truck rolling over everything in its path. A monster truck is a pickup truck with huge tires and suspension—current designs tend to resemble gigantic dune buggies. As monster truck rallies or jams, it might squash cars, motor homes, school buses, and even small airplanes as part of organized competitions, including a freestyling event judged on both crushing and creativity.

In today's reading, Amos continued with two additional oracles against Israel's enemies. The fifth oracle was against the Ammonites (Amos 1:13–15). They were guilty of military atrocities such as the killing and mutilation of pregnant women. The sixth oracle was against Moab (Amos 2:1–3). They were guilty of desecrating an enemy king's body, thus showing sinful disrespect. For these and other sins, the judgment in both cases was the same as yesterday—a destroying fire representing military defeat, exile, or death. If you look at a map, you can see that the seven nations condemned in today's and yesterday's readings form a circle around Israel.

The seventh and eighth oracles came as a surprise to Amos's hearers, for they were directed against Judah and Israel. They probably enjoyed hearing that justice would be done against their enemies, but to find their own sins as the "climax" and main target of the message was a shock. Judah was guilty of idolatry and disobedience and would also be judged by fire (Amos 2:4–5).

Israel was even worse. The northern kingdom was guilty of sins including idolatry, exploitation of the poor, injustice, oppression, greed, sexual immorality, drunkenness, and self-indulgence (Amos 2:6–16; cf. Deut. 15:7–11). They had "forgotten" God's character and what He had already done in their history, they had been unfaithful to the covenant. As a result, they were marked for destruction and would surely, despite their imagined immunity from judgment, be crushed. "The swift will not escape ... the warrior will not save his life."

#### Apply the Word

The fundamental sin was pride. Pride allowed them to believe that as God's "chosen people" they wouldn't be held accountable for the various forms of wickedness in which they were engaged. Pride blinded them to the truth of the character of God. As we know, however: "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18). Better to follow this proverb: "A man's pride will bring him low, but a humble spirit will obtain honor" (Prov. 29:23, NAS).

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Amos 2:1 - Bones burned. "The wickedness appears to have consisted in a wanton violation of the sanctity of the tomb, by the disinterment and burning of the royal remains. It was indicative of an enmity which was not satisfied with inflicting every possible injury upon its victim while living, but pursued him even into the regions of the dead." To exhume, burn, and disperse the bones of the dead, has often been adopted as a way of showing indignity. The bones of Wycliffe were disinterred and burnt, and Cromwell's remains were most indignantly treated.

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### Amos 2:1-5

#### TODAY IN THE WORD

I will send fire upon Judah that will consume the fortresses of Jerusalem. - Amos 2:5

Most of us who are parents have seen someone else's children behaving badly in the grocery store. Perhaps they threw a temper tantrum because mom or dad refused to buy them a toy. They may have pushed the grocery cart into other customers. On occasion we may have looked sternly at the child or even asked them to stop. Most of the time, however, we simply walked by, a little annoyed but grateful that our child was not the one making the fuss. When the disturbance is caused by one of our own children, however, our response is quite different.

This is also true of God. While He was angered by the sinful acts of the pagan nations that surrounded Jerusalem, He was also deeply concerned by the sins of His own people. In Amos 2:4 the prophet moves from Israel's pagan neighbors to Judah, its sister nation to the south. Employing the same formula used to accuse Moab and the other pagan nations in the preceding verses, the prophet condemned Judah. The formula "For three sins ... even for four," indicated that Judah's sin had grown to full measure.

Judah's sin, however, had gone one step further than the transgressions of Israel's pagan neighbors, who had sinned against man--Judah's sin was primarily against God. Judah had rejected God's Law and had followed the fake gods that had deceived their ancestors (Amos 2:4). Because of this, they would eventually face the same kind of fate as Israel's enemies. The Lord promised to

send “fire upon Judah that will consume the fortresses of Jerusalem” (Amos 2:5).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Do you have a double standard when it comes to sin? Do you want God to hold others accountable for their behavior and ignore your “little mistakes”? Those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ do not need to be afraid of being condemned by God (Ro 8:1). We should not conclude from this that God is indifferent about the way we live. Perhaps, like Israel, God may be using the example of others as an object lesson for you. Could He be trying to remind you that although you are forgiven, you are also accountable to Him ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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**Amos 2:4-5 In One Ear And Out the Other** - Three men went deer hunting, and as they crossed the field going to the woods, a huge buck jumped up in their path. All three fired at the same time. The buck dropped, and as they came up on the buck, they realized they had a problem. Which one of them shot the deer? As they discussed the problem, a game warden came along to check for hunting licenses. He offered to sort out the problem, examined the deer, and said, “One of you guys is a preacher, right?” And sure enough, one of them was. “Well, preacher, your shot is the one that got the buck.” Amazed, the guys asked how he knew one of them was a preacher and that the preacher’s shot was the one that scored. “Simple,” the game warden said, “It went in one ear and out the other.”

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**Amos 2:6-16 - MEDDLIN'** - Two elderly, excited Southern women were sitting together in the front pew of church listening to a fiery preacher. When this preacher condemned the sin of stealing, these two ladies cried out at the tops of their lungs, “AMEN, BROTHER!” When the preacher condemned the sin of lust, they yelled again, “PREACH IT, REVEREND!” And when the preacher condemned the sin of lying, they jumped to their feet and screamed, “RIGHT ON, BROTHER! TELL IT LIKE IT IS...AMEN!” But when the preacher condemned the sin of gossip, the two got very quiet, and one turned to the other and said, “He’s quit preaching and now he’s meddlin’.” Amos is now “meddlin’”

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#### Amos 2:6-16

#### TODAY IN THE WORD

I brought you up out of Egypt, and I led you forty years in the desert to give you the land of the Amorites. - Amos 2:10–11

As philosopher and author Ralph Waldo Emerson aged, his memory declined to the point where he often could not remember the names of friends. At the funeral of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, he said, “That gentleman has a sweet, beautiful soul, but I have entirely forgotten his name.”

Today’s passage reveals that God’s people also suffered from memory loss but of a far more serious kind. They had forgotten God’s redemptive work on their behalf and His Law.

After indicting many of Israel’s enemies, including the nation of Judah, Amos turned his attention to Israel itself. Using the same formula of condemnation that he had employed for Israel’s enemies, he warned that the nation of Israel would not escape punishment for its behavior.

The specific transgressions that Amos mentioned fell into three main categories. The first was the sin of enriching themselves at the expense of the poor. Amos criticized Israel of selling “the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals” (Amos 2:6). This probably alludes to the practice of selling debtors into slavery when they couldn’t pay off their loans.

The second major area of transgression mentioned by Amos was the sin of sexual immorality (Amos 2:7). Such immoral behavior often occurred in the context of pagan worship, which is the third area of sin mentioned in this passage (Amos 2:8). Interestingly, it is mentioned in combination with oppression of the poor. The custom of taking a poor man’s garment as collateral for a loan was strictly forbidden in God’s Law (Ex. 22:26–27).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY

What steps have you taken to make sure that you remember what God has done in your life? Consider keeping a journal or recording significant blessings in a “book of remembrance.” It is often a good thing to go back and remind yourself how God has worked in the past when you begin to feel unhappy with the present. Most of all, keep a record of the meaningful lessons you have learned from God’s Word. The psalmist declared, “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you” (Ps. 119:11). ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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#### Amos 2:13

**Our Daily Homily**

Amos 2:13 Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves.

Behold! This is like the hand which occurs in the margins of old books, to attract the reader's attention. It is God's special call to our heed.

Sin is very burdensome to God: especially the sins enumerated in this context. Look at the story of oppression in Amos 2:6; of licentiousness in Amos 2:7; of ingratitude in Amos 2:9; of drunkenness in Amos 2:12. These sins are aggravated when committed by his own people. Just as the groaning wain creaks and cries out under its load, so does the heart of God under our sins. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!" Should not we feel more as God does in this respect? Ought not we to bear the burden of sin, as Daniel did for his land and people?

What a fulfillment these words had in the life and death of our blessed Lord! The sheaves of our sins were laid on Him: for the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all. As He bore his cross through the streets of Jerusalem; as He lay crushed to the ground in Gethsemane; as He cried, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" — surely He was like a laden wagon, groaning under an almost insupportable load.

The r.v. gives another sense, which is not so true to the Hebrew, but it should be considered: "I will press you, as a cart presseth" and cuts deep ruts in the road. A discovery is announced of a process of turning silver into gold by a pressure of eighty tons on a square inch, and in very low temperature. Yes, pressure and the chilling effects of persecution, difficulty, and disappointment are God's methods of redeeming us from destruction, and turning our silver into gold. Oh, let us forsake our sins rather than compel Him to employ such an ordeal!

## Amos 3

### Amos 3:1-8

#### TODAY IN THE WORD

The lion has roared—who will not fear? - Amos 3:8a

When John F. Kennedy was President of the United States, his two young children Caroline and John would sometimes wander into his office. One famous photograph shows his son John playing beneath the President's desk. Because they were family members, they had a level of access to the President that others did not.

The nation of Israel also had the privilege of having a unique "family relationship." Along with the nation of Judah, they had been chosen to be God's people. In verse 1 the Lord refers to them as "the whole family I brought up out of Egypt." As such, they enjoyed a distinct privilege that was not shared by other nations. This privilege, however, also brought with it a responsibility. Those chosen by God were also liable to God for their response to Him. They had rejected God's truth and the warnings of His prophets. As a result, they were subject to His punishment (Amos 3:2).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Christians are often described in the New Testament with the same kind of language used to refer to God's Old Testament people. They are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God" (1 Peter 2:9). ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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### Amos 3:1–8 Today in the Word

Lions tend to hunt at night or early in the morning, when the weather is cooler. Most of the hunting is actually done by the lionesses rather than the male lions in a pride. Since they're not very fast, at least not compared to their prey, lions use patience and guile, including ambushes near waterholes. They prefer to stay hidden and use natural cover to stalk antelope and other food sources, often finishing with a short burst of speed and a bite to the neck.

"Does a lion roar in the thicket when it has no prey?" God asked in today's reading (Amos 3:4). In this case, the "lion" is the Lord and His "prey" is the northern kingdom of Israel. Summoned to His court (Amos 3:1), they were informed that not only did their

“chosen” status provide no immunity from judgment, but in fact that very status and the covenant in which it was grounded made them even more culpable for their offenses against God (Amos 3:2). He had chosen and redeemed them, and their covenant responsibility was to bear witness to His glory and exalt

Him among the nations. Not only had they failed to do this, but they had actually done the opposite.

This message gave Amos’s hearers a bitter jolt. To convince them He was serious, God asked a series of rhetorical questions (Amos 3:3–6). The picture of two people walking together reminded them of the covenant obligations they had violated. Then the image of the hunting lion conveyed the fact that God wasn’t bluffing. Lions don’t roar for nothing—this prophecy of judgment wasn’t an empty threat.

Third, the bird in a trap was a “gotcha” picture. They had been caught in their sins and were guilty as charged. Fourth, a trumpet doesn’t blow for no reason. Amos’s prophecy was like a trumpet, signaling impending disaster. Finally, “has not the Lord caused it?” (Amos 3:6) The seven enemy nations encircling Israel were nothing—the real problem was that Israel had earned the wrath of God! If the people ignored His warning, they would have only themselves to blame (Amos 3:7–8).

Apply the Word

How amazing that the people of Israel are pictured taking a walk with their friend God (Amos 3:3)! We use the phrase, “walk with the Lord,” so often that perhaps we’ve lost the amazement we should feel. The God of the universe has initiated a relationship with us—His Spirit indwells us so that we can walk with Him every hour of the day! The very thought should take our breath away. Reflect on this reality and thank Him for your walk today.

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## **Amos 3:3 Two Rivers**

**M.R. De Haan**

Read: 2 Corinthians 6:11-18

Can two walk together, unless they are agreed. —Amos 3:3

The Brule River, which is on the border between Michigan and Wisconsin, flows for miles with clear, sparkling water. It is inhabited by an abundant population of speckled, rainbow, and brown trout. At one point the Iron River, muddy and thick with sediment of ore and clay, merges with the Brule.

Where these two rivers join, the clear waters of the Brule flow alongside the muddy waters of the Iron for a short distance. Soon the waters are mixed into one stream. Now consider what happens—the clear waters of the Brule do not cleanse the waters of the Iron, but vice versa. The muddy waters of the Iron pollute the whole stream.

Likewise, entering into a close relationship with evil will corrupt a Christian. Partnering with an unsaved person in business or in marriage is contrary to God’s will (2 Cor. 6:14-15). Remaining pure and getting the unbeliever to change is as difficult as keeping the waters of the Brule and Iron separate in the same channel.

Christian, shun the unequal yoke! Retain your separate position in every sphere of life. Never consider uniting with an unbeliever. How “can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” (Amos 3:3).

“Keep yourself pure” (1 Tim. 5:22).

Lord, be in my thoughts, my words, my actions,

That I may be a river flowing clean;

Keep me from a partnership with evil,

So Christ the living water may be seen. —Hess

If you walk with Christ, you can't run with the world.

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## **Amos 3:3**

**F B Meyer**

**Our Daily Homily**



Amos 3:3 Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

This is the first of seven searching questions, to each of which there is but one answer—Certainly not.

We are conducted, first, to the forest, to the lion's lair, where the roaring indicates that he has certainly secured his prey. There is a cause for those low roars of satisfaction. Then to the moorland, where the bird is suddenly entrapped. But there must have been an intention to entrap it on the part of the fowler, else it had not fallen to his hand. Lastly, to the city, where the panic-stricken crowds cower before some giant evil, such as pestilence, and tremble at the bugle-note of alarm. Here also, whether in the sounding of the trumpet, or the presence of the plague, there is an evident reason. Thus sorrow, causeless, does not come; and whenever it presses on the individual or the State, inquiry should be made whether God has any controversy with those who suffer beneath the stroke.

Often, in answer to such inquiry, it will be discovered that the soul is not in agreement with God; but at some almost imperceptible angle its metals have diverged from the main track of God's wise and holy procedure. And the trouble will remain until the nation or the individual have come back into agreement with God. It is worth our while to make any sacrifices, if only we may get back to God's side.

Whether in marriage, or business, or journeying together, be very sure that you are in perfect accord with your companion before you start. What sorrow might have been saved in thousands of cases, if only there had been stricter comparison of temperaments and methods before starting forth!

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**Amos 3:3 - Agreeing with God** - How can God and His people walk together if they don't walk in agreement? If you are going to claim that Yahweh is the God you worship, then you will learn to care about the things that Yahweh cares about.

Illustration - The obstacle in the path - In ancient times, a king had a boulder placed on a roadway. Then he hid himself and watched to see if anyone would remove the huge rock. Some of the king's wealthiest merchants and courtiers came by and simply walked around it. Many loudly blamed the king for not keeping the roads clear, but none did anything about getting the big stone out of the way. Then a peasant came along carrying a load of vegetables. On approaching the boulder, the peasant laid down his burden and tried to move the stone to the side of the road. After much pushing and straining, he finally succeeded. As the peasant picked up his load of vegetables, he noticed a purse lying in the road where the boulder had been. The purse contained many gold coins and a note from the king indicating that the gold was for the person who removed the boulder from the roadway. This peasant had a heart for the same thing that the king cared about. It pays to be in "agreement" with the king. - Rich Cathers

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**Amos 3:4** - A lion doesn't roar while it's hunting, but will roar afterwards to tell the other animals to stay away from his kill. Amos' point is that if a lion has roared, then the hunt is over. He has already caught his prey. - Rich Cathers

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**Amos 3:7** - No surprises - God always warns His people. God's people can't ever say, "I never saw it coming" when it comes to God's judgment. There is always plenty of warning. Note: If judgment came because God hates you, why would He warn you? He warns you because He loves you and wants you to change.

Illustration - A couple of pastors from local churches were standing by the road, pounding a sign into the ground that read: The End is Near! Turn Yourself Around Now Before It's Too Late! As a car sped past them, the driver yelled, "Leave us alone, you religious nuts!" From the curve they heard ... (screeching tires) and a big splash. One pastor turns to the other and asks, "Do you think the sign should just say 'Bridge Out'?" - Rich Cathers

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**Amos 3:10** - Israel is acting like the gal that's been told to add a quart of oil to her engine ...[Play Engine Oil clip](#) Actually it sounds a lot like us. Illustration - We have too many men of science, too few men of God. We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount. ... Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living.-- Gen. Omar N. Bradley in a 1948 Armistice Day address.

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**Amos 3:9-15**

#### **TODAY IN THE WORD**

"They do not know how to do right," declares the LORD, "who hoard plunder and loot in their fortresses." - Amos 3:10

In an address to the House of Commons on December 21, 1937, Winston Churchill declared: "Moral force is, unhappily, no substitute for armed force, but it is a very great reinforcement." However, when armed force is cut off from moral force, the result is tragic. This is what happened to Israel. They lost their moral bearings and became a nation of people "who hoard plunder and loot in

their fortresses” (Amos 3:10).

Speaking for God, Amos described an imaginary court scene in which witnesses are called to observe and verify the corrupt behavior of Israel. Ironically, those who were chosen for this task were pagans. Ashdod, the first to be mentioned, was one of the five principal cities of the Philistines. Perhaps Ashdod was chosen because its own city wall had been broken down during the prophet’s lifetime (2 Chron. 26:6). Possibly it was because Ashdod would eventually suffer the same fate as Israel. The other witnesses called to testify against God’s people were Israel’s former masters, the Egyptians. Both Ashdod and Egypt were called to assemble on the mountains of Samaria and witness Israel’s unrest and oppression (v. 9). A minimum of two witnesses was required by Mosaic law for a conviction in a capital crime (Deut. 17:6).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Can you think of a time when you realized that you had overlooked a biblical principle when making a decision or engaging in an action? What were the circumstances that made it easy for you to “forget” to do right? We ought to be concerned about doing the right thing, not merely because of what it says about our view of God, but also because of what it says about us (1 John 3:7). When you encounter those circumstances again, rely on God’s strength to choose what is right. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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#### Amos 3:9-15 Today in the Word

On a Saturday night in 1969, Florida A&M and the University of Tampa played the first interracial college football game in the South. Florida A&M had long fielded a dominant football team among black colleges, while the up-and-coming University of Tampa team was “overwhelmingly white.” A race riot had occurred just two years earlier in the city. What would happen at the game? The stands were packed. The cheers were deafening. Throughout the offensive battle, the fans, players, and coaches behaved well, knowing they were making history. Florida A&M claimed the victory, with the final score of 34-28.

This football game, a little-known civil rights and sports milestone, struck a blow against the injustice of racial segregation. In today’s reading, the Lord testified against the sins of His people, including social injustice. Since Israel had so utterly failed to be an upright witness to the nations, the nations were summoned to see God’s justice in action (Amos 3:9, 13). Even pagans would agree that God’s people were guilty and deserved punishment. Specifically, Israel was guilty of oppression, moral foolishness (not knowing how to do right), greed and exploiting the poor (hoarding plunder and loot), and lack of care (barricading themselves in fortresses). Divine judgment would relieve them of the illicit spoils in which they had sinfully placed their hope. The destruction would be so severe that only a remnant would be saved, like a small body part of a sheep being saved from a lion’s mouth.

God’s attack would destroy the altars at Bethel, the northern kingdom’s national center of worship (Amos 3:14-15; see 1 Kings 12:26-30). Since idolatry was their most heinous sin, He would strike at its heart. Cutting off the horns of the altar meant that no protection was left—there was nowhere they could hide or flee. In addition, He would destroy “the winter house along with the summer house,” that is, the luxuries and self-indulgences enjoyed by the rich oppressors. “Declares the Lord” makes this righteous judgment a certainty.

#### Apply the Word

As we see in today’s reading, money can be a powerful temptation. Paul warned, “The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim. 6:6-10). This doesn’t mean that money itself is evil. As with any resource, the point is to be good stewards, earning and using money in obedience to God’s will. If money is earned unjustly or used selfishly, God is not pleased. Instead, we are to be content with what we have, whether little or much (Heb. 13:5; Phil. 4:11-13).

## Amos 4

#### Amos 4:1-5

#### TODAY IN THE WORD

God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth. - John 4:24

In his book *Practical Religion*, J. C. Ryle warns about what he calls formal religion. “When a man is a Christian in name only, and not in reality--in outward things only, and not in his inward feelings--in profession only, and not in practice--when his Christianity in short is a mere matter of form, or fashion, or custom, without any influence on his heart or life--in such a case as this the man has what I call a ‘formal religion.’ He possesses indeed the form, or husk, or skin of religion, but he does not possess its substance or its

power.”

Israel practiced formal religion. Amos 4:1–5 criticizes the people of Israel for believing that their religious practices could compensate for their self-indulgent and sinful lifestyle. He begins this section with a caricature of the wealthy women of Samaria, calling them “cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria” (Amos 4:1). Bashan was one of the most prosperous areas of Samaria, known for its rich soil.

This natural fertility, however, was not the only reason for the luxurious lifestyle enjoyed by the women of Bashan. Their wealth and success had been built on the backs of the poor. They are pictured as callous and selfish. Women who oppress the poor and needy and in the same breath call upon their husbands to bring them more drinks. Later on these same women would be carried into captivity with hooks. When the Assyrian army finally invaded, the city defenses would fall and they would be driven into captivity through the breaches in the wall made by their enemies (Amos 4:2–3).

Amos warned that judgment was inevitable and would not be forestalled by Israel’s hypocritical religious practices. With a note of sarcasm, the Lord commanded the people of Samaria to “go to Bethel and sin” and to “go to Gilgal and sin yet more” (Amos 4:4). Both were places where false worship had been carried out for many years. With a note of irony, the Lord challenged the people of Israel saying: “Burn leavened bread as a thank offering and brag about your freewill offerings--boast about them, you Israelites, for this is what you love to do” (Amos 4:5).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Religious practices can be good, but religious practices alone will not please God. How do we know whether our practices are the kind that God accepts? ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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#### Amos 4:1–8 Today in the Word

“Black Angus” beef commands top dollar these days. The label stands out in grocery stores and on restaurant menus. As popular as red and white Herefords used to be, now these black cows appear to be the most coveted breed of American cattle. The “certified Angus beef” brand has been advertised and promoted so successfully that the market has followed. Black cows now sell for more than any other color of cow. The perception among American consumers is that Black Angus beef now has superior quality or taste.

The “cows of Bashan” in today’s reading were also considered the top of the line. A sarcastic metaphor for rich and powerful women, the “cows of Bashan” were oppressors of the poor and needy. One can almost see them sitting by the pool, calling for more drinks, callously pursuing their self-indulgent lifestyle at the expense of others (Amos 4:1). Amos 4 is generally regarded as the second of three main sermons or messages directed against Israel. (Chapter 3 was the first; the third is found in chapters 5 and 6.) While the first message focused straightforwardly on sin and judgment, the second sermon goes into more depth concerning how the people had ignored warnings, multiplied sin, and refused to repent. It’s a powerful indictment.

For the uncaring leaders and other power brokers, justice was coming at the hands of a sovereign God (Amos 4:2–3). The “cows of Bashan” would be led away with hooks through their noses—an image that would be literally fulfilled in how the Assyrians treated their prisoners of war. Their sins were serious business, serious enough for God to swear by His own holiness to accomplish justice. The people were sarcastically encouraged to ignore this prophecy and keep on sinning (Amos 4:4–5). Go ahead, God said, keep bringing sacrifices and playing the hypocrite. Do you imagine I don’t see? Do you think I won’t respond? You’re kidding yourselves! Though He had given them many warnings and opportunities to repent, they had ignored and rejected them all (Amos 4:6–8; cf. Deuteronomy 28).

#### Apply the Word

The Israelites went through the motions of worshiping God, all the while bowing down before idols and pursuing greed, immorality, and other vices. Do we go through the motions on Sunday mornings, while living as we please from Monday to Saturday? Do we talk the talk but not walk the walk? If we are culpable of hypocrisy, self-indulgence, and a lack of concern for the needy, we should take warning from today’s passage and stop kidding ourselves.

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#### Amos 4:12 - A Dry Run -

Many times we will see groups like, Hazardous Waste Emergency Response Teams and other First Responders, plan and go through a simulated exercise to make sure they are ready for the real thing if and when it may occur. That is called a DRY RUN.

The DRY RUN that I am referring to is when one may have a Near Death experience from an accident, a heart attack, a stroke, etc. I am convinced that these experiences are purposeful. I believe that the Lord may take a lost person through a Dry Run with Death to show them that they are not Prepared to Die and to Meet Him.

Many people have reported how they turned to Jesus for salvation after having such a brush with death, and in that moment they realized they were not ready to go out into eternity and meet the Lord. If you have had such an experience, do not pass it off as just a part of life. Think about it!!

## **A DEVASTATING REPORT -**

How devastating it must have been for many to have heard the Prophet Amos to really be declaring to them that The End Had Come. Many have turned to the Lord upon receiving a devastating report from their Doctor that their end was near. My Mother was diagnosed with Colon Cancer and after several rounds of Chemo Treatments I was with her when her Doctor told her that they were doing no good and that there was nothing more they could do for her, but to try to control her pain in the last days and hours of her life. Many of you have been there also. Many have turned to Jesus after receiving such a Devastating Report. Others have had a knock on the door or a phone call, giving them the Devastating Report of a loved one's death. My sister came to Jesus just days after her first husband was killed in a car wreck. The Lord will not waste a broken heart. He will use it to call you to Himself. If you are still a lost soul and somewhere in your past you have had a devastating report, did you recognize that Jesus was calling you as a broken – hearted sinner and a heavy laden sufferer to Repent and Turn to Him for Salvation? Think About It!! It is not too late to still turn to Him today!!

- [Jack Woodard](#)

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## **Amos 4:6-13**

### **TODAY IN THE WORD**

Therefore this is what I will do to you, Israel, and because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel. - Amos 4:12

The English Puritan Thomas Brooks observed that holiness was not a natural condition for human beings. "Ah, sirs, holiness is a flower that grows not in Nature's garden," he wrote. "Men are not born with holiness in their hearts, as they are born with tongues in their mouths: holiness is a divine offspring: it is a pearl of great price, that is to be found in no nature but a renewed nature, in no bosom but a sanctified bosom."

Because of this, repentance is the gateway to true holiness. Since we are sinners by nature, only those who first recognize their need for God's grace and forgiveness can hope to be made holy. For believers, the first mark of true holiness is not the appearance of sinless perfection but a heart that responds to divine reproof.

The Lord reminded the Israelites of the many methods He had used to prompt them to repent and turn from their sins. He sent widespread drought, so that people "staggered from town to town for water but did not get enough to drink." When this had no effect He became more selective, withholding rain from one field and sending it upon another. He struck their gardens with blight, mildew, and locusts. He destroyed their young men and animals through pestilence and warfare. He even resorted to more spectacular methods that destroyed some towns entirely. Those who survived were "like a burning stick snatched from the fire" (vv. 6–11).

### **TODAY ALONG THE WAY**

"Meeting" God is not a happy experience for everyone. The prophet's warning to Israel is a sobering reminder that God's patience is unlimited but His timetable is not. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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## **Amos 4:6**

**June 29, 2005**

### **Come Back**

### **READ: Amos 4:4-13**

"You have not returned to Me," says the Lord. —Amos 4:6

The Old Testament book of Amos has given us some memorable phrases: "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" (3:3). "Prepare to meet your God" (4:12). "Let justice run down like water" (5:24).

But the most-repeated phrase in Amos occurs five times in chapter 4. Time after time the Lord speaks of all He has done to discipline His wayward, self-indulgent people and draw them back to Himself. In every case the response is the same: "'You have not returned to Me,' says the Lord" (Amos 4:6,8-11).

As we read and marvel at their hardness of heart, we must also ask if the same could be true of us. If we have sensed that the Lord has been trying to get our attention, how have we responded to Him?

The prophecy of Amos contains warnings of judgment, captivity, and destruction. Yet there are calls for repentance and promises of restoration: "Seek good and not evil, that you may live; so the Lord God of hosts will be with you" (5:14).

The book of Amos has many memorable phrases, but we should never forget God's invitation to all who have wandered away from Him: Return to Me.

If you haven't returned, do it now. —David C. McCasland

I've strayed, O Lord, and turned aside,

I've disobeyed Your voice;

But now with contrite heart I turn

And make Your will my choice. —D. De Haan

True repentance turns from the wrong and returns to the right.

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### Amos 4:9–13 Today in the Word

A near-shipwreck off the coast of Georgia led a young Anglican pastor, John Wesley, to reflect on whether he had genuine faith in Christ. Back in England after a failed ministry in the New World, he felt his heart "strangely warmed" during a reading of Martin Luther's preface to Romans. "I felt I did trust in Christ," he said, "Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death." An itinerant preacher and evangelist and the founder of Methodism, he called himself "a brand plucked from the fire" (Zech. 3:2)—a reference to his amazing rescue from a fire as a child, and a tribute to God's grace in his life.

"A brand [or burning stick] plucked from the fire" is a phrase also found in today's reading (Amos 4:11). In context, it means that only a remnant had been rescued from God's previous judgments. The people should have learned from all the disasters they had experienced, including locusts and military defeat (Amos 4:9–10). These were natural or social catastrophes, but with a deeper supernatural cause—God was trying to get their attention. Unfortunately, this historical recitation is punctuated by the refrain, "yet you have not returned to me." Their ears were deaf to God's shouting—their hard hearts remained obstinately closed.

Therefore, Israel was warned to "prepare to meet your God" (Amos 4:12). It was time for the sin to stop. It was time for justice to be done. The solemn tone in these verses has the ring of a judge pronouncing sentence on a convicted prisoner. Finally, rather than repeating the description of the coming disaster or the list of sins for which they had been condemned, the concluding verse of Amos's sermon highlights the almighty and sovereign nature of God and His absolute right to pronounce sentence (v. 13). God's people seemed to have "forgotten" who He is, although the evidence was all around them in the created world and in the fact that He "reveals his thoughts to mankind." They should have known better!

#### Apply the Word

In the midst of the awesomeness of Amos 4:13, it is comforting to read that God "reveals his thoughts to mankind." The fact that He has revealed Himself in both nature and Scripture is a tremendous encouragement. Without revelation, there is no chance of a relationship with God. We are reminded that we're not headed for an impersonal "doom" or "fate," but for justice as determined by a loving God. Because of this truth, we have hope!

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**Amos 4:11 - Brand Plucked out of the Fire**- John Wesley's father, Samuel, was a dedicated pastor, but there were those in his parish who did not like him. On February 9, 1709, a fire broke out in the rectory at Epworth, possibly set by one of the rector's enemies. Young John, not yet six years old, was stranded on an upper floor of the building. Two neighbors rescued the lad just seconds before the roof crashed in. One neighbor stood on the other's shoulders and pulled young John through the window. Samuel Wesley said, "Come, neighbors, let us kneel down. Let us give thanks to God. He has given me all my eight children. Let the house go. I am rich enough." John Wesley often referred to himself as a "brand plucked out of the fire" (Zech 3:2; Amos 4:11). In later years he often noted February 9 in his journal and gave thanks to God for His mercy. Samuel Wesley labored for 40 years at Epworth and saw very little fruit; but consider what his family accomplished! - Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching and Preachers, W. Wiersbe, Moody Press

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## **Amos 4:12**

**F B Meyer**

### **Our Daily Homily**

Amos 4:12 Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

These words might have rung out in Paradise. When the heat of the day was over, the voice of the Lord might have been heard sounding down the leafy avenues: Prepare, O man, to meet thy God! And the summons must have filled him with ecstasy. As a child to its parent, so must those two innocent and happy beings have sped to their Creator.

We, too, hear the summons. Each morning, when we stand ready for the duties of the day, we hear the voice, Prepare to meet Me. Each Lord's Day we wake with this same summons in our heart, and prepare ourselves to meet our God. Each illness, each fluttering of the canvas of our mortality, each premonition of our end, takes up the same appeal, Prepare to meet God. And as we hear the words, we have no dread, no fear. Clothed in Christ's perfect righteousness, arrayed in his beauty, we know that we are accepted; that the love wherewith the Father loves the Son is waiting to greet us.

But there should be a preparedness of heart. We should not rush heedlessly into his presence. We should stimulate our hearts by thoughts like those suggested in the following verse. Stop and remember how great God is: He formed the mountains. How subtle his power: He made the viewless wind, and the Spirit of which it is the emblem. How omniscient his knowledge: He can declare unto man his inmost thought. How absolute his authority the brightest morning will darken, or the darkest night brighten, as He bids. How vast the circuit of his providence, who steps from Alpine peak to peak. Let me not rush into his presence: He is my Father. But He is the Lord, the God of hosts: I must order my thoughts, and prepare to meet Him.

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## **Amos 4:12 - 1,000th Birthday**

**By Dennis Fisher**

**Read: Amos 4:7-13**

Prepare to meet your God! —Amos 4:12

In his book *Long for This World*, Jonathan Weiner writes about science's promise to radically extend how long we live. At the center of the book is English scientist Aubrey de Grey, who predicts that science will one day offer us 1,000-year lifespans. Aubrey claims that molecular biology has finally placed a cure for aging within our reach.

But what difference does it make if, after living 1,000 years, we will eventually die anyway? De Grey's prediction only postpones facing the ultimate question of what happens when we die. It does not answer it.

The Scriptures tell us that death is not the end of our existence. Instead, we are assured that everyone will stand before Christ—believers for their works and nonbelievers for their rejection of Him (John 5:25-29; Rev. 20:11-15). All of us are sinners and in need of forgiveness. And only Christ's death on the cross has provided forgiveness for all who believe (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). The Bible says, "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27).

Our appointed face-to-face encounter with God puts everything in perspective. So whether we live 70 years or 1,000, the issue of eternity is the same: "Prepare to meet your God!" (Amos 4:12).

What matters more than length of life

Is where you'll spend eternity;

If you have placed your faith in Christ,

Then heaven's glory you will see. —Sper

Only those who have placed their faith in Christ are prepared to meet their Maker.

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## **Amos 4:12 - Be Prepared!**

**By Richard De Haan**

**Read: Luke 12:16-21**

Prepare to meet your God. —Amos 4:12

The story is told of a nobleman who died very suddenly. Immediately his personal servant ran to tell the other servants of the household that their master was dead. He asked with gravity, "Where has he gone?" The servants replied, "Why, to heaven, to be sure." "No," said the man, "I am certain he has not gone to heaven."

Somewhat surprised, the others asked him how he knew their master had not gone to heaven. The man replied, "Because heaven is a long way off, and I've never known my master to take a long trip in his life but what he talked of it beforehand and made thorough preparation for it. And I never heard him say a word about this journey, nor ever saw him getting ready for it."

It's true that we are saved by grace through faith in Christ—not by how much we talk about it (Eph. 2:8). Yet it's strange when people think they're going to heaven but never mention it nor read God's Word.

The rich fool in Luke 12 wasn't prepared when the Lord said, "This night your soul will be required of you." If you seldom think about heaven and never discuss it, could it be you're not going there? One way or another, you are going to meet God. Are you prepared?

O to be ready when death shall come!

O to be ready to hasten Home!

And sweetly, gently, to pass away

From earth's dim twilight into day. —Anon.

Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people.

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## Amos 4:12

### Life's Final Deadline

#### Our Daily Bread

"Prepare to meet your God" - Amos 4:12

We're all confronted with deadlines! Bills must be paid, licenses renewed, tax returns filed-- the list goes on and on.

One deadline we all face is of supreme importance, however. The Bible says, "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

Except for believers who are living when Jesus returns (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), everyone will die. And all people from the beginning of history will stand before God in judgment. How foolish to neglect the preparation necessary for this inevitable accounting!

In Luke 12, Jesus told a parable of a rich man who planned to build bigger barns to store all his earthly goods so that he could live out his days in pleasure and ease. But God unexpectedly announced, "Fool! This night your soul will be required of you" (Luke 12:20). His ultimate deadline had arrived.

Are you ready to meet God? If you've never received Christ, as your personal Savior, do so without delay! Believe that He shed His blood on the cross to forgive your sins, and that He conquered death by rising from the grave. Ask Him to save you. Then you can face life's final deadline with confidence! - Richard W. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Life is uncertain,  
Death is sure;  
Sin the cause,  
Christ the cure.- Anon

Don't wait till the 11th hour to repent --you may die at 10:30!

## Amos 5

### Amos 5:1-17



## TODAY IN THE WORD

You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts. - Amos 5:12

Martin Luther King Jr. once observed that a great nation is a compassionate nation. He also noted that we have become comfortable with the presence of the poor because we overlook their existence. "The poor have been shut out of our minds and driven from the mainstream of our societies, because we have allowed them to become invisible," he explained. This is the same complaint that was leveled against the people of Israel in the book of Amos.

On the heels of the sober invitation of Amos 4:12 to "prepare to meet your God," the Lord appealed to Israel to turn to Him. In Amos 5:4 the Lord urged the house of Israel to "seek me and live." God's people were warned not to go to Bethel, Gilgal or Beersheba--all locations associated with idolatrous worship--in an effort to escape the coming judgment.

Those who attempted to protect Israel from doom that awaited them would themselves be decimated regardless of their might (Amos 5:3). When the time came for "Virgin Israel" to fall, no one but God would be able to provide refuge. The invitation to seek God, although gracious, was also coupled with a grave threat. "Seek the LORD and live, or he will sweep through the house of Joseph like a fire; it will devour, and Bethel will have no one to quench it" (Amos 5: 6).

In Amos 5:7-12 Israel's crimes are listed. They are said to have poisoned justice (Amos 5:7). They also had contempt for the truth. Motivated by greed, they had perverted the justice system so that it favored those who could afford to pay a bribe (Amos 5:10, 12). Consequently, they had produced a society that was biased against the poor. They forced the poor to earn a living as sharecroppers and then charged them exorbitant prices in rent. They used the legal system to keep the poor from getting the justice. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

## TODAY ALONG THE WAY

The Bible often reminds us that one of the marks of holiness is to have a concern for the poor. Is there a practical way for you to reflect God's interest in the poor by your actions? Perhaps you could volunteer to help at a homeless shelter or you could include a Christian relief organization in your giving. Find out if there's a program of helping the poor at your church that you could join. Proverbs 19:17 promises

He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done.

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## Amos 5:1–6 Today in the Word

Ronald Reagan was known as "The Great Communicator." Among numerous memorable speeches that he delivered during his presidency, few are as poignant as his words after the disastrous Challenger space shuttle disintegration that killed seven astronauts. He closed his address to a grieving nation with words from the poem "High Flight," by John Gillespie Magee Jr.: "We will never forget them, nor the last time we saw them, this morning, as they prepared for their journey and waved goodbye and 'slipped the surly bonds of Earth to touch the face of God'."

Today's reading is Amos's lament for the devastation resulting from God's coming judgment on Israel. A lament is a literary form expressing grief over a death or tragedy, in this case, a future tragedy (Amos 5:1). The anticipated disaster was the fall of Israel. The nation was represented as a virgin bride, a picture of purity and commitment to the covenant relationship. The tragedy was that this "virgin" had been unfaithful and strayed far from the covenant, as we've already seen throughout Amos. As a result, she will be left deserted and helpless, like a dead body abandoned in a field—an image of joy turned to one of despair. This was certainly not how Israel imagined its future!

As part of this lament poem, God made two pronouncements concerning Israel (Amos 5:3–6). The first emphasized the completeness of the nation's coming defeat. A thousand soldiers might march out to war, but only a hundred would come home. The military conquest by Assyria would be a crushing defeat, total annihilation.

The second pronouncement was another call to repentance. God urged the people, "Seek me and live." Do not go to Bethel and other sites of idolatry and hypocrisy, He said, for there's no hope there. The gods they followed would be powerless to help them. One option was repentance and a restored relationship with the Lord. The other option was defeat, exile, and God as a devouring fire. They were going to meet God, either as a loving Forgiver or as a holy Judge. The choice was theirs.

## Apply the Word

Amos knew that God's judgment on Israel was just and righteous, yet he still mourned the destruction to come. This is a helpful model for us. We can acknowledge God's holiness and sovereignty and still feel grief at the suffering caused by sin. In our own lives,



this lament should cause us to repent from sin and embrace the forgiveness and restoration offered by the Lord. Psalm 51 provides a beautiful template for our confession in these circumstances.

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## **Amos 5:7–17 Today in the Word**

A recent report found that every year, one out of every 50 children in America is homeless. That's about 1.5 million children. Forty-two percent are younger than age six. Consequences include poor health and lost education opportunities. The report said these numbers could rise if home foreclosures also rise, and found that the worst states for child homelessness are Texas, Georgia, Arkansas, New Mexico, and Louisiana. The long-term consequences for these children and their communities remind us that child homelessness is a social injustice that needs more attention, resources, and remedies.

Social injustice was one of the sins for which Israel was condemned in today's reading. It was these and other sins that had put them on the wrong side of God's wrath. Israel and the Lord were supposed to be in a faithful covenant relationship, but Israel had been continuously unfaithful. They were sinning. He is holy. The status quo simply could not continue!

Today's reading again feels like a courtroom scene in which a judge is reading out a sentence to a convicted criminal. Israel was guilty of discarding righteousness and turning justice to bitterness, that is, of doing the exact opposite of what they ought to have been doing (Amos 5:7). The goodness and integrity of the Judge, by contrast, were beyond question (Amos 5:8–9). God is the creator of the universe and sustains it by His great power. He is Lord over all, and is not to be mocked. Israel was guilty of hating truth, refusing correction, exploiting the poor, and other social and spiritual evils (Amos 5:10–13). Their self-deception was so thorough that God had to repeatedly expose their sins through His prophets.

He also repeatedly offered the people opportunities to repent and turn from their wickedness (Amos 5:14–15). Seeking the Lord is equated in these verses with seeking life and goodness and justice and mercy, for He is all these things. Fail to do this, God warned, and tears and grief would be the result (Amos 5:16–17). Judgment had been rendered and punishment would be administered, if they persisted in their sinful ways.

### **Apply the Word**

Standing for justice in the larger society is part of what it means to be "salt and light" and to follow Christ (Matt. 5:13–16). Whether the issue is the exploitation of the poor or the killing of the unborn, we as Christians need to take a stand for what is right. That might be through voting, volunteering, giving, social activism, or other means. In the words of another prophet: "Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another" (Zech. 7:9).

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## **Amos 5:8**

### **F B Meyer**

#### **Our Daily Homily**

Amos 5:8 Seek Him that maketh the Pleiades and Orion. (r.v.)

This chapter resounds with invitations to seek God. He makes the Pleiades, which usher in the spring: seek Him when life is full of radiant hope and promise, in days of love and joy. But He also makes Orion, the precursor of tempests; be sure, therefore, to seek Him when the sky is overcast and lowering, and when He presses you to enter the boat and face the storm.

He turns the shadow of death into the morning. Thank God for this. There is a turning of death-shadow into morning, when despair gives place to hope; when the dear one begins to revive from sore sickness; when circumstances begin to brighten; and when the perplexity and darkness of this mortal life, with its separations and misunderstandings, shall brighten with the eternal day. Weave thoughts of God into all these glad experiences; but not less so, when He makes the day dark with night. It may be that you will come closest to Him then; as the little child will sit on the far side of the railway carriage from her mother till they enter a tunnel, and then there will be a little startled cry and a rush to the mother's knee.

Sometimes the waters of the sea pour in on the land, engulfing the works of men, and devastating their toils. But amid all such scenes of desolation, the righteous have a secure hiding-place, suggested by the reference to the name Jehovah, with which this verse closes. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth unto it, and is safe."

"Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure; What entered into thee, That was, is, and shall be; Time's wheel runs back or stops—Potter and clay endure."

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## Amos 5:10 - HANDLING CRITICISM

Samuel Brengle, who was noted for his sense of holiness, felt the heat of caustic criticism. Instead of rushing to defend himself, he replied: "From my heart I thank you for your rebuke. I think I deserved it. Will you, my friend, remember me in prayer?" When another critic attacked his spiritual life, Brengle replied: "I thank you for your criticism of my life. It set me to self-examination and heart-searching and prayer, which always leads me into a deeper sense of my utter dependence on Jesus for holiness of heart, and into sweeter fellowship with Him." How do you handle it when someone corrects you?

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**Amos 5:19-20** - Amos is painting a picture of one calamity happening after another. First a man flees from a lion, only to meet a bear. It reminds me of a story...

**Illustration** - Two men are walking through a forest. Suddenly, they see a bear in the distance, running towards them. They turn and start running away. But then one of them stops, takes some running shoes from his bag, and starts putting them on. "What are you doing?" says the other man. "Do you think you will run fast than the bear with those?" "I don't have to run faster than the bear," he says. "I just have to run faster than you."

When the guy escapes from the bear, he runs into his house and is bit by a snake.

It will be a little bit like the plagues on Egypt in the book of Exodus, or the judgments in Revelation. It is one bad thing after another. - [Rich Cathers](#)

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## Amos 5:8 Breathless

By Dave Branon

Read: Psalm 8

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth. —Psalm 57:5

Bible in a Year:

Leviticus 4-5; Matthew 24:29-51

When was the last time something took your breath away because of its majesty?

I'm not talking about an electronic gadget or some special effects in a movie. I'm talking about a nighttime sky show such as an eclipse of the moon. Or walking outside on a starry night to see Orion or Pleiades—constellations mentioned thousands of years ago in Scripture (Amos 5:8) that are still glowing today for our enjoyment. I'm speaking of a bursting dawn that radiates with glorious colors to signal another sunrise. Or the sound and light show that accompanies God's way of watering the earth with food-producing rain (Job 36:27-33).

Have you stood by a fence and marveled at the power of a horse as it gallops gallantly through the field, mane flowing and hoofs pounding? (39:19-25). Or watched a soaring, swooping eagle drop from the sky because his God-designed vision has sighted supper from his mountain-peak nest? (39:27-30).

At creation, God gave man breath. Then he took man's breath away with the beauty, grandeur, and eloquence of a universe of marvels created by His own hand. Look around. Examine what God has done. Then, breathless, proclaim His majesty.

The wonder of creation speaks

To everyone in different ways;

But those who know and love the Lord

Can for His handiwork give praise. —Sper

All creation is an outstretched finger pointing toward God.

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**Amos 5:18-27**

**TODAY IN THE WORD**

But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream! - Amos 5:24

Catherine Booth, along with her husband William Booth, co-founded the Christian Revival Association, a precursor to the Salvation Army. She pioneered the women's work for that movement, and she was so well-loved that when she died, 36,000 people attended her funeral. A tireless worker, she once observed that revival ministry could often be discouraging. "What a deal there is of going to meetings and getting blessed," she complained, "and then going away and living just the same, until sometimes we, who are constantly engaged in trying to bring people nearer the heart of God, go away so discouraged that our hearts are almost broken."

Perhaps Amos felt the same way as he preached to the people of Israel. On the surface there seemed to be considerable religious interest. Many people claimed to long for the Day of the Lord, perhaps interpreted by them as a day when God would give them a decisive victory over their enemies. Amos corrected their thinking by pointing out that the Day of the Lord would be a day of judgment. He warned that for the unprepared, it would be an unremitting series of calamities. He compared the people of Israel to a fugitive who runs away from one threat only to find another (Amos 5:18-19).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Popular religion says, "It doesn't matter who you believe in, as long as you are sincere." Jesus says, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Popular religion says that God accepts everyone, regardless of faith and practice. Jesus says, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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### Amos 5:14-24 No Place To Hide

#### Mart De Haan II

Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord! ... It will be as though a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him! —Amos 5:18-19

The story is told of two hunters who came across a bear so big that they dropped their rifles and ran for cover. One man climbed a tree while the other hid in a nearby cave. The bear sat down between the tree and the cave. Suddenly, the hunter in the cave came rushing out, almost ran into the waiting bear, hesitated, and dashed back in. The same thing happened a second time. When he emerged the third time, his friend frantically called out, "Woody, are you crazy? Stay in the cave till he leaves!" "Can't," panted Woody. "There's another bear in there."

The Bible says that a similar kind of dilemma will someday come upon the godless. They will find trouble in the very place they run for safety (Amos 5:18-20). According to the prophet Amos, these people may be religious, and even long for the coming of the Lord, without realizing that His arrival will present for them the greatest problem of all—judgment of their wrongdoing.

Who are the godless? They are the ones who never turn from their sins to God's loving forgiveness through Christ. They love evil rather than good, and they expect the Lord's protection without ever submitting to His authority. But someday there will be no place to hide.

What, sinner, can you do?  
Where, sinner, can you fly?  
Eternal wrath hangs o'er your head,  
And judgment lingers nigh. —Anon.

Take Christ as your Savior, then you'll have a place to hide.

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### Amos 5:15 - Perfect Hatred

#### By Haddon W. Robinson

#### Read: Psalm 97

You who love the Lord, hate evil! —Psalm 97:10

Tell me what you hate and I can tell you a great deal about yourself. Hatred can be the strong side of righteousness, but it needs a sign written on it with large red letters: Handle With Care.

Olive Moore, the 19th-century English writer, put words to this warning: "Be careful with hatred... Hatred is a passion requiring one hundred times the energy of love. Keep it for a cause, not an individual. Keep it for intolerance, injustice, stupidity. For hatred is the strength of the sensitive. Its power and its greatness depend on the selflessness of its use."

We tend to waste our hatred on insignificant slights and differences. Comments made by a political opponent may draw our venom. Angry letters written to the editor often raise trivia to the level of significance because of the pathology of our misdirected hatred. Churches fracture and split when hatred is directed at people and not at the forces around us that destroy life and hope.

The old Methodist circuit riders were described as men who hated nothing but sin. They took seriously the admonitions of the psalmist, “You who love the Lord, hate evil!” (Psalm 97:10), and of the prophet Amos who urged his hearers to “hate evil, love good” (Amos 5:15).

Dear Father, help us to handle hatred  
with utmost care. Help us to direct our hatred  
only at the things You despise. Teach us  
what it means to hate the sin and love the sinner. Amen.  
If you can't hate what is evil, you can't love what is good.

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### **Amos 5:15 - A Focus On Fairness**

**By David C. McCasland**

**Read: Proverbs 1:1-9**

Hate evil, love good; establish justice in the gate. —Amos 5:15

Bible in a Year:

Proverbs 1-2; 1 Corinthians 16

During the past 135 years of Major League Baseball, only 20 pitchers have thrown a perfect game. On June 2, 2010, Armando Galarraga of the Detroit Tigers would have been number 21 but an umpire's mistake denied him what every pitcher dreams of. The video replay showed the truth. Even though the umpire later acknowledged his error and apologized to Galarraga, the call made on the field could not be changed.

Through it all, Galarraga remained calm, expressed sympathy for the umpire, and never criticized him. Armando's refusal to retaliate amazed fans, players, and sportswriters alike.

If we insist on fair treatment for ourselves, we can become angry and frustrated. But when we embrace the Bible's wisdom, we will seek the welfare of others. Proverbs calls us “to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity” (1:2-3). Oswald Chambers said of our personal dealings with others, “Never look for justice, but never cease to give it; and never allow anything you meet with to sour your relationship to men through Jesus Christ.”

When we experience unfairness, it is our privilege and responsibility as followers of Christ to respond with honesty and integrity, doing what is right, just, and fair.

How others handle justice

May not be up to me;

But when I react to others,

I must show integrity. —Branon

Life is not fair, but God is always faithful.

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### **Amos 5:18–27 Today in the Word**

In 1960, legendary CBS journalist Edward R. Murrow hosted a television special entitled, “Harvest of Shame.” This was a one-hour investigative news program exposing the plight of migrant farmworkers in America. White, black, and Hispanic, these workers were being ruthlessly exploited with substandard pay and housing. One of the wealthy growers said, “We used to own our slaves—now we just rent them.” The pay, working conditions, and legal status of such migrants are still important social issues a half-century later. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack estimates that 50 to 60 percent of the food we eat “has been touched by immigrant hands.”

God is passionate about issues of justice, as we see again in today's reading. The passage opens, "Woe to you who long for the day of the LORD!" (Amos 5:18). Why "woe"? Because the "day of the Lord" is a double-edged sword. The complacent Israelites imagined only that it would be a wonderful day of victory and blessing for themselves as God's "chosen people." They forgot that covenant unfaithfulness would earn His wrath. Therefore, the "day of the Lord" is an occasion of blessing for some—but justice for others. Since they had embraced such sinfulness, for them to wish for the "day" was to wish for their own judgment.

As things stood, the "day of the Lord" would be a dark day indeed (Amos 5:19–20). It would make things worse, as if a man escaped from a lion only to meet a bear, or as if he entered his house and thought himself safe only to be bitten by a snake. God's passion for justice will be highlighted on this "day" (Amos 5:21–23). He hates, despises, can't stand, rejects, and doesn't listen to the false worship and false hearts of the people. "Away with the noise of your songs!" He shouts. What He longs for instead are justice and righteousness (Amos 5:24). The similes of a "river" and a "never-failing stream" show that justice and righteousness are rich, powerful, and life-giving. In conclusion, God says plainly that because of the sin of idolatry, Israel will be defeated and sent into exile (Amos 5:25–27).

#### Apply the Word

We cannot compensate for a lifestyle of indulgence at the expense of others by singing a few songs or even by giving money to the church on Sunday. The Lord receives our worship only when our lives are oriented toward His pleasure, not our own. Do we go through the motions at church, but in fact worship at the altar of success, security, or satisfaction? God offers us a river of mercy, but only if we turn from our shallow droplets of seeking our own desires.

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#### Amos 5:21-27

##### WASTED WORSHIP

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart." -- Psalm 51:17

If you are able to go to church on Sunday, you probably will. For most Christians, it's almost automatic -- and rightly so.

But is it possible that our efforts to go to church for worship might be wasted? Could it all be in vain?

Yes. Before we even enter the church, the worth of our worship can be reduced to nothing because of the way we've lived during the week.

In Amos 5, the Lord had some harsh words for those who attempted to worship Him while bringing with them the guilt of an ungodly lifestyle. His people were constantly angering Him by following false gods (v. 26). When they assembled to worship the Lord through sacrifices and songs,

God despised their hypocrisy.

In Isaiah 1, God instructed His people that before they could worship Him, they were to "cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice" (vv. 16-17).

What a challenge to us! Before we worship God, we are to put things in order by confessing our sins, seeking His forgiveness, and then serving Him. Our daily walk with God and our obedience to His commands are the elements that prepare us for church. Anything less will lead to wasted worship. -- J. David Branon

O holy God, undone by guilt depressing  
We come to Thee our every sin confessing;  
Grant us, we pray, Thy cleansing and Thy  
blessing; We worship Thee, O God! -- Frost

Worship that pleases God comes from an obedient heart.

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#### Amos 5:21-27 A Mighty Stream

##### By Dennis Fisher

Read: Amos 5:21-27

Let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream. —Amos 5:24

When I was a young teenager, my dad, uncles, cousins, and I went trout fishing at the head waters of the Sacramento River in California. The source of the river is melted snow, so the water was swift, clear, cold, and refreshing. My cousins and I couldn't resist

stepping into the cool current while angling for rainbow trout.

On the way home, we stopped for a dip in a pond that was far different. The pond water was warm, and it smelled stagnant. It contrasted greatly with that swiftly flowing, invigorating stream.

The prophet Amos used the metaphor of a stream to illustrate the transforming power of righteousness. Appalled at Israel's dead religious ritual and their exploitation of the poor (Amos 2:6-8; 5:21-27), he called for justice and righteousness to prevail. He saw that God's people were stuck in the stagnant pond of injustice toward others when what they needed was a life marked by "righteousness like a mighty stream."

Likewise, God desires for us to allow justice to "run down like water" from our lives. One way that can happen is to strive for just laws and to champion loving care for the poor. May we seek to be a part of God's mighty stream of His righteousness until Christ returns.

Justice is the clarion call for Christians—

We cannot step aside from what God said;

He has told us how to treat our neighbor,

And we must follow on the path He's led. —Hess

Righteousness follows when truth springs into action.

## Amos 6

**Amos 6:1** He that desires to die well and happily, above all things must be careful that he do not live a soft, a delicate and a voluptuous life, but a life severe, holy, and under the discipline of the cross. [James 4:9] - Jeremy Taylor

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### Amos 6:1-7

#### TODAY IN THE WORD

Woe to you who are complacent in Zion, and to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria! - Amos 6:1

In his book *Seize the Day: Seven Steps to Achieving the Extraordinary in an Ordinary World*, author Danny Cox writes about a problem that arose when fighter jets were first invented. When some pilots ejected, they had a tendency to grip the seat instead of letting go, keeping their parachutes from opening. In order to solve this problem, engineers had to find a way to force the pilot out of his seat. Cox writes: "The new design called for a two-inch webbed strap. One end attached to the front edge of the seat, under the pilot. The other end attached to an electronic take-up reel behind the headrest. Two seconds after ejection, the electronic take-up reel would immediately take up the slack, and force the pilot forward out of his seat, thus freeing the parachute."

God was on a similar quest with His people, seeking a way to force them "out of their seats." One of the main reasons Israel's spiritual life had declined was because God's people had grown complacent (Amos 6:1). They had grown smug and self-confident, deriving a sense of false security from the prosperity they had enjoyed over the years. This had led them to believe that they were exempt from divine judgment. This was true of both the southern kingdom of Judah (Zion) and the northern kingdom of Israel (Mount Samaria). The leaders of Judah and Samaria seemed to have believed that, since they had a special place in God's plan, they would enjoy prosperity and escape the judgment of their neighbors (Amos 6:2).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY

According to Roberta Hestenes, "Maturity is pressing toward the mark; immaturity is complacency and self-satisfaction." [Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#)

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**Amos 6:1 - Woe to those who are at ease...and...feel secure** - You have probably heard the old story about the late, great A J Gordon, a famous preacher from England who came to a very dead, dull, formal, church in downtown Boston, Mass. He was a fiery preacher, who refused to wear a robe, which was mandatory in that church and he preached "Jesus" to those people with such fervor, they sat out there shell-shocked, and after a month, they were ready to fire Gordon. One Sunday he preached a sermon called "The funeral of the church" and this is what he said, "ecclesiastical corpses lie all around us. the caskets in which they repose are lined with satin and are decorated with solid silver handles and abundant flowers. like all caskets they are just large enough for

their occupants with no room for converts. these churches have died from the disease of formalism and have been embalmed in complacency. If by the grace of God this church has any life left in her, I warn you that those that buried thy sister churches will be at thy door to carry thee out, because I predict this church, will be dead soon, because I hear the death rattle.” After he preached that sermon, six men came through the back doors carrying a casket, and he had them put it at the front of the church and open it and then he asked everybody in the church to walk by and see their dead church. As they walked by, they looked in the casket and you guessed it—they were looking at themselves, in a mirror!

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### **Amos 6:1–7 Today in the Word**

An international anti-corruption organization released a list of the top ten most corrupt world leaders ever, as measured by how much money they took in through bribery and graft. Former Indonesian President Mohamed Suharto is at the head of the list, with his ill-gotten gains estimated at \$15 to \$35 billion. Next is Ferdinand Marcos, former President of the Philippines, at \$5 to \$10 billion, then Mobutu Sese Seko, former President of Zaire, at \$5 billion. Each of the ten men on the list was eventually ousted from power—justice caught up with them.

God’s way of thinking is that leaders should serve, not use people for their personal gain. The second “woe” of Amos is directed at bad leaders (Amos 6:1). The leaders of Israel and Judah were so blind and self-deceived that instead of fearing the coming judgment and turning to God in repentance, they were feeling good about life and smugly expecting His blessings. Instead of learning from the conquered fate of their wicked neighbors, they continued to think they would be fine (Amos 6:2). Divine judgment would fall on them first of all (Amos 6:7). Their current activities of “feasting and lounging” would cease as they went into exile.

Instead of leading God’s people in paths of righteousness, the leaders had blazed a trail of sinfulness (Amos 6:3–6). Their ivory beds and couches reflected an opulent, self-indulgent lifestyle. Their meal menu of choice lambs and fattened calves revealed gluttony at the expense of others. Lounging and strumming indicated idleness, while the wine and lotion signified a decadent addiction to pleasure and comfort. They were oblivious to the state of spiritual ruin to which they had brought their nation. “Like David” was an ironic contrast—they might be strumming a harp like David, but that’s where the similarities ended. They didn’t understand David’s heart of worship.

Israel’s leaders should have been leading the way in obedience, worship, and covenant faithfulness. They should have been the first to repent at the prophecies of Amos and others. They should have known better—and they would be held responsible.

#### **Apply the Word**

God wants leaders to be serving, not self-serving. When the disciples argued about who was the greatest, Jesus explained: “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves... I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:24–27). May we seek to follow His example!

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### **Amos 6:1**

#### **F B Meyer**

#### **Our Daily Homily**

Amos 6:1 Woe to them that are at ease in Zion!

A picture is given in the following chapters of the luxury and self-indulgence of the people. Stretched on couches inlaid with ivory, choosing the rarest dainties, accompanying their voices on the lute, and drinking wine from flowing bowls, they were indifferent to the wounds from which the national life-blood was pouring. “They were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph” (Amos 6:6).

The same behavior is only too common amongst ourselves. Indeed, this temptation besets us all. If only we are well supplied with the comforts and luxuries of life, we are apt to become thoughtless of the miseries of poverty and misfortune. If our own heaven is secure, we are apt to enwrap ourselves with an atmosphere of satisfaction and composure, without taking sufficiently to heart the needs of the great world of sin and sorrow around.

“The affliction of Joseph” reminds us of the scene at the pit’s mouth: how Joseph’s brethren sat down to eat bread, whilst their brother was in the pit without water, and then sold him to the travelling merchantmen, to rid their sight of him. But human nature is prone to act thus in every age.

Are we at ease in Zion? Are we using for our own luxurious enjoyment gifts which God entrusted to our care for the world? Are we too indifferent to the fate of those who live in our homes, or pour in great streams of activity along our streets? Are we sleeping in

the garden, whilst our Master sweats the bloody sweat? We have but one life to spend; let it be a life in earnest. Let us bethink ourselves of any whom we can help—any who are in affliction, the poor widow, the young wife with the sick husband, the student who is so eager to become a minister.

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## **Amos 6:8-14**

### **TODAY IN THE WORD**

I abhor the pride of Jacob and detest his fortresses; I will deliver up the city and everything in it. -

At one point in his ministry, noted preacher Harry Ironside worried that he was not as humble as he ought to be. When he asked a friend for advice, his friend suggested that Ironside make a large sandwich board sign with the plan of salvation in Scripture written on it and walk through the busy shopping district of downtown Chicago for an entire day. Ironside did as his friend suggested. When he had finally returned to his apartment, he thought about how humbling the experience had been. But as he removed the sign, Ironside caught himself thinking, “There’s not another person in Chicago that would be willing to do a thing like that.”

Pride is something that even the most godly Christians sometimes struggle with. One of the best remedies for pride is to see it through God’s eyes. According to Amos 6:8, God abhors pride. The Hebrew term used in this verse refers to the same kind of loathing that God has for idolatry. It means to regard something as an abomination. Indeed, the kind of pride condemned in these verses really was a form of idolatry, because it was rooted in the worship of self.

Israel’s pride had grown to such a proportion that extreme measures were required. Recent military successes led Israel to believe that it was invincible (Amos 6:13). God’s people would soon learn from bitter experience that their strongest fortresses were not strong enough to protect them from divine chastening.

### **TODAY ALONG THE WAY**

To what do you attribute your successes and achievements? Certainly, a measure of human effort is required in most endeavors. Ultimately, however, we must trace all our successes to God’s enabling power. It is a good thing to be confident in the Christian life, if it is the kind of confidence that Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 3:5: “Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.” Are you confident in yourself or in God as you engage in ministry? ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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## **Amos 6:8–14 Today in the Word**

In 1940, Polish army captain Witold Pilecki snuck into Auschwitz. He wanted to find out what was going on there and report it to the world. He stayed in the concentration camp for two—and-a-half years and smuggled out news of the executions and brutal treatment of prisoners. The Polish resistance thought he was surely exaggerating; the Allied command in London refused to act. After escaping, he wrote the first intelligence report on the now-infamous death camp. Though a hero, he was shot by the Communists who took over Poland after the war, and the story of his courage was suppressed until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Turning justice into poison is an abomination in God’s eyes (Amos 6:12). In Amos’s day, the people of Israel had also turned the fruit of righteousness into bitterness.” They had taken for granted their relationship with the Lord. The covenant relationship should have been a spur for them to obey, worship, and witness. Instead, they disobeyed, bowed before idols, and defamed God’s name among the nations.

Yet in their pride and self-deception, they somehow continued to believe that God was on their side. The truth was that not only would God not protect them, it was He Himself who had passed judgment and would execute the punishment (Amos 6:8–11). He’d had enough! To “swear by himself” was as serious as it gets. The picture of the survivors who don’t want to mention God’s name was Amos’s way of showing that it would eventually dawn on people that God Himself—not circumstances or human enemies—was the one responsible for their downfall. Indeed, the Lord Himself would be the one to give the command for Israel’s defeat.

To turn justice into poison and righteousness into bitterness is to make things the opposite of what they should be—like making oxen plow on “rocky crags” or like trusting in one’s own strength instead of God’s (Amos 6:12–13). As a result, the Lord was preparing a nation—which we know to be Assyria—to conquer His people and send them into exile (Amos 6:14).

### **Apply the Word**

Amos’s audience felt invincible (having won military victories) and immune (having God on their side). The entire book of Amos aimed to cure them of this delusion. Did they think they had accomplished success all by themselves? Did they think God didn’t see their idolatry and other sins? This should prompt us to ask ourselves if we’re putting our faith in anything other than God—perhaps



our own abilities, resources, or plans. If so, the prophet's wake-up call is aimed at us, too!

## Amos 7

### Amos 7:1-9

#### TODAY IN THE WORD

Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people Israel; I will spare them no longer. - Amos 7:8b

Writer Calvin Miller once noted, "Great communication is based on liking our audience rather than fearing them." One of the secrets to being an effective evangelist is to empathize with those you hope to reach. We may not like everything that they do but we must care about them.

This was true of Amos. The compassion he felt for those to whom he had been sent infuses today's passage. When the Lord showed him a series of visions foretelling the destruction of Israel, Amos pleaded with God on Israel's behalf.

In the first vision he saw a swarm of locusts ready to destroy the harvest. This was after the first harvest had been gathered and just as the second crop was starting to come up (Amos 7:1).

In our culture today we may miss the significance of this timing. The second crop was planted late in the season in order to benefit from the spring rains. A swarm of locusts then would mean that there would be no time left to plant another crop. Anything planted would die, since there was no rain to sustain it. Since the first crop was "the king's share," people depended upon the second crop for their survival.

In Amos's vision, the locusts "stripped the land clean." Instead of rejoicing because God's sinful people were getting what they deserved, Amos cried out in anguish and begged God to forgive (Amos 7:2). The Lord granted the prophet's request and relented.

Sometime after this Amos saw another vision. This time the Lord called for "judgment by fire" to destroy the crops and dry up the underground water supply (Amos 7:4). Many Bible scholars believe this referred to a possible drought. Once again, Amos pleaded with God to relent and judgment was delayed (Amos 7:5-6).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Amos felt compassion that compelled him to pray as well as preach. The people of Israel did not appreciate his ministry, but they were spared because he cared enough to pray. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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### Amos 7:1-9 Today in the Word

A bad golf shot accidentally started a brush fire that consumed 20 acres. On a golf course near Reno, Nevada, the golfer had hit his ball into the grass. Trying to get back to the fairway on his next shot, he started a fire when his metal club struck something that created a spark. It took 50 firefighters and several fire engines from two cities hours to subdue the blaze. Talk about a poor round of golf!

Fire is at the center of one of the three visions seen by Amos in today's reading. This marks a shift in the book's content. Amos 1 and Amos 2 feature a series of prophetic judgments against the nations, beginning with Israel's enemies, then stunningly announcing that Israel herself is the chief offender. Amos 3 through Amos 6 contain three sermons or oracles, directed mainly at the northern kingdom of Israel, which emphasize the severity of the nation's sins and the certainty of God's righteous judgment if they did not repent. Amos 7 through Amos 9 are built around five visions—three short ones (today's reading) and two longer ones.

The themes and meanings of these visions are the same as the messages in the earlier chapters, but God now uses Amos to communicate them in a different way.

In the first three visions, a pattern repeats: God shows Amos a form of judgment, the prophet cries out or intercedes for the people as unable to bear His wrath, then God relents—but notice, He does not forgive because the people haven't repented. In the first vision, it's a swarm of locusts, a kind of natural disaster (Amos 7:1-3). In the second vision, it's fire, with the imagery more supernatural and apocalyptic (Amos 7:4-6). In the third vision, it's a plumb line (Amos 7:7-9). This picture is less dramatic but more chilling. The message is that the standard is holiness and that Israel was failing miserably. A time of accountability and judgment had arrived. The idolaters and their high places would be destroyed. God had measured correctly—they're the ones who were so off course, and they would reap the results.

## Apply the Word

Amos is one among a great tradition of biblical characters interceding for their nation. Moses prayed to the Lord on behalf of the Israelites when God responded to their complaints with fire (Num. 11:1–3). We can join this great tradition by praying for communities, our nation, and for the world. Interceding for country and for our elected leaders and asking God to continue to call sinners to Himself should be a regular part of our prayer lives.

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### Amos 7:1

**F B Meyer**

#### Our Daily Homily

Amos 7:1 The latter growth after the king's mowings.

Our King has often to mow the grass of the inner life—the daisies and buttercups of experience of which we are so proud, the tall stalks, the flowering grasses. Were He to leave them, the entire growth would become altogether too coarse and rank for use. The lawn on which He loves to walk, with its velvet pile of grass, would become coarse and rough.

Mowing implies death. All the pretty flowers and myriads of blades lie in long swathes of death, presently to be carried away to the rubbish-heap. From myriads of dying flowers the last expiring sigh is being breathed out on the soft spring breeze. We must be prepared to die to our complacent self-content; to our blissful frames and feelings; to our complaints and consolations—if any of them come between us and our King.

But after the King's mowings there is the aftermath. It is said that the tenderest, juiciest shoots appear on lawns which are repeatedly mown. This is what the young lambs love, if they may taste it. And surely there is no such piety as that which follows on the repeated application of God's scythe. When repeated strokes have robbed us of health, friends, money, and favorable circumstances; then we put forth our tenderest shoots of love, and prayer, and consecration. Oh, do not be afraid of the scythe! The King loves thee too well to hurt thee. Be of good heart; thou shalt yet bear an aftermath!

"What do you think of your God now?" asked a well-known skeptic of Silwood of Keswick, who for twenty years suffered agonies. "Since He is able to keep me in perfect peace," was the reply, "amid sufferings like mine, I think of Him more than ever." Here was aftermath indeed!

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### Amos 7:8

**December 17, 2002**

#### A Straight Wall

**READ: Amos 7:1-9**

Behold, I am setting a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel; I will not pass by them anymore. —Amos 7:8

When I was a young boy, the kids in my neighborhood built a clubhouse. We were able to get the floor level, but we were having trouble making the sideboards fit because we didn't use a plumb line. The finished product looked like the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

Carpenters often use a plumb line to make sure walls are square with the floor. It is a string with a weight on it that hangs straight down to guide the builder when he puts up a wall.

In Amos 7, we read about another kind of plumb line. The Lord first told Amos about a swarm of locusts and a great fire, which were pictures foretelling the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel. After the prophet prayed and the Lord agreed to delay His judgment, Amos was given a vision of a straight wall. The Lord was standing by it with a plumb line. Because Israel's conduct didn't "square" with God's laws, they experienced God's wrath (vv.8-9).

As followers of Jesus Christ, we have a plumb line by which we can evaluate our lives. It is the Word of God with its principles and commands. When faced with moral choices, we must see what the Scriptures teach. When we follow the Lord's directives, we need not fear what His plumb line will reveal in our lives.—David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

For Further Study

Why did God give the Bible to us? (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Read the online version of [Right & Wrong: A Case For Moral Absolutes](#).

You can measure your love for God by your obedience to His Word

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## **Amos 7:10-17**

### **TODAY IN THE WORD**

The LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, “Go, prophesy to my people Israel.” - Amos 7:15

Radio humorist Garrison Keillor once complained that the preaching he heard was too soft. “I’ve heard a lot of sermons in the past 10 years or so that make me want to get up and walk out,” he said. “They’re secular, psychological, self-help sermons. Friendly, but of no use. They didn’t make you straighten up. They didn’t give you anything hard.” Keillor seems to agree with the person who observed that the true task of the preacher is to comfort the disturbed and to disturb the comfortable.

Amaziah, the priest who officiated at Bethel, subscribed to the view of tickling the ears of the powerful. In an effort to sabotage Amos’s ministry, Amaziah sent word to Jeroboam II accusing Amos of attempting to overthrow him. He warned Jeroboam that the things Amos prophesied threatened the king personally and placed the political stability of the northern kingdom at risk (Amos 7:10).

What Amaziah said was half true. Amos had spoken against the king and the sanctuary at Bethel. Amos, however, was not driven by a political agenda but by his calling as a prophet of God and his commitment to the truth. His preaching had not caused the calamities he foretold--they were the result of Israel’s sin.

Amaziah’s own values became clear when he told Amos, “Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there” (Amos 7:12). Amaziah was familiar with priests and prophets who sold their services to the highest bidder. Like Balaam, these “prophets” were motivated primarily by personal gain (cf. Num. 22–24).

### **TODAY ALONG THE WAY**

Money or power may not be the factors that affect us when we share the gospel with others—it may be the approval or disapproval of others. Whatever the circumstance, it is important to “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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**Amos 7:4-6 - Intercession.** God is responding to Amos’ prayers for the nation.

Illustration - Henry Blackaby writes,

Ivah Bates was a widow who had lived on a farm and was retired. She was one of the greatest pray-ers I have ever known. Our church was the body of Christ, and we called Ivah a knee. God put her in the body as a powerful prayer. When we had new believers, I would send them over to Ivah and let her talk to them about how to pray. She equipped many pray-ers. When we began our ministry to the university campus, Ivah didn’t know how to function in the body concerning the campus. Who was to equip her to function in the body in this new ministry? Well, our campus minister was. He shared with Ivah how she could pray regarding the campus. She did not change her role in the body. She just learned how to be the “knee” (pray-er) for the campus. The students were told, “Whenever you are going to witness to somebody or you have a particular assignment in our ministry, go to Ivah and tell her about it. She will pray.” So a student named Wayne said to Ivah, “Next Tuesday I will be witnessing to Doug, would you pray for me?” Ivah agreed. She dropped everything and began to pray over the noon hour while Wayne was witnessing. She did that every time the students told her what they were doing. Only the “hand” was touching the campus, but the whole body was fitly joined together. Each part functioned where God put it, so that the hand could be effective. About three months later, a young man came down the aisle during the invitation. He was trusting the Lord. I said to the congregation, “This is Doug. He has just become a Christian.” I looked over at Ivah and she was deeply moved and weeping. She had never met Doug, but she had prayed for him for three months.

Do you pray for others?

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### **Amos 7:10–17 Today in the Word**

Leaving home in order to preserve his life, Jacob spent a night camping out with a rock for a pillow. While sleeping, he saw a stairway to heaven, with angels ascending and descending. In the dream, God reaffirmed the covenant and told Jacob, “I am with

you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land." When Jacob woke up, he said, "Surely the LORD is in this place," and called it "Bethel," or "house of God" (Gen. 28:10–22).

In the days of Amos, the people of Israel had turned the sacred site of Bethel into a place of idolatry. When Amos challenged their sins, the leaders lashed out. Today's reading is a brief narrative interlude showing the hostility and hardheartedness faced by the prophet during his ministry. Thematically, we can see the truth of the plumb line judgment in yesterday's reading, as well as the vast difference between true and false followers of God.

Amaziah's response to Amos's prophecy demonstrated a false heart (Amos 7:10–13). When Amaziah, a priest and religious leader, heard Amos's message, he sent word to Jeroboam II, presumably seeking the king's political support for opposing Amos. He must have received confirmation of such support, because he condemned Amos and accused him of being a mercenary "seer," that is, a false prophet who delivered messages for pay. He saw Amos's prophecies as a political ploy to rouse opposition and conspire against the king. He also identified Bethel as the spiritual center of the kingdom, indicating that Amos had brought his message to the right place.

Amos's response to Amaziah's challenge demonstrated true faith (Amos 7:14–17). He had no prophetic lineage or political aspirations. He had been taking care of his own business, staying occupied with sheep and orchards. But God had seen fit to call him to prophesy, and when God calls, we dare not refuse! His call trumped all other considerations. At great personal risk, Amos affirmed the message of judgment and exile and added a word of warning for Amaziah's family as well.

Apply the Word

Amos answered Amaziah's accusations by sharing his personal testimony, the story of his call to ministry. A book by professor Alan Jacobs, *Looking Before and After: Testimony and the Christian Life*, discusses the importance of personal spiritual testimony. Seeing how God has worked in your life will encourage you, and sharing it can encourage someone else. These testimonies, like Jacob's stone of remembrance at Bethel, remind us of what God has done for us.

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### **Amos 7:14-15 - The Troubler From Tekoa**

... I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son... And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel (Amos 7:14, 15)

Many years ago I attended a week of meetings in a small North Carolina mountain town. The preacher gave a message each morning from the Book of Amos. I had never heard anyone preach all week from one book of the Bible. It was expository preaching and it fascinated me. Moreover, it introduced me to Amos, the colorful country prophet who went up to Bethel and gave that religious and political center a brand of preaching they were not accustomed to hearing.

In later years, after a barren period in my own ministry, the Lord woke me up and led me into plain old-fashioned preaching. One of my first sermons was about Amos. I preached it almost everywhere I went. Homer Rodeheaver used to speak of it almost every time we were on the platform together. I believe he thought it was my best sermon. It became a sort of pattern for my preaching.

Amos was trained in none of the schools of men. He got his message from God as he meditated outdoors in his humble work. He said, "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel" (7:14-15). He was not a prophet by profession: "I was no prophet." He was not a prophet by parentage: "... neither was I a prophet's son"; his father had not made a preacher of him. He was a prophet by providence: "And the Lord took me..." What better credentials does any man need?

Amos was not angling for return engagements. He was a nonconformist, unregimented, unclassified. He had no sponsor but Almighty God. He was definitely "out of order" at Bethel; he should have made an appointment through the regular channels instead of simply walking into town and opening up unannounced. He would not likely be invited to many big churches today. He might be invited to leave town, but not to come to town.

When he was called to preach, Amos, like Paul, conferred not with flesh and blood. His orders were direct. No council of men validated his commission. It is doubtful whether he could have found one that would have approved him. (It would certainly be impossible today!) Nobody in the school of prophets would do that kind of preaching, so God picked an outsider who had never learned the trick of talking out of both sides of his mouth. Here was a plain countryman who knew no better than to say bluntly what others covered up by the alibi. Singlehanded, and with no promoter or "project," Amos was a lone voice in the wilderness of his day. Probably he was a little lean, a little hungry, and a little angry; indeed, Amos has been called "God's Angry Man." Amos had no "foundation" behind him, no expense account, and he had not even heard of Social Security! Like Elijah and John the Baptist, he was, under God, "on his own."

His theology came to him like Paul's in Arabia. His sermons were not slanted to avoid giving offense to the godless times in which he lived. He did not take the teeth out of his message in Tekoa or "gum it" at Bethel. He offended almost everybody, including Dr. Amaziah, the court preacher, who was horrified at this rustic nuisance. "Go back to the backwoods," he said, in effect; "you have no business on the boulevards. You are not good for national morale. This boorish preaching of wrath and judgment—have you never heard of the power of positive thinking?"

Amos had not learned that it is really not nice to name things. He did not generalize; he particularized. He began with the sins of other nations, the neighbors as it were, but he did not stop at the borders of Israel. He was not one who could denounce evil at a distance while seeing none close at hand. His bifocals took in both the far and the near.

It was an evil time and Amos called it just that. He could not have picked a time when his views would have seemed more out-of-step with the age. Business was booming. Everything was on the up-up-up. People never had it so good! Under Jeroboam II there was plenty of everything, including religion. Amos made light of that: "Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression... " (4:4). A country preacher speaking with such irony must have horrified the religious Bethelites, but within fifty years the judgment Amos prophesied came to pass.

Centuries later another preacher wrote, "... the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16). This time it was a little Jew whose bodily presence, they said, was weak and his speech contemptible. If you had looked around at the grandeur and glory that was Rome, you might have said, "Paul, what do you mean? Look at this worldwide empire with its armies and art, its language and laws, its cities and culture. You should join the clubs and broaden your interests and widen your contacts. You are too provincial, too exclusive. And it is such poor psychology to say that the days are evil. Put on your rose-colored glasses and paint the clouds with sunshine! You will catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." But Paul was not in the fly-catching business. He looked like a nobody before Nero, but someone has said, "Now we call our dogs Nero and our boys Paul."

The days are evil now, what with abounding lawlessness and abating love. "... when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). Perilous times are upon us and men will not endure sound doctrine. Our age bears all the characteristics of the days of Amos. People hated him for calling the days evil; Ahab despised Micaiah for prophesying evil concerning him, instead of good; and our Lord said the world hated Him because He testified of it that its works were evil. Plenty of sermons and magazine articles bewail the hour, and they say we need an Amos. But how far would Amos get in the First Church of any modern Bethel? Where is there a wilderness prophet now who will be quiet enough to get a message from God and brave enough to preach it?

All kinds of arguments are advanced against such preaching today. Some ask, "What good will it do?" That is not the test. Isaiah and Amos and our Lord Himself preached to God's people, but they refused the message. The prophet who tries to arouse the church today need not be surprised if he gets the same treatment. Amos did not change the situation, but he gave God's message to his generation and left it without excuse.

Such preaching will not build up a crowd, but the business of the prophet is to fill the pulpit, not the pews. Nowhere in the New Testament is the size of the crowd the criterion of good preaching. Our Lord sometimes preached His crowd away. It is not our business to make the message acceptable, but to make it available. We are not out to make them like it, but to see that they get it.

Ahab accused Elijah of troubling Israel. Elijah promptly set the matter straight: "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim" (1 Kings 18:18). Elijah did not create the trouble; he revealed it. Amos belongs in the same category. We have a word for it nowadays—"troubleshooter." Big business employs men to look out for possible "bugs" and breakdowns, to locate and correct problems in the machinery. God calls such men in the church; they are New Testament prophets with an instinct for locating trouble and a genius for exposing it. Naturally they are not popular. It is much more pleasant to be a Gamaliel, keeping everything quiet in Jerusalem. Such men are called troublemakers, but they do not create the situation; they reveal it. They do not put delinquent Christians on the spot; such people are already on the spot. The prophet merely reveals the spot.

We need some sanctified troubleshooters today, for we have trouble aplenty. We are beset without and within. The atheists who hammer on the outside of the church make a lot of noise, but the pests who bore from within are doubly dangerous because they are so quiet about their work. Today the idea seems to have gotten around that we should never disturb the status quo, but should go along with it, termites and all. The church has a right and a duty to screen out all varieties of bugs.

Amos was a troubleshooter and yet there is a sense in which he was a troubler of Israel because he sought to arouse the conscience of the nation. A prophet is always disturbing; he is a cause of general uneasiness. He makes Ahab and Herod uneasy and keeps Darius awake all night. He plays havoc with the serenity school and irritates the tranquilizers. He has never learned to talk so that one half of what he says cancels the other half and he can finish without having said anything. Just when false prophets of peaceful coexistence have almost lulled everybody into a stupor, the true prophet blasts the neighborhood with a siren that cries aloud and spares not. He locates the trouble and proposes the remedy. He does not write a treatise on the subject; he calls to

repentance. While scholars write wordy volumes that few people read, the prophet says it in one colorful paragraph. Joseph Parker said, "The man whose sermon is 'Repent' sets himself against his age and will for the time being be battered mercilessly by the age whose moral tone he challenges. There is but one end for such a man—'off with his head.' You had better not preach repentance until you have pledged your head to heaven."

It is not easy to be an Amos at Bethel, and the new polite little rules for successful preaching leave no room for such disturbers of the peace. No school can produce them and no school can stop them; they are odd numbers in a regimented day. May there be even now in the backwoods somewhere a solitary lad who will walk in prophetic succession to the "Troubler from Tekoa"!

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## **Vance Havner - THE MODERN MESSAGE OF AMOS**

The prophet Amos was a country preacher, a rustic of the rustics, a herder of sheep and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. He did not belong to the elite nor to the intellectuals and, when he went up to Bethel to preach, neither his clothes nor his sermons were cut according to the popular pattern. He was sensational-but be not alarmed: sensational preaching is often merely the kind of preaching some preachers don't like because they cannot do it!

Amos preached because preach he must. As with Jeremiah, there was a burning fire shut up in his bones and he was weary with forbearing and could not stay. Pity the preacher who has not the holy compulsion, the heavenly urgency that cries, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel!" who, like Peter and John, cannot but speak the things which he has seen and heard. Too many, like Ahimaaz, run, having seen only a tumult and so have nothing to say when they speak.

### **1. The Present Condition.**

Amos began with the profiteers who sold the righteous for silver, the poor for a pair of shoes (2:6); who panted after the dust on the head of the poor (2:7); who stored up violence and robbery in their palaces (3:10); who said, "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?" (8:5).

Amos could say everything in America that he said in Bethel and be strictly up to date.

### **2. The Coming Judgment.**

"Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! To what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness and not light." So cried the prophet against those who looked for better times around the corner. He pictured them running from a lion to meet a bear, in other words, leaping from the frying-pan into the fire.

Today America faces judgment, and there is no reason to believe that she will fare better than the nations of the past.

### **3. The Passing Opportunity.**

In a vision given to Amos, God put a plumb line in the midst of Israel and compared the nation to a basket of summer fruit ripe for judgment. God's plumb line is among us today, and we are not merely ripe-we spoil. All sorts of remedies are being proposed for our national ills but we treat the symptoms instead of the disease. It is not money that we need for God's remedy is without money and without price. It is not more education that we need for the trouble is of the heart, not the head. Politics cannot save us: the average politician's platform is like a street-car platform-not to stand on but to get in on.

### **4. The Distant Prospect.**

Amos was a stern prophet but his book closes with one of Scripture's brightest passages as he paints the picture of a restored Israel (9:11-15). After all, he was an optimist, for there are two kinds of optimism-blind optimism and Bible optimism. Blind optimism looks to evolution and sings, "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world." Bible optimism does not shut its eyes and whistle its way past the graveyard. All is not well with the world but better times are around the corner-God's corner. We Bible Christians look for a better day but it will not be legislated by experts nor built by the blue-prints of human wisdom. We have a civic pride but it is in that Great White City that's soon coming down.

To whom shall we listen, Amaziah or Amos? Men want the bright side, but the right side is eventually the bright side. Amos was unpopular, but he was right: every scattered Jew today is a witness to that. Today America listens to the voices instead of to the Voice. Instead of inquiring vainly here and there, "Watchman, what of the night?" let us learn in the modern application of this old prophecy the present condition, the coming judgment, the passing opportunity; and the distant prospect. (Van Havner Notebook - Quotations)

**November 16, 2003**

## **Handling Criticism**

### **READ: Amos 7:7-15**

The Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said to me, "Go, prophesy to My people Israel." —Amos 7:15

As we grow older, we sometimes become set in our ways and unwilling to admit when we are wrong. Worse yet, if we don't see eye-to-eye with others, we become critical of them and try to discredit their views.

Some people, for example, when they disagree with a pastor, seem to be quick to judge motives. They may even suggest that the preacher is only looking for a paycheck.

This type of criticism happened to Amos about 750 BC. The prophet had been preaching a tough message about God's judgment of Israel. Understandably, his message was unpopular. Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, was irritated and told Amos to go back to Judah. Amaziah accused Amos of being a prophet-for-hire, preaching just to make a living (7:12). Amos responded by saying that he was prophesying only because God had told him to speak (v.15).

If we are preaching or leading, we must faithfully serve the Lord as Amos did, even if the task is unpleasant, unpopular, or rejected by our audience. And if we're in the congregation, we need to be sure that when we hear something we don't agree with, we're not actually resisting what the Lord wants us to hear and do.

That's how to handle criticism. —Albert Lee [Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

Lord, we can't see each wrong we do,

So send us help from Christians who

Will notice faults we do not see

And tell us of them tactfully. —Branon

Never fear criticism when you're right; never ignore it when you're wrong.

## **Amos 8**

### **Amos 8:1-10**

#### **TODAY IN THE WORD**

The LORD has sworn by the Pride of Jacob: "I will never forget anything they have done." - Amos 8:7

Two days ago we looked at three visions that Amos received. In today's reading, Amos was shown another vision. This time it consisted of a basket of ripe fruit--the Lord explained that, like this fruit, Israel was ripe for judgment (Amos 8:2). This moment had come after many years of patient waiting and pleading. God had acted according to His own timetable and was now declaring through Amos that Israel's time had run out. Yet even in this ominous pronouncement, God's grace was still evident. The actual fall of Samaria would not come for approximately another ten years.

The Bible often speaks of God's patience toward the sinner, noting that He does not take any pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 18:23; 33:11). He is a gracious and compassionate God who is slow to anger and abounding in love (Ex. 34:6). Yet He is also a God who is not afraid to judge. He had appointed a day of judgment for Samaria--and when that day finally came, the sounds of worship in the temple would turn to wailing and bodies would be flung everywhere (Amos 8:3).

The reason for this devastation was given in Amos 8:4-6. It had been prompted by Israel's disregard for the needy. They had "trampled" on the needy by using unfair business practices, including giving less than their poor customers had paid for, price fixing, and using dishonest scales. They treated others as property to be bought and sold and were so greedy that they collected the dirty sweepings of wheat that fell on the threshing floor and sold them (Amos 8:6).

Even worse, they did all this while appearing to obey God's Law. Although they refrained from doing business during the Sabbath as

the Law had commanded, their heart was not in it. Instead, they were eager for the day to end so that they could get back to maximizing their profits (Amos 8:5).

## TODAY ALONG THE WAY

We can misread God's patience and conclude that He does not care about our sin. But God's kindness is meant to lead us toward repentance (Ro 2:4). ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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### Amos 8:1–8 Today in the Word

"The time is ripe" is an English idiom suggesting "sufficiently advanced, especially for a particular action or purpose" or "ready for execution, action, or use." Practically, it means "the most favorable time to do something," as in, "Since Joe was in a good mood, I judged that the time was ripe to ask him for the favor I needed."

In today's reading, "the time is ripe" for God's judgment on Israel (Amos 8:2). The main image in this fourth vision of Amos is a basket of fruit (Amos 8:1). God showed it to the prophet as a confirmation of the coming judgment. The idea of "ripeness" means that this was not a random or sudden decision of God, but rather that it had been a long time coming. Like the slow process of fruit growing and ripening toward a harvest, the nation's sins—including its rejection of God's prophets and their warnings—had been accumulating and deepening toward a harvest of judgment (Amos 8:3).

This message is aimed especially at rich oppressors (Amos 8:4–6). Their pride and brutality are seen in the picture of them trampling the needy and doing away with the poor. Instead of repenting and seeking the Lord, they were waiting impatiently for holy days and Sabbaths to be over so that they could get back to doing business. They showed no respect for the rhythms of community life as established by God. They showed no respect for people, seeing them only as a source of profit. Perhaps they were workaholics—at the very least they had put money at the center of their lives. What's worse, they were guilty of dishonest weights and measures, not to mention price-gouging. "Selling even the sweepings" was the exact opposite of the Law's compassionate principle of gleaning, in which the poor were allowed to harvest "leftovers" from the fields (see Lev. 19:9–10).

Justice would be done on these sins and others (Amos 8:7–8). God would not forget. As surely as the annual rising and receding of the Nile River, a flood of judgment would overwhelm Israel.

#### Apply the Word

A number of godly business principles can be derived from today's passage. The significance of honesty and integrity stand out. Other principles include the importance of rest (not being a workaholic), the importance of respecting people (customers are more than a source of revenue), the fact that the bottom line is about more than money (price-gouging is immoral), and the truth that our ultimate accountability is to the Lord (and you can be sure He'll see that justice is done).

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### Amos 8:9–14 Today in the Word

We're familiar with symbols or signs of grief or mourning in American culture. People wear dark clothes to a funeral. The hearse is black. Sending flowers is an appropriate remembrance. The body is typically displayed in a coffin. A gravestone marks the spot where the deceased is laid to rest.

In the Israelite culture of Amos's day, typical symbols or signs of grief or mourning included tearing one's garment, wearing sackcloth, shaving one's head, and sitting in ashes. The death of an only son would have led to particularly intense grief. This is one of the pictures God used to communicate the severity of His judgment in today's reading, which follows up on yesterday's by giving a more extended description of "that day" (Amos 8:3, 9), that is, the "day of the LORD." The images in this passage are poetic, hyperbolic, and sometimes apocalyptic.

Amos 8:9 through Amos 8:11 focus on what God will do. From a human perspective, He will do things that are unexpected or even impossible, like making the sun go down at noon. Because of the people's self-deception and unresponsive hearts, they will be shocked when He turns their feasting into mourning and singing into weeping. He will overturn their empty rituals and bring judgment instead. It will be as bad as the death of an only son—the grief and bitterness will be violent when they grasp the brokenness of the covenant relationship. They had been taking for granted and rejecting the prophecies of Amos and others, not understanding that it was a privilege for them even to be receiving God's words. In "that day," there would be a "famine of hearing the words of the LORD."

Amos 8:12 through Amos 8:14 highlight the effects of God's judgment as mirrored in people's actions. They will desperately search everywhere for the word of the Lord, but they won't find it. Prophets won't be sent; God will be "silent." Those who took their spiritual sustenance from false idols will find themselves spiritually thirsty and starving. Having regarded God and His words so carelessly,



they will discover His true worth and learn again the true meaning of the covenant relationship.

#### Apply the Word

Amazing as it is, the one true God wants a genuine relationship with us! He desires our time and attention and worship because He loves us and knows what is best for us. All the empty rituals in the world can't substitute for hearts that hunger and thirst for Him (Matt. 5:6). Spend time today worshiping the Lord and thanking Him for sending His Word. May we never take for granted the rich feast He has provided for us!

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#### Amos 8:11-14

#### TODAY IN THE WORD

Not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD. - Amos 8:11

Not long ago, an article in Newsweek magazine described the tragic journey of Badia Omar, an Ethiopian woman who watched two of her five children die due to famine-related causes. She and her husband had once owned 200 sheep, 25 cows, and one goat. But when a deadly combination of drought and famine claimed their possessions, her husband abandoned the family. In desperation, Badia left the lowland region that had been their home and made an 18-day journey in order to find food.

Although her story may seem strange to those of us who live in a more prosperous country, it would have been very familiar to the people of Amos's day. Drought and famine often caused entire populations to uproot and migrate from one place to another. God's own people had initially gone down to Egypt because of such a famine. Few calamities in the ancient world were as devastating.

In today's passage, however, Amos warns of an even worse disaster. Because God's people had not listened to the warnings of the prophets, the Lord promised to send "a famine of hearing the words of the Lord" (Amos 8:11). In a sense, God permitted the people of Israel to have their own way. They had not wanted to listen to the message of the prophets, and so God said that He would silence them. Only then would God's people develop a "hunger" for His Word. Like Badia, they would wander throughout the land in a futile search, not for food, but for someone who would proclaim the Word of the Lord (Amos 8:12).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Some experience a "famine" of the Word of God because they live in countries closed to God's Word. How much more tragic is the case of those who have easy access to the Scriptures and suffer a spiritual famine out of neglect. The very availability of the Bible causes them to take it for granted. Write out or memorize Job 23:12 and place it near your Bible to remind you of its importance: "I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread." ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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#### Amos 8:11

F B Meyer

#### Our Daily Homily

Amos 8:11 I will send a famine in the land,... of hearing the words of the Lord.

Israel will not listen to God's prophets, and their voices would be silenced. This was a just retribution. As they were not willing to have the word of God, so there should be a famine of that word. The word of God was precious in the days of Samuel, because there was no open vision; so should it be again. And perhaps this privation will one day be meted out to our beloved country. There is a much larger proportion of our population outside than inside our churches; and men proudly eschew God's Word. It may be that the message of the Gospel will almost cease from among them, and be replaced—as in so many instances is now the case—by the dry husks of morality and ceremonialism. Then they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.

We may question ourselves, whether we feed enough on God's Word. If we would grow strong, we must feed, not on condiments and sweetmeats, not on tit-bits and scraps, not on versicles and pious sentences; but on the strong meat of the Word, on the doctrines, histories, types of Scripture. Oh for more hunger and thirst for these! Would you have it so? No child will enjoy its meals who is constantly being surfeited with sweets between times. Beware lest you cloy your appetite with the painted sweetmeats of the world.

It is worth notice, that if men have not God, they will find some substitute. They will swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy God, O Dan; thy manner, O Beersheba. This is why palmistry, spiritualism, so-called Christian science, are just now so much in vogue. Man's nature is made for God, and hungers for a substitute.

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**Amos 8:11 - Famine in the Midst of Plenty** - "Curious times, these. There is simultaneously a glut of the word of God and a famine of it, a drought and deluge. We have every translation of the Bible you can imagine – the NIV, the NEVG, the KJV, the NJKV, the NASR, NRSV, the preacher's bible, the worshippers bible, the spirit-filled believers bible, the left handed bald gypsy fiddler's bible, with versions for the nearsighted and the farsighted. (The last was made up).

You can have it in hardback, paper, leather, cloth, in pink, red, oxblood, turtle shell, iridescent orange, psychedelic paisley, with maps and charts and indices and appendices and concordances and holograms of the temple in the back, and a little sleeve with a CD-ROM that takes you on a guided tour of the Holy Land."

The food is out there – and it's a banqueting table. We're just picky eaters. Oh, we're buying bibles. And sometimes we're even reading them. But there's not much evidence that we're studying them. We're nibbling, not devouring. And you are what you eat...

Borderland is a virtual colony of biblical anorexics and bulimics, where appetites rage for everything BUT the truth. - Steve Malone

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## **Amos 8:11**

**January 21, 2007**

### **Spiritual Famine**

**READ: 1 Peter 2:1-10**

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. —Amos 8:11

In the novel *No Blade of Grass*, a destructive virus attacks the grasses of the world. Not just the grass in lawns but all grasses, including wheat, barley, rye, oats, and rice. In a matter of months, the world is plunged into famine and its brutal companion, violence. People begin by fighting, then killing, for food.

The novel depicts a scene that has been lived out in the real world in recent famines and is terrifying when seen on TV news networks. Yet I can only imagine what it's like.

The prophet Amos spoke of a different kind of famine. He called it a famine of "hearing the words of the Lord" (8:11). While a lack of food can lead to disease and death, a famine of the Word can produce eternal consequences. Without access to God's Word, we lack wisdom for life and the message of eternal life in Christ. As Christians, we need "the pure milk of the Word, that [we] may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). We can identify with the prophet when he said, "Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jer. 15:16).

The world is starving for the knowledge of the God who can satisfy the needs of the human heart. Let's help fill their hearts by sharing His Word. —Bill Crowder ([Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Give us, O Lord, a strong desire

To look in Your Word each day;

Help us to hide its truths in our heart,

Lest from His path our feet would stray. —Bosch

Without a heart for God, we cannot hear His Word

## **Amos 9**

**Amos 9:1-10**

### **TODAY IN THE WORD**

"Yet I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob," declares the LORD. - Amos 9:8b

The Scottish hymn writer Horatius Bonar once told of two men who were discussing their religious experience. One had attended

church for many years but did not trust Jesus Christ for eternal life. The other man had spent many years living an immoral life and had only recently come to trust in Christ.

"So you say you have found Christ, and have peace with God?" the churchgoing man asked. "I have indeed," the other replied. "I have found him, I have peace, and I know it." "Know it!" the churchgoer snapped. "Do you think that God would give a sinner like you peace, and not give it to me, who have been doing all I can to get it for so many years?" The new Christian answered, "You are such a respectable man that you can get on without peace and pardon, but a wretch like me cannot."

The churchgoer's mistake, of course, was to attempt to find peace with God by "doing" all he could. He believed that his religious efforts would shield him from the consequences of sin.

The people of Israel made the same mistake. Their confidence was based upon the outward trappings of religion. The Lord, however, called for the destruction of the very things in which they had placed their trust. He promised to pursue them in judgment, no matter what measures they might take to avoid His wrath (Amos 9:2-4).

This underscores the chief danger of sin--it alienates us from God. Sin is not a small matter. It estranges us from God and makes us His enemies (Col. 1:21). God's treatment of Israel in these verses may seem harsh, but it accurately reflected sin's penalty (Rom. 6:23).

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY

The good news of the gospel is that the God who judges sin has also provided the only sure remedy for it: "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). How should we approach Him? Horatius Bonar tells us in his hymn entitled "I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say": "I came to Jesus as I was,/ Weary and worn and sad;/ I found in Him a resting place,/ And He has made me glad." ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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**Amos 9:1-4** - Even when the northern kingdom is taken away into captivity to distant lands, God is still watching them. Even in captivity they will not be able to escape the judgment of God. Lesson - No Hiding. The motto of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police is "They always get their man". You can't hide from God. The poet Francis Thompson wrote a famous poem where he called God "The Hound of Heaven". His point was that you can't escape God.

Illustration - When Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, author of the Sherlock Holmes stories, wanted to play a practical joke on twelve of his friends, he sent a note to each of them that simply read, "Flee at once. All is discovered." Within twenty-four hours, all twelve friends had left the country. That's what you call a guilty conscience.

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**Amos 9:11-15 "I will restore!"** In contrast to God's destroying the Israelite house of false worship, God will raise up the "hut" of David, thereby assuring a bright future for the people of Israel and Judah. Like a rickety shack, David's dynasty was about to collapse. From the Babylonian Captivity to this present hour, there has been no Davidic king ruling over the Jews; and though a Jewish nation has been restored, they have no king, priest, temple, or sacrifice. But one day, the Lord will restore, repair, and rebuild the dynasty of David and establish the kingdom He promised. When Jesus Christ comes again, the breach between Israel and Judah will be healed, and there will be one nation submitted to one king. God will bless the land and the people, and His people shall live in peace and security. It will be a time of peace and prosperity to the glory of the Lord. Amos ends his prophecy with the wonderful promise that Israel shall be planted, protected, and never again pulled up from her land "says the Lord your God." Your God! What a great encouragement for the Jews to know that, in spite of their unbelief, their God will be faithful to keep His covenant promises. (Warren Wiersbe - Be Concerned)

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#### **Amos 9:1-6 Under Surveillance**

**By Mart De Haan**

"Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?" says the Lord. —Jeremiah 23:24

Imagine that you're visiting a foreign country when you realize that you're being followed. Your every move is watched. Your every conversation is monitored. Your hotel room is bugged and the restaurant tables are electronically rigged to pick up every word you speak. It's as if at all times someone wants to know what you are doing, saying, thinking, and planning. You are constantly under the scrutiny of another, and it seems there is no place to hide.

Fortunately, most of us don't know what it's like to live under that kind of surveillance. Yet in reality, we do live every moment of every day under the watchful eyes of the Lord. He sees everything we do; He hears everything we say; He knows every thought we think.

For those who love and trust the Lord, this is an awesome yet comforting truth. But for those who are determined to resist Him, it's a different story. Amos told Israel that God was pleading with them to turn from their sins (5:4-15), and he warned them that there would be no hiding place for those who refused to repent (9:1-6).

Father, have mercy on us when we are rebellious. We lift our heart to You in behalf of all who think they can somehow elude Your constant surveillance and final judgment.

They shall not stand the judgment test

Who live for self today,

For God sees all and He will judge

The evildoer's way! —Bosch

Live today as you will wish you had lived when you stand before God.

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### **Amos 9:1–10 Today in the Word**

In his famous sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” Jonathan Edwards impressed on his listeners the fearfulness of God’s just wrath: “The wrath of God burns against [sinners], their damnation does not slumber; the pit is prepared, the fire is made ready, the furnace is now hot, ready to receive them; the flames do now rage and glow. The glittering sword is whet, and held over them, and the pit hath opened its mouth under them... This that you have heard is the case of every one of you that are out of Christ.” The mercy is that sinners do not immediately pay this penalty, because God chooses to give them an opportunity to repent. If they do not, they remain “in the hands of an angry God.”

Amos’s version of “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” is found in today’s reading. This sixth and final vision does not have one main image, like the previous four visions, but rather presents a series of pictures that together create a book—concluding tableau of the “day of the LORD.” To begin, there is a picture of God standing by the altar in the temple (Amos 9:1–4). Here, at the very heart of the covenant relationship, He would destroy the temple and execute judgment on the Israelites. There would be no escape, for although it might seem that the Assyrians were the ones doing it, in fact the sovereign God would be the true agent of action: “I will keep my eye on them for harm and not for good” (Amos 9:4).

God is sovereign over the destinies of nations (Amos 9:5–7). He is the creator and sustainer of the world. His ways and thoughts are far above ours. Because of who He is, His judgment is as sure as His mercy (Amos 9:8–10). He will shake the nation, like grain shaken in a sieve, and His judgment will find all those who think it can’t happen to them. But in His mercy, which is also part of who He is, He will protect a remnant.

Apply the Word

In today’s judgment scenario, divine omnipresence is a fearful reality—there is nowhere the guilty can escape. But for those who trust in Him, God’s omnipresence is a comforting reality. In Psalm 139, for example, David reflected: “If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast” (Amos 9:8–10).

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### **Amos 9:9**

#### **Deliverance from Dust and Chaff**

#### **Faith's Checkbook**

#### **C H Spurgeon**

“For lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.”—Amos 9:9

THE sifting process is going on still. Wherever we go, we are still being winnowed and sifted. In all countries God’s people are being tried “like as corn is sifted in a sieve.” Sometimes the devil holds the sieve and tosses us up and down at a great rate, with the earnest desire to get rid of us forever. Unbelief is not slow to agitate our hearts and minds with its restless fears. The world lends a willing hand at the same process and shakes us to the right and to the left with great vigor. Worst of all, the church, so largely apostate as it is, comes in to give a more furious force to the sifting process.

Well, well! let it go on. Thus is the chaff severed from the wheat. Thus is the wheat delivered from dust and chaff. And how great is the mercy which comes to us in the text, "yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." All shall be preserved that is good, true, gracious. Not one of the least of believers shall be lost; neither shall any believer lose anything worth calling a loss. We shall be so kept in the sifting that it shall be a real gain to us through Christ Jesus.

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## **Amos 9:9**

### **Morning and Evening**

#### **C H Spurgeon**

"For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." — Amos 9:9

Every sifting comes by divine command and permission. Satan must ask leave before he can lay a finger upon Job. Nay, more, in some sense our siftings are directly the work of heaven, for the text says, "I will sift the house of Israel." Satan, like a drudge, may hold the sieve, hoping to destroy the corn; but the overruling hand of the Master is accomplishing the purity of the grain by the very process which the enemy intended to be destructive. Precious, but much sifted corn of the Lord's floor, be comforted by the blessed fact that the Lord directeth both flail and sieve to his own glory, and to thine eternal profit.

The Lord Jesus will surely use the fan which is in his hand, and will divide the precious from the vile. All are not Israel that are of Israel; the heap on the barn floor is not clean provender, and hence the winnowing process must be performed. In the sieve true weight alone has power. Husks and chaff being devoid of substance must fly before the wind, and only solid corn will remain.

Observe the complete safety of the Lord's wheat; even the least grain has a promise of preservation. God himself sifts, and therefore it is stern and terrible work; he sifts them in all places, "among all nations"; he sifts them in the most effectual manner, "like as corn is sifted in a sieve"; and yet for all this, not the smallest, lightest, or most shrivelled grain, is permitted to fall to the ground. Every individual believer is precious in the sight of the Lord, a shepherd would not lose one sheep, nor a jeweller one diamond, nor a mother one child, nor a man one limb of his body, nor will the Lord lose one of his redeemed people. However little we may be, if we are the Lord's, we may rejoice that we are preserved in Christ Jesus.

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## **Amos 9:11-15**

### **TODAY IN THE WORD**

"I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them," says the LORD your God. - Amos 9:15

When Mount St. Helens erupted in 1980, it covered the surrounding area with a layer of ash that was several hundred feet deep. The hot ash and lava that spewed from the mountain destroyed all plant and animal life, leaving behind a landscape that resembled the moon. Yet nineteen years later an amazing transformation had begun to take place. Birds, grass, elk, and even frogs had all begun to flourish there again. The mountainside, once dead, had come back to life.

The prophet Amos closes his book on a note of hope, describing a similar rebirth for the nation of Israel. God had promised to judge His people, but He did not intend to destroy them. In the future He would "restore David's fallen tent," "repair its broken places," "restore its ruins," and "build it as it used to be" (Amos 9:11).

The mention of "David's fallen tent" in this verse has been interpreted in a number of ways. Some think that it refers to the future restoration of the city of Jerusalem after its destruction by the Babylonians. Others regard it as a prediction of the reestablishment of the Davidic dynasty (see discussion of Millennium).

Acts cites this prophecy as support for the inclusion of Gentile believers in the church (Acts 15:16–17). The spread of the gospel to the Gentiles began God's fulfillment of His promise that the Gentiles would bear His name (v. 12).

In addition to this, Amos predicted a time of unparalleled prosperity for Israel in their own land. He foresaw a harvest so abundant that "the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes" (Amos 9:13). Normally the plowman worked during the months of October and November. The reaper harvested the crop in March or April. In the future, however, the harvest will be so abundant that the reaper will not be able to finish before the plowman begins.

### **TODAY ALONG THE WAY**

The promises Amos describes in these verses will one day be completely fulfilled when Christ establishes His kingdom (see

discussion of Millennium). But those who know Christ as Savior already experience a foretaste of what that fulfillment will be like, as they experience the richness of new life in Christ. Think of the changes Jesus Christ has brought into your life. In what areas that were once barren has Christ brought you new life? As you think through each one, pray and thank God for His transforming work in your life. ([Copyright Moody Bible Institute. Used by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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### **Amos 9:11–15 Today in the Word**

Arbor Day was first celebrated in Nebraska. Julius Sterling Morton, an early settler and editor of Nebraska's first newspaper, actively promoted his love of trees. In 1872, he proposed a resolution to the State Board of Agriculture that April 10 be set aside as a holiday for planting trees. The resolution was accepted, prizes were offered, and more than one million trees were planted on that first Arbor Day. By 1920, 45 states and territories had joined in, and today Arbor Day is celebrated in all 50 states. National Arbor Day is now the last Friday in April. As Morton said: "Each generation takes the earth as trustees. We ought to bequeath to posterity as many forests and orchards as we have exhausted and consumed."

Planting a tree is an image of life, and it's an appropriate picture in today's passage of God restoring a remnant of His people. This, too, is part of the "day of the LORD." Just as God Himself executed judgment, so God Himself will be the one to restore and rebuild "David's fallen shelter" (Amos 9:11–12). These are also messianic verses, and the mention of Edom and "all the nations that bear my name" suggests that God's plan for spreading His glory around the world included salvation for the Gentiles as well. That's certainly what the apostle James thought when he quoted these verses as the basis for his agreement with Paul and Barnabas that the Gentiles should be included in the church (Acts 15:15–17).

The picture of restoration with which the book of Amos closes is beautiful and powerful (vv. 13–15). Though judgment is imminent and inescapable, better days are coming. Then, the seasons will run together in such abundance that it will seem as though the plowman is following the reaper. The exiles will return and rebuild their homes. People will tend gardens and plant vineyards. Peace and plenty will be the rule of the day. God Himself will be their Gardener (cf. John 15:1–4), replanting the nation, "never again to be uprooted" (cf. 2 Sam. 7:16).

#### **Apply the Word**

Christian musicians have prayed in song for the coming of the "day of the LORD." One song by David Meece on his Chronology album is entitled simply, "Come That Day": "Come that day when the mighty gavel pounds the sky / And on that day every man will have to testify / And you will surrender your soul at His door / No man no better for rich or poor / There will be fire, there will be rain / There will be joy, there will be pain / Come that day, come that day, come that day."

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**Amos 9:11-15 - WHARF RATS** - Hopelessness is a terrible condition to be in. It will weaken you and cause you to give up, to even do things you would not normally do. Several years ago there was a study done in California with wharf rats, or rats that live by the water. And as you listen to the results of this study you will see the ultimate despair of hopelessness and the life that hope gives. In this study they found out that if you put the wharf rats in water, after about 16 minutes these rats would give up and die, drowning in the water. So they then put another group of wharf rats in the water and after about 15 minutes they took them out, dried them off, gave them something to eat, and then they placed them back into the water. And they did this several times until they finally just left them in the water to see how long they would last. Do you know how long they lasted this time? Not 16 minutes, not 32 minutes, but this time they lasted some 32 hours! What happened? What was the difference between these two groups of wharf rats? One group had no hope, the other did. You see, this last group had hope that they would be rescued again, and it encouraged them to go on. Thus, the focus of our study this morning will be on, not wharf rats, but hope, something that all of us need in our life! - [Sermon by Joe Guglielmo](#)

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### **Amos 9:11-12**

**F B Meyer**

#### **Our Daily Homily**

Amos 9:11-12 In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen.

These verses were quoted by the grave, white-vestured James in that memorable gathering of the Church to consider the admission of the Gentiles on equal terms with Jews (Acts 15). It is well worth noticing the special turn which the Lord's brother gave to the closing words of the quotation. He reads into it the deeper meaning of the Holy Spirit. The quickening and blessing of the chosen people has always meant the blessing of the world.

It was so, as James says, at Pentecost. The blessing which descended on the hill of Zion passed to all lands. They went everywhere preaching the Gospel, until some began to utter it also to the men of Antioch, and great numbers streamed into the Church (Acts 11); and thence the widening circles broadened out, until Ephesus, Athens, Rome, and distant Spain and Britain were included.

So will it be when the end of the present age has been reached. We, the Church, shall sit with Christ in the heavenlies, occupying the place now held by the devil and his demons, who will no longer be the prince of the power of the air; but the Jews, using that term in its strict sense, having been brought to God, shall be the evangelists and apostles of the world. Then the residue of the Gentiles shall seek unto the Lord. Ponder, specially, the promises of Amos 9:13-15; and compare them with Romans 11:15, 24, 28.

May we not appropriate them in a spiritual sense, and ask that the days may hasten when the crops shall have no sooner fallen before the sickle, than the plowmen shall run their shares through the clods; and the vintage shall follow close on the harvest; and men shall be prepared and eager before we begin to speak!

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### **Amos 9:11-15 - Peace and prosperity**

Illustration - The story goes that there once was a daughter of a fashionable couple from a large eastern city who went to Africa as a Peace corps volunteer. She had been to finishing school and her parents had made every effort to see that she was properly prepared to occupy a place in their social strata. When the young woman's term on the field was over she sent a telegram announcing that she would be bringing her new husband home with her. Her mother and father waited with excited anticipation at the airport gate. Their daughter emerged from the plane on the arm of a man about seven feet tall who was adorned in feathers, beads, skulls, tigers' teeth, and assorted pouches of magical potions around his neck. He even had a bone through his nose and rings in his ears! The mother fainted. As the father held his now unconscious wife, he shouted to his daughter, "No, no, dear. We said we wanted you to marry a rich doctor."

Some folks make it their life's goal to become wealthy and prosperous. Money isn't a bad thing, except the love of money will get you into trouble. There will be a day when we will live in prosperity. But the promise of God is for when Jesus comes back. Don't get too disappointed if you don't see prosperity in this life.

## **Amos Devotional Warren Wiersbe**

Amos opened his book by pronouncing judgment on the Gentile nations for the way they had treated the Jews, and this must have made the kingdoms of Israel and Judah very happy. But then the prophet announced that Israel and Judah would be punished for the sins they had committed against the Lord. God had already disciplined his people by sending drought and famine, blight and mildew, diseases and wars, but now the ultimate judgment would come—death. They would meet not God's "spankings" but God himself! The Assyrian army would invade the northern kingdom of Israel and many of the people would die. If you and I knew that we would die next week, how would we respond? If we suddenly had to rearrange our lives and alter them dramatically, then there is something wrong with our lives. We should so live for the Lord that he could call us at any time and we would be prepared. Israel was not prepared for several reasons.

They forgot God's covenant. Before the new generation of Israelites entered the Promised Land, Moses reviewed God's covenant and told them how they were to live (Deut. 27–28). After they were in the land, Joshua reviewed it a second time (Josh. 8:30–35). God told them he would provide for them and protect them as long as they obeyed, but if they disobeyed and became like their neighbors, he would chasten them. The very trials God named in the covenant were what he sent to the land, but the people did not get the message. Instead of worshiping the Lord as he had commanded, they began to worship the dead idols of the other nations, and there was nothing for the Lord to do but to chasten them. "The LORD will judge His people" (Heb. 10:30). Because the believers in the Corinthian church didn't properly observe the Lord's Supper, many of them became weak and sickly and some died (1 Cor. 11:27–32). God means what he says!

They ignored God's calls. The various judgments the Lord sent to the land were "wake-up calls" that the leaders and the people ignored. Five times in Amos 4, the Lord said to them, "you have not returned to Me" (vv. 6–11), but they would not listen. They had given their hearts to the pagan idols and turned their backs on the Lord. Amos begged them to seek God and live (5:4, 6, 14), but they ignored him and died. (Moses gave the same warning in Deuteronomy 30:11–20, and we assume that Joshua also reminded them.) It's been my experience that God always deals with me whenever I disobey him and won't listen. But I'm glad he does, because his chastening hand is proof of his loving heart and evidence that I am truly a child of God (Heb. 12:3–11). God doesn't

spank the neighbor's children, which is why lost sinners seem to "get away with things."

They didn't take death seriously. Death is the ultimate judgment God can send, and this includes his own children (1 John 5:16–17). For us to deliberately sin and expect to get away with it is contrary to what the Scriptures teach. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 18:23, 32) or when he must take the life of one of his own people. It's sad when professed Christians live as though Jesus never died, the Spirit never came, and judgment will never occur; but Amos cries out, "Prepare to meet your God" (Amos 4:12). Need the Lord say more?

It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment. Hebrews 9:27 ([Old Testament Words for Today: 100 Devotional Reflections](#))