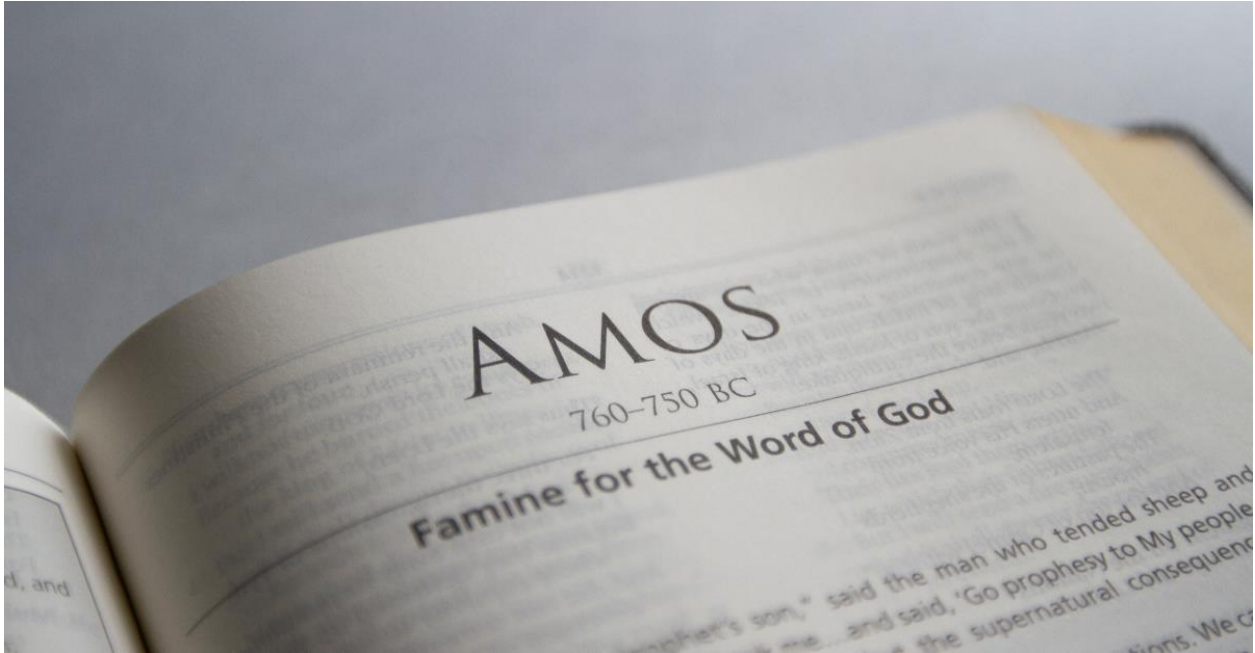


AMOS 3

LIKE HE SAID



T. M. AND SUSIE MOORE

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

Amos 3: Like He Said
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The Fellowship of Ailbe
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Amos 3: Introduction

The litany of Israel's sins, begun in chapter 2, is extended and summarized in chapter 3, and a word of judgment is declared. Israel was guilty of oppressing the poor and the meek, defiling God's Name, practicing sexual immorality, being ungrateful for His blessings, silencing the prophets, compromising the servants of the Lord, and pursuing an idolatry of wealth and ease (c. 6-12; 3.15).

Clearly the nation had departed from God's ways. And in the action they took concerning the path they would take, they chose the path of His judgment.

Like He said.

We hope you will find this study of the book of Amos to provide abundant stimulation for your walk with and work for the Lord.

For His glory and praise!

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1 Most Loved, Most Judged

Pray Psalm 58.3-5.

The wicked are estranged from the womb;
They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.
Their poison is like the poison of a serpent;
They are like the deaf cobra *that* stops its ear,
Which will not heed the voice of charmers,
Charming ever so skillfully.

Sing Psalm 58.3-5.

(Arlington: *This Is the Day the Lord Has Made*)

The wicked from the womb rebel; from birth they utter lies.
Their tongues of serpent's venom tell; all truth their ears despise.

Read and meditate on Amos 3.1, 2.

Preparation

1. Against whom did the prophet speak?
2. Why was God preparing to punish them?

Meditation

Once again, God through the prophet reminds Israel of their deliverance from Egypt, a powerful and saving deliverance that solidified their identity as “the whole family” of Jacob and the people of God (v. 1).

He reminds them of what He said then (Deut. 7.6-8), that He knew—that is, loved—they *alone* of all the families of the earth. It's not that God did not extend His love to the nations. His common grace, the everyday love of God by which He blesses and sustains everything in creation, reaches daily to the nations of the world. The nations are part of the world that God so loves that He gave His only-begotten Son for them.

But He did not love the other nations and peoples with the kind of attention, care, and intimacy He showed to the people of Israel, including Judah, who is here intimated (v. 2). He carried them through the wilderness and fed them every day. He drove out the pagan nations and parceled their land to His people. He gave them kings and judges and prophets for implementing of His Law. He made His dwelling among them to receive their worship and renew their hope in His promises and Law.

He loved them much. Therefore, because of their iniquities, and especially their ingratitude, He would punish them more. Soon Israel would be borne away captive to Assyria, and the nation would be no more.

There's a principle here: Much loved, much punished. God's grace reaches to us every day. We should give abundant thanks and praise to Him. Instead, His daily grace becomes so familiar to us that we take it for granted, hardly thinking it necessary to thank Him for things like breath, sight, health, work, the beauties of creation, and so forth. We are much loved of God. Let us be more grateful.

And there is one more facet to this principle: Jesus was the *most* loved of God; therefore, and because of God's love for us, He weighed down, weighed down Jesus with our sins, that He might bear *them*, not *us*, away.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Israel's, Judah's, and our dilemma—

“For the LORD has spoken:

‘I have nourished and brought up children,

and they have rebelled against Me;

the ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib;

but Israel does not know, My people do not consider” (Is. 1.2, 3)

God's solution—

“Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows...

He was wounded for our transgressions,

He was bruised for our iniquities;

the chastisement for our peace was upon Him,

and by His stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray;

we have turned, every one, to his own way;

and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Is. 53.4-6).

And now that we have been grafted into (Rom. 11.17-25) this family, we bear the same responsibilities, and the same outcomes of discipline for our rebellion and sin. However, the glorious promises are also just as real for us as for His beloved— “you only have I known of all the families of the earth” (Amos 3.2).

“My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.’ If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?” (Heb. 12.5-7).

“Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (Heb. 12.11).

“The ear that hears the rebukes of life will abide among the wise.

He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, but he who heeds rebuke gets understanding.

The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is humility” (Prov. 15.31-33).

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent” (Rev. 3.19).

And can it be that I should gain

An int'rest in the Savior's blood?

Died He for me, who caused His pain?

For me, who Him to death pursued?

Amazing love! How can it be

That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

No condemnation now I dread;

Jesus, and all in Him, is mine!

Alive in Him, my living Head,

And clothed in righteousness divine,

Bold I approach th'eternal throne,

And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

Amazing love! How can it be

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That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me.
(Charles Wesley, 1738)

Reflection

1. How many ways can you know the love God has for you right now, in this instant?
2. Give Him praise and thanks for as much of His love as He shows you now. How can you continue to be mindful of this amazing love?
3. Whom will you encourage today and for whom will you pray that they might be more conscious of God's amazing love throughout each day?

The distinguishing favors of God to us, if they do not restrain from sin, shall not exempt from punishment. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Amos 3.1-8*

Pray Psalm 58.1, 2, 10, 11.

Pray for the Church, the beloved Body of Christ. Pray for revival, repentance from sin, and a renewed commitment to seeking the Kingdom and righteousness of God.

Sing Psalm 58.1, 2, 10, 11.

(Arlington: *This Is the Day the Lord Has Made*)

Do you indeed speak righteousness, you rulers of the earth?
And do you judge the sons of men according to their worth?

No, not at all, but in their hearts they seek unrighteous ways;
their hands weigh out upon the earth cruel violence all their days.

The righteous will rejoice to see the vengeance of the LORD.
All men will say, "Then God must be, the righteous to reward."

2 Cause and Effects

Pray Psalm 68.1,2, 32, 33

Let God arise,
Let His enemies be scattered;
Let those also who hate Him flee before Him.
As smoke is driven away,
So drive *them* away;
As wax melts before the fire,
So let the wicked perish at the presence of God...
Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth;
Oh, sing praises to the Lord,
Selab
To Him who rides on the heaven of heavens, *which were* of old!
Indeed, He sends out His voice, a mighty voice.

Sing Psalm 68.1, 2, 32, 33.

(O Store Gud: *How Great Thou Art*)

Let God arise, let all Your foes be scattered!
Let those who hate You flee before Your face!
As smoke dissolves, as wax in flame is shattered,
let all the wicked perish in disgrace!

Refrain vv. 32, 33

Sing to the LORD, O kingdoms of the earth!
Ancient of Days—praise Him on high!
Behold He speaks; His Word is going forth;
Ancient of Days—praise Him on high!

Read Amos 3.1-6; meditate on verses 3-6.

Preparation

1. What images does God use here?
2. What was His purpose in doing this?

Meditation

By a series of metaphors, God justified the judgment which He would bring upon Israel. They were no longer agreeing with Him and had begun to walk a different path (v. 3). God roared out from Jerusalem like a lion, a young lion, because He had seized His prey—Israel (v. 4). Israel would fall like a bird in a snare that springs up from the earth because its prey has taken the bait—the sinful ways of the pagan nations (v. 5). The people of Israel should fear the trumpet blast of God warning them against coming calamity (v. 6).

All these images are put in the form of questions. Three of the questions begin with the Hebrew letter “h” (ה, *ha* which in Hebrew is called the *He* interrogative), while the last is in the form of “if”/“not”, twice in verse 6 (“If this happens, will not this follow?”). Reading this passage in Hebrew thus sounds powerfully emphatic: *Ha...? Ha...? Ha...? “If...not...? If...not...?”* Yet even this barrage would not arrest Israel’s rebellion against the Lord. They had already silenced the prophets, after all (2.12). Why should they listen to Amos?

When you see the effects, O Israel, you will know that the reason for them is the judgment of the Lord. We should consider certain questions for ourselves: Are not our churches in decline? Has not our influence over

the culture diminished almost to zero? Has not so much of the world crept into our lives that we no longer hear the Word of the Lord or hearken to His Law? Is not the world in a moral and spiritual tailspin because of our silence?

What is the cause of these effects? Our neglect and rebellion, God's judgment.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162
“...will not the LORD have done it?” (Amos 3.6).

“We have sinned with our fathers,
we have committed iniquity,
we have done wickedly.
Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders;
they did not remember the multitude of Your mercies,
but rebelled by the sea—the Red Sea” (Ps. 106.6, 7).

“For the LORD will rise up as at Mount Perazim,
He will be angry as in the Valley of Gibeon—
that He may do His work, His awesome work,
and bring to pass His act, His unusual act.
Now therefore, do not be mockers, lest your bonds be made strong;
for I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts,
a destruction determined even upon the whole earth” (Is. 28.21, 22).

“I AM the LORD, and there is no other; there is no god besides Me...
I form the light and create darkness,
I make peace and create calamity;
I, the LORD, do all these things” (Is. 45.5, 7).

God created the heavens and the earth.
God created mankind to live on the earth.
He does it all, and He does it well.

As Jesus' disciples marveled, “Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?” (Matt. 8.27)

Or as the onlookers to one of His miracles opined, “He has done all things well” (Mk. 7.37).

“For ask now concerning the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether any great thing like this has happened, or anything like it has been heard. Did any people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and live? Or did God ever try to go and take for Himself a nation from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD Himself is God; there is none other besides Him” (Deut. 4.32-35).

“Now see that I, even I, AM He, and there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; nor is there any who can deliver from My hand” (Deut. 32.39).

Will not the LORD do exactly what He has said He will do? Well, yes, He will.

Then if we believe that, we must pay attention to what He wants for us and from us: “I AM the LORD; I will

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bring you out...I will rescue you...I will redeem you... I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I AM the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens..." (Ex. 6.6, 7). "For I, the LORD your God, AM a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments" (Ex. 20.5, 6).

The effect of obedience and love is a cause worth fighting for.

Reflection

1. What positive effects of God's grace in your life have you seen lately?
2. What effects should we expect when the Spirit of God is empowering our lives?
3. Whom will you encourage today to walk in obedience and love?

As it is impossible for two people to share a journey at the same time, he is saying, unless indicating to each other where and why they are traveling, or for a lion to roar if there is no prey, or for a bird to fall without a hunter, or for all the other things mentioned, so it is impossible for any punishment to be imposed without God willing it.. Theodoret of Cyr (393-466), Commentary on Amos 3.6-8

Pray Psalm 68.3, 4, 19, 20, 32, 33.

Pray that God's Spirit will revive His people so that we desire to walk more closely with Him and to fulfill our calling to seek His Kingdom and glory.

Sing Psalm 68.3, 4, 19, 20, 32, 33.

(O Store Gud: How Great Thou Art)

LORD, let Your righteous ones exult in glory,
let us rejoice and praise Your holy Name!

Now let us sing the Savior's old, old story—
Who life to deserts brings, we now proclaim!

Refrain vs. 32, 33

Sing to the LORD, O kingdoms of the earth!
Ancient of Days—praise Him on high!
Behold He speaks; His Word is going forth;
Ancient of Days—praise Him on high!

Blessed be the LORD, our burden daily bearing,
O God, our God, our Savior and our King!
With us salvation and deliv'rance sharing,
He life from death His people daily brings.

Refrain

3 The Language of the Saints

Pray Psalm 147.1-3.

Praise the LORD!
For it is good to sing praises to our God;
For it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful.
The LORD builds up Jerusalem;
He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.
He heals the brokenhearted
And binds up their wounds.

Sing Psalm 147.1-3.

(St. Anne: *O God, Our Help in Ages Past*)

Praise God, for it is good to sing loud praises to the LORD!
With joy our songs of praise we bring to God and to His Word.

The LORD builds up His Church and He His people gathers in.
The broken hearts He tenderly repairs and heals their sin.

Read Amos 3.1-8; meditate on verses 7, 8.

Preparation

1. To whom does God reveal His secrets?
2. What must they do to whom God has revealed His secrets?

Meditation

Perhaps Amos was beginning to get some pushback (cf. 7.10ff.). Here he says, “Hey, don’t blame me, I’m just the messenger!” And his message here deserves a closer look. Amos asserts that “the Lord GOD does nothing” which He does not reveal to His prophets (v. 7). God does not keep people in the dark about His will or plan. He reveals these plainly to His prophets, and it is their responsibility, as His spokespersons, to proclaim His will and plan to the people to whom they are sent.

The Hebrew noun, סֵדֶר (*sobd*) means “confidential speech” or “counsel”, even “revealed counsel.” To translate this word as “secrets” seems unnecessary and even a little petty (“I know a secret, and you don’t.”). God does not reveal secrets to be kept but counsel, revealed to His people, which they are to proclaim.

Perhaps that is why Paul explained that the native language of the saints of God is prophecy. In 1 Corinthians 14 he explained that to prophesy is to speak words of edification, exhortation, and encouragement, for the building-up of the church (vv. 3, 4). Paul said all believers should prophesy (v. 5), especially when they are assembled together in the Lord (v. 31). Unbelievers may not understand what you’re talking about—or, as in the case of Israel in Amos’ day, they just may not want to hear it—but those who know the Lord and love His Word can benefit from it (vv. 22, 31). And prophecy can soften the hard hearts of the lost, as the Lord pleases (vv. 24, 25).

Amos prophesied as God gave Him counsel and confidential speech. His words, written in God’s Word, are divine revelation. Our words of prophecy, as the revelation of God transforms and commissions us, can bring edification and encouragement to others. The better we learn the language of the saints, the more God will use us as agents of His grace to our world.

Let God speak His Word to you daily. Then whatever He roars your way, take it to heart; then go and spread it around (Amos 3.8; cf. 2 Cor. 4.15).

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

God generously and lovingly revealed His plans to His prophets, so that the people whom He loved so dearly would be warned of His displeasure and the wrath to come. Seems fair.

All believers who know and love God's Word are now called to reveal His plans to our Personal Mission Field. And to do so is fair. Those in our sphere may only hear God's truth through us. And as believers, we are warned to do so.

“Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, ‘Surely we did not know this,’ Does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?” (Prov. 24.11, 12).

We are now the joyous, albeit responsible, recipients of God's “confidential speech, counsel, and revealed counsel”. What will we do with it?

Paul spoke of his calling and work as the recipient of God's words:

“...to fulfill the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily” (Col. 1.25-29). And we, beloved, have all been called to convey this same mystery and hope.

Jesus imparted this same counsel to His followers, when He said:

“No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you” (Jn. 15.15). With the added addendum: “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you” (Jn. 15.14).

We are prophets, saints, and friends called to the same work that Amos and Paul were called to: imparting the truth of God's Word in all its facets, nuances, forms, warnings, and promises. All of it—from beginning to end—the Good News and the bad.

And truly, “The better we learn the language of the saints, the more God will use us as agents of His grace to our world.”

But the only way this will happen is if we are daily immersed in His Word and in prayer. Learning moment by moment, and day by day, how to hear His “roar” (Amos 1.2), ably spread His Word and grace around, so that thanksgiving will “abound to the glory of God” (2 Cor. 4.15). Seems fair.

Reflection

1. How much does “the language of the saints” describe your language?
2. How do you proclaim the counsel of God to the people in your Personal Mission Field?
3. Whom will you encourage in the language of the saints today?

Much more kindly and mercifully has God acted, says Amos, with that people; for God was unwilling suddenly to overwhelm or to surprise them, but has warned them by his Prophets. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Amos 3.3-8

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Pray Psalm 147.12-20.

Praise God for the power of His Word, which upholds and sustains the entire cosmos. Thank Him for entrusting you with His Word, to wield its power for blessing throughout the day. Pray for many opportunities to do so today.

Sing Psalm 147.12-20.

(St. Anne: *O God, Our Help in Ages Past*)

O praise your God, Jerusalem, O Zion, praise the LORD!
He strengthens those who trust in Him with blessings from His Word.

Around us He has spread His peace; our borders are secure.
His bounty daily shall increase; His grace to us is sure!

His Word to earth runs to and fro to carry out His will;
He brings the rain, He sends the snow, and none can keep Him still.

His Word He to His Church bestows—His promises and Law.
No other nation God thus knows: Praise Him with songs of awe!

4 Encircled

Pray Psalm 3.1, 2.

LORD, how they have increased who trouble me!

Many are they who rise up against me.

Many *are* they who say of me,

“There is no help for him in God.”

Selah

Sing Psalm 3.1, 2.

(Eventide: *Abide with Me*)

LORD, all around my foes are multiplied, rising against me, like a ‘whelming tide;

many are saying of my weary soul, “Not even God can save and make him whole!”

Read and meditate on Amos 3.1-11; meditate on verses 9-11.

Preparation

1. What was God planning to bring against Israel?

2. To what would that lead?

Meditation

Indulge me a little exercise in one of my favorite aspects of Biblical studies: textual criticism. The Hebrew text of verse 9 reads “in the palaces at Ashdod”, but the Septuagint (Greek version of the Old Testament, translated before the time of Christ and quoted throughout the New Testament) has “in the palaces in Assyria”. How could this difference arise? The answer might well be, “Scribal error.” A scribe, in copying an earlier manuscript of this verse misread the Hebrew אַשְׁדּוֹד *Asshur, Assyria*, as אַשְׁדּוֹד *Ashdod, Ashdod*. Look carefully, and you might be able to see how that could have happened. The translators of the Septuagint, who understood what had happened to Israel, repaired the mistake and wrote ἐν Ἀσσυρίοις, *en Assuriōis*, in Assyria. We’ll go with them.

Fun, huh?

Not so much for the people of Samaria, though. God declared that He would surround the city of Samaria, which sat in a valley and considered itself protected by surrounding mountains. But God would send the Assyrians from the east and north and the Egyptians from the south and west, so that all the inhabitants of the capital of Israel would be bottled up and without hope of escape (vv. 9, 11). The Assyrians and Egyptians perched like vultures, waiting while the strength of the people of Israel was sapped. Then they would descend with great violence, robbery, and plundering to work God’s wrath against His people.

Seems awfully harsh, though, doesn’t it? Why was this necessary? Because the people, having forsaken the Law of God, did not know how to do what was right, and were practicing all manner of wicked self-indulgence and oppression (v. 10). And this for years, generations even. They would not listen to the prophets God sent, and yet they continued to invoke His Name right along with the pagan deities they worshiped. The defilement of His Name was the last straw. Israel would be encircled, destroyed, and carried away into captivity.

Because God is determined to keep His Name holy.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

From the beginning, when God pulled His people out of Egypt and set them on a new path, one with His Law at the forefront of all things, He fully informed them of the guiding ground rules for all their lives, all the time, forever and ever—right on up to us.

God began with this:

“I AM the LORD your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

You shall have no other gods before Me.

You shall not make for yourself a carved image...

You shall not bow down to them nor serve them.

For I the LORD your God AM a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,

but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

You shall not take the Name of the LORD your God in vain,

for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His Name in vain” (Ex. 20. 2-7).

Clearly forewarned.

What was wrong with those people?

Selah. A respectful pause while we think about their disobedience. Now.

What is wrong with us—the Church today?

Do we really want “tumults” within our gates? And “oppression”? (Amos 3.9)

But let’s pause now, respectfully, and view the Church, honestly, and observe if any of this could be said of us: an adversary is all around us, our strength and abilities are sapped, and worship is plundered.

Your thoughts?

Here are Peter’s thoughts and suggestions for the Church of his day—and for ours:

“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and

rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance;

but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,

because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I AM holy.’

And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one’s work,

conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;

knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold,

for your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,

but with the precious blood of Christ,

as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet. 1.13-19).

“Because God is determined to keep His Name holy.”

Reflection

1. How did God by His grace bring you to Himself? Outline your testimony of coming to faith in Jesus.

2. Ask a fellow believer to share their testimony with you. Give thanks to God for how He brought them to faith.

3. What can you and the believers in your Personal Mission Field do to keep the Name of God holy among you?

The Prophet alludes to the situation of the country: for though Samaria was situated on a plain, there were yet mountains around it; and they thought themselves hid there, and were as wine settled on its lees. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Amos 3.9

Pray Psalm 3.4-8.

Pray that God would protect His people, especially those who are experiencing persecution, and that He would revive His Church all around the world.

Sing Psalm 3.4-8.

(Eventide: *Abide with Me*)

You are a mercy shield about me, LORD, raising me by Your glory and Your Word.

Prayers fraught with tears stream from me like a fount, yet God will answer from His holy mount.

Waking and sleeping, guarded by Your grace, when foes by thousands stand before my face,
when countless dangers 'round me are arrayed, I will not fear, I will not be afraid!

Rise up, O LORD, rise up and rescue me! Let all my foes destroyed and routed be!

Grace and salvation, LORD, are Yours alone; bless and protect all those You call Your own.

5 Near-Total Judgment

Pray Psalm 81.11, 12.

“But My people would not heed My voice,
And Israel would have none of Me.
So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart,
To walk in their own counsels.”

Sing Psalm 81.11, 12, 8.

(St. Petersburg: *My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*)

“My people would not listen to Me, but hardened their hearts most hideously;
I cursed them for their hard-hearted ways to wander in darkness all of their days:

Refrain (v. 8)

“O Israel, hear, admonished now be; My people, repent, return to Me!”

Read and meditate on Amos 3.1-14; meditate on verses 12-14.

Preparation

1. What would be left after the lion of Assyria “devoured” the nation of Israel?
2. What would happen to the pagan altars at Bethel?

Meditation

Wait a second. All along here we’ve been saying that the nation of Israel was going to be completely destroyed, taken into captivity, ethnically admixed and compromised, and never allowed to return to the land of promise. Yes, and this is precisely the judgment God inflicted on those living in Samaria and the kingdom of Israel.

OK, but today’s passage seems to imply a remnant. Small as a lamb’s ear or a sheep shank, perhaps, but a remnant nonetheless (v. 12).

Hold that thought. The northern kingdom of Israel was indeed going to suffer the punishment due her transgressions (v. 14). Beyond that, God would also destroy the altars where sacrifices were given to false gods (v. 15). In doing this He showed that His judgment was not only against His people but also those false deities—demons, really—which had captured their devotion. And Bethel was where this heinous religion had started (1 Kgs. 12.33), so here (v. 14) it stands for the destruction of it all. Their destruction would be complete.

But a remnant of Israel would indeed remain. Recall that certain people from the kingdom of Israel had relocated to the southern kingdom so that they could live under rulers who worshiped the Lord (cf. 2 Chron. 15.8, 9; 30.18). This faithful remnant had established itself long before the Assyrians came down on Samaria and all Israel.

This small “remnant” found deliverance in Judah, just as all who flee the idols of our age find refuge in Jesus. So, yes, there would be a remnant of the tribes who inhabited Israel, but it would be small as a lamb’s ear or a sheep’s shank compared to those who were permanently lost.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

God is always ready to save a remnant, if indeed, a remnant exists.

Let's consider the situation written about in Genesis 18.16-33 between God and Abraham concerning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. God had plans for Abraham and his family: "For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."

But then there was this outcry against the unrighteousness found in these cities. Abraham had family in Sodom and thus found the impending destruction troubling. The outcry to God was great because their sin was very grave. Most worthy of certain destruction.

Abraham posed this question to God: Will You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Then he began his somewhat ridiculous countdown with God. Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it? Suppose there were five less than the fifty righteous? Suppose there should be forty found there? Suppose thirty should be found there? Suppose twenty should be found there? Suppose ten should be found there? And to all those numerical queries God answered that He would spare it for the fifty, forty-five, forty, thirty, twenty, and even the ten.

But Sodom couldn't even muster ten righteous and we all know what happened next: "Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground...and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace."

But praise God and His mercy and grace, He is willing to save a country, a city, a church, or a family for just a small remnant of the righteous!

The Church worldwide needs people who are willing to take a stand for righteousness. As the word of the LORD came to Ezekiel, so it comes to us: "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth and give them warning from Me: When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul." God also commanded him to warn the righteous—fellow believers—when they fell into sin, with the same outcomes for obedience and disobedience (Ezek. 3.17-21).

Time-out for our children was but for a moment. It was never meant to be done in perpetuity. Our great desire was that something positive might be learned in the quiet time. God keeps giving His people a time-out to learn to obey Him. He hopes that we will learn from others' mistakes, and our own. He wants us to be in His Word, to read about the failures of the disobedient. As Solomon pointed out, "Strike a scoffer, and the simple will become wary; rebuke one who has understanding, and he will discern knowledge" (Prov. 19.25). Or as the philosopher-poet, George Santayana said, "Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it."

Amos is read and studied so we will learn and not repeat the mistakes found therein.

Let us, as God's "fifty, forty-five, forty, thirty, twenty, ten" remnant people of today, be the obedient, righteous, watchmen, speaking words of truth to those in our Personal Mission Field.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (Jn. 3.16, 17). God continues to provide deliverance (Rom. 5.8).

"All who flee the idols of our age find refuge in Jesus."

Amos 3: Like He Said

Reflection

1. How did Israel come to fall under God's judgment? Was this a sudden or gradual thing?
2. How can you know when you might be drifting away from God's path for your life? What should you do then?
3. Whom will you encourage today to continue to pursue holiness in Jesus Christ?

*[I]ncidentally he says that some would remain, yet his object was to show that the whole kingdom was now given up as a prey to lions, and that nothing would be saved except a very small portion, as when a shepherd carries away an ear when the wolves and lions had been satiated. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Amos 3.11-14**

Pray Psalm 81.13-16, 8.

Pray that all who truly know the Lord and desire to live under His rule would repent of their sins and begin daily seeking Him for revival, renewal, and awakening.

Sing Psalm 81.13-16, 8.

(St. Petersburg: *My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less*)

Now let us all abandon our ways and listen to God, and offer Him praise!
Our foes He will so quickly subdue, extending His hand to save and renew.

Refrain (v. 8)

“O Israel, hear, admonished now be; My people, repent, return to Me!”

Then even those despising the LORD would falsely obey and follow His Word;
in vain they seem to follow His way, yet judgment awaits on God's chosen day.

Refrain

The finest foods for us He will buy, and furnish us an abundant supply.

How sweet our lives can be in the LORD, when only we heed His glorious Word.

Refrain

6 False Gods Judged

Pray Psalm 28.3-5.

Do not take me away with the wicked
And with the workers of iniquity,
Who speak peace to their neighbors,
But evil *is* in their hearts.
Give them according to their deeds,
And according to the wickedness of their endeavors;
Give them according to the work of their hands;
Render to them what they deserve.
Because they do not regard the works of the LORD,
Nor the operation of His hands,
He shall destroy them
And not build them up.

Sing Psalm 28.3-5

(Angel's Story: *Oh Jesus, I Have Promised*)

LORD, count me not among those who walk in sinful ways.
With words of peace their tongue glows while evil fills their days.
Your works they disregard, LORD, while evil fills their hands.
Destroy them by Your Word, LORD, and let them no more stand.

Read Amos 3.1-15; meditate on verse 15.

Preparation

1. What is the focus of God's judgment here?
2. What will happen to them?

Meditation

The idols and false gods of ancient Israel continue to be idols and false gods for many people in our society: wealth and ease. In Israel's case, a certain segment of the population had managed to accumulate sufficient wealth to own both summer and winter homes, or to have their houses trimmed with ivory, or just to build "great houses" which doubtless stood tall above those of the ordinary people.

It's not clear how this great wealth was accumulated. But we can imagine. Taxes, manipulating markets, rents, war, and theft were the most likely sources. The gods of wealth and ease are, after all, subordinate deities. They serve a larger master and the ultimate god of all wrong believers: the self.

People who worship themselves—what *they* want, what matters to *them*, the level of comfort *they* seek, how best to maintain and advance *their* stature, and so forth—seek wealth and ease that they may satisfy the demands of self. There is no sense that their wealth should be used for loving their neighbors or for any other use besides ensuring and enlarging their ease.

God hates this. He swore to take away the false gods of wealth and ease from those who pursued them, and to leave the god of self stripped of all satisfaction and captive to the whims of foreigners. A feeble, feckless, foolish deity bereft of every prop.

Everything in our society is aimed at convincing you that you are your own god and wealth and ease are what

your self needs above all. Education, government, advertising, even, alas, some elements of the Christian community insist that your greatest happiness is in satisfying yourself with stuff.

A day of judgment awaits all such folly. Make sure you're not standing in that crowd when God's wrath begins to fall.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

From the Old Testament to the New, and then to us, some things, sadly, never seem to change.

Solomon had some words of wisdom on topic to start our conversation: "Do not overwork to be rich; because of your own understanding, cease! Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away like an eagle toward heaven" (Prov. 23.4, 5). A real false god.

God spoke directly to this issue through the psalmist, by rehearsing all He had done for His children, how He had cared for all their needs; and then the psalmist spoke to their response. And God's. At first "they believed His words; they sang His praise." But then, "they soon forgot His works; they did not wait for His counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tested God in the desert. And He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul" (Ps. 106.12-15).

That is a horrible place to be—they had all their stuff, but their relationship with God was spare and sparse.

Jesus covered this same topic with His followers—then and now. He explained how God knows what we all need, and that those things will be supplied. Our job? "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6.33).

Then Jesus told a parable about obedience: "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall" (Matt. 7.24-27). Better to base one's values and life on a stable rock than on shifting sand.

After Jesus finished speaking, "the people were astonished at His teaching" (Matt. 7.28).

That's a good first step. Are we also astonished? Astonished enough to believe Him and do what He commands? Have God's words through Amos astonished us?

As Jesus said to a greedy questioner in the audience: "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Lk. 12.15). Abundant life is found in Jesus—following and serving Him. As He said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (Jn. 10.10). Stuff comes and goes, but we who do the will of our Father, will be participants in the Kingdom now and later—forever (Matt. 7.21).

(As an aside, some folks are blessed with all the stuff *and* really full souls; and that is a joy to behold, as well. For their thoughts are of the Kingdom first and then of others, and caring for them. They are not greedy nor covetous, and their ten per cent tithe blesses many other lives.)

Whatever our financial situation, the fact is, our hearts can either be set on a Jesus Path or not. And as Paul once wrote about experiencing both financial situations: "I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4.11-13).

A lean soul is never to be desired. So, regardless of our circumstances at any given time, we never want to be judged for serving a false god.

Reflection

1. How do you guard yourself against desiring too many things?
2. How does God want you to use the things and wealth He has allowed you to have?
3. How would you know when things are beginning to be an idol in your soul?

Amos shows again that in vain the great people trusted in their wealth and fortified places; for these could not hinder God from drawing them forth to punishment. As then abundance blinds men, and as they imagine themselves to be as it were inaccessible, especially when dwelling in great palaces, the Prophet here declares, that these houses would be no impediment to prevent God's vengeance to break through. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Amos 3.15

Pray Psalm 28.1, 2, 6-9.

Pray that God will stop the lies of those in places of influence in our society, and that He will revive His people to seek Him and His Kingdom in all things.

Sing Psalm 28.1, 2, 6-9

(Angel's Story: *Oh Jesus, I Have Promised*)

I cry to You, our Savior, O, be not deaf to me!
LORD, speak to me with favor, lest I should dying be.
Hear now my supplications when for Your help I cry.
Receive these, my oblations, before Your throne on high.

Blessed be the Name of Jesus, for He will hear our prayer.
His strength protects and shields us with mercy and with care.
In You our heart rejoices; You help us by Your Word.
To You we raise our voices to praise and thank You, LORD.

Our strength are You, O Savior, our strong defense and sure.
Anointed with Your favor, we rest in You secure.
Save us, and bless us, Jesus, upon us turn Your face.
With shepherd's care, LORD, keep us forever in Your grace.

7 Like He Said

Opening Prayer: Psalm 14.1-3

The fool has said in his heart,
“There is no God.”
They are corrupt,
They have done abominable works,
There is none who does good.
The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men,
To see if there are any who understand, who seek God.
They have all turned aside,
They have together become corrupt;
There is none who does good,
No, not one.

Sing Psalm 14.1-3

(St. Anne: *O God, Our Help in Ages Past*)

The fool within his heart proclaims, “There is no God at all!”
His deeds are wicked, filled with shame who on God will not call.

No good in such as these is found; corruption fills their breast.
God from His heav’nly throne looks down, their hearts and ways to test.

Read Amos 3.1-15; meditate on verses 1-3.

Preparation

1. What had been God’s relationship to Israel?
2. How had Israel responded to this (v. 3)?

Meditation

The litany of Israel’s sins, begun in chapter 2, is extended and summarized in chapter 3, and a word of judgment is declared. Israel was guilty of oppressing the poor and the meek, defiling God’s Name, practicing sexual immorality, being ungrateful for His blessings, silencing the prophets, compromising the servants of the Lord, and pursuing an idolatry of wealth and ease (c. 6-12; 3.15).

Clearly the nation had departed from God’s ways. And in the action they took concerning the path they would take, they chose the path of His judgment, like He said. The catalogue of judgement for refusing God’s ways, outlined in Deuteronomy 28.15-68, is as much a promise of God’s Word as the blessings of verse 1-14 in that same chapter. God had told His people what He would do if they defiled His Name and departed from His ways, and now He was preparing to fulfill His promise by a near total judgment upon the nation of Israel. Just like He said.

Israel did not want to do things God’s way. They wanted to be like the nations surrounding them, to worship their false gods, indulge their immoral ways, court their favor, and exploit and plunder them as they could. Just like the Canaanites whom God had driven from the land. And now God was preparing to vomit His people out of His land, just as He had sworn He would (Lev. 18.26-28).

Just like He said.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.16

God is asking us the same rhetorical question: “Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” (Amos 3.3).

Throughout the day, one has only to look outside, to encounter the sight of two people walking together. It is a thing, and people do it, for fellowship, protection, and encouragement. One cannot reap those benefits if the walking-partner is going the opposite direction. The duo must agree to walk together at relatively the same pace and on the same path.

“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor.
For if they fall, one will lift up his companion.
But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up.
Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone?
Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him.
And a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Eccl. 4.9-12).

To have a friend is a beautiful thing.
To walk with God is our supreme calling.
And to walk with God as our Friend is true joy and abundant life.
Without Him there is no point to our being.
We simply need to agree about where we are headed—together.

So let us listen carefully as Amos speaks God’s words to His children:

“Hear this word that the LORD has spoken
against you, O children of Israel,
against the whole family
which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying:
‘You only have I known of all the families of the earth;
therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities’” (Amos 3.1, 2).

If we are convicted in our hearts of any of the same sins that they were delving into—worshiping false gods, doing immorality of any kind, oppressing the poor and meek, taking the name of Christian in vain, being ungrateful for God’s blessings, and not listening to nor obeying His Word—then we must repent, turn from our sins, and walk again on the Jesus Path with God. We have sinned against Him (Ps. 51.4). We do not want to participate in the punishment He has promised for those who have done so.

God’s Word is always fulfilled. Which is good news and bad. God cannot lie. As Paul wrote concerning eternity, we have “the hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began” (Titus 1.2). But His children also have the promise of a recipe for near-total judgment with a side of remnant if we do not wake up and obey Him.

When we set our hearts and minds to obey Him to the end (Ps. 119.112) then we have the promise that He will keep that mindset in place for us, to the end: “Commit your works to the LORD, and your thoughts will be established” (Prov. 16.3).

Like that. “Just like He said” (Matt. 28.6).

Reflection

1. What are some things that might cause you to begin doubting the Word of God? How should you prepare to deal with those things?
2. How can Christians help one another to continue walking in agreement with the Lord?

Amos 3: Like He Said

3. Whom will you encourage today, to help them keep on the Jesus Path?

God and man cannot walk together, except they are agreed. Unless we seek his glory, we cannot walk with him. Let us not presume on outward privileges, without special, sanctifying grace. The threatenings of the word and providence of God against the sin of man are certain, and certainly show that the judgments of God are at hand. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Amos 3.3*

Closing Prayer: Psalm 14.4-7

Pray to understand God's Word and the blessings of obedience, and to fear God and His promised discipline. Ask Him to give you increasing clarity of insight to His revelation in Scripture and in Jesus Christ.

Sing Psalm 14.4-7

(St. Anne: *O God, Our Help in Ages Past*)

None understands, none seeks the LORD; they all have turned aside.
Deception leads them from God's Word who have His grace denied.

The workers of iniquity consume God's sheep like bread;
they trust not in the LORD, and He shall fill their hearts with dread.

For Jesus with the righteous stands, though they be put to shame.
He holds them safely in His hands who shelter in His Name.

Restore Your Church, let Zion sing; our captive hearts release,
that we may Your salvation bring, rejoicing and in peace.

Amos 3: Like He Said

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. How many ways had Israel departed the path of God?
2. By rejecting the promised blessings for obedience, Israel chose the judgment of God. What are the implications of this for us?
3. Besides wealth and ease, what other idols do people today pursue? How can we defend against stepping into the snare of idolatry?
4. Wealth and ease are not inherently sinful. How do we know this? When do they begin to become sinful?
5. What's the most important lesson you have learned from this section of the book of Amos?

For Prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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