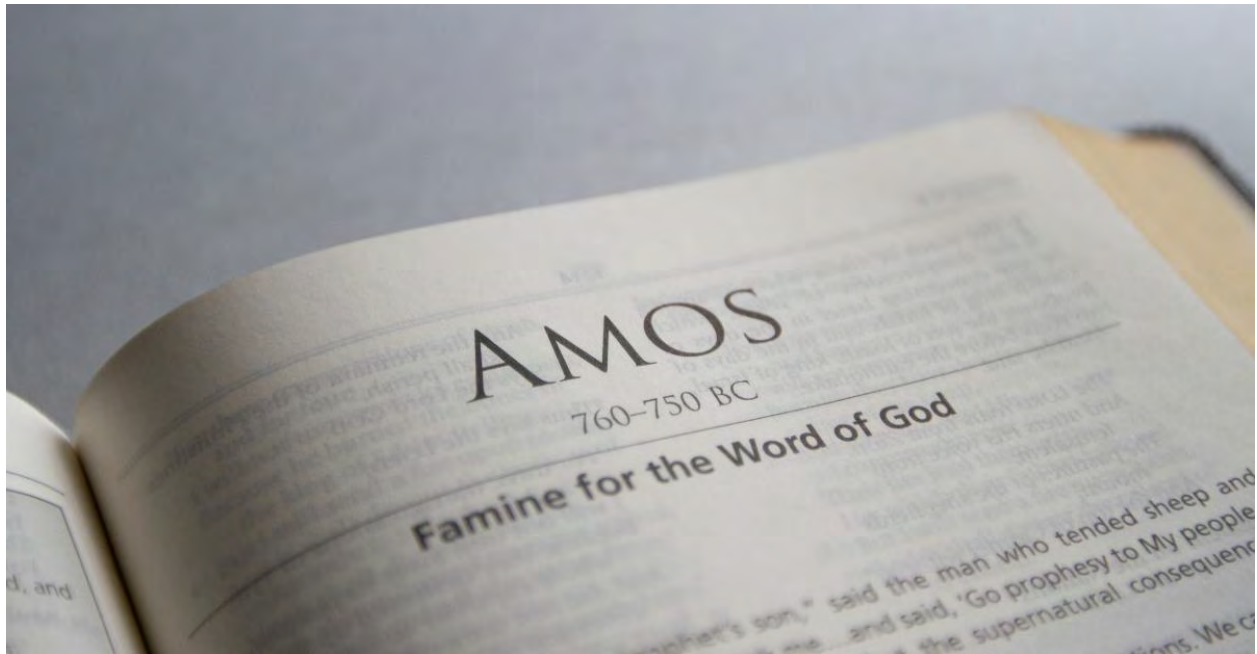


AMOS 6

IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE



T. M. AND SUSIE MOORE

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

Amos 6: It Can't Happen Here
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Amos 6: Introduction

When God pronounces judgment, it is sure to come. It may not happen in our lifetimes, but we must not ignore His Word. The wrath of God is even now being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth of God in unrighteousness. And it is taking forms outlined in the Word of God and clearly recognizable in our day, but completely ignored by our rebellious age (cf. Rom. 1.18-32).

The Gospel is Good News because the wrath of God is not. There is no indication that the people of Israel and Judah listened to Amos. Or Jeremiah. Or Isaiah. Or Hosea. And it is quite likely that the people of our generation will not listen to us. But we must go to them anyway, offering the love of God in Christ Jesus and warning of the wrath of God for all who continue in their sin.

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 At Ease

Pray Psalm 37.1-3.

Do not fret because of evildoers,
Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity.
For they shall soon be cut down like the grass,
And wither as the green herb.
Trust in the LORD, and do good;
Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.

Sing Psalm 37.1-3.

(Neumark: [*If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee*](#))

Let not the wicked make you worry; envy not those who break God's Word.
Like dying grass will they be sorry, and fade like every dying herb.
Trust in the Lord and do His will; dwell in His grace, be faithful still.

Read and meditate on Amos 6.1, 2.

Preparation

1. Whom was Zion trusting?
2. Where did God point them?

Meditation

It's not that God doesn't want His people to rest and be at peace. Indeed, that's His great desire and goal for all who believe in Him. He Himself is our rest. He Himself is our peace. When we shelter in Him, we are safe from all harm, come what may.

Zion's problem—that is, the southern kingdom of Judah—was that they were beginning to be at ease, but not in the Lord. The people of Judah had begun following the example of “Mount Samaria”—the nation of Israel to the north. They were taking up many of the idolatrous and unlawful practices which they saw in their sister state. We recall that, under Jeroboam II, God blessed the nation of Israel with restored borders, recovered cities, defeat of their enemies, and prosperity and peace. Yet they were ungrateful and remained in rebellion against Him, still disobedient to His Law, and still pursuing false gods rather than the one true God.

And it was Israel's “ease” that the people of Judah saw. “Notable persons” began to “trust” in the example of Samaria, turning away from God and His Law to make room for false deities, pagan practices, and other sinful pursuits.

God advised the people of Judah to look around. Were they better than any of the pagan nations that were about to be thrown down? Was their territory larger than any of those other nations? It was not. The implication was clear: Repent or be destroyed.

To their credit, or at least to the credit of kings like Hezekiah and Josiah, they repented of their sins and returned to the Lord and His covenant. At least, for a time. God calls us to repent of our sins daily and to set our feet in the path of His Word. As we do so, we abide in Him—rest in Him—trusting in His Word and delighting in what pleases Him.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“‘Therefore I will yet bring charges against you,’ says the LORD,

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‘and against your children’s children I will bring charges.
For pass beyond the coasts of Cyprus and see,
send to Kedar and consider diligently, and see if there has been such a thing.
Has a nation changed its gods, which are not gods?
But My people have changed their Glory for what does not profit.
Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; be very desolate,’ says the LORD.
‘For My people have committed two evils:
they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters,
and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water’” (Jer. 2.9-13).

Woe to any who think they are doing OK with the LORD, resting easy on their faux laurels.

Woe to those notable persons—notable because other church members think true spirituality dwells within them (Amos 6.1). And maybe they are doing fine, but maybe not.

God suggests: Go, have a look around, and see if we are doing better than the pagan nations (Amos 6.2).

And in all our looking around, we must ask: Is it at all possible that we are still “ungrateful” and remain in some semblance of “rebellion against Him, still disobedient to His Law, and still pursuing false gods rather than the one true God”?

“The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD,
but the prayer of the upright is His delight.
The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD,
but He loves him who follows righteousness.
Harsh discipline is for him who forsakes the way,
and he who hates correction will die” (Prov. 15.8-10).

But we do not need to die. We do not need to forsake the way, follow false gods, or be in rebellion and sin. We do not need to have God bring charges against us if we are obeying His Law and trusting in His merciful gift of Jesus Christ, “the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world!” (Jn. 1.29)

We never need to be guilty of straying from the Jesus Path, when our one goal in life is to traverse upon it.

Jesus said, “I AM the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (Jn. 14.6).

After soldiers do what is required of them, a good drill sergeant says, “At ease”. It is a well-deserved respite from the demands of service. However, ease without work is underserved.

The folks in Amos’ day were “at ease” for no good reason. They were slovenly and sinful—on hiatus from being obedient. They were completely AWOL from their duties as children of the living God.

But during obedience, God calls us to rest in Him, to be still and know that He is God (Ps. 46.10). He gives us peace that passes all understanding. And He guards our hearts and minds (Phil. 4.7). These gifts are ours when we are on active duty, avoiding sin and vigorously pursuing righteousness: “Depart from me, you evildoers, for I will keep the commandments of my God!” (Ps. 119.115)

“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me”, Jesus said, “and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matt. 11.29, 30).

In Him we have ease without woe. “Seek the LORD and live” (Amos 5.6).

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Reflection

1. What does it mean to be “at ease” in the Lord?
2. How can you know when you are seeking your “ease” from other sources? What should you do then?
3. What can you do to help other believers learn to rest and be at ease in the Lord?

*Those are looked upon as doing well for themselves, who do well for their bodies; but we are here told what their ease is, and what their woe is. Here is a description of the pride, security, and sensuality, for which God would reckon. Careless sinners are every where in danger; but those at ease in Zion, who are stupid, vainly confident, and abusing their privileges, are in the greatest danger. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Amos 6.1-7**

Pray Psalm 37.4-9.

In your time of prayer, delight in the Lord. Tell Him how much you love, how glad you are to know Him with you, and how eager you are to serve Him today. Rejoice in your salvation and give thanks to the Father for Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Rest in Him and Him alone.

Sing Psalm 37.4-9.

(Neumark: [*If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee*](#))

Delight yourself in God's salvation; He'll give you all your heart's desire.
Commit to Him your every station, and His good purpose will transpire.
Your righteousness a blazing light He will bring forth against the night.

Rest in the LORD and wait on Jesus; fret not at those who practice sin.
Forsake all wrath till anger ceases; let anxious fears not enter in.
The wicked perish from the LORD, but they are blessed who heed His Word!

2 Not Grieved for His Brother

Pray Psalm 77.1-3.

I cried out to God with my voice—
To God with my voice;
And He gave ear to me.
In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord;
My hand was stretched out in the night without ceasing;
My soul refused to be comforted.
I remembered God, and was troubled;
I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.
Selah

Sing Psalm 77.1-3.

(Leoni: [*The God of Abraham Praise*](#))

My voice to God shall rise; I seek Him on His throne.
In days and nights of trouble I seek God alone!
When I remember Him, then am I sore distressed!
My spirit faints and longs to find in Him its rest.

Read Amos 6.1-7; meditate on verses 3-7.

Preparation

1. How did Amos depict the people of Judah?
2. What would happen to them?

Meditation

Amos is still preaching against the people of Judah in these verses. We recall that they had begun to follow the lead of Israel (the northern kingdom) into idolatry and sin. Though they heard the prophecies of judgment against the surrounding nations and even against their “brother”, still, they told themselves “It can’t happen here” (v. 3). And in so doing, they ensured it would (v. 3).

Meanwhile, the people—especially the leaders—of Judah indulged themselves in all manner of sensual pleasures (vv. 4-6). Having a nice bed to sleep in, a couch to lounge around on, music to listen to and sing, and even some nice wine and “the best ointments”—these things are not sinful in themselves. But we recall from verses 1 and 2 that, just like Israel before them, the people of Judah were beginning to take their ease in these pleasures rather than in the Lord.

And worse, upon hearing of God’s judgment against Israel, the people of Judah did not grieve for their brother (v. 6). Had they been receptive to the Word of the Lord, they would have urged Israel to repent and would have repented themselves. As it turned out, Israel would go into captivity first, but Judah would follow not long after that—Israel to Syria and Egypt, Judah to Babylon.

And that would be the end of their lavish lifestyles (v. 7). The wrath and judgment of God are even now falling on those who trust and take their ease in idols (Rom. 1.18-32). Does this trouble us? Do we weep and pray for the lost? Or do we simply go our way, having taken up many of the wrong-believing ways of our materialistic age, all the while thinking to ourselves, “It can’t happen here”?

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Christians often find troubling the teaching of Jesus, “But many who are first will be last, and the last first...So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen” (Matt. 19.30; 20.16).

But we are chosen, we belong to Him, and we don't mind being last or least because we are loved.

The people of Amos' day got this troubling word from God: “they shall now go captive as the first of the captives” (Amos 6.7). The first shall be first. Which from my reading does not seem to be a bonus point?

Another area of contention seems to be with the idea that we are our “brother's keeper”. God came to Cain, after Cain had murdered his brother Abel, with one of those troubling questions: “Where is Abel your brother?” Duck and cover, Cain!

But instead, he lied to God, “I don't know where he is.” And then he answered God's question, petulantly, with a foolish question of his own: “Am I my brother's keeper?” (Gen. 4.9). The obvious answer being, “Well, Yes, you are!”

The people of Amos' day were not mindful of their brother's wellbeing—physically or spiritually. Woe to you who are comfortably at ease “but are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph” (Amos 6.6).

The first will be first to judgment and captivity. Removed. Moveable.

The last shall be firmly planted. Immoveable. Steady.

“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
nor stands in the path of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and
in His law he meditates day and night.
He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,
that brings forth its fruit in its season,
whose leaf also shall not wither;
and whatever he does shall prosper” (Ps. 1.1-3). Not first but last, yet firmly planted.

And firmly planted we care for all mankind: “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ...And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6.2, 9, 10). Last, firmly planted, brother's keepers—keeping the Law, and loving God and others.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15.58).

Grieved for those who do not know Him; and grieved for those who do, but are not walking obediently with Him.

Happy for wherever we stand in the line because ultimately “the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4.16, 17). Comfortable and at ease with God and our Savior, Jesus Christ. Loved.

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Reflection

1. How do you pray for lost people in your Personal Mission Field?
2. Whom will you encourage today in their walk with and work for the Lord?
3. Why is it so important that we look out for our brethren in the Lord? What are some ways we can do this?

Those who are set upon their pleasures are commonly careless of the troubles of others, but this is great offense to God. Those who placed their happiness in the pleasures of sense, and set their hearts upon them, shall be deprived of those pleasures. Those who try to put the evil day far from them, find it nearest to them. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Amos 5.1-6*

Pray Psalm 77.7-15.

Pray that God will lead His people to grieve for their sins and repent of them, and that He will revive us and renew our churches for His glory.

Sing Psalm 77.7-15.

(Leoni: [*The God of Abraham Praise*](#))

O LORD, will You reject Your people without end?
Has favor ceased, are You no more our heav'nly Friend?
Your promise and Your love in anger are obscured;
my sin has turned Your hand away, Your beauty blurred.

Now let us call to mind Your deeds and wonders, LORD,
and meditate on all Your works and praise Your Word.
Full holy is Your way, great God of earth and heav'n;
to You, O God of strength and pow'r all praise be giv'n!

3 The Sin of Pride

Pray Psalm 106.6, 48.

We have sinned with our fathers,
We have committed iniquity,
We have done wickedly...
Blessed be the LORD God of Israel
From everlasting to everlasting!
And let all the people say, "Amen!"
Praise the LORD!

Sing Psalm 106.6, 48.

(Trust in Jesus: [*Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus*](#))

We have sinned, just like our fathers; we have done iniquity.
Just like them, our hearts have wandered; we have acted wickedly.

Refrain

Blessèd be our God and Savior, evermore His praise proclaim!
Let all those who know Your favor praise Your holy, glorious Name!

Read Amos 6.1-8; meditate on verse 8.

Preparation

1. What did God abhor?
2. To what did that lead?

Meditation

The "pride of Jacob" applies both to Israel, the northern kingdom, and Judah, the southern kingdom. Both kingdoms were guilty of pride in that they received the excellencies (another way to translate the Hebrew word for "pride") of God and acted as if they were a law unto themselves.

Sound familiar? "Yea, hath God said...?" The serpent invited Eve and Adam to act pridefully, discarding the plain teaching of God and resolving to make up their own minds concerning what was best for them. Satan promised they would be like God if they did, and that appealed mightily to them.

It's what lies at the heart of all pride: A rejection of God's Word, a despising of His gifts, a repudiation of His way, and a determination to be our own god. God swears on His own Name that He will not abide such insolence. He delivers us to the consequences of our own pride: "Think you're a god, do you? Well, let's see how you handle this." Israel would be overwhelmed by the Assyrians. Judah would narrowly escape the Assyrians—thanks to a divine intervention—but the Babylonians would ultimately prove more than their pride could overcome.

Guard your soul against pride. Sooner or later pridefulness will be your downfall. Jesus was meek and lowly, and it behooves us to follow in His steps. As Paul reminds us, "And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive *it*, why do you boast as if you had not received *it*?" (1 Cor. 4.7) Every good and perfect gift we enjoy each day comes to us by the grace of God (Jms. 1.17). The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it" (Ps. 24.1). When you feel pride rising—that need to vaunt yourself or claim credit for this, that, or something else, or in any way to think you can get along just fine without the Lord—then beat it back down with thanksgiving to God and a humble heart.

Pride will kill you. Kill it before it does.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Let's start at the very beginning

A very good place to start

When you read you begin with A-B-C

When you sing you begin with do-re-mi

(Rogers and Hammerstein, 1959)

And in the Christian life, to avoid the sin of pride, we admit straight up, "We cannot do this life ourselves!" We are in dire need of the Holy Spirit to make all things new: "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment. . .when He the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you" (Jn. 16.8, 13, 14).

And so then I wonder, where are we supposed to start? Where are we to learn what the Holy Spirit has to say to us? Where should we look to find out what God requires of us? Where can we find what pleases the LORD? Where will we ever discover what displeases the LORD? Wouldn't it be nice if He had written us a guidebook about all these things? The ABC's and Do-Re-Mi's of the Christian life? Hmm.

"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (Jn. 20.30, 31).

"These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me" (Lk. 24.44).

"The Scriptures. . .these are they which testify of Me" (Jn. 5.39).

The do's and don'ts of the Christian life? Exodus 20.1-17 is a good place to start.

God's plan for our eternity—now and then? John 14.1-7 is full of the real estate of our salvation.

God's explanation of salvation and our call to get to work in His Kingdom? Ephesian 2.8-10 is a grand starting-place blueprint for understanding.

Pride is a terrible sin. Worthy of judgment. And the first step to being on the Pride Path? Just claim you can do your Christian life your way. All on your own. Not needing to meet with God daily about His plans. Not discussing anything with Him through prayer. Not bothering to confess your sins. Not relying on His strength to do anything and everything. Not working out your own salvation in fear and trembling.

"Why is there in the hand of a fool the purchase price of wisdom, since he has no heart for it?" (Prov. 17.16).

Why indeed. My guess is that everyone has access to the Word of God. Why do we not have a heart for it?

Let's start at the very beginning, each morning, with Him in His Word, and talk to Him in prayer.

It's a very good place to start.

Reflection

1. Are you finding your morning time with the Lord as rich and satisfying as it could be? How might you

improve it?

2. How can you encourage your fellow believers in the “Do, Re, Mi’s” of the Christian life?

3. Whom will you encourage today?

Men should take warning not to harden their hearts, for those who walk in pride, God will destroy. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Amos 6.8*

Pray Psalm 106.44-48.

Pray that God will humble His people, convict us of our pride and other sins, lead us to repentance, and bring revival, renewal, and awakening to our churches and the world.

Sing Psalm 106.44-48.

(Trust in Jesus: [*Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus*](#))

Look upon us, LORD, with favor, see us in our sore distress!

Hear our cries, with love surround us; turn again to heal and bless!

Refrain

Blessèd be our God and Savior, evermore His praise proclaim!

Let all those who know Your favor praise Your holy, glorious Name!

Save us, LORD, from every nation; gather us from all our ways.

And we to Your Name will offer glorious thanks and endless praise!

Refrain

4 Bits and Pieces

Pray Psalm 7.9-11.

Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end,
But establish the just;
For the righteous God tests the hearts and minds.
My defense *is* of God,
Who saves the upright in heart.
God *is* a just judge,
And God is angry *with the wicked* every day.

Sing Psalm 7.9-11.

(Finlandia: [*Be Still, My Soul*](#))

Bring to an end the evil of the wicked,
but let Your righteous ones established be.
You are my shield, my soul will not be stricken;
test heart and mind, my true Defender be.
You are a righteous Judge in every way,
angry at wicked people every day.

Read and meditate on Amos 6.1-11; meditate on verses 9-11.

Preparation

1. What's happening in these verses?
2. What did God say He would do?

Meditation

Verses 9 and 10 are deeply sad. They show the judgment of God, sworn against the nation, as it is brought to bear in a single household. All the men in the house are dead. A relative comes to collect the bodies, and the scene is so chaotic and gruesome that he can't even tell if he has them all. He must ask one of those yet surviving whether there are any more of his dead relatives to be carried out.

The survivor answers that there are no more dead inside the house. In the face of such sadness, such ruin and death, the immediate response of an Israelite would be to invoke the Name of the LORD. But the relative cautions against so doing, for he understands that God Himself has brought this ruin upon them. To call on Him at such a time would only bring down more of His judgment, as it was clear that wrath was the current disposition of God's will toward the nation.

This scene would be repeated all over Israel, in homes and communities throughout the land. Those who did not fall by famine, war, or plague would be carried away captive. The houses of the great and small alike would know the wrath of God, long promised by prophets to whom they would not listen. The nation of Israel would be broken into bits and pieces, never to be constituted again (v. 11).

It is indeed a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10.31). Was then, is now.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“For behold, the LORD gives a command...” (Amos 6.11).

In this case it was for destruction; but in many cases it is for edification.

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Let's consider the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20.1-17): each one is for either our benefit or the benefit of others.

Or Jesus' command to: "Follow Me" (Matt. 9.9). To follow Jesus is the epitome of pleasing God—for our benefit and the benefit of others.

As Jesus said to Paul: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? I AM Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads" (Acts 9.4, 5).

Vocabulary.com informs that a goad is a pointy stick or other instrument used to prod something along. To goad is to poke something with that pointy stick. Either way, the pointiness is really essential for making things leap into action.

Saul/Paul was kicking against the One Who was trying to change his life; trying to save his life; trying to lead him into a life that would be pleasing to God and helpful to others.

The LORD gives a command. The point is for us to leap into action. Into obedience to Him and His call on our lives.

Do we get the point? Or are we kicking against it?

"Hear, you who are afar off, what I have done;
and you who are near, acknowledge My might" (Is. 33.13).

Here is how not to kick against the point of God's grace:
"LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle?
Who may dwell in Your holy hill?
He who walks uprightly,
and works righteousness,
and speaks the truth in his heart;
he who does not backbite with his tongue,
nor does evil to his neighbor,
nor does he take up a reproach against his friend;
in whose eyes a vile person is despised,
but he honors those who fear the LORD;
he who swears to his own hurt and does not change;
he who does not put out his money at usury,
nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.
He who does these things shall never be moved" (Ps. 15.1-5).

God gives us a command, just as He did to the people of Amos' day. They didn't listen, and their life could not be put back together again.

Paul was prodded and kicked against it; but then he heard God's command. And followed Jesus to the end. He got the point.

Do we want our churches to crumble into bits and pieces?

Clearly, we do not. But we have all been given a command from God.
Will we kick against it? Or, Will we follow Him? To the end? (Ps. 119.112)

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Reflection

1. What “command” are you hearing from the Lord from today’s study?
2. What will you do to prepare for carrying out that command?
3. How do you expect your obedience to that command to spread the grace of God to others (2 Cor. 4.15)?

*We now apprehend the Prophet's object: he means that such would be the grievousness of this last calamity, that the Israelites would really find that God was an enemy incensed against them, so that they would cast aside the false glorying which filled them with pride; yea, that they would dread the very name of God, for they would know that nothing would be better for them than to be hid from his presence. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Amos 6.10**

Pray Psalm 7.1-8.

Pray for revival of God’s people, renewal in His churches, and a great awakening to faith in Jesus worldwide. Pray that multitudes will begin to call upon the Name of the Lord.

Sing Psalm 7.1-8.

(Finlandia: [*Be Still, My Soul*](#))

O LORD, my God, I trust in You: O save me!
Deliver me from all who seek my life.
If in my hands, You find iniquity,
or any evil, any wicked strife,
then let my foe pursue and overtake me,
and without honor I shall surely be.

Arise, O LORD, rise up in wrath to save me!
Let rage and judgment fall upon my foes!
From all who know You let abundant praise be;
rise up on high; the wicked curse with woes.
O Judge of all, judge now my righteousness
and my integrity, approve and bless.

5 Boasting about Nothing

Pray Psalm 50.16-21.

But to the wicked God says:
“What *right* have you to declare My statutes,
Or take My covenant in your mouth,
Seeing you hate instruction
And cast My words behind you?
When you saw a thief, you consented with him,
And have been a partaker with adulterers.
You give your mouth to evil,
And your tongue frames deceit.
You sit *and* speak against your brother;
You slander your own mother’s son.
These *things* you have done, and I kept silent;
You thought that I was altogether like you;
But I will rebuke you,
And set *them* in order before your eyes.”

Sing Psalm 50.16-21.

(Austrian Hymn: [*Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken*](#))

“All of you My Word despising, who are you to claim My grace?
Praise may from your lips be rising, but you scorn Me to My face.
You approve of all transgressions, scheme against your mother’s son!
I will crush your vain aggressions and destroy what you have done.”

Read and meditate on Amos 6.1-13; meditate on verses 12, 13.

Preparation

1. What had the people of Israel and Judah done?
2. About what were they boasting?

Meditation

We remember that the focus of chapter 6 is both Israel and Judah. The Lord had given command to His people, that they should hear and obey Him. They chose to follow their own best ideas. The result was like running unshod horses on rocks. They won’t last very long if you continue to do that. Or like trying to plow ground that is more rock than dirt. You’ll knock yourself out and won’t realize much produce (v. 12).

More to the point, by deciding to do things their way rather than God’s, the people of God had perverted both justice and righteousness (v. 12). Justice is what God says it is. Righteousness is defined by God’s character and Law. But the people of Israel and Judah had other ideas, and now these crucial virtues had become gall and wormwood—bitter and unreliable. Justice was what favored the rich and righteousness was whatever allowed the people to do what they wanted.

And yet they boasted about their achievements, their strength and power (v. 13). They had horns like the wild ox and stood ready to gore any adversaries. But God said they were boasting about nothing (“Lo Debar”). They rejoiced in their own strength, and they would soon discover their own strength was no strength at all. Everything done apart from God is nothing, for it cannot last.

Boast in God and obey Him, or all your boasts will be of nothing.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Trigger warning: The use of the word *stupid* will appear several times in this piece.

“Can horses run on rocks? Can oxen plow the sea?
Stupid even to ask—but no more stupid than what you do when you
make a mockery of justice and corrupt and sour all that should be good and right.
And just as stupid is your rejoicing in how great you are when you are less than nothing—
and priding yourselves on your own tiny power!” (Amos 6.12, 13 TLB)

How about this for prideful thinking?

For what is man, what has he got?

If not himself, then he has naught

To say the things he truly feels

And not the words of one who kneels

The record shows I took the blows

And did it my way

Yes, it was my way.

Sounds pretty stupid to me.

Hard to believe Frank Sinatra boldly and proudly sang that song.

Harder still to believe that we probably all hummed along.

Just like the people of Amos' day would have, had they heard the recording of Ol' Blue Eyes.

We cannot miss the point of what happens to those who truly believe this, and act upon it.

God will break the prideful into bits and pieces (Amos 6.11); make no mistake.

“You reject all those who stray from Your statutes, for their deceit is falsehood” (Ps. 119.118).

“Do not love the world or the things in the world.

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

For all that is in the world—

the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—

is not of the Father but is of the world.

And the world is passing away, and the lust of it;

but he who does the will of God abides forever” (1 Jn. 2.15-17).

Jesus said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work” (Jn. 4.34).

We say, “I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart” (Ps. 40.8).

Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matt. 7.21).

Paul said, “See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.

Rejoice always,

pray without ceasing,

in everything give thanks;

for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess. 5.15-18).

Amos said, Put pride aside. Boast only in the Lord.

And never do it your way! Stupid—and dangerous—even to try.

Reflection

1. Why are we so often and easily tempted to do things our way rather than God's?
2. What's the best way to resist that temptation when it arises?
3. Whom will you encourage today to seek the Lord and walk in His way?

A thing of nought he calls those fallacies, by which they were wont to deceive, not only others, but also their own selves. For hypocrites not only falsely pretend the name of God, but also deceive themselves by self flatteries, when they arrogate to themselves the name of Church, and the empty title of adoption and other things. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Amos 6.13

Pray Psalm 50.5-15, 22, 23.

Pray that your worship of God will not be empty and a thing of “nought”. Call on the Lord to fill your worship, and the worship of your church, with thanksgiving, praise, and renewed devotion, week by week.

Sing Psalm 50.5-15, 22, 23.

(Austrian Hymn: [*Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken*](#))

“Gather now My children holy, those bound close to Me by blood.”

Let the heav'ns declare His glory, for the LORD Himself is Judge:

“Hear, My people, I will charge you; I alone am God, your God!

I will bring a solemn charge to gain you to Me for your good.

“Not for rituals I accuse you—let your worship to Me rise.

Naught to Me is any use, Who dwells in glory in the skies.

All is mine throughout creation; I your help do not require.

Offer Me no vain oblation, hear what I from you desire:

“Sacrifice of thanks now render; pay to God your solemn vows;

let the troubled, each offender, seek Him in the midst of woes.

In the day of strife draw near Him; He will hear, and He will save.

Honor God, rejoice, and fear Him, give to Him your grateful praise.

“Reckon this, My sinful people, lest My wrath consume you whole:

None shall thwart Me when I seek to crush and break your sin-stiff soul.

He who thanks to Me addressing, follows after what is good,

He shall know the way of blessing coming from the hand of God.”

6 God of All Nations

Pray Psalm 10.11-15.

He has said in his heart,

“God has forgotten;

He hides His face;

He will never see.”

Arise, O LORD!

O God, lift up Your hand!

Do not forget the humble.

Why do the wicked renounce God?

He has said in his heart,

“You will not require *an account*.”

But You have seen, for You observe trouble and grief,

To repay *it* by Your hand.

The helpless commits himself to You;

You are the helper of the fatherless.

Break the arm of the wicked and the evil *man*;

Seek out his wickedness *until* You find none.

Sing Psalm 10.11-15.

(Aberystwyth: [*Jesus, Lover of My Soul*](#))

“Where, oh where, is God?” they say. “He has hidden out of sight!”

Rise up, LORD, in all Your might! Rescue those who You obey.

Wicked men Your judgment scorn; You observe their sinful ways.

Be our refuge, be our stay! Break the oppressor’s evil arm.

Read Amos 6.1-14; meditate on verse 14.

Preparation

1. What would God raise up?

2. What would happen then?

Meditation

We recall that the rulers and people of Israel had heard the prophets warning them to turn back to the Lord and that, if they did not, His judgment would fall. They silenced those prophets or worked to distort and discredit their words (as we shall see in chapter 7).

In effect, they were saying to the prophets, “Says you. Where is God? Where is His wrath? Bring it on—if He can.”

And, of course, He could, and He would, and He did. God is Lord of the nations. He rules every legislator, executive, judge, general, and bureaucrat in the world. Their hearts are in His hands to do with as He pleases (Prov. 21.1). It was a small thing for God to equip, empower, and mobilize the Syrians to destroy His faithless people. And He would do so thoroughly—north to south, east to west. The people of Israel would be carried away into captivity and a mixed-race population would be sent to live in the vacated land that Israel had occupied.

And it is a small thing for Him to mobilize trouble and discipline against us, His people, when we pridefully

think we know better than God how we ought to live (cf. Heb. 12.3-11). We must never forget this.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“But, behold, I will raise up a nation against you...” (Amos 6.14).

He most certainly can. And He will. When necessary.

“For behold, the LORD will come with fire and with His chariots, like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire.

For by fire and by His sword the LORD will judge all flesh; and the slain of the LORD shall be many” (Is. 66.15, 16).

So, wouldn't you much rather embrace the other things that He has promised He will do?

“I will make you a great nation;

I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, and

I will curse him who curses you; and

in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12.2, 3).

“Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love;

therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you. Again

I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt...” (Jer. 31.3, 4).

“Fear not, for I AM with you; be not dismayed, for I AM your God.

I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Is. 41.10).

“Even to your old age, I AM He, and even to gray hairs I will carry you!

I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you” (Is. 46.4).

“I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Deut. 31.6; Heb. 13.5).

“I AM with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28.20).

The If/Then and Then/When and Truth/Consequences addendum to all these promises is this:

I will show mercy to thousands, “to those who love Me and keep My commandments” (Ex. 20.6).

This is not about salvation, for that is a gift we could never earn, or vigorously obey ourselves into. Salvation is all about God's grace and mercy and lovingkindness bestowed upon wretched sinners who deserve only judgment, wrath, and death. No, this is about after salvation.

One never frosts a cake when it is still just batter in a bowl. That would be a pointless mess.

No, one frosts the cake after it has baked and set and cooled. That, frosted, then becomes a lovely treat.

Thus, good and righteous behavior follows salvation; it cannot possibly precede it (Eph. 2.8-10).

What God requires is from believers—His children—whom He expects to obey Him.

Not to gain salvation, but because of salvation.

It is when we are disobedient that He must warn us of what He will, and can, do if we do not “Seek Him and live” (Amos 5.4, 6). “I will...afflict you” (Amos 6.14).

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I AM with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28.18-20).

Amos 6: It Can't Happen Here

Reflection

1. God leads His people by promises. Which of His promises are especially precious and very great to you?
2. He also leads us by example. Which aspects of the example of Jesus tend to lead you through the day?
3. For whom will you be an example and a bringer of God's promises today?

When our services of God are soured with sin, his providences will justly be made bitter to us. Matthew Henry (1662-1714),
Commentary on Amos 6.14

Pray Psalm 10.1-3, 12-18.

Pray that the fear of God would fall on the nations of the world, beginning with this nation, and that God would stir His Spirit within His Church for revival, renewal, and a great awakening worldwide.

Sing Psalm 10.1-3, 12-18.

(Aberystwyth: [*Jesus, Lover of My Soul*](#))

Why stand off, O LORD, afar? Why in times of trouble hide?
Wicked men in foolish pride seek Your precious flock to harm.
Many plots do they devise; catch them in their wicked schemes!
Greed and lust fill all their dreams, while they curse You, God most wise.

Evermore, LORD, You will reign! Nations perish from Your land.
You will with the humble stand; hear their cries of woe and pain!
Strengthen now their hearts, O LORD; vindicate the sore oppressed.
Drive away all our distress; grant us justice by Your Word.

7 Far Off but Sure

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 6.1-14; meditate on verses 3.

Preparation

1. How did Israel and Judah regard the threats of the prophets?
2. What was the result of that?

Meditation

We need to remember that Amos prophesied during the reigns of Jeroboam II in Israel and Uzziah in Judah (Mt. Zion, 1.1). Though Jeroboam was an ungrateful ruler and Uzziah caved-in to pride (2 Chron. 26.16-21), God blessed the people of Israel and Judah during their reigns (2 Kgs. 14.23-27; 2 Chron. 26.3-15).

Thus enjoying relative prosperity and peace, the people would not listen to any threats from the prophets concerning judgment to come. At best they said, like Hezekiah because of his transgression, “Will there not be peace and truth at least in my days?” (2 Kgs. 20.19)

It can’t happen here. It can’t happen now. It may happen later, much later, but that won’t be my problem.

And so the people of Israel and Judah sought to “put far off the day of doom”, and in doing so, they assured that “the seat of violence” would come upon their nations.

When God pronounces judgment, it is sure to come. It may not happen in our lifetimes, but we must not ignore His Word. The wrath of God is even now being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth of God in unrighteousness. And it is taking forms outlined in the Word of God and clearly recognizable in our day, but completely ignored by our rebellious age (cf. Rom. 1.18-32).

Amos 6: It Can't Happen Here

The Gospel is Good News because the wrath of God is not. There is no indication that the people of Israel and Judah listened to Amos. Or Jeremiah. Or Isaiah. Or Hosea. And it is quite likely that the people of our generation will not listen to us. But we must go to them anyway, offering the love of God in Christ Jesus and warning of the wrath of God for all who continue in their sin.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The grief that Amos, Jeremiah, Isaiah and Hosea felt is shared by all of us who have family members, friends, and acquaintances who do not know the LORD; and equally as grievous, those who are on the fringe of belief but will not jump into the fray of true Kingdom belief and living.

We tremble for them. They push away all thought of the punishment awaiting them, but by their deeds manage to bring their Day of Judgment even nearer (Amos 6.3 TLB).

“Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie” (Rev. 22.14, 15).

So, we pray for their salvation. We pray for their awakening to His Word. And continue to pray. That God will stay His hand of judgment until they believe—until they love and live the Gospel.

“Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it” (Jon. 3.10).

As Jonah prayed, “for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm” (Jon. 4.2).

On the other hand, we have God’s words, with some penetrating—withering—questions. More of His questions. The duck and cover kind that inform the hearer that He is over their disobedience, and the time for Him to act is approaching:

“For who will have pity on you, O Jerusalem?

Or who will bemoan you?

Or who will turn aside to ask how you are doing?

You have forsaken Me,’ says the LORD, ‘you have gone backward.

Therefore I will stretch out My hand against you and destroy you;

I AM weary of relenting!

And I will winnow them...I will bereave them...I will destroy My people, since they do not return from their ways” (Jer. 15.6, 7).

We read all these words and we understand them. We know that God is a righteous Judge, and everything that He does is right. We also know that He is full of mercy and patience, lovingkindness and grace. He sent us Jesus, Who is “able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for us” (Heb. 7.25).

God wants us to continue: doing justice and righteousness (Ps. 119.21; Prov. 21.3), working in our Personal Mission Field (Eph. 2.10), and praying that He, in His abundant mercy, will reach out and save to the uttermost those who need Him so desperately—before the “far off day of doom” comes near.

Reflection

1. How should we pray for lost people?
2. What do we say to people who say, “It can’t happen here”?
3. How should you incorporate the threat of judgment into your presentation of the Gospel?

Amos 6: It Can't Happen Here

Such are ungodly men, when they provoke God's wrath as it were designedly, and at the same time scorn all threatening, as though they were safe through some special privilege. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Amos 6.3*

Closing Prayer: Psalm 14.4-7

Pray for boldness in your witness to the Lord. Pray that God will give you many opportunities to offer the love of Jesus to the lost and to encourage fellow believers in pursuing their calling.

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 6: It Can't Happen Here

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. How did the people of Israel and Judah respond to the warnings of judgment to come?
2. In what were they taking their “ease”? Why were they not resting in God instead?
3. The Lord hates pride and boasting in material possessions. Why?
4. Should we be warning the people in our Personal Mission Field about judgment to come? Explain.
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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