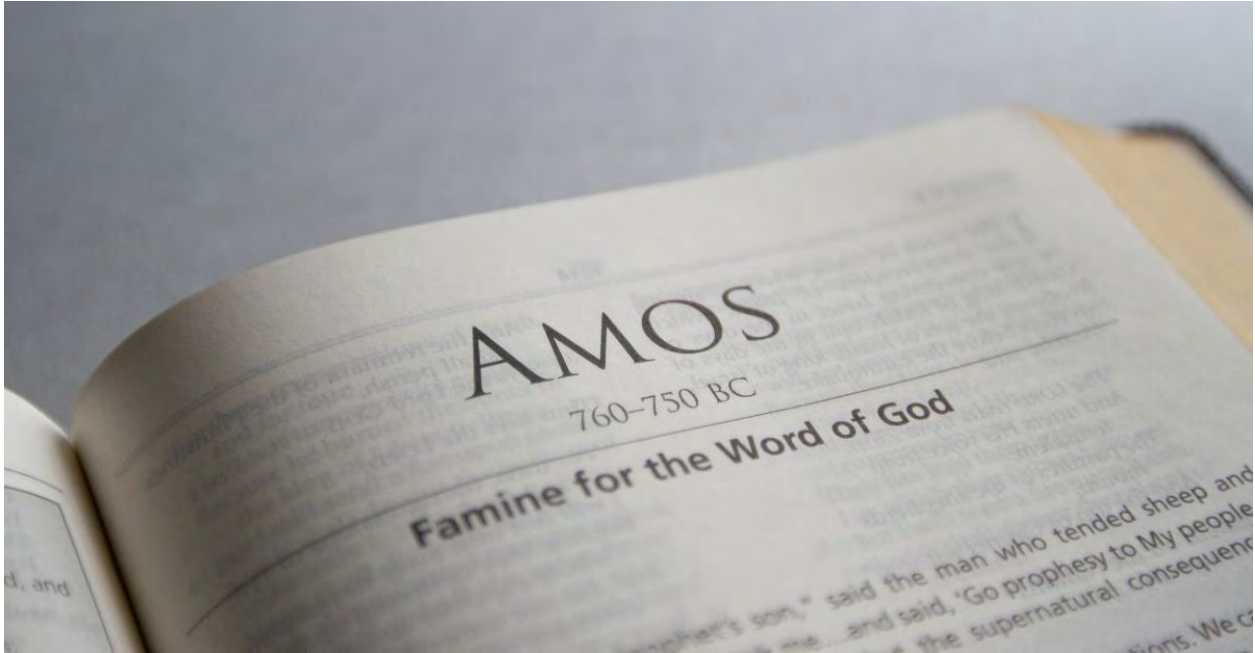


AMOS 7

VISIONS



T. M. AND SUSIE MOORE

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

Amos 7: Visions
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Amos 7: Introduction

Judgment on the macro- and microscale is the theme of this chapter. Visions are the medium of prophetic revelation, and in them we encounter both a God Who is powerful to judge and yet patient and long-suffering toward His people.

Amos 7 is a microcosm of the entire book. And since it comes near the end of the book, it can also be seen as a summation or denouement. Everything that comes after this is anticlimactic.

We could title Amos 7, “One Last Chance” because God relents twice from serious and devastating acts of judgment envisioned by the prophet. We can be sure that Amos proclaimed the longsuffering of God to the people of Israel.

We hope you 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 A Vision of Locusts

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 7.1-3.

Preparation

1. What did God show Amos?
2. How did Amos respond?

Meditation

The "late crop" would have been the food for winter, the non-growing season. Thus, the judgment of God against Israel would likely have taken the form of starvation. In his vision, Amos saw the plague of locusts so thick that it ate not only the late crop but "the grass of the land". Thus, the people's horses, flocks, and herds would have starved as well.

This was too much for Amos. He cried out to God to forgive the people, to allow their small nation to stand, and to turn away the swarm Amos had seen in His vision. And the Lord relented (v. 3).

Amos did not delight in the coming judgment of Israel. It would be bad enough as he had already declared it. To add the misery of starvation seemed overwhelming to Amos and drove him to prayer on behalf of a sinful people. Amos pled with God to spare a wicked people. Perhaps a little more time and they might repent? Would they respond to the grace of God when they heard of this restraint of His wrath?

Though the prophet was faithful to intercede and God was merciful to relent concerning this terrible plight, the people yet refused to listen, as we shall see.

The hardness of people's hearts and the depths of their sins must not prevent us from seeking mercy on their behalf. We must not fail to pray for those God has put into our Personal Mission Field, or for all the world of lost and blind, wrong-believing rebels against God. There is power in prayer, more than we know. God expects us to wield that power. Let us not fail to do so.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

We have no response, except thanks.
We have no plea or excuse, only remorse.
For God relented in His judgment toward us.
God responded to prayers for mercy on our behalf.

We are the beneficiaries of His grace.
We long for others, those in our Personal Mission Field to:
Understand their sin, and respond to His forgiveness.
And we beseech God, the Father of all mercies to:
Relent. Forgive. Heal. Renew. (Amos 7.2, 3)

“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” (Jn. 3.16).
“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5.8).
“...when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end” (Jn. 13.1).

*O the deep, deep love of Jesus!
Vast, unmeasured, boundless, free;
Rolling as a mighty ocean in its fullness over me.
Underneath me, all around me, is the current of Thy love;
Leading onward, leading homeward, to Thy glorious rest above.*

*O the deep, deep love of Jesus!
Spread His praise from shore to shore;
How He loveth, ever loveth, changeth never, nevermore;
How He watches o'er His loved ones, died to call them all His own;
How for them He intercedeth, watcheth o'er them from the throne.*

*O the deep, deep love of Jesus!
Love of every love the best:
'Tis an ocean vast of blessing, 'tis a haven sweet of rest.
O the deep, deep love of Jesus! 'Tis a heav'n of heav'ns to me;
And it lifts me up to glory, for it lifts me up to Thee.
(Samuel Trevor Francis, 1834-1925)*

“Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the LORD has done marvelous things!”
“I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten...” (Joel 2.21, 25).

Reflection

1. How do you pray for the lost people in your Personal Mission Field?
2. Who are some people whose prayers support and sustain you? Have you thanked them lately?
3. What are some areas where you are working for restoration in your life? Have you enlisted friends to pray for you?

See the power of prayer. See what a blessing praying people are to a land. See how ready, how swift God is to show mercy; how he waits to be gracious. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Amos 7.1-9

Pray Psalm 37.4-9.

Thank God for His great salvation! Wait on the Lord in prayer for our country and for lost people everywhere, that He would have mercy, be patient, and send witnesses to declare the Good News of Jesus to them.

Amos 7: Visions

Sing Psalm 37.34-40.

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

Wait on the LORD, His way observing, and He will lift you up on high.
Those prone to wicked ways preserving, your eyes shall see cast down to die.
The blameless man shall stand upright, for God preserves him by His might!

Salvation comes from Christ our Savior; He is our strength in time of need.
On us does He bestow His favor, who all His holy judgments heed.
He is our help in troubled times; our refuge He, in Him we hide.

2 A Vision of Fire

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 7.1-6; meditate on verses 4-6.

Preparation

1. For what did God call?
2. How did Amos respond?

Meditation

We have all seen videos of people trapped in wildfire, desperate to find a way out. This is the kind of fire Amos saw, coming from the Lord as a judgment against His people.

Notice that the fire comes as a direct expression of the Presence and wrath of God: It comes to “contend” with the people or “for conflict”. The locusts were a bad enough threat, of which God relented. But a consuming fire is a far worse threat. Imagine a fire that would rage throughout the land, burning every city and village, every home and farm, lapping up every river, stream, creek, pond, and lake, and destroying lives of people and animals in great numbers. God can bring such fire, and it would be terrible to endure.

But again the prophet appealed to God for mercy. We admire Amos’ compassion for the people who have ignored his message and continued in their godless ways. He refers to them as “Jacob”, probably as a way of invoking God’s covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And it worked again, as the Lord relented concerning this fire.

But what God has already threatened is greater than either the locusts or the fire: The transportation and complete dissolution of the nation of Israel. This is an act of judgment that will last throughout the generations to come, but it is nothing more than what the people have chosen for themselves. They did not want to be God’s covenant people—except only insofar as there was some immediate need or benefit to be gained. They wanted to be like the pagans, worship like the pagans, live and act like the pagans.

They wanted to be pagans, and it was unto paganism that God would deliver them, eliminating all identity of the ten northern tribes, except for the faithful remnant that made its way to Judah. Be careful what you long

for.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

God can do anything and everything.

In a vision to Amos, He is threatening to destroy His people through devouring locusts and an all-consuming fire. His people have seen Him use many different methods to get theirs and their enemies' attention—as in all the plagues sent the Egyptians' way.

It is reminiscent of the way God appeared to Elijah: “And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice” (1 Kgs. 19.11, 12).

“So the LORD relented concerning this. ‘This also shall not be,’ said the Lord GOD” (Amos 7.6).

But God will judge sin. We know and believe He will. Everything that He says, He does. We will do well to fear Him, acknowledge His justice, and live only to please Him.

“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10.28).

“The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.
More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
Moreover by them Your servant is warned,
and in keeping them there is great reward” (Ps. 19.9-11).

When we obediently fear God and keep His commandments, through the power of the Holy Spirit, then we are free, compelled actually, to pray for others in the same way Amos prayed for God's children:

“O Lord GOD, forgive, I pray! (Amos 7.2)

“O Lord GOD, cease, I pray! (Amos 7.5)

“God has spoken once, twice I have heard this:
That power belongs to God.
Also to You, O Lord, belongs mercy;
for You render to each one according to his work” (Ps. 62.11, 12).

In Jesus, our beloved Savior, we observe His meekness, His power under control, His ability to wield Holy Power over the enemy. He is whom we love; He is whom we long to imitate and follow.

“GOD, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...” (Heb. 1.1-3). The Triune God is all-powerful. Fear and obey Him; and tell others to do the same—keeping the vision of fire, as an impetus, on the back burner of your mind.

Reflection

1. What does it mean to fear the Lord? Why should we fear Him?
2. How can fearing the Lord help us to grow in love for Jesus?

3. How do fearing God and loving Him contribute to our obeying Him?

*[A] more dreadful punishment is here described than in the first vision. The locusts devoured the grass only but the fire penetrates into the utmost deep; it consumes and destroys not only the surface of the earth, but burns up the very roots, yea, it descends to the center and consumes the whole earth. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Amos 7.4-6**

Pray Psalm 77.7-15.

Pray for Christians everywhere to repent, to seek the Lord for revival and renewal, and to follow Jesus along the path of obedience to God's Law (1 Jn. 2.3-6).

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 Vision of the Plumb Line

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 7.1-9; meditate on verses 7-9.

Preparation

1. What did God have in His hand?
2. How did He intend to use it?

Meditation

God gave Amos a vision of a plumb line. What is a plumb line? How does a plumb line work? Why do builders use them?

The great usefulness of a plumb line is that it always points to the center of the earth, the hot core of gravity and vitality that drives everything else on earth. The plumb line tells a builder that he is or is not lined up with true straight—or, in moral and spiritual terms, true righteousness.

The plumb line God held up to His rebellious people was His Law. He sent His prophets to the nation of Israel for generations, and they declared the righteousness of God and warned the people of judgment if they chose to live "out of plumb". But for many years, God bore with the rebellion of His people; He would do so no longer. No longer would He "pass by" Israel and her idolatrous and sinful ways. Now He would pass through them, plumb line in hand, ready to make crooked things straight (vv. 7, 8).

But in Israel's case, He would first have to tear down all the crooked walls—destroy the places where Israel worshiped idols and bring the "house of Jeroboam" to ruin (vv. 9, 10). Only when the crooked, bowing, crumbling walls of a rebellious nation were cleared away would God send another Plumb Line to strengthen the things that remained and begin work on a new building—the Church.

Jesus is our Plumb Line. Every day we must hold ourselves up to Him to find crooked places in our life and bring them into line with Plumb. The Scriptures contain the Plumb Line of Jesus, just as the prophets of old contained the plumb line of the Law. The more we look to Scripture, seeking Jesus, the more the Spirit of God will bring us "into Plumb" so that we are more like Jesus and less like our old sinful selves every day (2 Cor. 3.12-18).

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The Tower of Pisa leans due to an unstable foundation. No doubt, Mr. Bonanno Pisano used a plumb line to begin his project, but due to ground deviations, it is no longer straight.

Our Bible study teacher, Pat Hunter, used to say, “Watch your deviations”.

To illustrate, she would hold up her finger, pointing straight, and heavenward, showing the positive trajectory of hitting the mark of being like Jesus. She would then slightly move her finger, again, visually illustrating how just a slight change will throw the trajectory completely off, totally missing the mark.

God used the plumb line as His reference point to show the importance of having a straight trajectory for life—His Law. Living and abiding by it we will, as best we can through the power of the Holy Spirit, hit our mark of being like Jesus. Without it, deviating from it, we will fail miserably.

Last Sunday, in his sermon on “Transformation”, the pastor stated, “if you find your life characteristically caught up in any sin, that should alarm you.” Indeed it should.

I was struck by the truth of that statement. The little deviations I allow to remain characteristically in my life should alarm me mightily! And then I should expunge them from my life completely.

Deviations and swaying plumb lines have no place in the Christian’s life. That is God’s vision for us.

“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 22.37-40; Deut. 6.5; Lev. 19.18).

“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all you do be done in love” (1 Cor. 16.13, 14).

“Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Eph. 6.13).

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith...” (1 Pet. 5.8).

The Tower of Pisa was never intended to lean. It was meant to be built on a sure foundation.

God never intended for His people to deviate from His Law. He meant for us to stand firm in Jesus.

“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3.11).

“Behold, I AM setting a plumb line in the midst of My people...” (Amos 7.8).

Watch your deviations. Stand firm on the Foundation. Stay on the right trajectory. Hit the mark.

And be alarmed if you lean or sway.

Reflection

1. What serves as a “plumb line” in your life? How?
2. How can you know when you are beginning to deviate from this plumb line?
3. How can believers help one another stay on the plumb line of Jesus? Whom will you help today?

The Lord now seems to stand upon this wall. He measures it; it appears to be a bowing, bulging wall. Thus God would bring the

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people of Israel to the trial, would discover their wickedness; and the time will come, when those who have been spared often, shall be spared no longer. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Amos 7.1-9*

Pray Psalm 106.44-48.

Pray that God will have mercy on His Church, that He will hold up the plumb line of Jesus for all His people to see clearly, that we might know Him better, love Him more, and be more faithful in obeying and serving Him day by day.

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 Enemy of the State?

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 7.1-13; meditate on verses 10-13.

Preparation

1. Of what did Amaziah accuse Amos?
2. What did he tell Amos to do?

Meditation

Amaziah was more than a priest of the false gods of Israel. He was priest of Bethel, the place where Jeroboam performed his religious duties. It's safe to say, I think, that Jeroboam chose Amaziah as royal priest, and that these clowns had been buddies for a long time. Amaziah would have had both access to and the ear of Jeroboam.

And he chose to position Amos as an enemy of the state: "Amos has conspired against you..." (v. 10).

That's never a safe place to be, but it's a venue to which Christians are not unaccustomed. Martyrs from Paul and Peter to Polycarp, Ignatius, Boethius, Savonarola, Bonhoeffer, and multitudes more have met death as enemies of the state. And this evil work continues even in our day.

Amaziah added emphasis to Amos' prophecies by putting Jeroboam's name in where the prophet had not (v. 11). Most of what he reported to Jeroboam was true. But there was just enough lie in it to ensure the king would be piqued to anger. Then he sought out Amos and spoke with him personally, ordering him to flee to Judah and prophesy there, but never again to preach in Bethel—or, he implied, in all Israel (v. 12).

Amaziah would regret his actions, as we shall see. Amos continued to fulfill his calling in and against Israel. Not to do so would have been to betray God. Doing so could have led to his death at any time, but, hey, we all die.

And it's better to die as an enemy of the state than as an enemy of the Lord.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Amos is a hero of the faith. He kept on keeping on regardless of the lies and threats against him. Because he did not want to be an enemy of God's. Much better to be at enmity with the world. "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (Jms. 4.4). And we admire Amos' courage. We long to be as courageous.

However, being shunned by your family, or your not-so-friendly friends; or at least only being vaguely tolerated by them; or to be caught in the crosshairs of church and state, speaking out against ungodly characteristics and behaviors, is often a lonely and sad place to be. But it is a place that forces us into the everlasting and loving arms of God our Savior (Deut. 33.27).

We have a great cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12.1), watching and cheering us on, who have experienced much the same from others. And of course, Jesus, our beloved, faced more than His undeserved share of abuse—for our sakes.

"For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful have opened against me; they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They have also surrounded me with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause. In return for my love they are my accusers, but I give myself to prayer. Thus they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love... [they] did not remember to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart" (Ps. 109.2-5, 16).

In truth, all the evils done against us, we have at one time or another done abysmally to Jesus. Think about the sins of omission committed against Him by His disciples as He was in torment—before experiencing all the things that He knew awaited Him: "My soul is sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch...are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners" (Mk. 14.34-41).

How often do we "sleep" through work that God has called us to do?
Are there times that it is just not convenient to bring up God's Law? Or to obey it?
Is it easier, or more peaceful to keep our mouths shut?
Or are we vocal enough so that the "land is not able to bear all [our] words"? (Amos 7.10).

Jesus calls us to follow Him. Regardless. The circumstances are what they are. The outcomes are in the Holy Spirit's hands. Our job is to be like Amos—in this time and place in history—God's friend and follower.

Reflection

1. What would make you an "enemy of the state" in your Personal Mission Field?
2. How should we respond to hostility such as Amos faced?
3. How can believers help one another stand firm against opposition?

Amaziah had sent to the king to induce him to adopt some severe measure; for he pretended that as Amos scattered words full of sedition, and made turbulent speeches, the affairs of the king could not be carried on, except the king in due time prevented him...
John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Amos 7.11-13*

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Pray Psalm 7.1-8.

Pray that God will lead His people to repentance and revival, and that those who would oppose such a work would not be able to stop it.

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 Called

Pray Psalm 139.1-5.

O LORD, You have searched me and known me.
You know my sitting down and my rising up;
You understand my thought afar off.
You comprehend my path and my lying down,
And are acquainted with all my ways.
For there is not a word on my tongue,
But behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.
You have hedged me behind and before,
And laid Your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
It is high, I cannot attain it.

Sing Psalm 139.1-5.

(Ripley: [Hallelujah! Praise Jehovah. O My Soul](#))

You have searched me, LORD, and known me, when I sit and when I rise;
from afar, my thoughts discerning, all my path before You lies.
Every word, before it's spoken, You behold and know it well.
Both behind me and before me, Your sweet Presence I can tell!

Read and meditate on Amos 7.1-17; meditate on verses 14-17.

Preparation

1. How did Amos respond to Amaziah's threat?
2. What would be the result for Amaziah?

Meditation

Amos' response to Amaziah's threat was straightforward: God called me to this. Take it up with Him.

Amos explained that he was not trained to be a prophet, as in one of the schools of prophets mentioned in the Old Testament. He wasn't even the son of a prophet. Rather, he was a farmer, a herder of sheep and "a tender of sycamore fruit", as we have seen. His only credential for this work was that God had called him.

But the Lord took him—seized him, laid hold on him, compelled him, and gave him a burden for the nation of Israel. He was to prophesy against them and that profusely, not merely an occasional dripping (v. 16). Open the spigot of the Word of God and drown the people in His words of judgment. That was Amos' call, and he would not back down from it or be intimidated by some false priest or disloyal king.

As for Amaziah, he would learn the hard way that the Word of the Lord is true and powerful (v. 17). He would see his family disgraced and destroyed before he himself would be taken captive to die in a foreign land. The moral: Those who try to interfere with the Word of God or to intimidate His servants will find they have to deal with Him, and that, as we know, is a fearful thing indeed (Heb. 10.31).

Like Amos, each of us has a calling from the Lord. We must make sure we know this and that we, like Amos, are faithful in pursuing it.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Amos went from humble disclaimer to bold claimer!

“I was no prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet...” (Amos 7.14).

However, “Hear the Word of the LORD ...!” (Amos 7.16).

It was said of two men who turned the world upside-down for Jesus:

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John,

and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled.

And they realized that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4.13).

It matters not to God what kind of education or background we have,
because what makes the difference is being with Jesus.

God’s power changes us from being disclaimers—to claimers.

We now have the credentials to say, “Hear the Word of the LORD!”

The syllabus for training is the Bible.

The power to understand and do it is the Holy Spirit.

Prayer is the study hall of waiting and listening.

The love and appreciation we have toward Jesus is the heart of it.

And the fear, love, and respect we have toward God is the impetus for it.

Our new life in Christ—workers in His Kingdom, for His glory—is our joy.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new...now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5.17, 20).

Called to our Personal Mission Field: “Go, prophesy to My people...” (Amos 7.15).

Let’s not be silenced by those who don’t want to hear the Word of the LORD.

Or who think we are not capable or professional enough to say it.

But let’s get right to work, just like Amos and Peter and John, and speak Words of eternal life.

What else is there to say? And really, to Whom else can we, or anyone else go? For we “have come to believe and know that [Jesus] is the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Jn. 6.68, 69).

God says to us, “Go, prophesy”.

We respond obediently, “Yes, we will”.

And we pray imploringly to Him, “It is time for You to act, O LORD,
for they have regarded Your law as void” (Ps. 119.126).

Teamwork at its best!

Reflection

1. What does it mean for you to “go prophesy”?
2. Why do some people just not want to hear the Gospel? What should be our approach with them?
3. Amos was certain of his calling. How can we be sure about what God is calling us to do?

*Amos says that he was not of that class. He indeed honestly confesses that he was an illiterate man: but by this as I have already said, he gained to himself more authority inasmuch as the Lord had seized on him as it were by force, and set him over the people to teach them: "See, thou shalt be my Prophet, and though thou hast not been taught from thy youth for this office, I will yet in an instant make thee a Prophet." John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Amos 7.14**

Pray Psalm 139.23, 24.

Spend some time in listening prayer, asking the Lord to clarify your own calling and to renew your commitment to fulfill it. Ask Him for specific steps to take today.

Sing Psalm 139.23, 24.

(Ripley: [*Hallelujah! Praise Jehovah, O My Soul*](#))

Search my heart, O LORD, and know me, as You only, LORD, can do.

Test my thoughts and contemplations, whether they be vain or true.

Let there be no sin in me, LORD, nothing that Your Spirit grieves.

Lead me in the righteous way, LORD, unto everlasting peace!

6 The Lesson of Amaziah

Pray Psalm 73.13-15.

Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain,
And washed my hands in innocence.
For all day long I have been plagued,
And chastened every morning.
If I had said, “I will speak thus,”
Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children.

Sing Psalm 73.13-15.

(Ellacombe: [Hosanna](#), [Loud Hosanna](#))

“Surely in vain have I kept pure my heart, or cleansed my hands!
What troubles daily I endure while thus with God I stand!”
But had I spoken thus I would Your children have betrayed.
When this at last I understood, my troubled soul obeyed.

Read Amos 7.1-17; meditate on verse 17.

Preparation

1. Who suffered because of Amaziah’s sin?
2. What would become of him?

Meditation

In Psalm 73, Asaph contemplated the wealthy wicked of Jerusalem. Everything seemed to be going just fine with them, and they seemed little concerned about offending God. Then (vv. 13, 14), jealousy began to rise in Asaph’s heart. He considered his own state—a priest with little personal property, no land, and days of serving others. He came to the point of crying out loud about the “injustice” of it all.

But then he caught himself, knowing that to complain or rail against the Lord would be sin, and not just a sin, but a betrayal of the people he was called to serve (v. 15).

We never sin alone. Our sins—even “private” ones and those we consider to be “harmless”—affect others because they affect us. Amaziah did not learn the lesson of Asaph, and he continued to sin against God, both by leading the people into idolatrous ways and by trying to get Amos deported or worse. His sins affected the entire nation, and to make that point, God brought his sins home to his wife and children. It’s likely that Amaziah loved his wife and children. Imagine the horror of seeing her reduced to prostitution by the ravages of the Assyrians. And his children slain by the sword. And he his neighbors marched along with an entire nation of captives, whose plight in no small part was the fault of Amaziah and his fellow priests, as well as the kings and judges of Israel.

The sins we commit and the sins we harbor are always, in the first instance, against the Lord of glory, who died for sinners such as we. You who love the Lord, hate evil (Ps. 97.10). Hate sin, and allow it no safe harbor in your soul, if not for your own sake, then for the sake of those whose lives will be affected by your sin.

Because we never sin alone.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

God uses the idea of a plumb line or survey line for good and for evil.

In the book of Amos, it is used for judgment, but in the book of Isaiah for blessing:

“Search from the book of the LORD, and read:

Not one of these shall fail; not one shall lack her mate.

For My mouth has commanded it, and His Spirit has gathered them.

He has cast the lot for them, and His hand has divided it among them with a measuring line.

They shall possess it forever; from generation to generation they shall dwell in it” (Is. 34.16, 17).

“The eyes of the LORD are in every place,
keeping watch on the evil and the good” (Prov. 15.3).

“For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD,
and He ponders all his paths” (Prov. 5.21).

God is ready to bless, but He is equally ready to judge.

And He keeps His eye on everyone.

Even as sinful as we are, we love our children; and we do not like it one little bit,
when someone is spiteful, scornful, mean, and unappreciative towards them.

God feels the same about His only begotten Son Jesus.

He does not like it, when people do not love, trust, and obey Him.

“Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way,
when His wrath is kindled but a little.

Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him” (Ps. 2.12).

When God gets out His plumb-surveying-measuring line we should take notice.

What happened to Amaziah and his family is an example worth noting.

“When the scoffer is punished, the simple is made wise;
but when the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge” (Prov. 21.11).

“Strike a scoffer, and the simple will become wary;
rebuke one who has understanding, and he will discern knowledge” (Prov. 19.25).

We can observe and become wise and discern knowledge; or we can ignore and be punished.

Our gracious and merciful God has warning stories scattered throughout all of Scripture
to guide us and help us make wise choices and decisions. He longs to bless (Matt. 7.24-27).

Why would we choose to go down the Amaziah path?

Who has the words of eternal life? (Jn. 6.68, 69)

Where would we prefer to live: in the Kingdom of God or of this world? (Gal. 5.19-21; Heb. 12.28)

What is not to like about being loving, thankful, and obedient children to God our heavenly Father, Jesus the
Son and Savior, and the teaching and guiding Holy Spirit?

Amaziah fell on the wrong side of the line—that was his lesson.

Which side will we fall on?

Reflection

1. How does our sin necessarily affect others?

2. What are the keys to keeping on the right side of God’s “plumb line”?

3. Whom will you encourage today in their walk with and work for the Lord?

*[H]e declares, that the sons and also the daughters of the ungodly priest would be slain by the enemies. It was indeed probable, that some also of the common people had suffered the same evils; but God no doubt punished the willfulness and madness of Amaziah for having dared to resist admonitions as well as threatening. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Amos* 7.17*

Pray Psalm 73.21-28.

Pray for yourself, that the Lord would reveal any lingering sin in your soul and cleanse you of it. Pray for any lost people you know, that God would convict them of their sin and draw them to Himself through Jesus.

Sing Psalm 73.21-28.

(Ellacombe: [Hosanna](#), [Loud Hosanna](#))

When my poor sad, embittered heart was pierced within by grace,
I saw how beastly was the part I chose before Your face.
But I am ever with You, LORD, You hold me by the hand,
and guide me daily by Your Word; in glory I e'er shall stand.

Then what have I in heav'n above but You, my God and Lord?
And on this earth what shall I love besides You and Your Word?
My flesh and heart shall surely fail, and death my soul release;
Your strength for me will e'er avail and grant eternal peace.

Then let them perish who depart from You and from Your Word.
All those unfaithful in their heart You shall destroy, O LORD!
But as for me, Your nearness, LORD, is where I e'er will dwell!
I hide myself within Your Word, Your wondrous works to tell.

7 Our Longsuffering God

Pray Psalm 41.4-7.

I said, "LORD, be merciful to me;
Heal my soul, for I have sinned against You."
My enemies speak evil of me:
"When will he die, and his name perish?"
And if he comes to see me, he speaks lies;
His heart gathers iniquity to itself;
When he goes out, he tells it.
All who hate me whisper together against me;
Against me they devise my hurt.

Sing Psalm 41.4-7.

(Aurelia: [The Church's One Foundation](#))

I cried, "O LORD, have mercy; against You I have sinned."
My enemies pursue me and lust to see my end.
From wicked hearts they utter dark words of vanity;
with hateful voice they mutter and seek the worst for me.

Read Amos 7.1-17; meditate on verses 1-6.

Preparation

1. What did God show Amos?
2. How did God respond to his prayer?

Meditation

Judgment on the macro- and microscale are the theme of this chapter. In that respect, Amos 7 is a microcosm of the entire book. And since it comes near the end of the book, it can also be seen as a summation or denouement. Everything that comes after this is anticlimactic.

We could title Amos 7, "One Last Chance" because God relents twice from serious and devastating acts of judgment envisioned by the prophet. We can be sure that Amos proclaimed the longsuffering of God to the people of Israel.

But Amaziah shows us the heart of the nation and its people: They didn't want to hear *anything* from the Lord, whether good or ill. They just wanted the prophet to be silenced, because this had been their practice with all the prophets God had sent them since the day Jeroboam led the ten tribes to break away from the two tribes in the south (cf. Amos 2.11, 12). God was willing to forgive, heal, and restore; but the hard hearts of the people of Israel neither feared Him nor regarded His threats.

Only the small remnant of those ten tribes which had made their way to Judah would be preserved. The rest, like Amaziah and his family, having spurned the grace of God and mocked His longsuffering, would receive exactly what they had chosen—the dire and disastrous consequences of rejecting the Lord.

Pray that God will relent of His wrath, first against our sins and those of our fellow believers, and then against those of the world. Pray that He will bear with us until He brings revival and renewal to His churches and a great awakening to faith in Jesus to the world.

Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“Though you grind a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his foolishness will not depart from him” (Prov. 27.22).

Amaziah, I’m looking at you.

But wait, doesn’t that describe us when we neglect to be alarmed by our own sin?

Our longsuffering God tells us where we have erred in the hope that we will remediate it.

One of the Holy Spirit’s main jobs is to convict us of sin. And He does. We just don’t acknowledge His “grinding” of us and we fail to depart from unrighteousness.

But maybe we do, and that is glorious.

Because God will “strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees... a highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray... the redeemed shall walk there, and the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Is. 35.3, 8, 9, 10).

We need never be a constant displeasure to our longsuffering God and Savior.

We can be pleasing to Him through the loving power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, “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. 16.13, 14).

We serve a longsuffering Triune God.

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen” (Gal. 1.3-5).

We will be “ground” because we are still sinful human beings.

But we are being worked over by His pestle for a good purpose—to be fit for the Kingdom.

As Jesus said, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Lk. 9.62). But we are not looking back. We are living forward into the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Because we would never want to disappoint our longsuffering God.

Reflection

1. Have you ever experienced God “grinding” you? How did you respond?
2. How would you try to help a fellow believer who was being “ground” by the Lord? How would you encourage them?
3. What’s the best way to keep from coming under the Lord’s pestle? How can you help your fellow believers avoid this?

The Prophet shows that God had not once only spared the people, but that when he was again prepared for vengeance, he still willingly deferred it, that, if possible, the people might willingly recover themselves: but as all were unhealable, this forbearance of God produced no fruit. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Amos 5.1-6*

Pray Psalm 41.11-13.

Pray that the Lord will be longsuffering with you, and that He will strengthen, keep, uphold, and use you for His glory today and every day.

Sing Psalm 41.11-13.

(Aurelia: [*The Church's One Foundation*](#))

In me the LORD delights, for my foes shall not prevail;
since I stand in the right, LORD, I know You will not fail
to set me in Your Presence in my integrity:
O LORD, from everlasting to You let praises be!

Amos 7: Visions

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. Does God still “relent” of His wrath? How should this encourage us in our prayers?
2. Amos had no doubt that God had called him. What about you? To what has God called you?
3. Should you expect people to oppose you in your calling? Why?
4. What is the duty of all who are called by God as His witnesses?
5. What’s the most important lesson you have learned from this section of the book of Amos?

For Prayer:

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