

Amos 4:6-9

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[0:00] Just to remind you that this chapter comes out pretty hot from Amos the preacher. And he's got a message that's loaded with sarcasm.

! It's loaded with judgment. And it's kind of, by the time this thing wraps up, this chapter particularly, he's going to recall what the Lord has done to try to get the attention of his people and then he's going to say, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

You've ignored, you've rejected his reproofs and his judgments, his punishments, and now he's going to laugh at your calamity. And so it's a harsh chapter for God's people.

I'm not going to cover or review anything from last week. So in verses 4 and 5, he lays this sarcasm on pretty heavy, and it's really the Lord describing the nature of this people.

All of these things that he lists are things that are not right, and yet he says, this is just the way you people are. This is what you want. This is at the end of verse number 5.

[1:10] He says, for this liketh you. This is what you're like. And so we'll read verses 4 and 5 and then try to carry on beyond that. So verse 4, come to Bethel and transgress.

Let's say, Gilgal, multiply transgressions and bring your sacrifices every morning and your tithes after three years. Offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven and proclaim and publish the free offerings for this like if you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord God.

Now a lot of people have a big issue that God is calling his people to come to Bethel and to transgress. That a holy God would be inviting his own nation that he redeemed from Israel and has given his holy laws and the holy priesthood and all the things he's done, and then he's telling them, just go ahead and do it anyway.

And if you can't hear the hint of sarcasm, I say hint, it's a lot stronger than a hint. If you can't see that and understand that about God, then you're missing something about the Lord. And what a lot of people do, people, I say people, I mean, the commentators, people that teach the Bible and give their thoughts on it, they adjust it.

They mess with the text or they try to take the text and spiritualize some, just come out with something vague so it doesn't sound like God's saying it the way he is. And it's a whole lot easier just to believe it the way it sounds, that God is in fact had enough of his people.

[2:33] And it makes sense as it all adds up and comes to the end. And so just to pick it up in the middle and try to change it and soften the tone, that'd be just a disservice to the word of God and misrepresenting him.

So he says in verse, let's see, we got to verse 4, we finished that. Verse 5, he says, Offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven. Now, traditionally, you're going to say, well, leaven, yep, that's not right, because the sacrifices are to be unleavened.

And for the most part, yes. And I say for the most part, because if you get into your Bible, you'll find two places where God allows leaven with a sacrifice. And one of them is an offering, a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

And I just want to show you the passage. Come back to Leviticus 7. And I do believe God's being sarcastic with him here. I don't think he's telling him you can go ahead and do this, or that I'm accepting this in any way, that you can offer this at Gilgal, or that you can offer this at Bethel, and it's going to be satisfactory or acceptable to me.

I don't believe that at all. But I'll show you the passage that he refers to here. Leviticus 7. And we'll start in verse 11. And this is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings, which he shall offer unto the Lord.

[3:50] If he offer it a thanksgiving, for a thanksgiving, then he shall offer with the sacrifice of thanksgiving, unleavened cakes mingled with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and cakes mingled with oil of fine flour fried.

Now here's the verse in question, verse 13. Besides the cakes, he shall offer for his offering leavened bread with the sacrifice of thanksgiving, of his peace offerings.

And so many will say, see, well, that's what they were doing. That's acceptable, and God's not a problem. And I think it is a problem. If I could say, if you want to get picky with it, it seems that he says in this one, offer for thanksgiving with the sacrifice unleavened, unleavened cakes and wafers. And then he says on top of that, in addition to that, is the leavened bread. And so when you go back to Amos, he says offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leavened. And so if you want to parse it down, really the offering with sacrifice was to be with these unleavened cakes.

So there's the sarcasm, or there's the contradiction. But at any rate, there's one more place in Leviticus. I think it's in the feast of, which one is it?

[5:09] Pentecost. I think that's Leviticus, either 23 or 27, probably 23, where you'll find that one, another chance where leaven is permitted.

Going back to Amos chapter 4, in verse number 5, he says, proclaim and publish the free offerings. Now there's no place that I can see in the Word of God where he ever tells anybody to go proclaim and publish the offering, the free will offerings that they're offering to God.

As a matter of fact, this would be a mark of what Jesus Christ accuses the Pharisees of. Why don't you hold your place, but flip over to Matthew chapter 6, and look at the very first verse, when the Lord Jesus is exposing the sin of some of the powerful men of his time.

Matthew chapter 6, look at verse 1. Take ye that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them.

Otherwise ye have no reward of your Father, which is in heaven. Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and streets, that they may have glory of men.

[6:28] Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth, that thine alms may be in secret, that thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Same thing with prayer, same thing with fasting in this passage. And there's no place where God is saying, hey, proclaim it and publish it out loud and let everybody know what you're doing, but rather this is to be in secret if it's before the Lord.

And so there in Amos chapter 4, it does sound like God's giving them that sarcastic, say, yeah, come on here, or just do your sacrifices here. Yeah, go ahead, publish it to everybody what you're doing, because that's exactly the kind of people you are.

You're not offering it to me in secret from your open heart. You're offering it to be seen of men.

That's the kind of people you are. And so Lord, he's done with them, and he's calling them out.

Come back there in Amos chapter 4. He says at the end of verse 5, for this like if you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord God, it is not a compliment by any means.

[7:25] This is what you're like. This is the stuff that you're made of or the kind of stuff that you'll do. You'll have a form of godliness. Paul said that they're guilty of that in our day, denying the power thereof.

What they have is a form, but it's not holiness to the Lord, and it's not acceptable to a holy God. And we commented last week about some thoughts of them justifying their sins with the word of God.

And so let's just move forward into the next section. So let's get to verse number 6 here this evening where we kind of really get kicked off. The Lord has already dealt with his people by sending them prophets.

Look back at chapter 2 and be reminded of this in verse 11. I raised up your sons for prophets and of your young men for Nazarites.

Is it not even thus? So ye children of Israel, saith the Lord, but ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not. The Lord has already pleaded with them by prophets. And the next few verses, this next section of this chapter, he's going to indicate that he's pleading with them by punishment.

[8:30] Another kind of correction towards people. And what we're going to read here is one after the other five, I'll call them minor afflictions. They're minor because they did not destroy the entire land and wipe out the civilization.

They're somewhat isolated in some of them. But what he did was he sent some minor afflictions to his people to turn them back to him before their end actually came.

So he pleads with them by prophets and now he's going to plead with them by punishment. And he lists here five attempts to get their attention. I'm not going to make a doctrine out of five chances to get right.

I don't know that the number five here means anything. And you could even parse some of these down and make it six, seven, eight, and nine if you wanted to. So what you see though is that the Lord is showing great patience and long suffering toward his people and attempts to get them back to return to him.

Now before we even read these and study them, I want to point this out that God deals with this nation like a father deals with a son. And he identifies himself as their father and he says Israel is my son, my firstborn.

[9:37] And he's going to deal with them by way of chastising them. And if you need to understand what that is, then you read the Proverbs on your own and I'll have time to go through that tonight. But you'll learn everything you need to know about correcting, specifically parents and children.

And what you'll learn is there's two forms. There's the reproof and then there's the rod. And they're in that order. The reproof comes first, the rod follows if the reproof doesn't seem to get the job done. And this is the order the Lord takes with his people. He sends the prophets and they declare to them, you're wrong, you're wrong, you're wrong. And this is what God wants. And he reproves them with the words of the prophets.

And when they ignore and reject and reject and reject, then he sends the rod. And he sends the punishments one after another, after another, after another, after another, until he finally says, you haven't returned unto me.

Prepare to meet thy God. You're done. So God exercised, like I said, patience and long-suffering and gave them ample opportunities to get right.

[10:42] And they brought on their own demise and destruction. And so if you're a parent in here, this is good instruction to follow God's order of things is to reprove first.

You don't just flip out and start swinging and say that I'm, and I quote the Bible about the rod, bring a correction or like deliver his soul from hell. I know they're in there, but the reproof comes first. Follow God's order and do it in patience and do it in long-suffering. If you don't reprove correctly and clearly, then you can expect it not to work and then you're going to be the frustrated one and then you're going to feel like I need to get the rod out, but maybe you're just not doing the reproof correctly.

And again, go through the Proverbs. There's so much on that stuff there. And anyway, it's way off topic, but it's a lot. So let's get into chapter four, verse six, verse six, and I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities and want of bread in all your places.

You say, I don't know what that phrase cleanness of teeth means. That's such an odd thing to say. It doesn't mean they're brushing their teeth or that they're going to the dentist. God's not doing that. And anyway, he's talking about there's no food to eat.

[11:52] There's, it's a famine that the Lord sends among his people. He sends them a famine and it's not to destroy them entirely and it's not to wipe out his people, but it's to wake them up.

It's for them to get their attention on God and say, why is this happening? Do you remember King David sitting in his throne and a famine comes? I think it's for three years if I recall.

And I want to say it's second Samuel 21. I'm pretty sure that's pretty close, but David's like, what is going on? So he inquires of the Lord and the Lord answers him and says, it's for Saul.

It's because he killed the Gibeonites who Joshua made a covenant with. And there, so there were some things that David didn't do. He inherited something, but the Lord sent a famine and the thing

was he had to make it right.

Blood was shed. And so blood had to be shed to equalize this thing or the land. There was an imbalance in the land and God was not going to allow it. So he sent a famine to, he could have sent a prophet to him, but no, he sent punishment instead to get his attention.

[12:52] It caused David to turn and inquire of the Lord and to take care of the situation. So the first thing he sends is a famine. Then in chapter seven or four, verse seven and eight, second thing he sends in verse seven, he says, and also I have withholding the rain from you when there were yet three months to the harvest, like the worst time.

And I caused it to rain upon one city and caused it not to rain upon another city. One piece was rained upon, so it's isolated where God's doing this. He's not destroying the entire land. And the peace whereupon it rained not, withered.

So two or three cities wandered unto one city to drink water, but they were not satisfied. And then here it is again, yet have ye not returned unto me, second time, I didn't read it, but the end of verse six, the same thing, saith the Lord.

So he withholds rain. There's a drought that God sends upon the land in isolated areas. It's selective. And he's judging, I would guess, likely the wickedness of individual cities in that land. And it's remarkable how dependent civilizations, all of us are, upon water falling out of the sky. Like if it's not there, you don't have anything.

[14:07] Nothing. Everything goes away if the water goes away. And I know you can say here, well, it doesn't rain here, but if it's not raining up there or snowing up north and coming down here, we're not here either.

And so it's remarkable how dependent man is upon God doing something and keeping us sustained and alive. And so there's the second thing to get their attention.

He withholds rain. He sends drought. Verse nine gives another list. I have smitten you with blasting and mildew when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased.

The palmer worm devoured them yet have you not returned unto me, saith the Lord. So he mentions blasting and this is likely an extreme wind that God sends, a destructive wind upon their fields, upon their trees, their agriculture, their crops.

When you were first introduced to this in Genesis 41 when Pharaoh has a dream and he says, there were seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind. And so we're talking about some likely a hot, dry, pulverizing wind that just dries up and destroys vegetation.

[15:18] And whether it destroys them down to the ground or not, it definitely, if you know anything about growing things, it puts plants in a state of shock or a state of distress where they're not producing fruit or even putting out leaves.

What they're doing now is just trying to survive and to get through this season to see another one. And next year, maybe they'll be able to put it. They're trying to just live another year. That's what plants do. They go kind of into a shock state.

And so the Lord sends a blasting, likely a wind, to destroy. Then he says, mildew, which rots anything that is living and even gets in the homes.

But it seems here he's more concerned with their gardens, their vineyards, their fig trees, and olive trees. The third thing he mentions is the pulver worm. Now some of the scholars, I don't know why, but they get all worried about this word pulver worm.

And so they change it to locust. Like, there, we fixed it. We fixed the Bible. We put the word locust in there and got rid of pulver worm. Well, I think they're, I don't want to talk too tough here.

[16:22] So just turn to Job chapter one. Look at Job chapter one. Let's, Joel, I'm sorry, Joel. Just a few pages to your left, like two pages. Joel chapter one. They say the King James Bible's wrong.

I say you're wrong. And let's just stick with pulver worm. Here's why. One reason why. Joel one, verse four. That which the pulver worm hath left, hath the locust eaten.

So they must be different after all. And that which the locust hath left, hath the canker worm eaten. And that which the canker worm hath left, hath the caterpillar eaten. There's four different species of some kind of, they're all very similar as we can tell.

It's some kind of insect or whatever state it's in. I don't know my states of insects before this to that. The caterpillar, larva caterpillar.

And yet there they are. And they're all seemingly very related. And to say that the one is a wrong translation should be this. I think they need to study their Bible a little bit more and just let it be.

[17:34] So there's the pulver worm. And that's what the God's, the third thing he's coming after them. Now let's come back to NamUs. And before we get into four and to five and what else takes place, let's just consider what we've already discussed.

All of these things, this famine and drought and these insect infestations, maybe we could just call it that, they're all taking aim at the nation's food production.

And therefore, it's going to cripple their economy. And this is an easy one for mankind to realize that this is happening one after another to us.

And we're so dependent upon the Lord to do something here. We've got to get God to reverse this judgment or we're going to starve and we're going to die.

We can't maintain when we don't have food, much less survive. So certainly these three things, just this much, should have gotten their attention. And likely you'd think their choice is either we continue this road, which is going to lead to death, or we bow our knees to our creator in God and confess our sins and repent and turn to him.

[18:51] And yet every time it says, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. What this scene reveals to us is something far too common, yet very incredible about the heart of man, what Amos is exposing in his preaching.

It's revealing the stubbornness and the pride that can dwell inside of the human heart. It's astounding. It's astounding because it's so unreasonable.

It makes no sense to any, it's so irrational that God withholds the rain, God sends famine, God is coming after them one time after another, and they're the ones that are losing and hurting, and yet they will not return to him.

They will not bend the knee to God and get right with him. They would rather die than concede that they're wrong. They'd rather watch their wives, their children starve to death than to bow their hearts to the Lord.

What I think here, and I'll say this, you judge it on your own, but possibly one of the worst things that man can possess is a hardened heart. It's got to be one of the worst things that ever existed ever in eternity.

[20:14] Not the lust of the flesh, not the lust of the eyes, not the pride of life, not fornication or uncleanness, but a heart that is so hearted it refuses to hear instruction.

It refuses to receive correction. It's, it's, I don't know if there's anything worse than a hard heart. A very obvious example of this in the Bible is Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and we'll discuss that in a second, but it's, it's hard to compare these things and say, well, this is the worst, and it's worse than that one, when maybe it's a bit subjective to discuss it, and so I don't mean anything by saying it's possibly the worst thing.

I'm not trying to be a wow factor to that, but understand how horrible it is. You see this in scripture when God hardens the heart of a ruler, of a people, like I mentioned in Pharaoh, and when you see those cases, don't get all nervous about God doing something unjust.

What God is doing is manipulating a ruler of a nation because he's attempting to do something with his people, or he's manipulating the heart of a ruler or some king because he's going to punish another nation that deserves punishment and judgment because of how they treated his people. It's generally always a spotlight on Israel, and whether it's directly or indirectly, God hardens the heart of a ruler. It's usually, if not always in the Old Testament, a ruler, a king, somebody in position so that they'll go to battle, so that they'll go do something and attack because God's just like playing with them, not a game, but he's like playing chess, making a move to make a move, to counter, to do something, and that's the God of the Old Testament and how he deals with nations.

[21:58] Now, in the scripture, God hardens the heart of a ruler, and Pharaoh is the great example, and I want to say a few things that'll resonate with what happened in Pharaoh with other cases as well about a hard heart.

One thing about a hard heart is that a hard heart refuses to repent. It absolutely will not repent, as is the case right here. Negative, ugly, bad things happening, not going to bend a knee.

And the only way to fix the thing is to humble yourself, admit you're wrong, it's possible to get it right, that's why God's sending it, so you'd get right, but a hard heart refuses to repent.

A hard heart has no ability to reason. The Bible, God says to his people, come now, let us reason together. He wants to reason with you.

He wants to just discuss this. Think about this. This is how it's going to go for you. But a hard heart is absent of that rationale and that judgment or just maybe logic because they're so hardened against it, they refuse.

[22:58] A hard heart ignores all potential consequences, whether it's on themselves or others around them. You think of Pharaoh, his heart was hardened. I mean, he's watching all their cattle get wiped out.

He's watching all the substance that they have, that his military get destroyed, and he's just going to keep going and keep fighting and bucking against God. A hard heart doesn't even look on, it has no compassion.

It says, I don't care. Yeah, but come on, you know, think about it. I don't care. My heart's too hard. I can't receive truth and righteousness. And a hard heart always loses.

It always loses against God. In Daniel chapter 5, Daniel is speaking to a different king, but he's reminding him of Nebuchadnezzar when he says, but his heart was lifted up and his mind hearted in pride.

He was deposed of his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. The word of God doesn't penetrate a hard heart. You remember the parable of the sower and the seed and how that seed fell on hardened ground.

[24:02] It was trodden down by the foot of men. It was the wayside. It was too hard to receive the seed. Faith can't dwell inside a hardened heart. I'm reminded of the disciples of the Lord in Mark 16 when the Lord said that he abraded them with their unbelief and hardness of heart.

A hard heart doesn't receive the word of God. It doesn't exercise faith. And it's not impossible for God to grant repentance to a hard heart. It's not impossible for God to replace a heart of stone and give him a heart of flesh.

But a hard heart sure will bring about a lot of heartache and pain and suffering and sorrow and all of that could be avoided if we'd learn from the Bible the dangers of hardening our heart toward our God.

But here's the alternate to that. And it's a beautiful thing. It's a tender heart. A heart that is open and honest and absent of the pride.

It's humble. It wants the truth. It's a tender heart can avoid all of these consequences. And a tender heart can gain the favor of God.

[25:13] Doesn't mean that you're righteous and holy. It just means you have a tender heart. When God pricks your heart when God convicts your heart you're tender and you respond and you get it right or you come back to God you return unto the Lord when he comes at you and says you're wrong.

A tender heart. Take a look at one king here just quickly. One example. 2 Kings chapter 22. 2 Kings 22.

2 Kings 22.

And so we know this guy, Josiah. And he gets the word of God. He hears what the Lord has pronounced because of their sin. The judgment that's coming. And God likes the way he responds. Look at verse 16. Thus saith the Lord, behold, I will bring evil upon this place and upon the inhabitants thereof even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read because they've forsaken me and have burned incense on other gods that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands.

[26:21] Therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place and shall not be quenched. But to the king of Judah which sent you to inquire of the Lord thus shall ye say to him. Thus saith the Lord God of Israel as touching the words which thou hast heard because thine heart was tender and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord when thou heardest what I

spake against this place and against the inhabitants thereof that they should become a desolation and a curse and has rent thy clothes and wept before me.

I also have heard thee, saith the Lord. Behold, therefore, I will gather thee under thy fathers. Thou shalt be gathered into the grave in peace and thine eyes shall not see the evil which I will bring upon this place.

That was a tender heart and it found mercy with God. When God is going to bring the hammer down on his people, a tender heart found mercy with God. And that's all he's looking for from his people with Amos preaching to him.

I brought you this, I did this, but you won't return unto me. A tender heart can avoid all those consequences. And I can't overstate this to you people tonight, how important it is to keep your heart tender to the Lord.

How important it is that you keep your heart tender toward his word, tender toward his people, tender toward all the things that God would have in your life, tender toward souls.

[27:40] I'd say that's probably, of all of that, I bet you that's my biggest flaw in this category is having a tender heart toward some souls in Los Angeles because I just get fed up with people and I get frustrated with people.

And I don't know why, it's probably a flaw and a fault of my own and it's pride inside of me. But when I don't have a tender heart, I'll go back and read some of the things a hard heart does. It has no ability to reason.

It's absent of rational and of judgment and logic when I look at them and not say they're going to hell. They might have yelled at me, but they're going to be yelling in the lake of fire.

Why can't I have compassion on them? Because my heart's hard. It ignores, a hard heart ignores consequences and says I don't care. Why don't I tell them about Christ?

I don't care because my heart's hardened toward all their sin, toward all their selfishness, toward just doing, living their lifestyle in my face when I don't want to be around it.

[28:41] And my heart grows hard toward this world and I lose my compassion. And a hard heart loses out. It always loses. You know what I lose? The rewards that I could have for doing what God's called me to do and just being compassionate and tender and careful like my Lord Jesus Christ was.

A hard heart though, you'll lose out. It refuses to repent and admit that you're wrong. I can sense it. My heart gets hardened living in this world, being around it.

And the word of God won't penetrate if I keep it hard. So a tender heart is what God's looking for. It will help you, it will help me to remember that you're nobody, that you and I deserve that same lake of fire, that in my flesh dwelleth no good thing, that the only good thing, all the sum of my goodness can be summarized in one thing, Jesus Christ, and nothing of my own.

And when I take that attitude, then repentance is a blessing, a blessing that you and I should exercise. It's a gift from God that He would grant us repentance.

And when He does, and when He pricks our hearts and our conscience toward Him, it's a gift of God to be able to turn to Him in a tender heart and not resist His Holy Spirit. It's one that we should embrace.

[30:15] Compassion and forgiveness and humility, these are all good indicators that a heart is tender. And those are things to embrace and to desire and to stir up within yourselves.

But be afraid, church. Be afraid of a hard heart. You're the one that's going to lose out, and so will I, all day long. So God's warning His people one time after another time and a third time, and it continues to say, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.

And now, I'm going to run out of time here, so there's two more things at least that He references in verses 10 and verse 11 that end with the same phrase, yet have ye not returned unto me.

We're not going to be able to finish that this week, so we'll pick it up there next week in verses 10 and 11. But He's not finished with the punishments that He has sent their way. Why? To get their attention and to cause them to return.

And so take that away that God sends reproof and then He sends the rod. And He does it in that order. And we'll continue, Lord willing, next week picking that up. But take this away, is that God wants to see a tender heart in you and I, not just toward the souls of the laws, that's just the one that I feel like it's my flaw.

[31:28] But it may be toward being rebuked. It may be toward preaching and toward your sin. It may be toward somebody at work. Who knows? Let God deal with your heart on that.

But where it gets hard, you're the one that loses. So keep a tender heart. When God speaks, remember who you are, remember who He is. And consider it a privilege to be able to say, speak, Lord, my servant heareth, and send me and all the above answers.

Father, thank you for tonight and for each one here and the opportunity to get in the Bible together. And just to cover a few passages of Scripture, Lord, please give us tender hearts that are open to repent, that are quick to have compassion and forgiveness.

God, we can grow cold because of sin and because of being surrounded by it, either in our own flesh or just the world around us. But Lord, make us different and change us from the inside. And may that new man in us, Jesus Christ, be put on. And may he get the victory as we go through our daily lives. Thank you for making a difference in us.

[32:35] Thank you for your word, for how it guides us and rebukes us and exposes our sins. And yet as we go out this door today, please guide us and give us strength to do right and to be a pleasure to you.

Please keep each one safe. Bless those that couldn't be here tonight, that had other things and kept them. And I just pray you will have a good weekend coming up here. Bless our outreach on Saturday. And may Jesus Christ be glorified.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.