

Amos - A Wake-Up Call from a Simple Farmer

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[0:00] Amos, a wake-up call from a simple farmer. Imagine a farmer coming down to a small town, God used him to deliver a powerful message.

So we're going to take it up from verse 2 of chapter 1. And this kind of picture here of the Lord and his message relayed through this simple, ordinary farmer.

And it tells here, verse 2, And he said, The Lord will roar from Zion and utter his voice from Jerusalem. So the word is here pictured as a roaring lion.

If you can picture a roaring lion. And we think of a lion's roar, it's got authority and power. And of course, what's more powerful than God's authoritative voice, the word of God? What's more powerful than the word of God?

This is the most powerful thing, the truth of God's word. And it speaks the lion's roar of God's power, of his authority. Think of a lion's roar as you would be out, perhaps in the dark of night.

[1:28] And the lion roars and you don't know how close is that lion. It's a terrifying sound. It instills fear. It demands attention. This is the word of God. It's like a lion's roar.

And God's voice is this strong, urgent voice. This word, it's impossible to ignore. And that's Amos' message. It's like this wake-up call to the nation. And for Israel at this time.

And what's more, it's just as relevant to us today. This kind of wake-up call, this lion's roar. Here was Amos. Amos wasn't a professional prophet.

Amos says, I'm not a prophet or a prophet's son. I'm just a shepherd. I'm a fig farmer. But God told me, go speak to my people, Israel.

So we're going to pick it up there. He kind of outlines it in this section. Amos chapter 7 from verses 14 to 15. It reads, Then answered Amos and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son.

[2:32] But I was an herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. He's saying I was just looking after the stock and I'm just a picker of figs.

There's the sense of it here. The Lord God took me, it says, as I followed the flock. And the Lord said unto me, go prophesy unto my people, Israel.

God picked out this ordinary fellow to share an extraordinary truth. Can't we think that's true for us today? Who am I? Who are we? Any of us.

That we should be used of God to do anything. And God picked out this ordinary man, Amos. And Amos' name means burden. Burden.

His book was a burden. Truly. A burden from God. A message of warning. Amos was bold, speaking to this nation that looked outwardly successful, but was far from God.

[3:32] They had strayed from God's best. And Amos wasn't some product of the prophet's school. He wasn't part of some outfit that had kind of prepared him professionally, as it were, that he was part of that select group that always come from that special place, the prophet's school.

No, he was no polished professional preacher. He was a simple farmer. A simple believer, just like you and me. A working man. A humble shepherd.

A fig picker, you could call him. That's his job. He picked figs for a living. He was an unlikely prophet, yet bold and unfiltered.

And he said it like it is. We could learn from Amos. The piercing words of his book are like this lion roaring, with the authority of the Lion of Judah, who is our Lord.

Amos spoke to this complacent nation that had forgotten God. And his words were words of warning, words of judgment. He calls the people, he urges them to awaken out of this kind of spiritual sleepiness, to repent, to pursue righteousness, to cling to that hope, ultimately the hope that is Christ.

[4:47] And like Amos, God can use any one of us. I think it's an important lesson that sometimes we can gloss over the word of God and think, how does it apply to me? These are ordinary people.

If we'd have been back in that time, as I was kind of picturing it this morning, as if we could kind of teleport ourselves, if it were possible, to be back in time, at this place, at this moment.

He's just one of us, Amos. He's come out of the wings and now he's the spokesman for God. And it could have been any one of us that God could have put this mantle on. And he urges the people to this urgency, to act, to listen.

And what a difference God made in him. And God can use any one of you. Believe it. Don't ever think that you're not enough. God can use you.

And the setting here now, the problem, was this nation drifting. Israel seemed to have everything at this time. There was an occasion where they seemed to have everything outwardly going fine.

[5:54] They had wealth, peace. There was fancy feasts. They had lively worship services. Hey, everything was there. It seemed like everything was going fine.

And they had it all, it seemed. And Amos 6 talks about people lounging around on plush couches, having this gourmet food. It's like everything's going really fine and dandy in Israel.

And they were singing along. It seemed like everybody was having a ball. But they were ignoring the poor and their own spiritual needs. And in Amos 5, verses 11 through 12, the picture here is of these folk in Israel that they were cheating.

They were being dishonest. They weren't being just. And all the while, they're claiming to honour God. It's like if it were for us going to church on a Sunday, but then living selfishly the rest of the week.

And our world isn't really much different when you boil it down to it. We've got the same kind of issues in our world. It's easy to chase comfort and to put on a spiritual show without the substance, without real change.

[7:10] In really giving you an overview of some of the themes of the book, here's just some things that jumped out at me as to God's message through Amos.

And he's saying, get real with me. If we could use a colloquial terminology. God's saying, hey, brother, sister, get real.

Get real with your faith. Get real with me. Get real with that relationship. And that's the clear challenge of Amos that he brings. He still speaks to us. Hey, we need that same message. We need that kind of wake-up call.

We need that, lions roar! It gets your attention when a lion starts roaring. And so let's look at some of these themes here. So one theme I see is in Amos 3, verse 3, where the prophet says, essentially, get back on track.

Amos 3, verse 3, it says, the nub of this verse says, can two walk together except they be agreed? God's saying, hey, if you want to walk with me, we've got to be in step.

[8:20] Don't we want to walk with God? To walk in the spirit, to walk in the light. There's lots of themes about walking. The Christian life is a walk. One foot after the other, isn't it?

One foot after the other. Hopefully not one foot forward and two steps back. We're walking with God. That's the point of it. And he says, can two walk together? Except they be agreed. We've got to agree with God.

Can two people walk together if they're not in step? And for Israel, it's like they'd broken fellowship with God. They weren't walking with God. They were out of step with God.

They weren't walking on the right track. They'd got off track. They'd wandered off. They'd chased after idols, ignoring God's ways. And God says, hey, get real.

Get back on track. It's this thought of he wanted their hearts back. They were far from him. It's like a friend who comes to you, hey, there's been some kind of discord.

[9:18] Hey, let's fix this. Let's fix this. All right? It shouldn't be how it is. We want to get this sorted. Don't you feel like that sometimes when there's a difference with someone? Hey, come on.

Let's sit down and talk about it. Let's fix this. We don't need this hurt, this gap, this wedge between us. Let's fix this. God's saying, can two walk together except they'd be agreed?

Let's sort this out. And our Lord, once he comes to us and he beckons to us, doesn't he? He's got his arms wide open. He says, come unto me. Let's our lives realign with his will.

If God's saying this is the way, walking in it, we'd better listen so the lines roar. We've got to walk together with God. All right? So get back on track. It's kind of one theme. We could think, how can we realign our lives to the will of God?

Through prayer, through reading his word, tuning into God. If we're not walking together with God, that's a big problem, isn't it? If we're not walking in his way, we're walking in the wrong way. So get back on track.

[10:15] Another thing we could think of is get ready to meet God. One day we will. One day soon. Who knows? You might beat me to it. I might beat you to it.

One thing's for sure. We're going to meet God one day. And it tells us here, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. Amos is telling Israel, hey, time's short.

How much time have we got? You wonder, like, this news came out of the blue this morning. And it's kind of blown me away as much as I haven't had time to really check any real news stories about what's happening just presently.

But hey, whatever's happening every day is an escalation. We can see somewhat of an escalation. Prepare to meet your God. Are you ready? It's important, isn't it? To get ready to meet God.

Because one day we will meet him as saviour or as judge. And God has sent hard times here to Israel to wake them up. But they kept on ignoring him. Stop it.

[11:16] Get ready. Don't play games. It's time to get serious. Get ready to meet God. All right? And in Amos 6 verse 1, it tells this rebuke here as Amos delivers it.

He says, woe to those people who are at ease. He's saying to Israel, hey, you're too comfy here. They're laid back in these plush chairs. It talks about their Amos 6.

And they're laid back. They're kind of taking it easy. They're at ease. They're getting too casual and careless. It's like they're getting sloppy. They're getting complacent. They're getting comfortable. They're getting too comfortable. And yet blind to their need of God. It's the picture here of really, I suppose, when we can all have those moments when, hey, we just kind of take the foot off the pedal.

We're just slacking right off.

[12:15] Slacking back. Missing church. Dropping out. Dropping the ball. Amos is saying, woe to them.

This is not a good place for you. It's not a good place for you to be at ease in Zion. He's saying, woe to them that are at ease in Zion, that trust in the mountain of Samaria. It's a reminder to us, hey, as a Christian, don't get so cosy in life.

And we can get that as in the Western world, everything's pretty easy. Let's face it. We're not, as I prayed for that family in Iran, that their very survival is at risk.

They find it hard to get employment and income. They're in constant danger and threat. And their life is at risk.

Every day of their life as a Christian in a non-Christian land. I mean, we're in a non-Christian land, but not like that one. And so don't get so cosy in life that you forget your Christian priorities.

[13:18] Are we ready? Living at ease in Zion, or are we living ready for his coming? Living ready to be, ready to serve. I liked how Brother Doug Carragher, he talked about army ready.

In the sense that, I know, I talked to Brother Don too, this theme of, as a soldier. Any moment. Right. We're sending you to this place.

Don't worry about packing your bags. Just get on the plane. Sort of like, you know, you're on call.

You've got an assignment. You've got a mission. You've got to be army ready. Are we ready? That we'll just...

Let's get on with the mission. Let's go where God's sending us to go. And... Or are we so comfortable in Zion? At ease in Zion. It's got this picture as...

Even comfortable. We can get comfortable in our fine church buildings. Air conditioning. Comfy seats. Maybe too comfortable. We should stick some nails in them, I think.

[14:19] I don't... I don't... Padded pews, you know. But we're not grieved about the lost souls. We're at ease in Zion. Hey, oh, someone else can go door knocking.

You know, someone else can do it. We're slackened off. It's not good. There's lost souls all around us. There's spiritual poverty. What if we were living in a persecuted land?

Have we got what it takes? Or are we going to be at ease in Zion, just complacent? So that's another theme there. So get on track. Get ready to meet God. Another one.

Get real in worship. This is another theme in the book. And we see that in Amos 5, for example. That Amos begs Israel to seek after God honestly.

And to let righteousness flow like a river. It says there, Amos 5. That God says, I hate your church. I hate how you're doing worship. I hate what you're doing.

[15:20] I hate your worship. Worship. That's pretty strong language, isn't it? That God would hate our worship. Whew. He says, I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.

Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them. Neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. And he says these other strong words. He says, I don't want to hear your songs.

Take those songs away from me, the noise of them. He says, take thou away from me the noise of thy songs, for I will not hear the melody of thy vials. That's pretty strong words, isn't it?

That the worship was somehow, it was out of accord with his will. It was out of accord with what he wanted. Maybe they had the music, but they didn't have their heart right.

But let judgment run down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream. God's saying here, I hate your religious show. I hate what you're doing. I hate your songs. I hate your offerings.

[16:22] Because he could see that something was wrong at the heart. Something was wrong. I don't know, maybe there's other aspects you could draw out of this.

But it's an interesting thought that even their worship was not accepted, was not acceptable. What a rebuke. I hate your church.

I hate your songs. I hate your offerings. It's pretty strong, isn't it? Take away that noise. I don't want to hear it. Their songs were noise. It was an offence unto him. They're sacrifices.

And perhaps it boils down to verse 24, that what he wants is righteousness. He wants righteousness. That righteousness would flow like a mighty stream, like this never-ending stream. That he would rather that you just have righteousness rather than make some kind of spectacle. We know in some church quarters it's like a circus show, like a pantomime, like a disco.

[17:26] It's like some performance sort of thing. It's taking away the righteousness. That's a big problem, isn't it? That rather that we get the righteousness right, that we get our hearts right.

How we treat people in the context there of helping the hurting, of doing what is right, that justice was lacking in the nation to stand for what is right. And another thing we could think about is, I haven't got a quote to show you on this one, but Amos 7 verse 7, that God showed Amos this plumb line, this plumb line.

So if you could picture it, a plumb line, you know, this line that's a cord with a heavy weight on the end of it and holding it up. And of course, it's straight up and down. It's perfectly vertical in all dimensions.

And God showed Amos this plumb line as a sign of something that's straight, that's true, that's undeviating. It's marked.

It's not shifting. It's a line. It's an up and down line. And God's showing Amos this line, this plumb line, which is this tool to check if a wall is straight.

[18:31] I don't know some of you men here, builders, you know, hey, we're going to get that plumb line right. Otherwise, that wall's going to be crooked. It's just not going to be built right. And it's a picture, I suppose you could think of it as how God's measurement is perfect, isn't it?

His standard. We could think of it, you could really reflect that the plumb line is the word of God, straight up and down. That's the word. That's the standard. That's what God measures things by. Not by human measurement or preference or opinion, but the word of God. That's what we measure everything by. Thus saith the Lord. Is it Bible?

Does it measure up? Does it line up? Literally line up. And our lives would line up. God measures our lives by his standard of righteousness. And we know Israel fell short, and we did too.

Amos prayed for mercy, and God listened in Amos 7. And we know that God worked on their hearts. And this shows God's heart. We think of how he warns us. He warns us.

[19:33] He says, hey, something's not right. You've got to get that right. Maybe then the songs will be right. But he wants us to turn our hearts back to him and to see righteousness flow like a mighty stream.

Then we get right with God. We can check our hearts, check our lives. Does it line up? Is it in accord with the word? What God says is right, right conduct, right living, right faith, right doctrine. And let's check our lives, how we treat others too, which is the whole kind of concept, the application of it. How are we following Jesus? Are we walking with God? Are we in step with him? And asking for his help to get it right.

In all of these kind of themes, it leads to another aspect of this warning. And we see that in Amos 8, for example, that Amos warned of this tough consequence of this famine.

And he says, this is maybe it's kind of pointing to, hey, this is why this is all happening to you, because you got away from the word of God. There's a problem here, this warning. And yet this warning and this hope.

[20:35] And so Amos here, he warns of this circumstance. And he says, to this nation that looks like it's outwardly prosperous and it looks like it's all going fine, actually it's very needy.

And we think of our nation. Australia's got everything. The lucky country. Really, we should say the blessed country. Think of our nation. It's got everything, doesn't it? We've got everything we want. I know Brother Doug was a bit blown away when we talked about the welfare system in Australia. They don't have that in America. America is the limit. There's a time limit to how much you can claim. But yeah, brother, sister, we've got everything at our disposal.

We're so looked after by our government. As much as, hey, they could pay us more. We could get more. But honestly, we've got nothing to complain about in Australia. But you think, actually, we're in a famine.

Australia's in a famine. And that's the situation here with Israel at this stage. Here we see, as our Lord tells us, Behold, the day has come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.

[21:42] He says there's going to be a famine here in the land, not of bread or food, but of the word of God. He says they shall wander from sea to sea and from the north even to the east, and they shall run to and fro.

They're going to run here and run there to seek the word of the Lord and shall not find it. We get that. We hear stories about people searching for a church. They just can't find one, where the word of God is.

The word of God's not there. And it's sadly lacking. And any church can be like that. We can make that mistake. I'm not saying we've got everything right here.

A picture here is of a nation that is, the word of God's not front and centre. The word of God doesn't seem to count, doesn't seem to matter. So they're not obeying it.

It's like you're having a GPS and you're ignoring it. It's saying go this way and you go the other way. That's why I'm learning lately. Julie's my nav man. What do you call it?

[22:42] You know, some cars have got sat navs. And Julie says she's my sat nag. She doesn't nag me really. But no, she keeps me on track. She says, no, turn left.

Yes, dear. I'm learning to obey my wife. It's a blessed learning experience. But how much more wouldn't we to love and obey and honour and listen to our God, to listen to his word, to understand his word, to navigate life.

This is the GPS. All right? What do people call it? GPS. It stands for something, doesn't it? No, I'm thinking there's a Christian terminology. It's global positioning system.

But I think there's a Christian one. Someone has said GPS. Anyone know that one? I'm sure it's on Google somewhere. It's God's positioning system. Maybe that's what it is. This is the GPS. This is the way. Like it says in the word, this is the way. Walk ye in it. All right? Don't turn to the left hand or the right hand. I'm being a little loose with some of that. Just the sense that they didn't have the word of God and they weren't seeking it.

[23:50] Or if they were seeking it, they couldn't find it. But then it ends with some hope here in Amos 9.13. It tells how God will restore and he will bless his people. It's like this rebuilding process happens.

And it says, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the ploughman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed and the mountains shall drop sweet wine and all the hills shall melt.

It's got this picture of, hey, God's going to sort it all out. Ultimately, we're going to see the Lord Jesus is going to come in his glory. We're going to see the world in his charge again entirely. And for the meantime, no matter how far we've drifted, God offers a way back. He says there's going to be some blessing to come. Will we heed the word of God? Will we seek after it and find it? Will we be like Amos, this farmer, this really nobody, Amos wasn't anybody special. He's just like you and me. But he was willing to speak the truth.

[24:47] And when we heed the message of God, the simple message, it tells us that God sees how we live. And really, this is probably a good verse to end with.

Amos' message is this call to God against complacency. Woe to them that are at ease in Zion. He's rebuking them for their carelessness. They've missed the point.

They've got all these songs and show, but they haven't got the substance. They haven't got the heart right. And they were comfortable with their blessings, but they neglected their walk with God. He says, we've got to walk together. You've got to agree with me. Basically, God is saying, agree with me, and then we can walk together. And he's saying there's a plumb line here. This is the way. This is the standard. This is what we measure life by. This is what matters. And to have that regular prayer, Bible study, church attendance, to keep us spiritually vigilant, on track, to keep us alert and in his will.

[25:49] And the promises coming of a new kingdom, when we know, of course, ultimately we see that he's building his church. We see that ultimately we'll be in glory for eternity with our Saviour.

And Amos, this simple farmer, is telling this nation to wake up. And he's telling them that God sees how we live. And God's message through Amos, you could distill it down to some simple truth, such as do right, get close to God, live it out, your life, your faith.

In the context, it talks about helping those who hurt. There's a context of the hope ahead of us, that eternal hope, Christ coming, ultimately.

And this thought of live every day for what lasts forever. Can we have that heart? Live every day for what lasts forever. Amos thundered this message as the lions roar, a message of judgment, but also this note of hope.

You see this in this verse, for example. For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live. He is life. He's life eternal.

[27:05] As I know Brother Neil talked about, the way, the truth, and the life. Seek me, and ye shall live. Without Christ, we don't have life. In him is life. To live is Christ.

He is our life. And he says, seek ye me, and ye shall live. This is still the call today. And we could think of it for the unsaved. Flee to Christ. Flee from the wrath to come and find life in Christ. Seek me, he tells you. And to the saved too. We should keep on seeking God, shouldn't we? Don't get complacent, laid back, compromised. Let justice flow.

Let righteousness shine. Let righteousness flow like a river. Streams of that righteous river. This picture of an overflowing living for Christ.

He says, seek me and live. To those far from God, find his forgiveness. Find his grace. That you can know the grace of God that saves. It gives you eternal life.

[28:02] And for we that are saved, then keep on living it. Amen. Keep on seeking after God. We should seek his face every day, shouldn't we? And

seek his will. Not get comfortable.

As those that were at ease in Zion. They had a comfortable kind of Christianity. We can get a casual, comfortable Christianity. Like a careless Christianity.

We're still saved. But we're backsliding. And what does it take to be a backslider? It's incremental, isn't it? Before we know it, just slip away.

I thank God when I see some people. There was a woman here this morning. She hadn't been in church for numbers of years. She said, see you next week. Oh, praise God.

She's back. She's back in the land of the living. You get that. We think, well, where were they? And I know that was my brother-in-law's experience where he spent 40 years in the wilderness.

[29:02] Backsliding for 40 years. I don't know how it started. Maybe it was just, oh, skip this one. I'll skip that. I'll drop out of this. Drop out of that. And before they know it, you never see them.

And they're gone. In the wilderness. Backsliding could creep up on any one of us. Brother, sister. Seek ye me. And ye shall live. Let's be like Amos to be willing to be used to God.

Even in our simplicity. This is just the local yokel. The farmer. Who is this peasant? This farm man. This farm boy. God used him.

You might feel hate. Who am I? God's going to use me. Yes. You don't necessarily go to the school here or there. Or have some degree or paper on the wall. Or letters after your name.

Just be used of God. Just be a channel. And reach out. Live with integrity. Help the hurting. That's the context of Amos 2. Where it seemed like some people were missed.

[30:02] They weren't caring. They weren't caring for one another. And stay close to God. And live for what matters forever. Amen. Let us pray. Lord, we thank you that this ancient book still has truth for us today.

And Lord, you still say, prepare to meet thy God. We pray each one here might know what it is to be prepared. That their soul is ready. They're saved.

They're assuredly saved because they've trusted, entirely trusted Christ for their saving. If it be that one would yet have to do that. That they'll call on your name even at this very moment and say, Jesus, save my soul.

I want to be ready. I want to get ready. I want to be prepared to meet my God. Lord, that you have saved me. You've taken my sin. You've paid for it. I've trusted you. You've paid for it at the cross of Calvary.

Paid in full my sin. That I can be a saved person. Lord, we thank you that you can also shake us up, Lord. Sometimes you do roar like a lion. You kind of scare us a bit.

[31:03] Your word, it trembles. We tremble at it sometimes because it kind of shocks us into the reality of eternity. Lord, that one day we'll see your face, Lord.

And we'll be our saviour, not as judge. Lord, we thank you for your grace that is all sufficient. Thank you, Lord. Lord, help us to not be at ease in Zion to kind of kick back and maybe take our Christianity a bit too carelessly.

Help us, Lord, to walk with you. That we'll be agreeing with you. That we'll walk together with you in life's journey. Lord, we'll walk in the light. We'll walk in the spirit. We'll walk by faith.

We'll walk in your ways, Lord. Guide us that way. Help us, Lord, to have a heart to think about the plumb line. To not measure things our way, but to get the absolute authority.

The plumb line. That we follow what you say is right. What you would dictate. What is your measurement of right and wrong. Help us to see the plumb line.

[32:03] To get hold of the plumb line. When we face a decision, we'll go to the plumb line. And we'll make sure it's right before we set our course. Lord, help us, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen.