

Amos 8:4-9:15 (PM)

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Date: 30 July 2023

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good evening, everyone. My name is William Shane Ross, and I'm a pastor here at St. John's Vancouver. Before I begin, I just want to say if you're new or if you're joining us here for the first time in a while, welcome.

We're glad you decided to come. Tonight, we're ending our sermon series on the book of Amos. And as we've been going through it, we realize Amos is a prophet, and a prophet's job is to warn God's people of his coming judgment before it's too late.

The prophet's job is to lead Israel into repentance before it's too late. And so Amos has given warning after warning after warning in this book. And now in our text tonight, Amos says, Time's up. Judgment is coming.

Israel, you have chosen profit and comfort and luxury and pleasure over your God. And God will not and cannot tolerate your sin anymore.

God hates sin so much that he's going to do something about it. And he's going to act in two ways in our text tonight. First, he's going to bring his day of judgment.

[1 : 0 5] And that's the majority of the text we read this evening. But then surprisingly, he's going to bring his day of restoration, of redemption. And so what I want to look at with you tonight are three things.

I want to look at God's hatred of sin. I want to look at God's day of judgment. And I want to look at God's day of restoration. And by the way, if you haven't yet, can I just encourage you either to take out your phone and go to a Bible app or pull out the Bible in front of you and turn to page 769.

There's a lot of text we're covering, and it'll be helpful for you to follow along if you have it in front of you. So point one, God's hatred of sin. So right away in our text, God puts words into Israel's mouth.

And by doing this, God reveals the hearts of Israel, and it also convicts Israel of their sin. And if you look at verse five, God says that Israel has observed the festivals and the Sabbaths, but they're thinking instead about the profit they'll make on their grain and on their wheat.

In other words, Israel shows up to church on Sunday, but their hearts are already thinking about next week's bonuses. And this is crucial because in Deuteronomy 5, Moses told the Israelites, remember the Sabbath because you were once slaves.

[2 : 2 1] You see, the Sabbath was a reminder that God had freed Israel. And it's a reminder that God's grace brings freedom into your life. And it's supposed to change who you are, and it's supposed to radiate outward into your community.

But instead, for Israel, that freedom led to addiction. It led to an addiction of comfort, of luxury, of wealth, of pleasure.

And so they chose prosperity over God. And by doing that, they've also chosen prosperity over their own integrity. Verse five, again, look at it with me.

As you read it, you get the sense that Israel is itching and delighting to use their false weights to swindle people. They're delighting in their deceit. They're almost, you can sit there and you can imagine how they're bragging about how much they've swindled people left, right, and center.

And again, this flies against the face of what God has commanded. He's commanded Israel to use just weights. For God delights in honesty and integrity. And one of the things that separates God of the Bible from gods of surrounding culture is this.

[3 : 28] You see, if you're another pagan god, what matters is the ritual. What matters is you come to the worship service, you say the right words, you offer the right sacrifices, and maybe you'll get what you want.

But for God, it's not just about the ritual. What you do on Sunday is important, yes, but your whole life is worship.

Your whole life is worship. So he watches his people Monday through Sunday. And here's the thing. When you act honestly, when you deal with integrity, especially when no one else sees it, or when it costs you, God delights in it.

But the inverse is also true, as we see in our text. God abhors dishonesty. Proverbs 22 calls false weights an abomination. And here's the thing.

He hates dishonesty because he cares too much about his people to let them get away with it. He cares too much because dishonesty and lack of moral integrity break down our ability to flourish as a society.

[4 : 32] And we see that play out because not only does Israel choose prosperity over God or over their integrity, but they choose it over their needy. They choose it over their own people. Verse 6 in chapter 8 ends by saying that Israel has bought the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals.

God, who has rescued his people out of slavery, is now watching them put themselves back into it. And when profit, when pleasure, when luxury become our vision for our best life ever, we'll use and abuse others to get it.

But God sees Israel doing this and he says, enough. Enough. Verse 7, quote, I will never forget any of their deeds. And here's the thing. Friends, we live in a culture that just says live and let live, or do whatever works for you, or you live your best life and I'll do mine.

Just forget about anything as long as it doesn't hurt anybody. But that's not what God says. He sees your sin and he knows it. We can't hide our sins from God.

And so because of this, God is going to act. And that brings me to point two. God's day of judgment. So from verse 8 in chapter 8 all the way to chapter 9, verse 10, we get God's judgment.

[5 : 54] And so there's a lot of text here, so I just want to paint in broad brush strokes. In verses 8 to 10, there's a reversal. There's a reversal in nature. The sun goes down at noon, day becomes night, and there's a reversal in Israel's fortunes.

Feasts turn into mourning, songs to lamentations. When God brings his judgment, he brings suffering to both land and to people. So there's a reversal.

And then more importantly, there's a removal. In verse 11, God says there will be a famine, but not of what you would expect, not of grain, not of bread, but of God's word.

And this is important for us because in Deuteronomy, Moses says that, quote, humanity cannot live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

So by removing his word, God is then creating a spiritual starvation that is actually worse than any physical destruction could ever be. It's a spiritual silence.

[6 : 57] And there is nothing more devastating in the midst of tragedy, in the midst of pain, in the midst of grief, than utter silence. And that silence, what it does is it dashes any sense of hope, it inflicts despair, and it ultimately leads to death.

You see, friends, that's the pictures in verses 12 to 15. Young men and women, they're running around, they're looking for hope, they're seeking salvation from whatever God that might offer it. And then at the end of chapter 8, it says, quote, they shall fall and never rise again.

Fall and never rise again. The worst thing God can do is remove his word. And when he does that, he's giving his people over to destruction.

So in the day of judgment, God reverses fortunes, he removes his word, and beginning in chapter 9, we get his wrath. Amos sees God standing on the altar.

Now here's the thing. Traditionally, that should have been a sign of God's protection over Israel. But instead, it's a sign of Israel's destruction. And his destruction of the temple is total, terrible, and inescapable.

[8 : 10] Verse 1 tells us that no one will survive. It tells us, in fact, that God is going to kill his own people. And verses 2 to 4 tell us that there's nowhere to flee. That no matter where you go, God will find you and he will kill his people.

Keep in mind, these are the people he chose. These are the people that he chose to bring out of Egypt, not because they were numerous, but because he loved them and they wanted them to be his treasured possession. And so God here is killing his treasured possession.

It's terrible, it's total, and it's inescapable. You all still with me? Because here's the thing.

That wrath, as terrible as it is, it is coupled with mercy. Starting in verse 8, God says, Friends, the entire book of Amos has been about judgment, and Aaron has stood up here preaching judgment after judgment after judgment.

Well done, Aaron, by the way. And here in our text, we see how total and terrible and inescapable God's wrath is. And yet, God's mercy always, always has the last word.

[9 : 34] He will not utterly destroy his house. Instead, he's shaking it. He's cleansing it. He's purging it. He's sanctifying it. And in verse 10, we get this line.

Look with me at that verse, verse 10, chapter 9. He says, All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, who say disaster shall not overtake or meet us.

Here's what that last sentence means. It means, on the one hand, God will never tolerate sinners. He will not tolerate sinners. But here's what it doesn't say. It doesn't say, All sinners of my people will die.

Full stop. If that were the case, we'd be in a whole bunch of trouble. If that were the case, we wouldn't have hope. He says, All sinners die who say disaster shall not overtake us.

So what does that mean? Well, for Israel, it's those who have taken God's saving grace, the way he has saved Israel from slavery. And rather than being transformed by it, they've turned divine grace into divine entitlements.

[10 : 38] Their lives weren't changed. Their hearts weren't reordered. They exploited their neighbors, and they didn't seek God first. This is a warning for us today, especially today because we are sold so much that the best possible life is based on pleasure or experience or luxury.

And if we buy into that lie, we will perish. But if we go, Hold on. Something is desperately wrong, and not just out there, but also in here.

If we realize that we cannot do it on our own, that we need help, well, then there's good news. Because God's going to act. And we know that because we have these wonderful five verses at the end that talk about God's restoration.

And that brings me to my last point, the day of restoration. God doesn't tolerate sinners, as I've said. God saves sinners.

So look at how he does that. In verses 11 and 12, God says, Friends, this is the messianic promise.

[11 : 58] This is the promise that God is going to restore David. He's going to restore his kingdom of Israel, and he's going to redeem it. This is the promise that Israel is going to pin its hopes on for the next 700 years.

And then in verse 12, it says, quote, that they may possess the remnants of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name. So what does that mean? Well, first off, Edom was a hostile neighbor to Israel.

The only time Israel actually controlled that territory was in the days of David. So hostile neighbor, only time controlled was in the days of David. So when God is saying that's going to, when God is talking about Edom, he's saying, when I restore your kingdom, it's going to be just as good as it was at its best.

But it's going to be even better than that, because I'm going to redeem it. And I'm going to redeem it because I'm going to include all the nations who are called by my name. And that phrase, called by my name, it's so important.

Let me illustrate. My last name is Shane Ross. But before I was married, it was just Shane. And my wife is Kathy Shane Ross, but before she was married, it was just Ross.

[13 : 10] And that means that I am now called by my wife's name, when you say Shane Ross, and my wife is called by my name. So by taking on one another's names, we have entered into a relationship of unity and intimacy.

Who we are and who we belong to have changed, and no one else can be a part of that. And so then when God says, other nations will be known by my name, he's saying he's going to enter into an intimate union with all people of the earth.

And we see that. We see that start to happen in Acts chapter 11. A small but diverse group of people in Antioch were called Christians for the first time.

God himself will restore David's kingdom, not with a political savior, not by a military conqueror, but by coming down himself and uniting himself with humanity in the person of Jesus Christ.

Or as John puts it in his gospel, the word becomes flesh. God's judgment was the removal of his word.

[14 : 20] God's redemption is the complete giving of his word. That's how redemption will come about. And so in the final verses of our text, we have this beautiful, wonderful vision of what this new kingdom life is like.

And just as we got a reversal of fortune in the beginning of chapter eight, we have another reversal. Ruined cities are rebuilt. Mountains drip wine, gardens bear fruits, and his people will never, ever, ever be uprooted.

It's a picture of hope, of restoration, and of eternal delight. I've said a couple times that God will never tolerate sinners.

And I say that again because at the end of the day, toleration is the best the world can offer. God, however, saves sinners, and he brings them into an everlasting life of abundance and of flourishing.

Friends, in a few minutes, we're about to partake of communion. And by it, we're reminded the fact that the day of judgment and the day of salvation, of redemption, are not necessarily two separate days, but they meet.

[15 : 36] They meet on the cross, and another reversal happens. Jesus died for our sins because God had to judge sin. And we get access to eternal life because God loved us too much to just tolerate us.

And so, friends, let me conclude here. As you come to the table in a few minutes, I invite you to reflect on Amos. It's been a wonderful and terrible and convicting book. And if you haven't been with us this entire time, I encourage you to go and listen to some of the other sermons.

But here's the thing that Amos should do. Here's the job a prophet should do. It should remind us, in the words of Tim Keller, we are far more sinful than we can imagine. And we're also more loved than we can ever dare dream.

So wherever you are, I pray and encourage you to reflect on those truths and that they would come together. Because when they start to come together, those two truths, you'll start to understand how powerful and how transformative God's grace is in your life.

Amen.