

The Lord Roars at Israel

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Bible Text: Amos 2:6-3:2
Preached on: Sunday, March 19, 2017

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Well, back to the book of Amos. Let's go to Amos 2. We'll begin in verse 6. Amos 2. If you'll go to Matthew and go back about an eighth of an inch to the left, that will get you fairly close to what's called the Minor Prophet, minor not certainly in truth or in doctrine or in theology or importance but shorter than the others. One of the Minor Prophets. Amos is a country boy. He was keeping the sheep in the remote somewhat wilderness area of Tekoa and God called him to go into the major cities primarily of the northern kingdom called Israel, and preach and denounce the judgment that the holy God had against them. And the parallels between what Amos was facing and the judgments pronounced to our day are so clear. So very clear.

Amos 2, beginning in verse 6. We'll go down through chapter 3, verse 2.

6 Thus says the LORD, "For three transgressions of Israel and for four I will not revoke its punishment, Because they sell the righteous for money And the needy for a pair of sandals. 7 These who pant after the very dust of the earth on the head of the helpless Also turn aside the way of the humble; And a man and his father resort to the same girl In order to profane My holy name. 8 On garments taken as pledges they stretch out beside every altar, And in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined. 9 Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, Though his height was like the height of cedars And he was strong as the oaks; I even destroyed his fruit above and his root below. 10 It was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt, And I led you in the wilderness forty years That you might take possession of the land of the Amorite. 11 Then I raised up some of your sons to be prophets And some of your young men to be Nazirites. Is this not so, O sons of Israel?" declares the LORD. 12 "But you made the Nazirites drink wine, And you commanded the prophets saying, 'You shall not prophesy!' 13 Behold, I am weighted down beneath you As a wagon is weighted down when filled with sheaves. 14 Flight will perish from the swift, And the stalwart will not strengthen his power, Nor the mighty man save his life. 15 He who grasps the bow will not stand his ground, The swift of foot will not escape, Nor will he who rides the horse save his life. 16 Even the bravest among the warriors will flee naked in that day," declares the LORD.

1 Hear this word which the LORD has spoken against you, sons of Israel, against the entire family which He brought up from the land of Egypt: 2 "You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."

Now the prophet has been preaching to the countries surrounding the northern and southern kingdoms, the Gentile countries. He turned a focus, as we saw last week on Judea or Judah, the small southern country that was more of a remnant of righteousness but still had wandered into various and awful sins, but now he turns his gaze toward the northern kingdom. The Lion of Judah is now looking up north to the regions ruled by Jeroboam II and what he beholds is unutterable wickedness. Israel, the northern kingdom primarily in this day, exhibits what happens in one's personal life, in the professing church and in society at large when God's law is rejected and God's statutes are set aside.

Now, as we're talking about Israel, God's chosen people, it's good to remind ourselves and, by the way, though his primary denunciations for the rest of the book are on the northern kingdom, however, he'll throw in all of Israel which would include the southern kingdom too, so you can't completely divorce Judah from these pronouncements but primarily the pronouncement is to the northern kingdom. But the taproot evil of Israel, and I'm including all of it in that statement, is their rejection of sanctification. Now get that: their rejection of sanctification. God said, "I am the one true holy God and I have made myself known to you. I have given you my law, my statutes, my truth. I have given you all of these things and I have given you the guidance on how I expect you to live since you're to reflect me and express my character to the other nations of the world and to one another. And I have given you the means whereby you can live out this new kind of life." But his point is, "You have set that aside. You were to be a set-apart people, a sanctified people, a unique and holy people among all the peoples of the world but you have pushed that aside. You're supposed to be distinct and holy as I am holy. But since I have called you, since you had these unique privileges and blessings, since I gave you my name and I expected you to represent me and you have utterly turned aside from that and rebelled against that, then I'm going to come against you in punishment. Your guilt is greater than others."

We see a clear parallel of this in 1 Peter 1:15 and 16 as the apostle is writing to the churches. "But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'You shall be holy as I am holy.'" Now, God's dealing with Israel of old is a type of God dealing with the church in the modern age. There are parallel truths that apply to all of us. So they rejected the covenant relationship God had with them. They rejected the calling to be a holy people. They rejected the calling, "You're to be set apart and unique. You're to have a dignity about you. You're to have a specialness about you. You're not to be like the rest of the people." So you can see why the central offense that Amos will bring up over and over again was how they took the holy worship of Jehovah and mixed it with the unholy, perverse worship of Baal. In effect, they took the holy worship of Jehovah and mixed it with worldly sensual pleasures and entertainments that were connected with Baal worship. So instead of worshipping

Jehovah in a unique and special way, they worshiped Jehovah as if he were just like all the other base and immoral and unethical gods of the age. They rejected sanctification, being set apart from that stuff.

And if I might just make a side note here. It's not in my notes but, folks, that's what the church is to be today. We are to be a people who are striving after the deeper and holy pleasures of God. We are not to be a people to drag in the worldly sensualities and amusements into God's church in order that we might have more fun. No, we want to engage in the disciplines of learning the higher eternal pleasures of God. Aren't you glad we've got more than the temporal pleasures of the world to live for? So praise God for the common graces that we have, a good steak dinner or watching a ball game or whatever it might be, those are not evil in and of themselves, but behind all of that we rejoice that we get to enjoy those common graces, at least those that don't violate Scripture, of course, but beyond that we enjoy the higher pleasures of worshiping and knowing the one true God and that will go on for all eternity. But they rejected that and they have gone astray in deep, deep spiritual adultery.

Now this is how I outline it going through the text. I. He says, "You have lost the love of the brethren and callously abused the vulnerable." This is such a foundational evil because once you're converted – are you listening, child of God? Once you're converted, you're to lay down your lives for your brethren. You're to do the best you can to take care of a brother or sister in need. If they are in sin, you would lay down your life to call them to repentance knowing that sin will ruin and wreck everything. If they have a legitimate need, you will go out and help them and serve them and provide for them. If they need just the average day-in, day-out Christian encouragement and fellowship. You're faithful to your small group because you would lay down your life for those, just to be there, just to pray with them that week, just to study the Bible that week. And on and on we could go. We are saved that we might be with one another, have one another and care for one another and minister one to another. It is radically contrary to the character of God and therefore to the character of God's people to deliberately misuse one another, especially the vulnerable among us and that's what Israel was doing.

We see it so clearly. If you will, look at verse 6 there, "Thus says the LORD, 'For three transgressions of Israel and for four I will not revoke its punishment.'" Once again he's saying, "Your sin are just piled up one on the other." That's what the phrase, "three transgressions and four" means. Then he gets right to a keynote issue, the last part of verse 6, "Because they sell the righteous for money And the needy for a pair of sandals." The point is that those in Israel who held positions of power and wealth had come to make an art form of abusing the vulnerable among them. The sins of covetousness. The violations of human rights. An arrogant, willful self-promotion was just rampant in the culture. Taking advantage of the poor and the indefensible became sport to them. They had this perverse enjoyment of running over people just because they had the power to do it and they weren't just running over people, it was their brethren, those who bore the name of Jehovah with them.

He said, "you sell the righteous for money." The point is for financial gain they would unjustly bribe the judges and win a case against a man who had truly a just cause. But it didn't matter if his cause was just. The corrupt judiciary went along with the powerful and the wealthy. He even mentions specifically, "for a pair of sandals." Now a sandal meant a little wooden bottomed shoe with some leather straps. The sandal was the shoe of the common man, and particularly the poor man. Now, the more wealthy had more of a shoe like what you and I would have today but the poor had only a sandal and they needed those sandals but the point where the powerful were not only driven by money but they in callous, reckless shamelessness would use the corrupt judicial system just to prove they could do it and literally take the sandals away from a poor man just to flaunt, "Look what we can do. Look what we can accomplish." In our vernacular today, light their cigar and drink their beer and laugh about it in their pub.

I remember many years ago seeing some movie and there was a warlord in the movie and he was just a harsh corrupt man and he walked into one of the little hovels of one of his subjects just almost not enough to live in, and he walked in there and the little guy had nothing and he snatched a dollar bill away from him and lit it in the fire and lit his cigar with that dollar and threw it back at the guy's foot just to show, "I can do this." That's what we're seeing here.

Then in verse 7, look at it there. He says, "These who pant after the very dust of the earth." I think that means they're just living off the least you can possibly live on. And, "on the head of the helpless." I think his point is there that in their insatiable lust for more material pleasure and wealth, they drive the poor into the dust and then even ask for the dust that might settle on tops of their heads. The phrase there in verse 7 where he says, "Also turn aside the way of the humble," they would literally mock and scoff at those who were legitimately needy.

Now, let me balance this in our day. We have a great movement today about social justice that's really communism. It's not really about helping the truly needy. These folks were truly needy. They didn't have two televisions and two cars and still saying, "We're not equal to everybody else." Christianity knows nothing of that kind of "social justice." In Christianity, some always have had more, some always have had less. I don't understand God but he is sovereign, but as Christian people – listen now – we are always ready and willing with compassion to help the truly needy, amen? And we have for many years had a benevolence fund here that we give to every week but, you know, we learned many, many, many years ago we had to hold people accountable for the gifts we gave them because we found out very soon, unfortunately in a high percentage of cases we would give money to these folks and the babies didn't get it and often the wives didn't get it, the man spent it on booze or on drugs. So we will give now, we work through other agencies and make sure it really goes to help the children and really goes to help those who need it. Listen, folks, are you listening to me because this is big in our culture today? Charity without accountability leads to depravity. You see, a truly needy person doesn't mind being accountable. Are you hearing me? And they want to work to get to where they can be one of those who help the truly need. Charity without accountability always leads to depravity.

Well, these folks, though, are not folks who just have less stuff than other people, they were truly living in the dust of the streets and in that setting, their own Israeli brothers they would trample over them. So they had just disregarded God's law. Deuteronomy 15:11 says, "For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.'" God's ordinance was always be there and be ready to help those who literally need food to eat or basic medical care to survive that week or that month, and they were not doing that. They had the truly poor all around them and callously ignored them and viewed them even with contempt.

Now, notice verse 8, "On garments taken as pledges they stretch out beside every altar." Now, that's an interesting statement, "garments taken as pledges." They extorted from the poor even the outer garment which for many of these poor folks was all they had was one outer garment which was to keep them warm as a covering at night and therefore the law in Israel forbids you, even if you had just cause, it forbid you to take that man's cloak because he'd have nothing to sleep under at night. For example, the law said in Exodus 22:26-27, "If you ever take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, you are to return it to him before the sun sets, for that is his only covering; it is his cloak for his body. What else shall he sleep in? And it shall come about that when he cries out to Me, I will hear him, for I am gracious." But the point is these very wealthy people in Israel were even taking the outer cloak of the poor and laying it down in their pagan idol temples. Now, these people are supposed to know Jehovah God, going to a pagan idol temple, laying on a garment they took as a pledge. Not only are they going to keep it overnight which is against the law, but they're taking it from a fellow brother in the land. Deep, deep, calloused disregard and taking advantage of the vulnerable.

He says in verse 8, the last part, "And in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined." Again, the point is using the corrupt judicial system, they have taken what little money the vulnerable and the poor had and used that money to indulge in their sensual gratifications of wine drinking in their pagan temples. And by the way, the pagan temples of this day, and it was almost consistent throughout antiquity, pagan temples associated worship or their worship was associated with drunkenness, revelry, singing and dancing, and sexual immoralities and that's the kind of stuff the men of Israel had begun to embrace. Now listen, here's the vile part of it, we're about to get to this: they called it worshiping God. They had brought the name of God down to that level. Now, folks, well, I'm not going to go there yet.

II. They lost true and holy worship and engaged in false and perverse worship. They lost true and holy worship and engaged in false and perverse worship. The Bible says at the end of verse 7, "a man and his father resort to the same girl In order to profane My holy name." Now, there are two possible interpretations here when it says "a man and his son resort to the same girl." First of all, it could mean that a man and his father have the same vile relations with the same temple prostitute, or it could mean in a more general sense that all the men of the land, old and young alike, are involved in these perverse immoralities. But I think it's likely that both are true. As a matter of fact, from the

balance of the biblical text here, I'm quite certain both were true. This was an open and frequent practice in this day in Israel. They would call it worshiping Jehovah but they brought perverse Baal worship in, united them together so they could check off the boxes of, "We brought our tithes. We brought our offering. We brought our sacrifice. Now where's the temple prostitutes?" Embracing immoralities as a part of their service and worship of Jehovah God. Wickedness.

Now, here's the way they would justify such a thing. Again, they combined Baal worship and all of these shenanigans with Jehovah worship and Baal worship had from time immemorial been associated with sexual impurities and immoralities, but what Baal worship was like was that it was built upon the fertility principle and all these pagan idols of antiquity, they viewed that idol, that god, as being in charge of or having the power of fertility in the land. That god or that idol was able to make your wife fertile and have children. He was able to make your livestock fertile and reproduce and increase your herds. He was able to make your crops fertile so you'd have a good harvest. And so Baal was a powerful god but here's the way he's different from Jehovah and here's the way all the gods of antiquity are different from Jehovah: Baal was not a moral or ethical god. He was powerful but he had just more of the vile pollutants and immoralities that the people possessed. Baal wouldn't call you to repentance because he did everything you did. He made you happy in your sensual pleasures. He confirmed them and blessed them. So, folks, don't be surprised, it's 2,800 years later and we see the same kind of principle trickling if not now flowing into the professing evangelical church. Let's bring these fun, sensual things into the church and then if anybody thinks that's wrong, we'll just call it, "Well, we're loving each other and being tolerant of each other." No, you're not. You're a Baal worshiper and the Lion of the tribe of Judah is coming after you.

Now, here's what they would do: the practice would be to go to the Baal temple, in this case the Baal-Jehovah temple because they brought them together, and lay with a temple prostitute that by your example you might induce Baal to enact his powers of fertility on your lands. One scholar, one commentary writer said it this way and I thought it was a good illustration, he said they viewed teaching Baal what to do to make their land fertile, their livestock fertile, their wives fertile, the same way we would teach a small child to blow his nose. They don't understand much so when they have a runny nose you put the tissue paper over the nose and then you make the sound and they learn to do it that way. Well, that's what they were doing for Baal. "We're going to illustrate to him what he needs to do so he can make everything fertile and we'll have great families and great livestock and great harvest of crops."

Now he says in verse 7, "You're doing all these things and you've got my name attached to it," so he says at the last part of verse 7, "In order to profane My holy name." Now, in the end, self-gratification through sexual immorality, that was their god. Now let that sink in as you think about our modern culture. Self-gratification through sexual immorality was their god and that's the way we're living in this age today, with deep self-gratification and self-indulgent immoralities. You and I live in a culture that says, "That's what we're all about and that's what we're here to worship and serve and do." Sexual gratification was replacing and had replaced the holy name of God as the foundation of their pleasures

and as the guiding principle of their lives. That is exactly where our culture is. I mean, the whole notion today is, "If I feel it and I desire it, you must affirm it and celebrate it as equal to anything else anybody else is doing." That's exactly what Baal worship would teach. You have the lust, you ought to be able to fulfill it. That's who you are. Now, they'll try to make it sound good by saying, "You ought to be able to love whoever you want to love." It ain't got anything to do with love, it's base, below animalistic lust. That's what it is. It's old ancient Baal worship dressed up in some contemporary clothing.

So they had rejected God's law and rejected God's truth, lusting after the pleasures of Baal worship and declared, in effect by attaching Jehovah's name to it, that Jehovah was this kind of immoral, unholy, polluted god and that Jehovah himself was by himself rather, was insufficient for them. So he says, "You've attached my name to it and you've declared I'm like this and also declared by attaching me to Baal worship that I alone am not sufficient." Oh, church, let's always pledge and let's always strive that we will say to our community and to the world, "Jesus Christ alone is sufficient." We have to bring nothing of the world's sensuality, nothing of the world's amusements or entertainments into Christ's church. We love him, we promote him, we teach him, we preach him, we sing of him, we adore him, and he alone is sufficient for us. That's what they were not doing. They profaned, they dishonored who God was by attaching him to this filth and in effect saying he was therefore filthy and in effect saying he alone is not sufficient for us.

Then in verse 8 again where he says you "stretch out beside every altar," he's just showing how they were just so active in chasing after all the fads and all the gimmicks of false worship of their day.

III. They had forgotten God's grace and blessing and walked in callous ingratitude. God's going to remind them, "You've done all this and you've forgotten how amazingly I, Jehovah, by myself, did such wonderful things for you."

Look at it there beginning in verse 9. He says, "Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, Though his height was like the height of cedars And he was strong as the oaks; I even destroyed his fruit above and his root below." Now he starts with the Amorites, that's an important one but the Amorites in one sense stand for all the nations of Canaan that God drove out before them, but the Amorites were the mightiest of all of them. They were, indeed, a gigantic race of men who were skilled in warfare. Do you remember when the 12 spies came back from spying out the Amorites, what did they say? They came back and said, "Moses and brethren of Israel, these guys are giants! We're like grasshoppers compared to them!" And God said, "Yeah, but what happened? I defeated every one of them for you. Have you forgotten what I've done for you? Have you forgotten the grace and the blessings I've given you?" God promised them that he would go before them. Exodus 33:2, "I will send an angel before you and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite." "I," God said. "You didn't just go out with your battle implements and win the day, I was there in supernatural power and blessing. My grace and blessing was upon you, Israel. I brought you these victories. I gave you the land."

Verse 10, "It was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt, And I led you in the wilderness forty years That you might take possession of the land of the Amorite." In other words, "I'm the one who redeemed you by blood from the slavery in Egypt when you put the blood on the doorposts and on the lintel and the death angel passed over your life, over your household." He's saying, "You did not do that. I overpowered your captives. I am the one who convinced Pharaoh to let you go. You did not do that, I did that. You did not part the Red Sea so that you might pass through safely on dry land, I did that for you. You did not do that. You did not provide for your own needs in the wilderness after leaving Egypt. I blew in the quail. I brought down the manna from heaven. I gave you water from the rock. Do you not remember all of this, the grace and the blessings I've showered on you, Israel? I gave you a pillar of cloud to follow by day and a pillar of fire to follow by night. I am the one who did that. Do you not understand, Israel, what I've done for you?" His point is, "From your redemption from Egyptian bondage through the blood," and by the way, is that not a powerful parallel of what Christ has done for us? He redeems us by his own blood. "Your provisions in the wilderness wanderings and up to your victory over the Canaanites in the Promised Land, that all was my grace, that all was my power, that was all of me."

What a clear parallel for us, church. Everything we are is grace. Everything we are is grace. We ought to be striving to be like him. We ought to be striving to be a holy people. We ought to be striving to live according to higher principles. Our love for one another ought to be greater than the love the world has for one another. Our commitment to truth which means sometimes we will correct one another, sometimes we would call one another to repentance, that's because we function according to higher principles. We don't just listen to emotions and sentimentalities like our present culture does. We have a present victim mentality where if anybody is offended or if anybody in any way thinks that they're somehow not getting what someone else has got, well, the whole world is just supposed to clamor around them and support them in some way. Well, that may not be according to truth. As a matter of fact, the Apostle Paul said in the New Testament, "If you don't work, you don't eat." So while always with love and always compassionate but always according to truth. Sometimes a brother and sister might have to be told, "Well, you need to do your part. We love you. We'll help you. But you've got to do your part." Aren't you glad we've got a book of truth to follow? If you just follow your sentiments and your emotions, you'll dig a ditch and you'll never get out of it.

In other words, "I've given you so much, Israel. You've had my law. You've had my blessings. You've seen the provision. I've come to you in grace and cared for you and delivered you and sustained you. Have you forgotten all of that?" They had forgotten all of his grace and blessings and were functioning in calloused ingratitude.

Number 4: they rejected the means of sanctification to walk in wickedness. Notice what he says in verses 11 and 12, "'Then I raised up some of your sons to be prophets And some of your young men to be Nazirites. Is this not so, O sons of Israel?' declares the LORD." He says, "I gave you a provision. I gave you a means whereby you could be taught" – now listen, church – "you could be taught the wisdom and the benefits of self-restraint." There is a wisdom and a benefit to learning biblical self-restraint. Do you

know why? Because we're fallen beings and if we give into all of our desires and all of our lusts, we will ruin ourselves, ruin our marriage, ruin our families and ruin our church and then ruin the culture, which is the course we're on in our country today because we've thrown off biblical self-restraints. It might be self-restraints about your attitude, your disposition, the words you speak, what you eat, what you drink, where you go, how you fulfill yourself sexually. All the areas of life where God gives his law, full of self-restraints so that you will not ruin and destroy yourselves. But they threw that off.

First he says, "You threw it off because you threw away my prophets. I sent you prophets to proclaim God's word to you concerning your situation and how you need to repent of your indulgence and come back to the law and the self-restraints I've given you." And another way, he says, "You have rejected the Nazirite." Now, the Nazirite was one who lived a holy and sanctified life of self-restraint among the people. He was called of God to this Nazirite office, if you will, that he might live before the people, what it looks like to really separate yourself off to God and be devoted fully to God. Now, we don't have the office of the Nazirite in the New Testament and in the church age. Do you know why? Because all of you are Nazirites now. You've all been changed by the power of the Spirit. You've all been regenerate. You all now have the seed at least in your heart of, "I want to be pleasing to God. I want to be set apart for God. I want to be holy for God." But in this day, they just had a class of men. Primarily they refrained from drinking wine, they wouldn't cut their hair and they wouldn't get near a dead body. Samson had taken a Nazirite vow and Samuel had taken a Nazirite vow and John the Baptist had taken a Nazirite vow and Paul the apostle had temporarily taken a Nazirite vow. You could either do it permanently or temporarily.

But what does Amos say they do to these Nazirites, to these men who tried to live holy and tried to be an example that there are virtues and there are benefits to a life of self-restraint and not indulging in wickedness? Look at it there in the text, verse 12, "you made the Nazirites drink wine, And you commanded the prophets saying, 'You shall not prophesy!'" So here's what they did: they intimidated and seduced the Nazirites into compromise. Do you know why they did that? Because those guys were a conviction. Those men were a conviction. They wanted to indulge in their booze, have their big drunken celebrations in their temple that they called a Jehovah-Baal worship temple, they wanted to indulge in their sexual immoralities and here this guy would come and he's living a holy separated life. That convicted them. They didn't like that so they just ridiculed him and demeaned him and scoffed at him and eventually many of those Nazirites themselves gave in and indulged in the sensual pleasures.

One thing I noticed after my conversion at the age of 19 and coming into Baptist churches was it seemed to be that there was a spirit in a lot of churches that was like this, "You scratch my sin and I'll scratch yours." There wasn't that Nazirite spirit of, "Let's try to live for God." If you fail, we'll forgive you. If you struggle, that's what we're here for, amen? Compassion and care. But this wholesale indulging and giving in and ridiculing the man who is trying to live right is an evil before God and Amos says, "That's one of the reasons I'm bringing the judgments against you. You didn't take the means of sanctification to help you set apart for God, you corrupted them and tried to drive them

away." And you know what they did to the prophets in that day, Jesus said, "Your fathers killed the prophets." They would ridicule the prophets, as we're going to see Amos gets ridiculed and they try to intimidate Amos, but you know one good thing about Amos was, he just thought, "Well, I don't care what you say. I'll just go keep sheep if I have to. I'm not losing anything anyway. I'm just here to tell you what God told me to tell you." It's a good place as a pastor when you decide, "I ain't got nothing to lose." Sometimes they imprisoned the prophets and then sometimes literally they killed them.

Well, their sins are building up. Look at verse 13, if you will. God says, "Behold," through the prophet Amos, "Behold, I am weighted down beneath you As a wagon is weighted down when filled with sheaves." He's actually saying, "You've just sinned upon sin upon sin upon sin. I've had all I can take." Just like you can only put so much on a wagon before it breaks.

Verse 14, he says, "Flight will perish from the swift, And the stalwart will not strengthen his power, Nor the mighty man save his life." Now note again, remember what we said in our introduction: they are living in very prosperous times, the greatest prosperity they'd had in many many decades, you might even say a century and a half or so. And things are good, things are exciting, the economy is good, the businessmen are doing well. Their newfangled new approach to doing church was exciting and the numbers were good. And God said, "Yeah, but I'm about to judge every bit of it." Beware, friend, when you hear of a certain church or certain ministries exploding and doing good. Your question should be, "Yes, but is it holy? Yes, but is it righteous?" I'd rather meet with Amos on the hillside of Tekoa with the true believers than in a packed out temple in Bethel full of hell and Baal worship.

Now, that's a word for today, friend. If you've got any wisdom or discernment, that's a word for today. You men, be heads of your households. Lead your families to the truth. Do not be seduced by anything that's even got the fragrance of Baal worship on it because that invites the judgment of God.

He says, "No matter what you do, you're not going to be able to escape." Look at verse 15, "He who grasps the bow will not stand his ground, The swift of foot will not escape, Nor will he who rides the horse save his life." No matter what you have or what you rely on, you'll not be able to stand against the enemy I'm sending against you in judgment.

Verse 16, "'Even the bravest among the warriors will flee naked in that day,' declares the LORD."

Now quickly, my final point, chapter 3, verses 1 and 2: a covenant of judgment. A covenant of judgment. He kind of reiterates what he's saying and he re-emphasizes the main point as to why he's judging Israel.

Verse 1 of chapter 3, "Hear this word which the LORD has spoken against you, sons of Israel, against the entire family," now I believe that includes Judah also, the southern kingdom and the northern kingdom, "which He brought up from the land of Egypt." And

here he comes with this point as to why I'm judging you specifically. "You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; Therefore," based on that, "I will punish you for all your iniquities." In other words, "I elected you." I had a lady tell me this week that they knew of a family that would probably join Grace Life Church if I wouldn't preach on election. Well, there it is again. Look at it, "You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth." It means God elected and chose Israel and did not elect and choose the other nations. I don't know what to do. That's the doctrine of election.

His point is, "Since you didn't deserve this, I could have picked the Hittites or the Amorites or the Perizzites or anybody else, but I, not because you were better, I for my own pleasure chose you, Israel, and I made a covenant with you. I elected you to be my own special people. I redeemed you. I adopted you. I provided for you. I cared for you. I gave you the temple and the ceremonial law and the moral law and I gave you the prophets to help you. I gave you the Nazirites to help you. We had a special intimacy, Israel, a special covenant, Israel. You were my chosen, redeemed, elect and loved people therefore," chapter 3, verse 2, "I will punish you for all your iniquities." You see, friends, sin is desperately serious among God's people. Sin is desperately serious among God's people. Why? Because we represent him and he is holy.

Now, while the Gentile nations, as we've already seen in Amos, are judged because they violated the conscience God put in them and they violated the law of God he had written in every man's heart, Israel however had violated conscience, they had violated the law in their heart, they violated the written law given through Moses, they violated the prophets' preaching, they violated the Nazirites' example, and many more ways, all the supernatural ways he delivered them and cared for them and protected them. So this vengeance God brings against Israel – now listen – is within the covenant he made with them and because of the covenant he made with them. "I'm judging you because you're mine and you've sinned."

Now, let's get down to the church today. Let's get down to you and I and we remind ourselves, the Bible clearly teaches that if God chooses you to be one of his own, then he will discipline you because you are his own. If God chooses you to be one of his own, he will discipline you because you are his own. Hebrews 12:5, "and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, 'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him.'" Verse 7, "It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?" In other words, God is your Father. He has chosen you. He's elected you. He's made you his own. He's cast his love upon you and therefore he will discipline you because you're his. By the way, sir, by the way, ma'am, if you're living in sin and God has not disciplined you, you're not his. "Well, I've been doing this for years and I'm getting away with it." Then you're not his. You'd better hope he breaks your heart. You'd better hope he humbles you. You'd better hope he grieves you about it. You'd better hope when the word preaches, you feel badly about it. You'd better hope the Spirit enables you to not blame this person or that person and that person and say, "Lord, it is me! It is me! I am the guilty one!" That's a sign you're his. That's a sign you're his.

1 Peter 4:15-17, "but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name." He's connecting suffering with God's judgment against Christians and against the church. Verse 17, "For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" So here Amos is telling Israel, "God is coming to judge you because you're his special, elect, chosen people whom he loves and has revealed himself to." Judgment is a part of the covenant. Judgment is a part of this relationship.

Now, here's a key point. Now, if you've been asleep the rest of the time, wake up! Listen to this. Don't miss this. Listen now: judgment for his church, judgment for his chosen and elect – listen – is limited to time. It's temporal. In this age, those of us who are saved in his church, we get the judgments and the disciplines of God but that all ends at glorification. Judgment for the world is for time and eternity. Aren't you glad you get the judgment of the covenant and not judged with the world? And by the way, Romans 1 teaches us that part of God's judgment is when he pulls back his restraining power and a people begin to give themselves over to unnatural lust but that's only a little part because the world's judgment builds and builds and builds and in time it explodes into massive vengeance and retribution at the day of judgment and for eternity. But praise God if you're his. He loves you. He might discipline you but it's only for a while until he takes us home and glorifies us, but the judgment of the world lasts forever. It is a covenant of judgment. Thank God he's just going to spank me for a few days and I'm going to grow up and get glorification one day.

Can I just give you an exhortation as your pastor? There is no congregation that doesn't struggle with sin. We have ours but we try, we genuinely try to have accountability in this body and I'm not going to pastor a church nor be a part of a church that does not have biblical accountability. Some of you have friends right now who are abandoning their marriage. I'm calling you to be a man. Be loving but be firm in calling that brother to repentance. Some of you ladies in your small group or your class and they have abandoned their marriage and they've abandoned the morals in keeping with Christian people. I'm calling you ladies to be women of God, be compassionate but be clear in calling them to repentance. Now listen, the wages of sin is death. It is not loving to let someone go on and bring death into their life, their marriage, their family and everything else. They can't see it because they're in the stronghold of iniquity.

Now, if you charted on a chart, we have less of this than almost anybody I know and I praise God for that, but we still have some of it and most of these couples have not been active in a long, long time but let's be the people of God. Let's love – are you listening – biblically which means we lovingly hold each other to accountability for what we are. We're going to raise our babies in churches where a holy God doesn't condone willful, calloused sin and rebellion, amen? But while we go and we counsel and we call another brother or sister to repentance, we humble ourselves, mindful that except for the grace of God that is I. Amen? Always with humility and always with sweetness but with firmness. And the reason why there's a lot of folks that you never see brought before the church is because they do respond and they do humble themselves and they do work at their marriage and they do restore. Sometimes they won't but often they do. I didn't really

mean to get on that but it was on my heart heavy. Well, amen. Once again, I'm glad the covenant of judgment is just for this time, not for eternity for those who are his.