

They Grieved Not for the Ruin of Joseph

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Let's go this morning back to the old part of the book, back to the Old Testament prophet, Amos. You might say, "What can the New Testament church of Jesus Christ learn from a Jewish prophet, an obscure country Jewish prophet who preached to the northern kingdom of Israel 2,800 years ago?" Well, I'm glad you asked that question. You just listen: it is so amazingly powerful how applicable these truths are to us today and how powerfully and clear the Gospel of Jesus Christ comes forth out of the old Jewish writings. As Jesus said, "Everything you saw in the law and prophets testify of me." Now, it's there, it's there in something of a hidden medium, if you will. It's not as clear as the New Testament but it is there. What was contained in the Old Testament is explained in the New. What was concealed in the Old is revealed by the New.

Let's go now, we're in Amos 6. If you're visiting with us today, our mainstay in the pulpit is expository preaching verse by verse, chapter by chapter through books of the Bible that we might understand the original message God intended and then make practical applications for our day and our age. But folks, listen: the truth of God never changes. Now the culture goes everywhere. We now live in an effeminate culture and part of being in an effeminate culture is that it's a culture that follows emotions and whims. Every time somebody feels something, we've got to have a law about that or a statute about that or a policy about that. We're no longer principled people. We were built on the Judeo-Christian tradition, the eternal, unalterable, unthwartable absolutes of the Scriptures as the foundation for our culture, but now we've "progressed" beyond that. Now we can have smart elitist people who feel certain things come up with what is now truly right and wrong, good or bad. The problem is they'll say something is right and later they'll say it's wrong, then they'll say it's wrong, then they'll say it's right because they're following whims and emotions and sentimentalities, not firm, established principles. And we see in the book of Amos that Israel had lost their moorings in God and in God's truth.

Let's look at it together. Amos 6, beginning in verse 1. Amos says,

1 Woe to those who are at ease in Zion
And to those who feel secure in the mountain of Samaria,
The distinguished men of the foremost of nations,
To whom the house of Israel comes.
2 Go over to Calneh and look,
And go from there to Hamath the great,
Then go down to Gath of the Philistines.
Are they better than these kingdoms,
Or is their territory

greater than yours? 3 Do you put off the day of calamity, And would you bring near the seat of violence?

Here's how they were living. Look at verse 4,

4 Those who recline on beds of ivory And sprawl on their couches, And eat lambs from the flock And calves from the midst of the stall, 5 Who improvise to the sound of the harp, And like David have composed songs for themselves,

All these are indulgent people. Look at verse 6,

6 Who drink wine from sacrificial bowls While they anoint themselves with the finest of oils, Yet they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph.

Remember that phrase, "Yet they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph." Verse 7, God says,

7 Therefore, they will now go into exile at the head of the exiles, And the sprawlers' banqueting will fade away.

Amos says, "God is saying because you've denied God and left God out of your lives and lived only for yourselves," now they didn't leave religion out, there's a big difference between knowing God and knowing religion. They were very religious but they left God out so he says, "Now the Assyrians are coming." He doesn't name them here but history tells us that's who it was. "The Assyrians are coming to destroy you and you're going to all be carted away," well, the ones that were not killed were carted away in exile as captives. Verse 8,

8 The Lord GOD has sworn by Himself, the LORD God of hosts has declared: "I loathe the arrogance of Jacob, And detest his citadels [or palaces]; Therefore I will deliver up the city and all it contains." 9 And it will be, if ten men are left in one house, they will die. 10 Then one's uncle, or his undertaker, will lift him up to carry out his bones from the house, and he will say to the one who is in the innermost part of the house, "Is anyone else with you?" And that one will say, "No one." Then he will answer, "Keep quiet. For the name of the LORD is not to be mentioned." 11 For behold, the LORD is going to command that the great house be smashed to pieces and the small house to fragments. 12 Do horses run on rocks? Or does one plow them with oxen? Yet you have turned justice into poison And the fruit of righteousness into wormwood, 13 You who rejoice in Lodebar [or you could say vanity or things that have no lasting value], And say, "Have we not by our own strength taken Karnaim for ourselves?" [Then God says through the prophet] 14 "For behold, I am going to raise up a nation against you, O house of Israel," declares the LORD God of hosts,

Isn't that interesting? Israel was his chosen nation and, by the way, I'm convinced they still are and there will be a day when they will be drawn back to their God through Jesus Christ. "But Israel, you are my chosen nation but I have put you aside. Now I'm going to use Assyria to do my bidding. Wicked, pagan, idolatrous Assyria is going to do my bidding. Assyria is going to come against you as my instrument of judgment." The last part of verse 14,

"And they [the Assyrians] will afflict you from the entrance of Hamath To the brook of the Arabah."

Israel had declined spiritually and Israel had committed perhaps the greatest religious error that can ever be committed. Now listen to this: she had committed the greatest religious error that perhaps could ever be committed, she had lost heart sincerity but yet still clung to external ceremony. Did you hear that? She had lost the heart sincerity of her religious devotion. She didn't love God from the heart but she kept all the outward external motions of her religion, the rituals and the ceremonies God required.

Amos points out that they were disciplined and faithful in their religious practices. Motyer, the scholar who did such a good job on the book of Amos, said that they performed 99% of that which God commanded of ceremony in their religion, but they treated ceremony and ritual as the end itself. In other words, if we just check these boxes off and jump through these hoops and do these things the law commands every week, we're okay. They, in effect, used ceremony and ritual even though it was biblically prescribed, as something of a formula or like a mantra that we see in superstitious religions, and if they just did those things and all of a sudden they thought, "We're okay with God and we'll get all the benefits and blessings that God has promised." It was a superstitious tit-for-tat. They lacked the main thing, though, really the only thing and that is a converted heart, a heart that did not chiefly love self and sin but a heart that chiefly loved God and righteousness.

They had lost what that kind of converted heart lives out, that is, a righteous conduct toward your fellow man. Their religion, in effect, had declined to become a form of religious self-pleasing. Oh, my goodness, is this not contemporary? How many professing Christian organizations, ministries and churches today when you really boil it down, they're not really following the Scriptures that carefully, it's just religious self-pleasing going through the motions. That's what Israel was doing 2,800 years ago. Their religious practice and worship did not arise from who God is or who man is, but it was separate; it was yet designed around their own selfish lust and their desires for carnal or worldly pleasures.

As you know, Amos has pointed out to us that they had taken the popular religion of the day, Baal idolatry. Baal was where they made a golden calf and this calf represented this god, Baal, and he controlled the fertility of everything: the fertility of your crops and your livestock and your own household. So they would worship Baal to keep him happy but then they'd worship Jehovah, the God of Israel, to try to keep him happy, and so they

thought, "Well, the best thing to do to be relevant and contemporary is just to combine the two. We'll take the spirit of the day and what everybody's excited about, Baal worship, and we'll put on it some of our old orthodox Jewish worship and then we'll have every base covered." Is that not contemporary? Are we not seeing that in our world today, the world of the professing church? Of course, the end result that they came up with in Israel was a church, if you will, that was both perverse and powerless where this greatest of sin and evil, God says in Amos 6, that he will visit upon them a judgment of exacting retribution, thus the theme of chapter 6 is God's exacting judgment for this most serious of sins and failures.

You see, they could not see and they would not believe that they were actually in a ruinous, a broken condition before God. Now remember that: they could not see and would not believe that they were ruined before God and thus that's why that most important phrase is at the end of verse 6, "They did not see or grieve over the ruin of Joseph," Joseph being the patriarchal forefather. Joseph represented the nation. These are the descendants of Joseph or Jacob or whoever, pick any patriarch you want. The point is these are Joseph's descendants and you've fallen away from the God Joseph loved and Joseph served and Joseph honored and you've come to ruin. They did not grieve over the ruin of Joseph, and I guess that's what grieves me the most in today's modern world as I look at churches and I look at Christian movements and I look at what they're emphasizing and I don't see a grieving over the godlessness in our lives, in our worship, in our churches, in our culture. That's what I've entitled the whole message, "They Grieved Not for the Ruin of Joseph."

I. Note their denying of God's place in their lives. The denying. They were people in God-denial. You've heard of people being in denial, that's a psychological term that's used today, well, these people were in God-denial. In one sense they held onto the trappings, the external motions of loving and serving God but from their hearts they didn't want God in their lives and they didn't want his rules or his righteousness in their lives.

He says in verse 1 there, "Woe to those who are at ease in Zion And to those who feel secure in the mountain of Samaria." Now, woe to those who are at ease in Zion, that's been used a lot in a lot of places and I think it's misused sometimes. Being at ease in Zion doesn't mean you sometimes take a break or you get a rest, it means that from your heart you live in an intentional continual pattern of saying no to God and yes to yourself. They were God's people. They were "in Zion" but they were trying to have an easy life of sinful self-indulgence and not of yieldedness in obedience to God. This is a reckless and a careless ease. It's a sinful, indulgent ease that increases the sin's stronghold in the soul. It dulls the spiritual nature and it hardens the heart and, my, how hardened their hearts have become.

I mean, think about it: here's old country boy, preacher, Amos, coming out of the wilderness areas of Tekoa where he's shepherded sheep and gathered sycamore figs for a living. He comes into the high sophisticated city of Bethel and Samaria, the major city of the northern kingdom, and starts shouting these things against his Jewish brethren. My,

how they must have thought, "What ancient civilization did this guy crawl out of? Doesn't he know we've progressed beyond all that nonsense? I mean, we're sophisticated and modern and learned. We know how to incorporate what the world loves with what God says to do and make it effective. Look at our crowds in our churches. Aren't we effective?" they would say. They were at ease in Zion in a reckless, careless, sinful indulgence right there in the middle of God's people in God's country.

Secondly, he says, "You feel secure in the mountain of Samaria." Now this was a geographical thing. Samaria is set on something of a mountainside and it was a difficult fortress to assault and take down. As a matter of fact, when the Assyrians did attack the northern kingdom, Samaria was the last place to fall because it was just hard to take and they were just resting and feeling secure in their military might and in the fortress that was Samaria.

In the last part of verse 1 he says, "The distinguished men of the foremost of nations, To whom the house of Israel comes." By degenerating into worldly values and false religion, they had gained the esteem of other countries around them. That's what it means, "the distinguished men of the foremost nations." You see, Israel's leaders by compromising the moral, ethical and righteous standards of God, therefore they became no longer a rebuke or a conviction to the surrounding pagan countries. They became popular among the idolatrous pagans that lived all around them. They were all applauding them. They're all saying, "We're glad you Jews have finally come up to the new, modern, progressive era. Now you're like us and we think you're doing great. We applaud you. We affirm you."

"The distinguished men of the foremost nations." You see, Israel was meant to be God's light and God's truth to the world. Israel was meant to be a rebuke to paganism, a rebuke to those who walked in darkness, but instead here Israel has backslidden to where she is just like the dark world and she is backslidden like the world is backslidden from God. So she's become popular for doing all of this.

John 15:19 warns of this very thing when it says, "The world loves its own." All this worldliness around Israel and the prophet says, "Now, they all love you, don't they? Yeah, because you're just like them now. You're not the unique, elect, distinct, called out nation you're supposed to be. You're not sending out God's light and God's truth, you're sending out the world's darkness and the world's error."

Then he says, "To whom the house of Israel comes." It's a play on the patriarchs of old. The patriarchs of old, like Joseph, were godly men who had godly wisdom and the nation and even many of the other nations of the earth would come to the patriarchs of Israel to find truth and to find hope and to get wisdom. But he said, "You hold yourself up like that, as your distinguished men, like your forefathers, but you're distinguished for all the wrong reasons. You've gained popularity and prominence in your own country and among the pagan countries because you've become sinfully indulgent just like they are. You're just the opposite of Joseph and the forefathers. You've become prominent and respected and esteemed as heads of the state of Israel but for all the wrong reasons.

Unholiness and unrighteousness marks both your rise to power and your program of governance and God is angry with you. Woe to those," the prophet says, "who are at ease in Zion, who are living this way."

Now notice verse 2, "Go over to Calneh and look, And go from there to Hamath the great, Then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are they better than these kingdoms, Or is their territory greater than yours?" Now these are three kingdoms, if you will, surrounding Israel, actually on three points of the compass around them, and these are three cities that have recently fallen to foreign powers, and what the prophet is saying is, "You, Israel, have had all the light and all the truth given to you by God, you've had these great treasures given to you and yet God has judged the nations around you by allowing them to fall to foreign powers and he's been patient with you, he's been longsuffering with you, but the point is: don't you know your day is coming. You know if he judged those nations who sinned with hardly any light of truth, you're sinning against the great light of truth that the prophets and the forefathers have given you from God and you've rejected all of that. How much more, Israel, are you going to be judged by God for these sins?" That's the prophet's point.

Verse 3, here's where their willful denial in denying of God in their lives comes out so clearly. Look at verse 3, "Do you put off the day of calamity, And would you bring near the seat of violence?" The prophet is saying, "You have actively and willfully pushed God out of your minds, with not even a thought of God in your minds." Well, now look, they were very religious. They thought a lot about God. Now listen now: but it was a God they made up in their own hearts and minds that they were comfortable with, not the God of Scripture that makes you uncomfortable. If you're sitting here today and you're a fallen, fleshly man like Jeff Noblit, like all of us are since Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden, we're all fallen in sin, then some of what I'm preaching today troubles you a little bit and that's good because this is about a true and holy and Triune righteous God and you're not holy and you're not righteous, at least not on your own.

So they denied God. "We want to push away this day of calamity," Amos says. "You want to push, you think you can push away the day of calamity." Their point is, "You think you can push away God and that God will hold you accountable and he's the one with whom you have to deal." They willfully and actively pushed out of their minds and out of all their notions that God was righteous and he governs over the affairs of men. They willfully and actively pushed out of their minds any thought of a day of accountability of their lives and actions.

Go to the modern liberal secularist who loves his sin and just speak kindly about a day of accountability and judgment for all sinners, include yourself, by the way. Don't assume...we're all sinners, amen? And watch them get loud and harsh and demeaning and rail against. They just want to silence it. It's like, "Don't let me hear it. Don't let me hear it." That's the picture here. Amos is saying, "You think you can push it away by just ignoring it? By singing your loud music? By entertaining yourself and drowning yourself in worldly pleasures? You think you're going to push that day away?" Is this not a contemporary book?

They actively and willfully pushed out of their minds the just retribution that a holy God will bring upon them for their sin. They tried to push off the evil day or the day of calamity. They're in denial. They live in a delusional non-reality. They so love sin that anything necessary to be allowed to indulge in their sin is what they're going to do. "We don't want a theologian. We don't want a pastor. We don't want the Bible. We do not want the teaching of the forefathers. Get that away from us. We're having a ball." And remember they're prospering economically, the nation is doing well. They've gained more territory than ever before, at least since the days of Solomon. Everything's great in the country so they just know they're on the right track. So who is this fireball country preacher named Amos? Who is this guy coming in and trying to rob us of all the great days we're having? Amos says, "You think you can just push aside, don't you? You think you can just push it down the road, kick the can down the road and not deal with it."

He says in verse 3, the last part, "would you bring near the seat of violence?" In other words, they think they are increasing their pleasures by being a denial of God and a denial of accountability to God when Amos says, "What you're doing when you have that attitude, you're both increasing the expediency of wrath upon you and the intensity of the wrath when it does come. You're hurrying God's day of calamity, you're not pushing it off with the way you're handling this."

So we see their denial. What is it, the Psalmist said, "The fool has said in his heart no God." Look on my Twitter account or look up where Bernie Sanders vilely berated a Christian man who was being nominated for some office in the government, just slammed him for believing the doctrines of Scripture. Do you know what Bernie is saying? "No God! Leave that out of the culture!" My friend, if you leave the God of the Scriptures, the Old and New Testament, out of this culture, there would be no culture called the United States of America. We are built on the ethic of biblical truth. Now, I'm sorry, pluralism is a myth. There is no such thing as absolute pluralism because every man's philosophy or religious conviction by its very nature contradicts every other man's philosophy so at the end of the day, some elitist is going to force his on the rest of us. The freest form of government that ever will or ever has existed, the freest form of society that ever has or ever will exist is a society built on the Judeo-Christian tradition that says we are a Christian nation that believe in these truths and that will give all of us the most possible freedoms. You don't have to be a Christian but every other approach to governance has resulted in totalitarian controls over the people, and as we lose our Christian heritage, our Judeo-Christian moorings, we're going to increasingly lose our liberties – now listen – in the name of liberty. That's the twistedness of it.

They deny God. No God in our lives. II. Their adulterous love for false gods. Their adulterous, this is spiritual adultery, their love for false gods. Now notice it here as we begin in verses 4 through 6 as we see this extravagant indulgence. "Those who recline on beds of ivory And sprawl on their couches." Now you've got to understand, to have an ivory engraved bed and even to have a bed or a couch in your house meant extravagant luxury. The Jews from time immemorial had always lived and slept on the floor. They

didn't have furniture, as such. It would be very very extreme and extravagant in this day to do that.

"And eat lambs from the flock And calves from the midst of the stall." That means they're put up and fattened just perfectly for them. Now let me say this: the prophet is not saying nice things are evil – now listen – the point is they had made nice things their god. Instead of being thankful to Jehovah and yielding even the nice things to service to God, they held to the nice things as their God and kept on and on and on in more deeply indulging in this idolatry and spiritual adultery.

Notice verse 5. Brother Tom and I have been talking about this back and forth on texting. "Who improvise to the sound of the harp, And like David have composed songs for themselves." Here they have developed music around their carnal pleasures and indulgence. Actually, it means they invented new musical instruments to come up with new kinds of music and sounds. This text indicates a perversion of the pure and harmonious music that marked Israel back in her better days. This new music was base music. It gloried in things that men should be ashamed of. Does that sound like music in our culture today? Glories in things men should be ashamed of? Their music, in effect, was not God-centered or glory of God focused, and it lacked the beauty and harmony and resolution fitting to praising a God that is beautiful and harmonious and whole and brings things to a proper resolution.

Now, they say, what they're actually saying, what the prophet is getting at, last part of verse 5 when he says, "And like David have composed songs for themselves." They liked to say, "We're just doing what David did and isn't he a great patriarch to follow?" Well, certainly he's a great patriarch to follow but they're twisting it. Bill O'Reilly before he got in bad trouble used to have a show called "The No Spin Zone" and what he meant was everybody is going to put a twist on things to make their viewpoint look right. Well, that's what they're doing here. They're putting a spin on David. David actually took crude instruments and refined them so that they would be better fit to glorify our beautiful God. They're taking musical instruments and creating new ones and changing them so that it could have more of a base, worldly, fallen nature to it.

Listen, Pusey in his excellent commentary on Amos says this, "Debased music is a mark of a nation's decay and it promotes the nation's decay." Now that doesn't mean that every song's got to be something about Jesus or God but the songs ought to reflect the morals and the truths and the principles of God's truth. Now, sometimes songs can be a ballad and just tell a story. We're not saying those are wrong so don't get out of balance and legalistic here, but isn't it sad – now listen to your pastor this morning – it could be that a majority of new churches in America now use base secular music in their so-called worship services. That's the same principle here.

I mean, one church, I think it was Easter Sunday, some of the staff can correct me if I'm wrong, on Easter Sunday started their Easter Sunday service with the secular song, "Highway to Hell," somehow to make a point. Really what that is, that is a denial that God's word and God's Spirit converts men's souls. It's an embracing of we have to do all

kinds of worldly stuff to get men saved. Well, if that's true, why didn't Jesus do it? And why didn't the Apostle Paul do it? We're to – now listen – we're to sing the songs of the redeemed from our hearts that love our Savior and that should be attractive to those God is drawing to the Gospel. But if we muddy it up and our services look more like the nightclub or the concert they went to last week, they're going to be confused, not drawn to God. Now there's balance here but is this not contemporary? Look, this happens in every generation. Men get ahold of the church, men get ahold of religion and they begin to style it so that's it "effective" as if Jesus and his Gospel are not effective alone.

Well, some more, they had idolatrous pleasures, laying on couches of ivory, eating the best of foods, improvising music to reflect and glory in their base fallen lifestyles, and then verse 6, "Who drink wine from sacrificial bowls While they anoint themselves with the finest of oils." So here they are, now first of all they drank wine out of bowls because a goblet didn't give them enough. This means, "We want to get a buzz. We want to get loose and we want to get happy." That's what this means. It could have been the bowls they used in their service to Baal. It could have been the sacrificial bowls dedicated to the worship of Jehovah in their new temple. I'm not sure all that it meant but we do know that they drank that wine and then they anointed themselves with the finest of oils. Now, the Bible doesn't teach that it's sin to have nice perfumes and nice oils, but the point was perfume and oil in this day was to be set aside for worship of Jehovah and he's to be first and the point is they weren't doing any of that for Jehovah but they were doing all of it for themselves. So really the false adulteress idolatry was their worship of self, the worship of themselves. Their god was their own sinful selfish lust.

Then in verse 6 he makes that statement that I don't want you to forget, last phrase, "Yet they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph." "You are all of the lineage of Joseph," he's saying. "Joseph was a godly and righteous man and look what you've done to his posterity. Look what you've done to his nation. Are you not," Amos is saying, "Are you not grieved? Does it not bother you that in your own individual hearts you are ruined before a holy God and he must judge you? Does it not grieve you," Amos is saying, "that as a national whole, as a collectivity, you are together participating in wickedness? You're ruined before a holy God!"

Now maybe he picked Joseph because remember what happened to Joseph? Joseph's father loved him more than the other kids and Joseph had a dream that he would one day be leader over his brothers and they didn't like either one of those. So they went out and in effect threw Joseph down into a cistern, an old dried up well, and do you know what the Bible says? While Joseph is crying for help down in the well, they went down and feasted and they ate. That's what his brothers did. So while Joseph is being ruined in the cistern, they indulged and enjoyed their fleshly appetites. That's what they did to Joseph, literally, specifically the Joseph of their heritage and that parallels what Israel is doing here. You are indulging in your own appetites and lust while the descendants of Joseph are ruined before the holy God. I believe that's the picture he's painting here. They just never thought to grieve over the ruin that was contained in their own hearts and in their own nation.

Number 3, III. Their perverse warping of justice and righteousness. Do you like expository preaching, verse by verse? That's what you get when you go verse by verse, you get the truth. And by the way, Jesus said it's the truth that sets you free. III. Their perverse warping of justice and righteousness. Look down in verse 12 for this. He says, "Do horses run on rocks?" Well, of course, that's unimaginable. That's absurd. You get a field full of big boulders and that's what this means, just boulder after boulder, a horse can't run on that. He'll break his leg. Might kill you too.

"Or does one plow them with oxen?" Do you take a field just filled with boulders and try to plow it with oxen? Of course you don't. What he's saying here is, "Israel, you're trying to do something that's utterly unimaginable." I got in trouble with my grandson because I used the word "stupid" last Sunday night in my sermon, but it's a biblical concept. Amos is saying, "You wouldn't do something that stupid. It's unimaginable that you'd do that but," he said, "you've done the unimaginable."

Look at verse 12, the last part, "Yet you have turned justice into poison And the fruit of righteousness into wormwood." He says, "You've taken blessed good things, wonderful treasures God has given you. God has given you the patriarchs, he's given you the prophets, they have taught you and preached to you and written sacred Scripture so that you know what justice is and you know what righteousness is. You've taken a good, pleasant, sweet, wonderful thing and you've perverted it and warped it to be a bad, poisonous, bitter thing." That's what wormwood means, bitter. The justice system had been perverted so that the wealthy and the powerful could come against the innocent. And even though the wealthy and the powerful were guilty, the justice system would conclude that they were innocent and would punish the little man, the poor man, the man stricken in poverty, and he would be abused through the justice system and the wealthy would go free and be exonerated.

They just warped it. The justice system, look, read the law of Moses, read Leviticus, read how God set up the justice system. It was designed so that everybody would have justice but they warped it so that it served only a few and trampled upon the others. God says, "I'm going to judge you for this. You wouldn't dare try to run a horse across a field of boulders, you wouldn't dare take a team of oxen and try to plow a field of boulders, do you know what you'll do? You'll ruin everything. You'll ruin your implements, your plows, your tilling implements, you'll ruin the oxen and the horse, probably hurt them or maim them, maybe even kill them. You can't do that and," he said, "that's what you're doing. You've ruined the nation with your injustice and your unrighteousness."

IV now: the crushing retribution that is coming. The crushing retribution that is coming. Look at it there beginning in verse 7, if you will. "Therefore, they," therefore based on all these things they're doing and all these things they've become, "they will now go into exile at the head of the exiles, And the sprawlers' banqueting will fade away." What verbiage Amos uses. He said, "Here you are, you're reclining on beds of ivory, you're sprawling on your couches, you're eating the best food, you're drinking the best wine, you've developed new music to celebrate your sinful lifestyles, you're using the sacrificial bowls so you can guzzle down wine and get drunk, you're using the finest oils and

perfumes, serving yourself which is your true god, yourself." He said, "I'll tell you what you're going to do, you like to be the top, you like to be at the height, you like the best, okay, I'm going to let you be the first to go into exile."

This thing of sprawlers' banqueting, it's a cultic banquet. They would have feasts around their new religion they developed. Remember it had Jehovah on it but it had pagan Baal worship in it too. And they would drink and they would be sprawlers and it means loud and shouting and revelry. He said, "Well, very very soon you're going to become woefully quiet. You're going to become really quiet. Not going to be this revelry, debased, pagan celebration that you're calling worship. That's not worship at all. You're going to be quiet except for the occasional moan as your new Assyrian lords bind your hands and your feet and put yokes on your neck and march you off into captivity."

Because God in verse 8 says, "The Lord GOD has sworn by Himself." Let me just stop right there. Do you know what it means when the Lord GOD has sworn by Himself? Here's what God is saying, "I'm taking the totality of godly omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence to make sure what I'm about to say is going to happen." Our President may get up and say, "We stand behind Great Britain with everything we've got as America," and that's a lot humanly speaking, but God's got something infinitely greater than that. God says, "I'm putting the whole resource of the God-head behind what I'm about to say." God swears by himself.

Verse 8, "I loathe the arrogance of Jacob." He said, "You're so full of yourselves. You don't think you need me, you don't think you need my power and you think everything you've gained, you did it yourself and I didn't have anything to do with it." Sir, can I tell you the skills you have, the mind you have, the abilities you have, the wisdom you have, God gave that to you. You owe God everything. But they were arrogant.

He said, "I loathe the arrogance." You think you're so excellent. God had given them a lot of excellent things. He had given them an excellent kingdom, an excellent law to live by. He had given them excellent prophets to preach and declare God's truth to them and corrections when they needed it. He had given them the excellency of the priesthood. He had given them great dignity as compared to the other nations of the world. An excellence of moral and ethical character, though other pagan nations could not understand. He had given them great treasures and they had squandered it all. And while squandering the real excellence, they clung to a new man-invented, so-called excellence that wasn't excellent at all. It was rottenness. God says, "I loathe that."

So, verse 9, "And it will be, if ten men are left in one house, they will die." In other words, this is a picture of total devastation as the Assyrians come in and destroy them.

Then verse 10 is interesting. He said, "Then one's uncle, or his undertaker, will lift him up to carry out his bones from the house." Now stop right there. It was the statute in Israel that if devastation, maybe a plague had come or in this case an invading army that probably included plagues and difficulties as all this played out, that the nearest of kin

would go to the household of that relative and it was their job to take out the dead bodies and bury them. That's what's happening here.

He said, "and he will say to the one who is in the innermost part of the house." Evidently one feeble, sickly person is left. He'll say, "'Is anyone else with you?' And that one will say, 'No one.' Then he will answer, 'Keep quiet. For the name of the LORD is not to be mentioned.'" Here's the point: the men coming in to carry out the dead bodies find one sick, feeble survivor and that feeble, sick survivor starts to mention the name of the Lord and the men going in say, "Stop it. Don't say a word. You see, we've had all these decades and we claimed we worshiped Jehovah, we used his name but we didn't really. We just loved ourselves. So it's no time to praise him, it's no time to talk about him. Now you must be silent as he moves in among us in righteous retribution against us. His name is not to be spoken. Formerly you boasted in his name, you boasted you were his elect people but you really were not, you had fallen into sin and worshiped only yourself and your lust. Now you must be silent and you must shudder at his name because he is now one who is among you and hostile to you. You must yield to him."

Verse 11, "For behold, the LORD is going to command that the great house," that's the palaces, "be smashed to pieces and the small house," that's the average man, "to fragments."

Verse 14, "For behold, I am going to raise up a nation against you." God said, "Israel, you were to be my nation but you sinned away that possibility. I'm going to raise up a nation against you, And they will afflict you from the entrance of Hamath To the brook of the Arabah." Hamath is the northernmost entrance into the country. The brook of Arabah probably refers to the Nile or the southernmost point that you could consider any land belonging to Israel. In other words, he's saying it's going to be total. Total destruction. Total occupation by a foreign enemy. In other words, Israel is about to learn devastatingly so, that it is God who determines the destiny of nations. Now, remember, this flagrant idolatry and revelry and sinful indulgence has been going on – listen – for 150 years before Assyria finally marched in. So don't you think American's getting a free pass and God has somehow gone to sleep on justice.

So in conclusion, the prophet has told us very clearly they were very religious and they checked off the boxes of orthodoxy and Judaism, they were very committed to the ceremonial law, they became very popular, highly esteemed among the pagan nations of the world, they became exceedingly wealthy and expanded Israel's borders like never before since Solomon, they were drinking the finest of wines and eating the finest of foods, they reclined on the finest ivory inlaid couches and lived in the finest palaces, they anointed themselves with the finest of oils and of perfumes, they enjoyed great new music that would wow the emotions and stir the soul, but there was no grieving for the ruin of Joseph. Now maybe Amos and some of the small remnant that met in his little church, but overall generally speaking, there was no grieving over the ruin of Joseph. And by the way, that is a distinct note of hope. That is a very clear word of hope because no matter – listen to me – no matter how ruinous you may be as a sinner before the one true holy God, and we all are, the Bible says all have sinned and fall short of the glory of

God. You may look good compared to other people around you, but compare yourself to the Triune holiness of God and you find, "I'm ruined!" What did Isaiah the prophet say? He said, "I'm a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips. Woe is me! I'm ruined! I'm ruined!" In a way, Isaiah the prophet was a godly and righteous man, yes, he was compared to other people, but before God he was ruined. And listen sir, young person, if you don't come to understand the ruin in your own soul, you can never be saved. There is no hope for you. First you must come to grasp the ruin that is in your own soul.

A few quick verses and I will close. Psalm 51:16-17. Notice what the ancient Jewish Psalmist said. He says, "For You do not delight in sacrifice." Wait a minute, God commanded all those sacrifices and Amos says the Jews kept doing all that stuff. Yeah, but that's not what God is really looking for. He said, "otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." What God wants is you to come saying, "If I do everything I possibly can all of my life and keep all the law I possibly can, at the end of the day before you, God, I'm still ruined. So I come to you with a broken contrite heart. I see the ruin of my own soul." And God says, "That's the man I will save. That's the one I will redeem. That's the one I will forgive."

Matthew 5:3-4. Jesus takes this same truth that the Old Testament lays out and he develops it further. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Wait, poor in spirit, mourning? Yes. What he means is: when you begin to see that on your best day you're still ruined before a just and holy God, then you're on the right track. There is hope if you can see your ruinous statute before a holy God.

Quickly, Romans 3:10-23. Paul developing this truth further says, "as it is written, 'There is none righteous,'" that means every one of us, "There is not even one; there is none who understands." That means on your own you'll never learn how to find God. God's got to help you. He said, "There is none who seeks for God." Now you might seek religion, you might go through the motions, you may do what your parents taught you to do in church or in a synagogue, whatever it may be, if you're a Jew, but he says none of us genuinely seek God from the heart. We're all ruined.

Verse 12, "All have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none," that's all of us, "who does good," not in the sense of what God calls good, ultimate goodness. "There is not even one. Their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving, The poison of asps is under their lips." We all are tending to say things and speak things that are not good at all times. We're all guilty of that to a degree.

Verse 14, "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; Their feet are swift to shed blood." Well, I never went somewhere with my feet and killed someone. Yes, but Jesus said if you've hated in your heart, you're a murderer already. You see, we're all ruined. That's what it's saying, we're all ruined.

Verse 16, "Destruction and misery are in their paths, and the path of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." So here the Apostle Paul in the New Testament takes the Old Testament prophet and says, "This is Christian truth."

Look at verse 19, "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth," how many mouths? "Every mouth," all Jews and all Gentiles. "Every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God." In other words, God is saying, "God's truth is clear. Shut your mouth. You're all ruined and there's no hope. In your religion, in your service, in keeping your law, in your works, in your ritual, in your ceremony, there is no hope. You're ruined. You're ruined."

Oh, but look at verse 21 and 22, "But now apart from the Law," no wonder the Psalmist said God does not delight in the sacrifices, all those law things, "apart from the law now, the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets." In other words, the law and the prophets could never get you right before God but one has come along that they really pointed to the whole time and his name is Jesus. He can take all you ruined ones and make you right before God.

Look at verse 22, "even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction." In other words, when it all boils down, as much as we owe to our Jewish heritage in the faith and they were the foundation stone from which it all came, he said, but when it all boils down, at the end of the day every Jew and every Gentile must come to faith in Jesus Christ and the moment you believe that he died for you and he took all of your ruin on himself and God judged him for being a sinful ruined one in your place, love beyond comprehension. And if you will believe that he indeed took your ruin and your sin and trust him to be the provision for you, then, then God declares you righteous in his sight.

If you don't turn to Christ, then your ruin will come to fruition. As Jesus said in Luke 6:25, "Woe to you who are well fed now." Now, weren't the Jews well fed that Amos was talking to? "Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now." Weren't they having revelry and parties and exciting good things? He said, "Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep." In other words, if you stay in the state where you're not grieved over, "O God, I'm a sinner! I'm a ruined one! I need Christ!" If you stay in the state where you don't see that, then one day – listen to me – Jesus will return and you will be caused to see your true state before God. Then you will mourn. Look, you're going to agree with God on this. Are you hearing me? Every man, every woman, every boy, every girl that's ever lived on the earth will agree with this truth. It may be at the judgment when they finally say, "I'm a ruined one!" Or it may be before the judgment when you say to Jesus, "I'm ruined! Jesus, save me!" One of the two.

They were not grieved over the ruin of Joseph. Well, I pray to God that you are. I pray that you are, and in that grieving find hope and peace in Jesus Christ.