

Where's the Grace?

8.23.2020

Amos 8:1–9:6 (CSB)

FOURTH VISION: A BASKET OF SUMMER FRUIT

8 The Lord God showed me this: a basket of summer fruit. ² He asked me, "What do you see, Amos?"

I replied, "A basket of summer fruit."

The Lord said to me, "The end has come for my people Israel; I will no longer spare them. ³ In that day the temple songs will become wailing"—this is the Lord God's declaration. "Many dead bodies, thrown everywhere! Silence!"

⁴ Hear this, you who trample on the needy
and do away with the poor of the land,
⁵ asking, "When will the New Moon be over
so we may sell grain,
and the Sabbath,
so we may market wheat?

We can reduce the measure
while increasing the price
and cheat with dishonest scales.

⁶ We can buy the poor with silver
and the needy for a pair of sandals
and even sell the chaff!"

⁷ The Lord has sworn by the Pride of Jacob:

I will never forget all their deeds.

⁸ Because of this, won't the land quake
and all who dwell in it mourn?
All of it will rise like the Nile;
it will surge and then subside
like the Nile in Egypt.

⁹ And in that day—
this is the declaration of the Lord God—
I will make the sun go down at noon;
I will darken the land in the daytime.

¹⁰ I will turn your feasts into mourning
and all your songs into lamentation;
I will cause everyone to wear sackcloth
and every head to be shaved.

I will make that grief
like mourning for an only son
and its outcome like a bitter day.

¹¹ Look, the days are coming—
this is the declaration of the Lord God—
when I will send a famine through the land:
not a famine of bread or a thirst for water,
but of hearing the words of the Lord.

¹² People will stagger from sea to sea
and roam from north to east
seeking the word of the Lord,

but they will not find it.

¹³ In that day the beautiful young women,
the young men also, will faint from thirst.

¹⁴ Those who swear by the guilt of Samaria
and say, "As your god lives, Dan,"
or, "As the way of Beer-sheba lives"—
they will fall, never to rise again.

FIFTH VISION: THE LORD BESIDE THE ALTAR

⁹ I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and he said:

Strike the capitals of the pillars
so that the thresholds shake;
knock them down on the heads of all the people.
Then I will kill the rest of them with the sword.

None of those who flee will get away;
none of the fugitives will escape.

² If they dig down to Sheol,
from there my hand will take them;
if they climb up to heaven,
from there I will bring them down.

³ If they hide
on the top of Carmel,
from there I will track them down
and seize them;
if they conceal themselves

from my sight on the sea floor,
from there I will command
the sea serpent to bite them.

⁴ And if they are driven
by their enemies into captivity,
from there I will command
the sword to kill them.

I will keep my eye on them
for harm and not for good.

⁵ The Lord, the God of Armies—
he touches the earth;
it melts, and all who dwell in it mourn;
all of it rises like the Nile
and subsides like the Nile of Egypt.

⁶ He builds his upper chambers
in the heavens
and lays the foundation of his vault
on the earth.

He summons the water of the sea
and pours it out over the surface of the earth.
The Lord is his name.

Introduction: Today we read the last prophecy of judgment from Amos.

A. Amos is the first of the prophets before the exile.

1. After him will come Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the others.
2. Although the Book of Amos is referred to as a minor prophet, it is minor because of its length not its significance.
3. God used the insignificant Amos to blaze a path through the sinfulness of his day and time.

B. Prophetic books like Amos remind believers of a few key principals:

1. First, where you come from does not matter to God.
 - a. He uses people from all walks of life.
 - b. The important thing is God wants you to be a willing participant in His divine plan.
 - c. Although God has used reluctant prophets like Jonah and sinful people like Balaam to accomplish His purpose, willingness is a desired requirement to be a servant of God.
2. Second, God doesn't ask us to shy away from hard things.
 - a. The right thing to do is often the hardest thing to do.
 - b. What God asks of us always requires supernatural help and strength.
 1. He hasn't tasked you with a mission that doesn't require pray, worship, struggle, and dependence upon the Holy Spirit.
 2. As Amos, the prophets, and then the Apostles found out, God wants His people operating at the edge.
 3. The edge where we must be dependent upon the Holy Spirit to empower us and lead us.

3. Third, Amos reminds us of the seriousness of sin.

- a. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.
- b. That means He doesn't take sin any less serious today than He did in Amos' day.
- c. Jesus' teachings in Matthew and John's vision in Revelation are reminders that God will, again, judge sin in a dramatic way.
- d. The Good News is that for those who believe in Jesus, the price of our sin has been fulfilled through Jesus' suffering and death.
- e. I don't have to suffer God's wrath for my sin because Jesus has suffered for me.

C. Today's passages take one more look at the judgment that Amos warned Israel was coming.

- 1. These are terrible pictures, all of them fulfilled later in the Assyrian captivity.
- 2. While some of the images are familiar throughout Amos, I would like to narrow our focus on a few.

1. Judgment is aimed at those who abuse the poor while holding onto false-religion.

Amos 8:4–6 (CSB)

⁴Hear this, you who trample on the needy
and do away with the poor of the land,

⁵asking, "When will the New Moon be over
so we may sell grain,
and the Sabbath,
so we may market wheat?"

We can reduce the measure
while increasing the price
and cheat with dishonest scales.

⁶We can buy the poor with silver
and the needy for a pair of sandals
and even sell the chaff!”

A. This accusation of God to Israel features a mix of religions.

1. They are celebrating New Moon (not a Jewish holiday) along with the Sabbath (a very Jewish holiday).
2. These are people who are religious without a heart for God.
3. Their religious practices merely get in the way of making money.

B. Israel oppresses the poor, while claiming to be religious.

1. The truth is, she was religious.
2. But her religion was not the one that centered around YHWH, God.
 - a. When your religion revolves around you, it's a false religion.
 - b. When your religion focuses upon earning money at the expense of others, it's a false religion.
 - c. When your religion systemically cheats and steals from others, you have a false-religion.

3. Any religion that afflicts the poor and needy is false-religion.

- a. The New Testament book of James declares that “religion that is pure and faultless is one that cares for the orphan and the widow”.

b. Because God's people consistently violated the Covenant responsibilities to look after the poor and needy, God made them poor and needy.

1. He destroyed their cities.

2. He killed their crops.

3. He allowed evil people to oppress and enslave them, just like they had oppressed and enslaved their brethren.

4. God judged His people for their refusal to represent Him in the Covenant manner.

C. Believers, we must be mindful of how we carry out the Great Commandments.

1. We have spent much of our time and energy making sure we love God correctly.

2. Yet, how well are we fulfilling the Great Commandment to love our neighbors?

3. Each one of us has a responsibility to search our hearts and, with the illumination of the Spirit, ask ourselves "how well am I loving my neighbor?"

4. Remember, there is no such thing as a righteous jerk but religious jerks are everywhere.

2. Unique to today's passage is the famine of 8:11-14.

A. So far, God has consistently warned of upcoming judgment.

1. Judgments of fire and locust.

2. Invading armies and earthquakes.

3. For 8 chapters, we are kind of used to the theme.

4. But Amos 8:11-14 foretells of a famine far greater and far worse for the people: A famine of hearing the words of the Lord.

Amos 8:11-14 (CSB)

¹¹Look, the days are coming—
this is the declaration of the Lord GOD—
when I will send a famine through the land:
not a famine of bread or a thirst for water,
but of hearing the words of the LORD.

¹²People will stagger from sea to sea
and roam from north to east
seeking the word of the LORD,
but they will not find it.

¹³In that day the beautiful young women,
the young men also, will faint from thirst.

¹⁴Those who swear by the guilt of Samaria
and say, "As your god lives, Dan,"
or, "As the way of Beer-sheba lives"—
they will fall, never to rise again.

B. Physical thirst and hunger are terrible things.

1. Yet, Scripture teaches that we do not live by bread alone.
2. Deuteronomy 8:3 says it is not by bread that we are sustained but by the words of God.
3. If the Spirit and Word of God are removed, we die.

C. Imagine being unable to hear from God!

1. When you pray, God does not hear.
2. When you look for a man or woman of God to speak God's word over you, there are none.

3. Through the worst moments of your life, there is no word from God!

4. This is what God said would happen.

D. The sad part is, it was what Israel had asked for.

1. She didn't want to hear from Amos.

2. She rejected every prophet and tortured and killed many.

3. She consistently resisted God and His Word.

4. Therefore, God stopped speaking.

E. Did you know that this can happen to people today?

1. How many times can we tell God to "shut up", and still expect Him to speak when we want?

2. How many times can we mock God, and then demand Him to answer our prayers?

3. Is it possible that we have adopted a view of God that makes him more like a doormat than the Sovereign King of Kings and Lord of Lords?

a. I say this so that we might be reminded to be careful what we ask for, and what we sow.

b. Israel asked for the Prophet to leave, and so the Word of God left to.

c. Israel sowed into unrighteousness and judgment, and reaped the harvest.

d. How long can we disdain God and still expect to receive His Blessings?

3. The famine of the Word was especially difficult on the young.

A. Amos speaks of the beautiful young women and the young men.

1. Here was the hope of Israel.

2. The young represented those who would have kids, raise families, work the hard jobs, and protect the nation.
3. Here are the best, youngest, and fittest.
4. But in that Day, according to Amos, they would seek a Word from God and faint from lack thereof.

B. I love the millennial generation and the kids we are raising.

1. I look upon the youth of this nation and see incredible energy, creativity and potential.
2. I see that many are misguided, not because they were born evil, but because the previous generations have misled them.
3. Let me remind you that the Lord loves the younger generations!
 - a. He loves your kids and grandkids.
 - b. He loves those who are living quiet lives, raising families and working hard.
 - c. He also loves those that are rioting and protesting.
 - d. What every young person has in common is that they all need Jesus.

C. Much later on, through the prophet Joel, he shares a different prophecy.

1. In Joel 2, He says that in the Last Days, that God would pour out His Spirit upon all people and that the Sons and Daughters would prophecy!!!!
2. See the difference!
3. God didn't want the youth to search for God and not find Him.
4. He wanted them to be so close to God that the Word of God would be UPON their lips!
 - a. To prophecy is to declare God's Word in power and authority.

b. That is what God desires for you and I to do and what He desires for your children and grandchildren.

4. Where's the Grace in Amos?

A. Throughout this series, I have had to ask myself: Where is the grace?

1. This has not been a fun series of messages.
2. I shudder to think of the judgment of God and what ensues.
3. However, much of Scripture tells of God's response to the sins of His people.
4. Yet, we are New Testament people, and so, where is the Grace?

B. Is it not found in the warning?

1. Part of the purpose of sharing the warnings to Israel is so that she would repent.
2. Just like Jonah's message to Nineveh, God wanted the people to repent and change.
3. God warned His people repeatedly because He planned to extend grace and mercy if they repented.

C. In Leviticus 26, God sums up His blessings and curses.

1. If Israel does this, then these things will happen.
2. And there is a significant section from 14-35, where God says what He will do when they reject Him.
 - a. And it was exactly what He was doing in the days of Amos and the Prophets.
 - b. God was not being mean spirited.
 - c. He had declared what the consequences would be and then He followed through.

D. However, God had long ago declared what He would do when His people repented.

1. Lev. 26:40-46, God declares "But when they confess their iniquity...then I will remember my covenant.

2. Where's the Grace?

- a. God sent the prophets to warn of coming judgment so that His people would be reminded of the Grace that was at hand.

- b. When we focus solely on the judgment, we lose sight of the Grace.

- c. God's grace is written all throughout the Book of Amos.

- d. God's grace is found in the voice of the prophets.

E. God uses the voice of the prophets to communicate the message.

1. The "tone" of the prophet is important to the message.

- a. Have you ever not received a message, because the "tone" was wrong?

- b. The tone you use is a crucial part of the message.

2. The tone of Amos is one of reluctance and compassion:

- a. He had declared, "I'm not a prophet or the son of a prophet".

- b. He didn't delight in the message BECAUSE God did not delight in bringing a harsh judgment.

3. Jeremiah prophesied some of the harshest words of judgment and he did so through tears.

- a. So much so that he became known as the "weeping prophet".

- b. The tone of the prophets is a strong, yet compassionate voice.

c. The voice of God today is still a strong, yet compassionate voice.

4. If you will listen, you can hear God calling out to the nations:

a. Judgement is coming, but Grace is here!

b. Judgment is coming, but I have sent you Salvation.

c. Judgment is coming, but I LOVE YOU so change!!!

F. As God's people today, we must be mindful that our "tone" reflects the voice of God.

1. I'm afraid that **The tone of the Church today doesn't reflect the tone of voice that God is using.**

a. Let me give you an uncomfortable example:

b. We believe that homosexuality is sinful.

1. Yet, we say it is gross.

2. Or we say it is unnatural.

3. No, those are NOT the reasons why I am not in favor of homosexuality.

4. The other 2 messages are opinions, what I am saying is that I'm not accepting because God is not.

c. In our conversations, we often use words and slangs that are derogatory, mean, and crude.

1. Then we wonder why those people don't get saved!

2. People will not hear the love of God for them if they can't hear it through your tone and the words you are using.

d. Are we to warn our world about sin and sin's wages?

1. YES!!!!

2. But don't let your heart and your words get in the way of what God is wanting to do!

G. It is inappropriate for believers to delight in that which God does not delight himself in.

1. Did you know that God does not delight in the death of even the wicked? Ezek. 33:11

2. Did you know that Jesus wept and cried over the coming destruction of Jerusalem, the very city that killed the prophets and would kill him too?

3. Therefore, it is inappropriate for believers to preach and talk on hell with a big smile on your face!

4. May our hearts break for the lostness of our world, and then do something about it!!!

Close: Where's the Grace?

A. My answer is, look all around!

1. Grace and salvation is here.

2. You don't have to earn it or deserve it; you just have to want it.

3. While Amos prophesied judgment, what Israel didn't always recognize was that Grace was right in front of them.

4. All they had to do was repent and ask to be changed, and God would have done it!

B. If you aren't living your life the way God wants you to, then ask God to change you.

1. You don't have to die for your sins.

2. You don't have to wait until someday when you think you deserve forgiveness.

3. Grace is right in front of you.

C. Today, my prayer is, if you don't know Jesus then let today be your day.

1. My prayer is that each and every one of us will exude so much of Jesus that people will be drawn to Him because of us.
2. I want my words to reflect the heart of God, not my opinion.
3. I want the tone of my voice to echo the love of God.
4. As the Psalmist prayed: Let the Words of my Mouth and the Meditation of my heart be acceptable oh Lord, my strength and my redeemer.
5. I want the world to know that Grace is standing right in front of them.