

Series: AMOS – A Regular Guy Used By God. Part 9 - "God Proclaims 'Woe'" (Amos 6:1-14)

Introduction: The title of our series is: **"AMOS – JUST A REGULAR GUY USED BY GOD."** Amos was a keeper of sheep and a harvester sycamore fruit. He was not from a heritage of prophets, **BUT GOD TOOK HIM AND USED HIM!** **We need to realize God still uses regular people! This means that God can use you also!**

Over the past weeks, the primary theme has been: **"GOD CALLS HIS PEOPLE TO REPENTANCE."** God called Israel to repent **by reminding them of all God had done for Israel. God filed His complaint against Israel for how the nation had treated Him, even in light of all God had done for Israel.** Because of this, God **warns Israel they will face the consequences of their sin.** Ultimately God will bring **the Assyrian army to defeat the northern kingdom of Israel** and carry them into exile. God also warns **the southern kingdom of Judah; eventually the Babylonian army will conquer them, destroy Jerusalem and carry them into exile.**

Israel was guilty of **wrong worship** and **wrong motives**, and rebelling against God, so He sends **multiple "wake up calls"** designed to get their attention and bring them to repentance and returning to God. But Israel refuses to repent and return to God. Repeatedly God said, **"...yet you did not return to me, declares the Lord."**

Even in the face of Israel refusing to repent and return to the Lord, He still graciously compels them to **"Seek Him."** God says, **"For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel: "Seek Me and live;..." (Amos 5:4)**

Because Israel refuses to seek the Lord...to repent and return to Him, God begins to pronounce "Woe" upon Israel. Last Sunday, Pastor John focused upon the first **"woe"** God proclaimed over Israel. **Because of Israel's wrong focus and wrong worship, because of their practice of injustice and rejection of righteousness, God tells Israel, "...and I will send you into exile beyond Damascus," says the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts" (Amos 5:22)**

Join me in **Amos 6** and as we walk through this chapter, we will see **God continuing to proclaim "Woe" over Israel.** However, as we focus upon God proclaiming **"Woe" over Israel, we also need to be alert to the various reasons God may proclaim "Woe" over our lives.** Notice **two main reasons** God proclaims **"Woe"...**

1. God Proclaims "Woe" to People with a False Sense of Confidence! (Amos 6:1-6)

Amos 6:1a – "Woe"... **"Woe" – oh!; alas; ah, as in expressing grief; similar to another Hebrew word meaning a crying out after or a lamentation; also, from a word meaning expressing pain with an exclamation point!** Earlier in Amos, **he began a funeral dirge over Israel.** Now this funeral dirge continues. Israel, **because of their prosperity and many religious celebrations, had a false sense of confidence.** **They thought everything was good...they thought they had the blessings of God, but Israel was using the wrong measuring stick!** **Being blessed by God is not always evidenced by prosperity and religious celebrations!** **Being truly blessed by God includes the need to practice justice and righteousness as evidence of a right relationship with God.** Amos now proclaims God's **"Woe"** over Israel **for their false sense of confidence for their false sense of "ease."** **God does not enjoy pronouncing such "woe" over Israel. God is expressing grief over His people! God is crying out in lamentation over Israel! God is expressing pain, with an exclamation point, showing how much God dislikes what is about to happen to Israel. Let's look in detail as to why God proclaims "woe" over Israel and let's also be sensitive as to whether God has reasons to proclaim "woe" over us.**

➔ • **A False Confidence Based Upon Misplaced Security. Amos 6:1 – Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria, the notable men of the first of the nations, to whom the house of Israel comes! ESV.** This **"woe"** was addressed to both **Judah ("Zion")** and **Israel ("Samaria")** **because both kingdoms had strayed from God and refused to repent and return to Him. Now judgment is coming.** They were mistakenly **"at ease" (secure in a bad or haughty sense).** **They had misplaced security! "secure" (to hie or run to for refuge; to trust in; to be confident or secure).** **They had called themselves "notable men" of "the first of or the foremost nation" and thus trusted in an unwarranted false confidence in themselves.**

➔ 0 **They were complacent and had false security because of their geography – Situated on Mount Zion, Jerusalem was considered impregnable; and Samaria also had a seemingly secure position. But when God decided to deal with these cities, nothing could stop the enemy He would send. Just like people today may become complacent and have a false sense of security for various reasons – "I'm an American, so God must be on my side!" "I'm a member of a church." "My parents took me to church when I was little." "I've taught VBS or Children's classes." "My dad was a deacon or pastor." Etc. Any of these are false reasons to feel secure or grow complacent in your faith. YOUR ONLY TRUE SECURITY IS TO KNOW FOR SURE CHRIST IS YOUR SAVIOR AND LORD! Be sure your security is in God! In Christ!**

➡ 0 They were also complacent and had false security because of their **prosperity**, government, and military strength. The "notable men" in Israel's government gave their opinion that the nation was safe and secure, and the people believed them, just as people today believe the political "experts" and the polls. False confidence that's based on expert advice, statistics, and material resources, but ignores the spiritual dimension of life is sure to lead to shameful defeat. **Instead of coming to and trusting "notable men" for their security, Israel needed to COME TO THE LORD! SO DO WE!**

➡ • A False Confidence Based Upon **Foolish Comparisons**. **Amos 6:2** – "Pass over to Calneh, and see, and from there go to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are you better than these kingdoms? Or is their territory greater than your territory,..." **ESV**. Amos mentions areas in Syria and Philistia that had already fallen to the Assyrian army and then asked two questions: **"Are you better than they? Is your territory bigger than theirs?"** Because the enemy had already destroyed places bigger and stronger than Samaria and Israel, what hope was there for the Jewish people, **especially when the Jews were living like the Gentiles and were disobeying the Lord? God had been the defender of Israel throughout their history, but now, because of Israel's disobedience and rejection of God's will and word, Israel is no better than any other Gentile nation!** Israel pridefully considered themselves better than all other nations. Israel viewed themselves as God's special nation...but Israel strayed from God...and God had warned them if they rebelled against Him, He would take them out of their land. The people of Israel foolishly compared themselves as better than all other nations, but God tells them they are no better or greater than the other nations, **especially without His protection**. Israel and Judah had turned their backs upon God who established them. Because they had turned their hearts away from God, God would judge them and carry them to exile...as He had promised He would do. **Be careful as a Christian you do not foolishly elevate yourself above being judged by God! Doing so will cause a "fellowship-exile" from God's best for your life!**

➡ • A False Confidence Based Upon **Wrong Perceptions**. **Amos 6:3** – O you who put far away the day of disaster and bring near the seat of violence? **ESV**. Israel was displaying attitudes of, **"It can't happen here!" "If a day of judgment is coming, it's surely a long way off."** By putting off the possibility of judgment, they were in fact bringing violence and judgment nearer by their disobedience to God. **The people had a wrong perception concerning God's judgment, imagining God would not judge them or if He did it would be way off in the future. But God had a different viewpoint. Amos 9:10** - All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, who say, 'Disaster shall not overtake or meet us.' **ESV** By their indifference, Israel and Judah were bringing the day of judgment that much nearer. **As a Christian today, don't have the wrong perception that God will not deal with you when you reject His Word and His will for your life!**

➡ • A False Confidence Based Upon **Wasted Privileges**. **Amos 6:4** – "Woe to those who lie on beds of ivory and stretch themselves out on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall,..." **ESV**. God proclaims **"woe"....expresses pain....because of how His people in Judah and Israel were wasting their privileged position God had given them! God is filing a complaint against their indulgent lifestyles!** Their ways of life were focused upon luxurious living, while they were at the same time ignoring God. **They were living for pleasure instead of living for God! They were consuming their prosperity to themselves, instead of using their prosperity to help the poor and needy!** Common people would sleep upon mats placed on the ground, but the wealthy were enjoying luxurious beds or couches decorated with ivory. Excavations in Samaria have led to the discovery of the "Samaritan Ivory" fragments of beautiful ivory carvings that once adorned their houses and furniture. **Not only did they use their prosperity for indulgent rest or sleep, but the wealthy also enjoyed elegant feasts, eating the choicest young lambs or calves...while the poor and needy had to settle for occasional meals.** The poor, who were being exploited by the rich in that day, could not afford to kill young, tender animals. **God was taking special note of how the rich lived in luxury and ignored the poor and needy. As believers, we need to be sure we do not just use our God-given prosperity for our own lives! God expects us to care for the needy and poor!**

➡ • A False Confidence Based Upon **Fake Identities**. **Amos 6:5** – "...who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp and like David invent for themselves instruments of music,..." **ESV**. God complains against the focus of their music. **Instead of songs worshipping Him, they were consumed with idle songs.** Israel's identity was to be found in God, not in idle songs. **Some of the people evidently imagined**

they were like David! But their identity was fake...they were not like David at all. David did not **invent for himself** instruments of music...as God accuses Israel of "inventing for themselves" instruments of music! **DAVID'S FOCUS WAS PRAISING AND WORSHIPPING GOD!**

- ➔ **A False Confidence Based Upon a **Selfish Focus**.** **Amos 6:6** – "...who drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the finest oils, **but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!**" **ESV.** **God again rebukes the selfish excess of the wealthy in Israel.** *Drinking wine in a cup wasn't enough for them, so in excess they filled bowls with wine. Olive oil, sometimes with perfume added, was used like cosmetics in that day. They used the finest of oil to ANOINT THEMSELVES! (Instead of using the oil to anoint others, such as a guest in their home, they selfishly focused upon themselves!)*
- ➔ **Note Historical lessons:** **When nations get carried away with pleasure, it's a sign that the end is near.** *Belshazzar and his leaders were enjoying a sumptuous feast when the city of Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians (Daniel 7). The Roman citizens enjoyed excessive living with much sensuality, as the empire decayed morally and politically and eventually fell. One of the marks of the end days is the fact that people become "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:4). Jesus warned His followers, "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly" (Luke 21:34).*
- ➔ **The sin in Amos' day was that the people were distracted by luxurious living and ignoring the real problems of the nation** – "...but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!" (**Amos 6:6b**). **"ruin," means the total collapse of the nation.** **We should be warned about living a selfish focus, whereby we are consumed with our own pleasure, while ignoring the moral and spiritual fiber of our lives, our culture and nation!** **It is difficult today to find people who are truly burdened about the sins of the nations and sin within the church. Too many are people are living lives of fantasy based on false theology.** *How many believers can honestly say, "Indignation has taken hold of me because of the wicked, who forsake Your law"? (Psalms 119:53) Or "Rivers of water run down from my eyes, because men do not keep Your law"? (Psalms 119:136) ILL: Dr. Vance Havner had a dinner in a dimly lit dining room. At first, he could scarcely read the menu, but then after his vision became accustomed to the dark, he found he could see fairly well. He said to his friends, "Isn't it strange how easy it is to become accustomed to the dark?" That's one of the problems in the church today: we've gotten accustomed to the darkness, and our lights aren't shining bright enough.*

2. God Proclaims "Woe" to People **Who Will Face Exile!** (**Amos 6:7-14**)

- ➔ **Amos 6:7a – "Therefore"...** Once again God uses the word **"Therefore!"** Because of the behavior of Israel and Judah, exile was coming!
- ➔ **Exile Will Bring a Loss of **Comfort or Ease**.** **Amos 6:7** – **"Therefore they shall now be the first of those who go into exile, and the revelry of those who stretch themselves out shall pass away."** **ESV.** *Those living in luxury would soon lose that luxury! They would be the first to go into exile. (Why? Those who are so privileged have the greater responsibility!) Their partying, luxurious fine beds, excellent meals and drinking wine from bowls will not happen in exile. Their comfort, ease, and false security would be changed into chains of bondage!*
- ➔ **Exile Will Bring a Loss of **Pridefulness** concerning Strongholds.** **Amos 6:8** – **"The Lord God has sworn by himself, declares the Lord, the God of hosts: "I abhor the pride of Jacob and hate his strongholds, and I will deliver up the city and all that is in it."** **ESV.** **God swears by His own name, by His own character...very serious statement! God hates pride...He especially hates wrongfully placed pride of His own people!** *The people of Judah and Israel had pride in their own defenses...in their self-made strongholds! God hates Israel's trust in self-made strongholds BECAUSE GOD IS TO BE THEIR STRONGHOLD! God will deliver up such misplaced pride and their strongholds would be destroyed! Pride goes before destruction!!! (Proverbs 16:18). Be careful where you place your trust...your pride! Our boasting should be in Christ...not self-made strongholds!*
- ➔ **Exile Will Bring a Loss of **Relationships**.** **Amos 6:9-10** – **9 "And if ten men remain in one house, they shall die. 10 And when one's relative,** *the one who anoints him for burial, shall take him up to bring the bones out of the house, and shall say to him who is in the innermost parts of the house, "Is*

there still anyone with you?" he shall say, "No"; and he shall say, "Silence! We must not mention the name of the Lord." **ESV.** One terrible result of the Assyrian army defeating Israel will be multitudes of people would die...many relationships would cease...many relatives would die. Amos is giving a foresight, through a hypothetical situation. There would be great terrors when God allows Israel to be defeated and carried into exile! Ten men, perhaps the remnants of a hundred soldiers (5:3), would be hiding in a house, but pestilence would catch up with them, and they would die. If a relative came to burn the bodies (the safest thing to do in war when disease is rampant), anyone in the house guarding the bodies would deny there were others there who also might die in the plague. But the disposal of the dead bodies wouldn't be a "religious" occasion, for the people would be afraid to even mention the name of the Lord lest He become angry and send more judgment.

→ **Exile Will Bring a Loss of Refuge.** **Amos 6:11** – “For behold, the Lord commands, and the great house shall be struck down into fragments, and the little house into bits.” **ESV.** The great houses they had built and trusted for refuge would be destroyed. The wealthy, who had the summer and winter houses, would have refuge there no longer! This may also be referring to the destruction of religious sites in Israel and eventually the future destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Babylonians...even Judah's beautiful Temple would be destroyed! Their perceived places of religious refuge would be gone!

→ **Exile Was Caused by the Rejection of Justice and Righteousness.** **Amos 6:12** – “Do horses run on rocks? Does one plow there with oxen? But you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood—” **ESV.** God makes a point about Israel's rejection of justice and righteousness, using logical truths. Horses are too wise to gallop on slick rocks, where they might fall or break their legs. Farmers are too wise to try to plow rock filled soil, because the plow won't accomplish anything on rocks. (Remember, Amos was a farmer.) Plain common sense convinces us of the truth of these statements. Then why would God's people poison their own judicial system? Why would God's people act like justice was poison? Why would God's people treat righteousness like it was rotten or bitter? Because God's people rejected justice and righteousness, they would experience exile! You and I, as Christians, can experience "fellowship-exile" when we ignore justice and righteousness!

→ **Exile Causes a Loss of Proud Rejoicing.** **Amos 6:13-14** – “13...you who rejoice in Lo-debar, who say, “Have we not by our own strength captured Karnaim for ourselves?” 14 “For behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel,” declares the Lord, the God of hosts; “and they shall oppress you from Lebo-hamath to the Brook of the Arabah.” **ESV.** Israel proudly rejoiced in what they viewed as their own personally achieved military victories! We aren't certain when Israel took these cities, and it's not important. What is important is that they were proud of their own achievements and confident that nobody could defeat them. “Lo-debar” means “nothing.” “Karnaim” – a horn, representing power; an elephant's ivory; a corner of an altar; a peak of a mountain; figurative for power. Israel was boasting of their own strength in conquering these cities BUT God thought of their proud rejoicing in their own strength as “NOTHING”! They boasted victories came by their own strength, BUT their false confidence would lead to their defeat and exile. God will raise up the Assyrian army to oppress Israel from a strong walled city near Syria (Lebo-hamath), located in northern Israel; and to the river of Arabah (“the desert” or “sterile valley”) located in Southern Israel...thus meaning God would allow Assyria to devastate the entire land.

→ **Note:** If a nation rehearses the victories of the past and gives the glory to God, that's one thing, BUT if they claim victory for their own glory, they are asking only for future defeat. Humble dependence on God is the only guarantee of His continued help and blessing. Assyria's invasion of Israel wouldn't take place because of the accidents or incidents of international politics. God would bring the army into the land and give Assyria the responsibility of chastening His people. “Behold, I will bring a nation against you from afar. O house of Israel,” says the Lord” (Jeremiah 5:15).

→ **(Conclusion)** God proclaims “Woe” over His people Israel! God still proclaims “Woe” over believers who forget Him...turn away from Him...reject His Words. When we have a false sense of confidence...when we place confidence in anything or anyone other than Christ, doing so brings displeasure from God and He will pronounce “woe” over us. No, not a loss of salvation, for God always keeps His promise...His covenant with us. But we can experience “exiles in our fellowship with God” when we fail to repent and return to Him! Let us always be sensitive to God's will and God's Word. May we never turn away from His ways and decide to follow our own ways! May we never experience God proclaiming “WOE” over our lives! The Prophet Amos has finished preaching God's messages to the proud and complacent kingdoms of Israel. Now the Lord will give Amos six visions — five visions of judgment and one of the glorious kingdom that will be established after the Day of the Lord; as Amos brings his prophecy to an end. This will be the focus of the rest of our series on Amos.