

The Weekly Word
January 21-27, 2019

This week we conclude the book of Amos. May the Lord speak with you through the words of this ancient prophet. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

Monday, January 21: Amos 4- God's heart for the poor...

I found myself thinking... wow, how much God loves and cares for the poor!

Amos begins lambasting the women of Israel for neglecting the poor in order to live in personal comfort. *Hear this word, you cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy and say to your husbands, "Bring us some drinks!"* (1)

The remainder of the chapter is God's response to these people who oppress the poor and crush the needy. It is not a response from the Lord I would want to face!!!

God's indictment of these women got me thinking about my life and my treatment of the poor. If I don't want to fall under a similar judgment then I need to evaluate how I treat people who are poor and needy.

First I spent a few moments considering my attitude toward the poor and needy? I ask questions like:

- Do I dis them?
- Do I think ill of people simply because they lack?
- Do I assume they are lazy simply because they have needs?

Where does my heart go when I think about or hear reports about or see people who are poor and needy?

Next I considered my actions:

- How do I treat people who are needy?
- How do I speak with them? Do I speak with them?
- Do I feel compassion for them?.. and then,
- Do I help them as I am able?

How about you? What are your attitudes and actions toward people who need help?

Lord God, I can have a stony heart. Help me to grow more like You, to be more helpful and caring to people who have needs. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, January 22: Amos 5- Consistency and integrity rather than hypocrisy...

Consistency... integrity... not hypocrisy, these are the words that came to me upon concluding my reading of this chapter.

God is angry with Israel. They pursued false gods, yet somehow they believe that by performing the ritual sacrifices of the faith, God Almighty is bound to bless them. Amos, as God's mouthpiece, gives a stinging rebuke as the chapter concludes:

"I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your

songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream! “Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings forty years in the wilderness, people of Israel? You have lifted up the shrine of your king, the pedestal of your idols, the star of your god— which you made for yourselves. Therefore I will send you into exile beyond Damascus,” says the LORD, whose name is God Almighty (21-27).

The word ‘your’ strikes me as highly important in verse 21. *I hate, I despise **your** religious festivals...* It is not that those religious observances were bad in and of themselves, in fact, they are good having been instituted by the Lord. But **their** observances of these religious festivals render them unacceptable because they are offered by people who were actually pursuing false gods, which is an abomination to the Lord.

God expects consistency, integrity, honesty. If you are going to worship God, GREAT... go for it. If you are going to pursue false gods, the Lord will not be pleased but at least He can do things to call you home. But Israel was pretending to love God while actually loving false gods. They are fooling themselves. And when God did things to get their attention, they didn’t pay any attention to them because they had duped themselves.

Israel’s sin begs the question of me... am I fooling myself? Am I consistent and full of integrity in my love for God? I am not perfect. I sin and fall short of God’s ideal, but am I pressing into the Lord and living as a person who has the Spirit of God in their life?

Again and again God’s Word causes me to examine my life. Am I faithful to the Lord? Today is another call to do just that.

Lord, I avail myself to Your gaze. Examine me and know me and see if there is any wickedness in me and then purge that wickedness from me. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Wednesday, January 23: Amos 6- Complacency...

Complacency is not a good word particularly when it comes to issues of faith. God is angry. Not only is Israel sinning, but they are complacent about it. Life is good, so they think ‘ahhh, no worries.’ Complacency robs effort, drive, and determination.

The Lord hits them hard: *Woe to you who are complacent in Zion, and to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria, you notable men of the foremost nation, to whom the people of Israel come!* (1).

The Lord turns my thoughts from Israel to self. Am I complacent? Do I feel secure so that there is no spiritual urgency in me to press into the Lord? Professionally as a pastor, am I complacent or am I still learning, growing and striving to be all of the man God want me to be?

Success and security, while good, can become a negative if/when we grow complacent...

Lord, give me a thirst for You. Give me a hunger for more of You. Drive me to pant for you... that my hunger and thirst will drive out any inkling of complacency in my walk with You. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

Thursday, January 24: Amos 7- Diligence is required...

As a person who works with wood and has refinished basements and built sheds, decks and the like, the imagery of the plum line caught my attention. If my work isn’t plumb and square, then it is out of whack... windows, doors, walls, cabinets won’t fit properly.

A plumb line is a tool to square things so they fit.

Israel was out of whack... she was no longer square with God’s directives. Where God wanted things one-way, Israel was crooked.

For this reason Israel was being judged. God called her back time and again. But Israel rejected the Lord's appeals. It was as if the construction people disregarded the engineer's designs and blueprints. Not only that when the engineer pointed out some problems the owner/construction crew refused to make the necessary corrections, so God is now condemning the building. It will be torn down because it is unsafe.

Israel is being torn down... they have disregarded all of God's directives and warnings.

It is clear from verses 10-11 that Amos' ministry included more than the words of this book. Apparently he spoke directly to the crown and foretold Jeroboam's downfall, which was rejected by the court.

Unfortunately for the court, Amos was speaking God's Word and God's Word will come to pass. What God has said will happen... will happen.

Stepping back, verses like the 10 Commandments, Jesus' repeated call to 'love one another', Galatians 5 and the 'Fruit of the Spirit' flood my thoughts followed by the question, "Is my life square and plumb with God's revealed will for living?" Does my life and living square with God's Word?

It is a constant battle to keep my life square with God's Word. Vigilance, reflection, contemplation, and review of my life against the direction in God's Word is a constant responsibility. Some days it is a chore to hold my life up to the scrutiny of God and His Word. Some days it feels as natural as breathing. Either way it is a necessity. It is all too easy to allow the push and pull of the world around me to knock myself out of plumb with the Lord.

This is why I sit regularly and read, study, consider and reflect upon God's Word. Diligence is required.

Lord, I pray for strength to keep at it... to put in my time, inspecting my life for flaws, cracks and areas that are not square with You and Your Word. Send Your Holy Spirit to be Your engineer inspecting my life to make sure it is safe and strong. And prompt me, Lord, to listen to Your Holy Spirit that I may remain plumb with You. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Friday, January 25: Amos 8- ...

The time is ripe, how will God bring His judgment upon Israel? History shows us that God used many avenues. Towards the end of the chapter Amos however focuses on one. "*The days are coming,*" declares the Sovereign LORD, "*when I will send a famine through the land— not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD. People will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it.*" (11-12).

A famine of the word... God will shut His mouth and no longer speak to Israel.

Imagine living in a family where the Father refuses to speak. The one who loves and guides and protects and directs and helps and leads goes dormant, silent... This is part of God's punishment... He withdraws His Words.

Words like 'abandoned' come to mind.

One really sad aspect of this is that at first the people weren't even looking for it. They didn't notice God had withdrawn His voice, and then they made up their own to 'fill in' for God. How sad.

A famine of God's Word... Oh, Lord, may it never be so, in my life and in the life of my church. I fear, Lord, that there is a famine of Your Word in my world. But among your people, may it never be, Lord. May it never be. Amen and amen.

Saturday, January 26: Amos 9- Disaster precedes restoration...

Judgment meted out; disaster comes as a result of judgment, then comes restoration.

I sat with a group of people trying to figure out how to deal with someone who broke one of the significant rules of life and relationships. I repeat, the individual broke a significant rule and crossed a boundary, a significant relationship boundary. We wrestled with consequences of the action and the role of grace, love and forgiveness. It was a difficult conversation.

One person in the group said, something to the effect, “the individual has to feel the consequences of the action (sin) before restoration can be instituted.” As we wrestled with the situation, we discovered there was wisdom in this comment.

In this chapter God will bring judgment and then comes restoration...

Judgment is coming. Israel will feel God’s wrath. After that the ‘love-covenant of God’ kicks in and restoration is released for those who turn from their sin-way.

Sometimes in life we need to experience the pain of our bad and sinful actions before we can receive true forgiveness and restoration. Sin has consequences.

I found myself considering that final thought. Sin has consequences...

Yes, it does.

This is why Jesus had to die on the cross. He took the consequences we deserve upon Himself so that we do not have to bear the weight of our consequences....

Consequences were meted out... Jesus took them in our stead.

Oh my, the extend of Jesus’ saving action hit me, **hard**.

Oh, the gift Jesus gave us...

Lord, I am overwhelmed by your gift and the sacrifice You made accepting our consequence so that we could be brought back into relationship with the Father. Praise and thanks to Jesus for His amazing gift. In His name I pray. Amen.

Sunday, January 27, 2019, Sunday Worship

If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.

If you are reading along with me from the PCOG website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at office@pcogonline.org.

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.