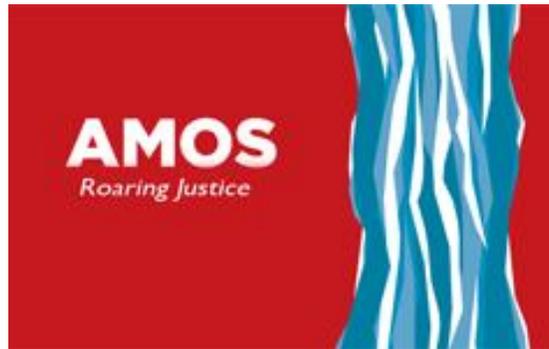


# The Sins of Others



## Amos 1:3-2:5

Open your bibles to the book of Amos. We're going to be looking at chapter 1:3 in our preaching material is going to be to the 5<sup>th</sup> verse of Amos chapter 2. We are going to take large chunks of chapters and spend about five or six weeks looking at the book of Amos.

Have any of you ever heard a sermon, and after it was over, you wished someone you knew had heard the sermon? Have any of you ever been listening to a sermon, and while you were listening, you actually hoped and prayed that the person with you was getting it and listening? You kind of had this thought... *whoa! This is what they really need to hear.* I can tell you how many times after a sermon has been over that I have been in the foyer and someone will come to me and say, "Is it ok if I can a CD of that sermon?" and immediately, I say, "Why yes! Go over there to the information booth and get one; they're free." Then they will say, "No, I mean do you think it's ok for me to get one and give to my..." and then they will name somebody. Then they'll tell me how that sermon was exactly what they needed to hear. What is it about us as humans that when we hear certain topics we immediately think of someone else who needs that message? Do you agree with me that sometimes as Christians, we really like it when the preacher is preaching about sin, but the sin is not ours? The sin is somebody else's. What is that little saying, "Faults in others, I clearly see. Thank God, there is none in me."

Amos knew about that weakness of humans where if you want to get somebody's attention, talk about somebody else's sin. Turn with me to Amos chapter 1 and we will see what Amos does. We're going to be using all of chapter 1 and the first 5 verses of chapter 2, but we're only going to read Amos 1:3-5. He's going to speak to seven different nations in this passage, but he kind of says the same thing. He uses the same format, just the name is different, the sin is different, the punishment is different.

As a matter of fact, yesterday I was at Murray State and a guy said, "Hey, I read Amos this morning getting ready. Man, this is going to be a depressing sermon series." Since you've already read Amos, we don't have to read every verse. We'll get the gist of what Amos is talking about as we read.

## **Scripture**

***"Thus says the Lord:***

***"For three transgressions of Damascus,  
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,  
because they have threshed Gilead  
with threshing sledges of iron.  
So I will send a fire upon the house of Hazael,  
and it shall devour the strongholds of Ben-hadad.  
I will break the gate-bar of Damascus,  
and cut off the inhabitants from the Valley of Aven,  
and him who holds the scepter from Beth-eden;  
and the people of Syria shall go into exile to Kir,"  
says the Lord."***

(Prayer)

Father, add Your blessings to the reading of Your Word. Anoint us to listen, anoint us to speak. It's in the precious name of your Son we pray, amen.

Amos' sermon actually begins in verse 3. Verses 1 and 2 were not spoken by Amos to the northern kingdom of Israel. It was probably written later after the sermons had been written down. As this sermon was getting ready to be placed into the Word of God, an introduction of who wrote the

book, who it's to, the time, and the purpose was added. This morning, we begin to study the sermon of Amos. Remember this. From your reading of the book of Amos, you know that Amos is from Judah; he's from the south. He's a farmer. He raises sheep, possibly cattle. He's a fruit farmer also. None in his family before him has been called to prophesy, and he gets a call from God, not to speak to his village or his country, but to go up north and speak to the northern kingdom.

Now, you know from your public speaking days in school that one of the most important elements of a speech, a sermon, or a talk is the introduction. You are actually introducing to your congregation, or audience, what you're going to say. So you've got to know your audience. Everyone realizes this, that normally, the first thirty to forty-five seconds of a talk are the most important if you're talking to someone you don't know. Why? Because during those first forty-five seconds, people actually make the decision whether or not they are going to listen to the speaker. Did you realize that? That's why so much thought usually goes into the first forty-five seconds. Here's what we know to be true. In that first couple of minutes, you've got to get the attention of your audience. If you can get the attention of your audience, reel them in, and then they're more likely to listen to what you've got to say.

Can you imagine being Amos, you're from the south, going up north, you're just a farmer, you've been called to preach, and you're getting ready to deliver your first message to the northern kingdom? Now I can just see him as he's making that journey, probably to Bethel, it's probably a religious holiday, there's going to be thousands in attendance, and he comes up with the introduction to his message. Here's what you need to know. Chapter 1:3 to chapter 2:5 is the introduction. It's a long introduction. What Amos does in this introduction is get the attention of his audience by playing to the weakness all human beings have, and that is we really like it when the preacher, prophet, or speaker talks about somebody else's sin, especially the sins of those people that we don't like, we don't agree with who just might be our enemies.

To put this in context so that we truly understand this, imagine if I, from Dexter, get invited to a men's conference in a big city, let's say Chicago, or

New York City. The organizer of the men's event wants me to specifically talk about the sin of husband. They don't know me; I don't know them. I'm from the country. I've got a West Kentucky accent. I don't have a doctorate degree. I don't have a degree in psychology. But I am going to address this organization and talk about the sin of men as a husband. Do you not agree that a good attention getter, a good way to start that sermon would be to just get up and say something like this? "Hey guys, how many of you hate it when your wife does..." and then name something that all wives do that all husbands hate. Amen! Now, they're adjusting to my West Kentucky accent, but they know I know women, especially as a wife. Then I follow that up with another sin that all wives commit against husbands, and I ask the guys, "How do you feel when your wife..." and then I say what she does. I bet you I am getting a few amens. There may not be any Baptists in the audience, but there's got to be a few charismatics, a few Presbyterians that will say amen! Then my third statement is this, "Have you ever thought about how she feels when you..." Whoa! All of a sudden, we have gone from amen to oh me. I now, hopefully, have their attention.

Imagine next spring that I get invited as pastor of Hardin Baptist Church to the congressional breakfast in Washington, DC. The organizer of the speech wants me to specifically talk about the sins that our government is committing today, and they don't know me. Would you not agree, perhaps a good way for me to begin that congressional breakfast might be something like to maybe just talk about the sin of Syria? Just say, "Can you imagine being part of a government agency that would actually order the release of chemical weapons on your own people?" I bet I would get a few amens. If I could quickly switch from Syria and go to the far east and talk about a country by the name of North Korea and some of the things that dictator is doing to his people, I bet I would get a few more amens. Then if I could just quickly slide in something about Iran and its desire for nuclear weapons, and how they might...and then, I begin to specifically talk about some of the decisions Washington DC is making. Whoa!

Let's bring it a little closer to home. Let's suppose the Southern Baptist Convention decides to invite me to speak about a doctrine that we've all

misunderstood as Baptists, and they know I've studied Scripture and have the right answer to the doctrine. They want me to address where southern Baptists have been wrong in a certain area for our whole history. Do you agree that would be a tough assignment? Do you think it might be effective if I just started out talking about the history of the Roman Catholic Church and where they've missed a few major doctrines? Then, maybe I talk about the Church of Christ and how they've missed a few. Then I talk about the charismatics and where they've misinterpreted the Scripture. I talk about the Methodists and a few they have misinterpreted. Then I get a little closer to home and hit the Presbyterians a little bit. Then I ask the question of is it possible that we as southern Baptists have made some similar mistakes, and then talk about the doctrine.

See, we're going to be listening to a farmer, but don't picture him as uneducated. I want you to see a man who received his education from God as he tended to the needs of sheep and cattle. Year after year, he watched the fruit trees be specifically designed by God to bring a harvest that is a blessing to others. As he makes that trip to the north, he's working on his introduction. By the time he gets there under the leadership of God's Holy Spirit, what he does is begin to talk about the sins of the nations around Israel. As you read this introduction to his sermon, he's trying to get to verse 6 of chapter 2, but he's trying to build credibility with his audience. What he does is first talks about the sins of the nations around Israel and he starts with Damascus, then to Gaza, to Tyre, to Edom, to Ammon, to the Moabites, and then down south to Judah. When he starts off talking about those dirty rotten scoundrels in Syria, (Israel's hated enemy, Damascus) they are agreeing. Then he goes down south to Gaza, that's where the Philistines come from. If you remember, they've been a pain in Israel's you know what long before Goliath, and he's talking about their sin. Then he goes back up to Tyre and back down to Edom. If you'll look on the map, here's what Amos is doing. Guys, this is masterful! He started in the northeast, down to the southwest, up to the northwest, and then comes down to the southeast. What he does, preaching, is geographically makes an X through Israel. Then he talks about those two countries over to the east that's been a thorn in their flesh, Ammon and Moab. Now, if you add that up, that is six nations. A preacher could never preach a sermon to the

Israelite people and have six points in a message. Why? Because to the Jewish people, the number six was the number that was short. It didn't live up to completion because the number for perfection, for completion was the number seven. So they know he's preached against six nations, they're all pagan nations around us, and when he gets ready to bring the seventh point, which is to the seventh nation, which is Judah, which is their brothers in the south, they are tickled because that's a good number to stop on. No preacher would ever have eight points in a sermon, so they're feeling good as they amen.

See, Israel just never could quite live up to the expectations of their brother, Judah, in the south. I don't know if you're from a big family or ever had a brother or sister that's kind of hard to live up to who they are, what their expectations are. Maybe in school, you were always told about them. At the dinner table, you just kind of knew how it was. Well see, Judah always felt a little better than the rest of Israel because they were from the south. They had the temple, the true king who goes back to the line of David sitting on the throne in Judah. But now, Amos is skinning Judah alive! All of a sudden, in verse 6, he gets to his point and begins to talk about them. You can imagine this cheering crowd has gone from "amen, get them preacher, tell them like it is, come on, you're of God, we got you, we can stay here all day, preach it brother!" to dead silence. Oh me...

So, when you study this introduction, there will be eight nations, but the eighth nation is the thesis, the statement; it's who it's to. Now here's what we've discovered, archeologically. We've discovered that nations that had law, made certain contracts, certain treaties, covenants with one another. When the covenant or treaty would be broken, sometimes those people would be taken before a judge. We discovered all of those nations in the Middle East had a similar court system. We now know about the book of Amos is, when you read this introduction, it's a covenant lawsuit. It's called a *riv*, pronounced, reeve. So the picture here in the introduction is not God as creator, not God as redeemer, but God as judge. Now let me just say it is dangerous when the church of Jesus Christ teaches only God as creator, only as redeemer, but also forget the God who created and the God who

redeemed is also the God who will judge. What you have here is God calling the nations before Him because they have broken the covenant, whether it be the covenant they have by general revelation or the covenant they have by special revelation. The covenant mediator, the prosecuting attorney, so to speak, is going to be Amos, the farmer from the south. Now be careful here. In America, we believe if you've been accused of something, you have the right to a defense attorney and you're innocent until proven guilty, and you have the right to a trial by your peers. Not so as a nation before God. The judge and the jury is God. God's prophet, Amos, is the prosecuting attorney. The nations have no defense. What you will see in each of these indictments is God carrying out His sentence of punish upon them because they've broken the covenant. Look at verse 3. It starts out this way, "Co Amer Yahweh" (Koh Amar Yahweh), the first words Amos said when he got to Israel! It translates into English ESV, "Thus says the LORD." We don't know if he preached on a stand, if at the religious festival there was a wooden platform, or if he was just on ground level. What you've got to realize is no one in Israel uttered those words unless you were a prophet. You might say what you think God believes, you may say what you think the scrolls teach, but you never said what God said unless you were a prophet.

Have you noticed in our churches today that there are some pastors that when they teach they teach from the perspective that they almost imply God has told them personally what they're saying to you? Then you hear other preachers don't say what God says to them, they say what the Bible says. Do you see that difference? An Old Testament prophet didn't say what the scrolls said; the Old Testament prophets said what God said, and he's speaking with the authority of God. So when we call this to book of Amos, we're not studying Amos' message to Israel; we're studying God's message to Israel through Amos. The authority behind this book is not Amos. The authority behind this sermon is God. That's why at Hardin Baptist Church we try in our Adult Bible Fellowships and from the pulpit to not teach you what we believe, but to teach you what we believe God says from His Word. We try to be careful sometimes to say this is my opinion, because we don't want the authority of the church based on the authority

of a pastor or teacher. We want the authority of the church to be God's Word, God speaking to us.

"Co Amer Yahweh," and then the ESV says, "For three transgressions...and for four..." This word, transgression, is an interesting word because it's the word the Jewish people used for sin that wasn't talking about breaking a law, making a mistake, stepping over a line. It was the word used to talk about revolt and rebellion. Have any of you parents ever looked at one of your kids and thought, *I have a rebel on my hands!*" You know there's a difference in having a kid who sometimes doesn't do what you ask them to do and they break one of your rules, but you know when you've got that kid that always breaks the rules. Inside, you know you've got a little rebel on your hands. Anytime you get ready to speak, they are going to rebel against authority. That's the word that's used here. So what God is teaching here as judge when He views creation and sees these nations, (because He has ordained government, ordained nations) is He doesn't view them as just breaking a law He's written in their hearts, or on their mind, or in His special revelation in what we would call the Old Testament. He views them as rebels.

He uses a little phrase 'for three transgressions and for four,' but He would say "for three transgressions of Damascus," "for three transgressions of Gaza," "for three transgressions of Tyre," "for three transgressions of Edom," "for three transgressions of the Ammonites," "for three transgressions of Moab," "for three transgressions of Judah." Now don't picture this literally as God saying through Amos, 'hey, you sin three times and the fourth time I'm going to get you.' Don't listen when people say you add three and four together and get seven. That's not what He's saying. This is a proverbial statement. The closest thing we have to this statement is this statement: that was the straw that broke the camel's back. Why do we use that statement? Why do we sometimes feel justified in having to tell somebody that was the straw that broke the camel's back? It's because we know if you look at that particular thing by itself, there's no reason you should be as upset as you are. The individual thing was light; it was just a straw. There's no way you could put a straw on the back of a camel and it break the camel's back. What does that phrase mean? The camel is loaded

down; it's at its breaking point. We're not putting a sack of grain that weighs fifty pounds on the camel; we're putting a straw. If you put a straw on a scale, you can't even weigh it, but when you put that on the back on an already loaded down camel, it breaks the camel down.

Do you know what this is picturing? This is picturing the graciousness of God. I get so aggravated at those people who teach God was one way in the Old Testament and another way in the New Testament, like God was mean in the Old Testament, but then Jesus came along and appeased God. No, God the Father is not one way and God the Son another way. The nations have a God who was gracious. But there comes a time when He says enough is enough. You've had every opportunity to get this right, and you refused. That's what this is talking about. "Therefore, I will not revoke your punishment." When we get to chapter 4 of Amos, there will be a verse that says, "Prepare to meet your God." I can't tell you how many times I've heard preachers take that verse and preach an evangelistic sermon inviting sinners to come to Christ. I can't tell you how many times when we preach against a certain sin, we use that verse, prepare to meet your God, as an invitation. This isn't an invitation. When Amos says prepare to meet your God, what he's saying is prepare to meet your God; He's coming in judgment and you will be judged for your sins as a nation. Whoa! What God is saying is I will not, I cannot, revoke the punishment that is coming on you because that was the straw that broke the camel's back!

Then, in the law court terminology, He names the sin. After He names the sin, He tells what the punishment will be. I want you to see this. Every time He punishes the nations, He starts with the leaders. Mike Pullen, a man in this church, reminds me all the time, "Bro Ricky, everything rises and falls on leadership." Amos is teaching that as it goes in the capital of a city, so it goes in the country.

I was raised during what's called the Cold War. Do you remember the Cold War? I never heard us as a nation talk about the Soviet Union. I never heard us talk about the United States of America. Every time I would hear about the Cold War, there would be a reporter on TV on one side of my screen and at the bottom of the screen, it would say Moscow, then there

was another reporter on the other side of the screen and at the bottom, it would say Washington DC. They would talk about what Washington DC was doing and then what Moscow was doing. Washington DC was a symbol of the United States, and Moscow was a symbol of the Soviet Union.

When God gets ready to judge nations, do you know where He starts? He starts among its leaders. Not only is the church in America, but also as American citizens, when God judges the leaders, when God judges the country, that judgment falls upon all. Sometimes I think we have this thought that somehow when God judges a group He doesn't judge the individuals. You can't judge a group without judging the individuals in the group. As Christians, we've got to learn that lesson. If you work for a certain company, you're still an individual in that company. You have a responsibility no matter what that company is doing that might be wrong, you as an individual do not have the right to do what's wrong in the name of the company. You are an individual and you're responsible for the group. That's why this sermon series about Amos is about not only the northern kingdom of Israel, but it's about you and I as the church. We have a responsibility to do what's right.

What we're going to discover, and this is going to break our hearts, but Amos is going to go through the sin of seven nations that God is holding accountable, and then when it comes to His people, the northern kingdom, He is going to say you are no different. You've done the same thing. Oh, you're individual sin isn't the individual sin they have, but the sin you're committing, in God's eyes, is the same. That's what's happening in the pagan nations around. Is that not sad? There was no difference in those people who had natural revelation and those who had special revelation. When it came down to it and God gets ready to judge a nation, He is judging a nation on by the way they treat other people. Wow! Isn't that what Matthew 25 teaches? Isn't the great separation between sheep and goats basically going to come down to this? 'What you did to the least of these, you did to Me.' Can I say this to us? The way you treat another brother or sister in Christ or the way you treat a lost person is exactly the way you treat Christ. Christ doesn't just see that as you doing that to them,

Christ sees you doing that to Him. See, in the church, we would be better off if we would get over the sin of everybody else and focus on our sin. I promise you, the sin of everybody else isn't going near as much damage as the sin you're doing is. It's time the church in America quits blaming Washington DC and stepped up to the plate and understood judgment will begin, not in Washington DC but in the house of God. We will start in the leadership of the church, then it will come to you in the church, and then God will deal with America. America does not have a covenant relationship with God. You've been taught wrong if you believe that. God's covenant with people in the United States of America is with His church, and that is you and I. God also has a covenant with the people of China, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Thailand, Mexico, and Canada, but it's not them as a nation; it's the church in those nations. It's the same way with Israel.

So, this book is not going to be a book where we can look at Israel and say, oh wow! No, when we learn how Israel sinned against God, we've got to look at ourselves and see how we sinned against God. But Amos was good. He first talked about the sin of Damascus. Do you know what those scoundrels did? When they conquered the people of Gilead, they threshed them with instruments of iron. In the biblical world, when they would harvest their crop in mass. They would lay it on the ground and they had these big threshing instruments made of wood, and on the bottom, they had iron. They would hook this instrument to their animals and run it over the grain and it would separate the grain from the chaff. Modern correlation would be farmers getting into field with a combine. It takes eight rows of corn into the combine, and you see all this stuff spit out the back. That's what Damascus did to Gilead. When they went into a village, there wasn't anything left of the village!

Do you know what I hear in America? I hear this all the time in America, "I don't understand why we go into Iraq and bomb a bridge, bomb a building, and then build it back and we have to pay for it!" Do you know why we do that? It's because we are not like the Syrians! In war, we are going to be humane. Do you know why I think America is more humane in war than most countries? It's because of the church in America. A Christian soldier is not going to do what some soldiers of the world will do in times of war.

I remember as a kid when Israel found Adolph Eichmann in South America. Do you remember that? Do you remember who he was? He was Hitler's general and Israel found out he was in South America. They didn't ask anybody; they just went and got him. When they got him back and put him on trial, do you remember what he said? Do you remember what his defense was? "I am not guilty because I was not responsible." Here's what we know about him. He was the man who was over the extermination of six million Jews. His defense was I'm not responsible because I was a German and just doing what Hitler told me to do. God help those who have that kind of thinking. You are responsible. I am responsible for my actions as an individual in the church of Jesus Christ.

Gaza, do you know what they did? They were so greedy for money that they took advantage of the slave trade and go into countries where people were peaceful, not armed, and take a whole village and sell to the Edomites for slave. The Phoenicians (the ones we got the alphabet from) went into a country, take a whole country, and sell them into slavery. So you think they were doing the same thing, but no. Amos says they broke their treaty of brotherhood. They would go in and make a treaty with a country and say we're going to be friends, allies, we're going to trade together, so that they would lay down their arms, then they would go capture them sell the whole village into slavery.

The Edomites came from Esau. You know Esau; he never was a good brother. Can I say this? Some of you do what you do and think the way you think because that's the way your great-great-great-great thought. There are some things we Christians need to lay down! You need to be able to look at your history and say it might have been bad back then, but I can't help what granddaddy thought; I'm going to think like a Christian and I'm burying the hatchet! Kentucky is famous around the world for the Hatfield's and the McCoy's. There's just something about family rivalry.

Did you see what Ammon did? The Ammonites would go into battle, and to make sure the next generation wouldn't fight against them, they would slit open the bellies of the women who were pregnant. You didn't have to do anymore. Once you slit that belly open that little baby died. Can you imagine that?

Do you know what the Moabites did? They burned the bones of the king. That doesn't seem like a big deal to us because today you can choose to have a cremation instead of a burial. So what's the big deal in burning the bones? Back in that day, the thought was if you don't get a proper burial, you don't go to the next life. So in war, when the Moabites burned the bones of the king, they said we're not only taking you out here, we're taking you out of the next life. This is going to be controversial, but I've got to say it. Have you ever had something bad happen to you and you wished the person who did it rotted in hell? Have you ever wished somebody would get what they deserve? Do you remember what was on the lips of the church right after 9/11? I HOPE HE SPENDS ETERNITY IN HELL! Wow...I can't imagine people who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ honestly wishing other people didn't make it to the next life. Can you?

Do you know what Amos is going to teach us? We ought to be different. Do you know why we're different? We're different because we've been treated differently. What really sums up being a Christian is we ought to want to treat others the way God has treated us. We don't do unto others as they have done unto us. We do unto others as we wish they would do unto us. What this book is going to be about is the church in America being salt and light. We're not talking about the church in its entirety because I have no voice to that church. What little voice I do have, I have with you. Why can't it start here in Hardin? Why can't there be a people in Marshall and Calloway counties, Graves, Trigg, and McCracken? Why can't there be a people truly stand up and be light and salt? Take accountability that I am a part of a group of people who is bigger than me and my actions count, and we're going to be the best church we can be. For just a short period of time, we're going to quit thinking about the sins of others and we're going to look at ourselves and be the best us we can be for the glory of God. It will affect how we teach, how we vote, how we parent; it will affect everything we do. Remember, I'm not a prophet; I'm just sharing with you about what a prophet said who was anointed by God. "Co Amer Yahweh!"

