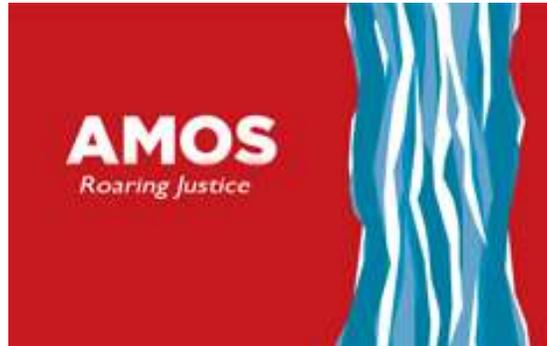


# A Sermon You Don't Want to Hear



## Amos 8

We have two chapters of Amos left, but I want to warn you that it's going to take us a long time to get there. I think there's just some stuff we've got to talk about before we actually get into chapter 8 and read the text. So there's a few things we need to discuss before we get into the text and looking at that and how that applies to our life. I've often wondered what it would be like to be a doctor. As a doctor, you have to deliver really bad news. I've often wondered what it's like when you have a young couple come into your office and sit down, their vibrant with life, excited about the future, and you have a manila folder in front of you, and you know what it says. The test came back positive. This girl who looks like she's got the life in front of her, the news is not good. She has a deadly virus, you have to deliver that news to the couple, and you know that the truth is going to absolutely crush them. It's going to hurt. I can imagine as a doctor, it's almost as if you don't want to tell. You want to just say everything is ok, just go about and live and be happy. But you know there is a truth that you must tell them. I think that is probably what Amos has been going through. That's some of the emotions he's been feeling as he's been talking to the people of Israel. He knows there is a truth that God has given him to speak to these people about the coming judgment and need

for repentance, but he knows that truth is going to hurt. At least that's how I felt this week just looking through Amos chapter 8 and preparing to speak to you about it. I can imagine some of the same feelings Amos had are what I had. I've got truth, and I know that God wants us to speak it, but for some it's going to hurt. In fact, the title of the message is 'a sermon you don't want to hear.' You can imagine where this is going. As we looked at Amos chapter 7 last week, you remember that God put a plumb line in the midst of His people, Israel. He said 'here is My standard. Here's My Law. Here's how the people should be.' Amos looked and saw how much the people had strayed away from that. In other words, there was a disconnect between who God was and who God's people were. You see, God was generous, but they were greedy. God was loving, but they were hatred. God was a God of freedom, and they were enslaving others. In other words, they weren't at all living how God wanted them to live. There was this massive disconnect, so Amos delivers this message, 'you're in trouble; you need to repent.' As we see the end of chapter 7, which we didn't get to read last week, in hearing this message, they tell Amos to go back home. 'We don't like your message; we don't like what you're saying, so go back home.' Of course, Amos says 'I wasn't a prophet, my dad wasn't a prophet. I was a farmer, God came to me and said I've got a message, go tell the people. So I'm here, not because I want to be; I'm here because God has a message for you.' They didn't want to hear it. I'm afraid even this morning that the message that is about to come, some of us will not want to hear. We're not going to think about the end. We're not going to think about judgment. We're not going to think about that day when we stand before the Lord, but I think that's exactly what the text is going to push us to think about. As we get ready to hear a sermon about judgment, about the end, about your life and how you will give an account before God,

I want to deal with just a couple of issues that I think might prohibit you from hearing this message from God and the way He would want you to hear it. Two of those are cultural issues and one of those is just a misconception I think in Christianity in some circles. We'll deal with the cultural issues first.

## **Cultural Issues**

The first one is the belief in self-autonomy. Self-autonomy means that as a culture we believe we are our own boss. We are our own judge, and we can do whatever we want to do and no one can tell us what we can't or must do. We're our own boss, our own king, and we're our own judge. That's self-autonomy. It's up to you for you to live your life however you want to live it. We see extreme examples of this in culture. For instance, even the most basic things you don't get to choose, we're now told we can choose. One of the most basic things you don't get to choose is your gender. You are born a certain gender, either male or female. You're born that way. You don't get to choose that, but now we're seeing a new revolution in our culture where even that you can now choose. We have children like a first grader in the news where a Colorado court decided that even though he is a male by birth he can now go to the female restrooms because he identifies himself as a female. We want to choose everything, even the most basic things. We want to be autonomous. We want to be in control of our own life and destiny, and we don't want anyone telling us how to live our life or what to do. The problem is, when we base it on the Bible, we are not autonomous. We are not the boss of our lives; God is. He created us, so He gets to set the rules. When He created Adam, He could tell him you must do this and you must not do that. That was His right, and Adam, as a creature, must obey His maker. We belong to God and God has every right to set up how we should and shouldn't live. You don't control that; God does, but you swim in a culture that tells you it is your choice. You've got to know that, as you're hearing this message, there will be some pushback.

The other thing I think we must talk about as we think about a message about judgement is the new tolerance. New tolerance is basically that truth is like ice cream. There are all kinds of different flavors. You choose your truth, I'll choose my truth, but there is not real absolute truth. The first thing is there is no absolute truth. The second thing is all truths are equally the same. If I like vanilla and you like strawberry, neither is better than the other, it's just our preference. Then, the only sin in our culture is calling something sin, saying no, that's wrong. We like truth like ice cream, but

the problem is it doesn't work. For instance, you take that kind of truth into banking. Say you take your check this week and deposit \$500 in the bank, and then you come back the next week and withdraw \$50. They say, "We're sorry, you don't have any money in your account." "I deposited \$500!" "We didn't think you did that. We thought you deposited \$20." That was their truth, and the other was your truth, but they're all equal. No, it doesn't work that way. The truth is I deposited the \$500 and I need \$500 back. Truth is not like ice cream, it is more like banking; there is a truth. Used to, tolerance meant I could tell you I think you're wrong and you could tell me you think I'm wrong, and we could live peaceably with one another. There was not a fight that broke out, it was I'm going to convince you and you're going to convince me. That was tolerance, but that's no longer the way our culture views tolerance. Now tolerance is you must agree that everything is ok.

So we're going to hear about a God who is going to say that is not right; He actually says what's right and what's wrong. Just know, in hearing this message, there will be pushback, "God can't be angry at sin because He's tolerant." No, that is your cultural perspective. That's not the God of the Bible. Understand those two things; self-autonomy, and tolerance, are going to cause pushback from this sermon.

The last one I want to deal with is that some circles of Christianity have a misunderstanding of the God of the New Testament and the God of the Old Testament. The thought is the God of the Old Testament was about justice, wrath, and judgment, but the God of the New Testament is different; He's about grace and mercy. So when we hear sermons about wrath and judgment, that doesn't really apply today. What Jesus did when He came to earth, His real mission was to say 'hey guys, My Father's been angry for a while at all the mess-ups you've been doing, but I'm here to tell you I've got it all under control. It's ok, He's not angry anymore, just go about and live your life. I'm here to give you grace, so just go ahead and do what you want because I'm peace and grace.' So we think Jesus somehow is not against sin, and He is somehow not going to judge. I don't know where we get that because we don't get it from the Bible. If you remember, when Jesus first hit the scene, what was His very first message

as He began to preach? The Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel. His message was repentance! Do you know what repentance says? You're wrong. Whether you're religious or non-religious, you're wrong. You've messed up. You're sinful. Your only hope is repentance. That was Jesus' message. This isn't Amos; this is Jesus. His message is you must repent in order to see the Kingdom of God. It's not that Jesus is different from the God of the Old Testament. It's always been God who has been against sin, in the Old Testament and the New Testament. I just want to pose a question in your mind. Think about your concept of Hell...judgment, the end. Think about all the imagery you have in your mind, things like eternal flame, utter darkness, and the worm will not die, weeping and gnashing of teeth, torment day and night, and chains. Think of all that imagery of wrath and judgment. Where do you get that imagery? It's the red letters of your Bible. It's from Jesus! Jesus talked about Hell more than anybody. Why? Because He doesn't want us to go there. He is telling us the truth so we, like the people of Israel, might have a chance to repent, to turn and receive His grace and mercy. The God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament is one giant story. God has always been holy and God's always been against sin. The difference in the New Testament is God dealt with sin through Christ, and we're going to see that. Christ is not saying just live however you want to. No, His message, as well, was repent. You must turn because judgment is coming.

So, as we hear that, some of the filters you're going to hear this message through is you're autonomous, God is tolerant, and Jesus is somehow different than the judgement of the Old Testament. As you hear that, I want you to know there's going to be pushback when you think about judgment, but I want you to hear that's what I'm thinking, those are the lenses we have so hopefully you can see through those and listen to the truth of the Word of God. With all that said, let's read our text in Amos chapter 8. As we are prepared to think about the judgment of Israel, I pray that we would also consider our own coming judgment because it's something we don't want to think about, we don't want to hear, but it's something we must give time and attention to this morning.

## Scripture

***"This is what the Lord God showed me: behold, a basket of summer fruit. And he said, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A basket of summer fruit." Then the Lord said to me,***

***"The end has come upon my people Israel;  
I will never again pass by them.***

***The songs of the temple shall become wailings in that day,"  
declares the Lord God.***

***"So many dead bodies!"***

***"They are thrown everywhere!"***

***"Silence!"***

***Hear this, you who trample on the needy  
and bring the poor of the land to an end,  
saying, "When will the new moon be over,  
that we may sell grain?"***

***And the Sabbath,***

***that we may offer wheat for sale,  
that we may make the ephah small and the shekel great  
and deal deceitfully with false balances,  
that we may buy the poor for silver  
and the needy for a pair of sandals  
and sell the chaff of the wheat?"***

***The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob:***

***"Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.***

***Shall not the land tremble on this account,***

***and everyone mourn who dwells in it,***

***and all of it rise like the Nile,***

***and be tossed about and sink again, like the Nile of Egypt?"***

***"And on that day," declares the Lord God,***

***"I will make the sun go down at noon  
and darken the earth in broad daylight.***

***I will turn your feasts into mourning***

***and all your songs into lamentation;***

***I will bring sackcloth on every waist  
and baldness on every head;  
I will make it like the mourning for an only son  
and the end of it like a bitter day.***

***"Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord God,  
"when I will send a famine on the land—  
not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water,  
but of hearing the words of the Lord.  
They shall wander from sea to sea,  
and from north to east;  
they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the Lord,  
but they shall not find it.***

***"In that day the lovely virgins and the young men  
shall faint for thirst.  
Those who swear by the Guilt of Samaria,  
and say, 'As your god lives, O Dan,'  
and, 'As the Way of Beersheba lives,'  
they shall fall, and never rise again."***

(Prayer)

Father God, I pray as we hear this word from Amos, as we think about the judgment that's coming to Israel, we will think about the judgment that we all face. My prayer is we will be clothed in Christ when we face that judgment. We thank You and we praise You. In Jesus good name, amen.

## **Facing Eternity**

In the opening of chapter 8, we see that God gives Amos a picture of Israel and their coming judgment. He shows in this illustration here is a basket of fruit. He puts it in front of Amos and says what do you see there? Amos says a basket of fruit. It's kind of funny, right? I don't know how I would deal with God, here. It's like yes God, it's a basket of fruit, ok...can You explain this basket of fruit for me? There are apples...do You want me to eat it? What's going on here? So God shows Amos this basket of fruit, and as soon as Amos said it's a basket of fruit, God says the end is coming to My people, Israel. We don't really get how this basket of fruit really deals with the end, but if you go back to the original language in Hebrew, those words actually sounded very close together. For instance, the word for 'fruit' was *qayis* and the word for 'end' was *qēs*. That was the word play. So when Amos says 'qayis', God says 'qēs'. It's almost the same sound, fruit and end, and He links them together. What I think He is saying there is just like this fruit is ripe to be eaten, so are My people, Israel, ripe for My judgment. The first thing God tells Amos is the end is coming to Israel, and the end is here. 'I've been merciful. I've be gracious. I've been longsuffering with them. I've been calling them to repentance, and there has been none. So now, the end has finally come for Israel.' The end is here; the basket of fruit is there, and they are going to be devoured by My judgment and wrath.

I want us to think about Israel's end coming. I want us to think about our end also coming. We don't want to think about that. We want to think about having our whole life to live. We have all the years in world, we're never going to die, we're never going to have the end of us, but the truth is our end is coming. Some of us, like Israel, don't want to think about that. We just want to think about today. We're just having fun, living life, doing our own thing, and we're not really concerned about judgment or living for God. We're just living for today and today only. We're not thinking we might not have tomorrow.

I remember the first time I really encountered the reality that death could come at any moment. I was racing Motocross out in California, and I lived with a guy named Shane Kelly. I went out there for the winter and got to

stay with him and his dad, who was the maintenance guy on the tracks. I had my motorhome there and he actually lived in a motorhome. We were best buddies. He was eighteen, I was eighteen, and we were both in the same class, living the same kind of life, doing the same thing. It was around Thanksgiving and he was getting ready for a national race, and the night before I helped him change his tires. We worked on his bike and got it all ready for the national. The next day, I was going to go eat Thanksgiving dinner with a family that I had gotten to know, and I wanted Shane to come along, but he said, "No, I'm going to stay back and practice a little bit to get ready for nationals." We said our goodbyes and I went this house to eat Thanksgiving dinner, and the meal was soon interrupted by a phone call. The phone call said, "Shane has had a back wreck; they took him to the emergency room." My whole world is just rattled. Shane is eighteen, I'm eighteen, we're both racing, he's my best friend, and now he's in the hospital. So we gather all of our stuff and get in the motorhome, driving towards the hospital, and then we get another phone call. The phone call said, "Shane didn't make it." At that moment, my whole world was turned upside down. At that point, I thought I was invincible. I'm eighteen, I'm a motocross racer, I'm going to live forever, and so is everyone else. But in that moment, I realized my life is a vapor, Shane's life was a vapor, and at any moment, the end can come.

I want us to think about that. At any moment, and I know we don't want to think about this, but we must think about this, at any moment, the end will come upon you. It may be today, it may be tomorrow, or it may be fifty years from now, but the end will come. The sad thing is Israel was not ready for the end. They were just living life and had no thought that the end was coming. For us, we've got to think that the end is coming; therefore, you have to make sure you're ready for that end when it does come. So, I think the first thing that God shows Amos is the end for Israel is coming, and the first thing He wants to apply to us is the end is coming for us as well. Are we ready? If you faced the end today and entered into eternity, would it be the best day of your life, or would it be the absolute worst day of your life? It's going to be either/or. It's not going to be an in between. It's either going to be great, or it's going to be horrific. I want you to be prepared for that. Are you ready for the end?

## **Lifestyle Reveals Relationship with God**

The second thing I think God shows Amos about Israel is that their lifestyle revealed their relationship. God lays it out, 'it's pretty clear My people have no relationship with Me at all.' Just look at their lives. Here's what they were doing...they were coming to the festivals, coming to church, coming to Yahweh's house, and the whole time their attention was not on Yahweh; their attention was on themselves. They were looking at their watch wondering how long the preacher is going to go. 'It's time for us to go. We've got to sell some grain today. We've got to make some money today.' Their whole concept was about on them rather than on Him. As they left the place of worship, when they go into the streets into their dealings, they were just crooked. They were filthy. The way they dealt with their neighbors, the way they dealt with the people who were buying grain from them, they were deceitful. They knew it; they bragged about it! 'Let us go deal deceitfully. Let us make money off of their loss and our gain.' They would make an ephah small. An ephah is how you measured the grain. It was about six gallons. You would put it on a container and that's how much you bought, and they said they made the shekel great. That is the amount of money you put on there to buy the ephah. They made the container smaller so you got less grain, and they made the amount of shekels you put on more so you paid more money for less. What was in the container was not just wheat it was also chaff. It wasn't even fully grain; it was half and half, half waste, half grain. They were ripping people off, and when the poor came and couldn't pay, they made them their slaves. They were enslaving the people who couldn't pay for their grain. Can you imagine? Here is God, who rescued the people of Israel from slavery. That's their story! That's their history. They were slaves, God rescued them and made them free, and now that they were free, they were making others slaves! There's this huge disconnect from the character of God and the actions of His people. That revealed, very strikingly, His people had no relationship with Him. If His people had a relationship with God, their life would have been different. Their life would have reflected the character and the goodness of God. Instead, because they didn't have a relationship with Him, it was just false forms of religion and their life showed they were

anything but a follower of Yahweh. They were anything but a servant of the King. They were only about themselves.

I think the same is true for us. I think the application for us is that our lifestyle also reveals our relationship. That's what Jesus said 'you can judge a tree by its fruit. If the fruit is good, the roots are good. If the fruit is bad, the roots are bad. There's a connection between your relationship with God and how you interact with everyone around you in your day to day life. You might be asking the question: how do I know if I have a relationship with God? If Israel didn't, how do I know that I do? Some of your thoughts are 'I'm at church today,' so was Israel. Maybe you think 'I put money in the plate,' so did Israel. They brought their sacrifices. Maybe you think 'I sang loud,' well, so did Israel. They did all of the stuff, but the whole time they weren't really thinking about God. They were thinking about themselves. It's not really a good judge of your relationship with God by whether you go to church. God does not show us that it is your participation that makes you part of Him. He wants us to show what our life says. In other words, it's not just are you in the right place, but how are you dealing with the people around you. What God showed is here is how I know they are not Mine. Look at their relationship with others. They're enslaving, they're deceitful, they're liars, they're ripping people off, and they're not loving their neighbor, which showed they were not loving God. I think the same is true for us. We can look at our relationships. How are your relationships? How is your relationship with your wife? How is your relationship with your husband, or your girlfriend or boyfriend? How is your relationship with your kids? How is your relationship with your co-workers, with your neighbors, even strangers? Is it loving them because God has loved you? Or, is it trying to get all of them to be all about you, because life is really all about you? You can look at your life by looking at your relationships, and it's a good indicator whether or not you have a relationship with God. Now, loving people is not going to get you a relationship with God. We can't get a relationship through good works. But if you have a relationship, it's going to flow through to the way we treat our neighbors, our family, the way we treat others.

What about your relationship with sin? What is your relationship with sin now? Do you love it and live in it? Or, do you fight it and despise it? If you've got a relationship with God, you're going to despise and fight sin. You're going to do everything you can to put off sin and walk in godliness because you've got a relationship with God and you know that He is against sin. I think for Israel, the end was coming and God showed their relationship showed their actions, their lifestyle, showed they didn't have a relationship with Him. I think for us, our end is coming and we can look and gage whether or not we have a relationship with God is by looking at our lives. Do our lives say we're in connection with a God who is love, and we're showing that through everything I do?

### **Facing Judgment**

I think the third thing God tells Amos about Israel is judgment is here. He says 'there is going to be a dark day that's going to come. The sun is going to stop shining at noon when My wrath is poured out on My people. The earth is going to quake. It's going to rise and fall, like the Nile. There's going to be terror, exile, armies coming in and invading, there will be deaths, and they're going to scream out for Me, but I'm not going to hear them. I will not speak to them even though they are crying out for Me to speak to them. There will be a famine of My Word. Judgment is coming.' I think for us that same message needs to be heard in the church today. Judgment is coming. In your end, you will face the judgment of God. In the judgment of God, God is wrathful towards sin, towards evil, and those who do so. I know we're modern people and we already have pushback, and we think this can't be right. God's not going to be wrathful towards sin because God is love! God is ok with everything; God is tolerant, right? So we ask why is God going to judge sin? Why is God going to judge people? Why can't He just be ok with everything? The reason is because God is good. That is why there will a judgment, because God is good. For Him to be good, He must be opposed to that which is evil. In other words, He can't be ok with evil and still be good. If He's ok with evil, then He's not good. I'll give you a few examples. If God is going to love truth, He must hate lies. He must, because lies are the enemies of the truth. They destroy the truth, so He can't say lying is ok and truth is ok. If He's good, He loves

truth and He hates a lie. He must have wrath towards a lie because He loves the truth. See, if God loves marriage, and if we're going to love marriage, then we must abhor adultery. We must hate it because adultery destroys marriage. If God is going to love sexual purity, then He must be against sexual immorality. He can't be ok with it all. If He's ok with it all, then He doesn't love purity because He's ok with immorality. See, God can't be ok with gossip if He loves encouragement because gossip is the antecedent of encourage. It's the enemy of encouragement because it rips people apart rather than builds them up. You see, if we love the one true God, we must hate idols. You can't be ok with everything. If you are good and you love goodness, you must be against that which is evil. That's why God is going to judge. That's why His wrath is going to fall upon evil, because He's good! It's not because He's not good; it's because He is good, and that's why His judgment is coming. He will judge evil and those who do evil.

Now, here's the really, really bad news. It's *bad* news. You and I have all done evil, all of us. We have all fallen short of God's standard. We have all broken His laws. None of us is in the plumb line of God's standard. We are all way off the Mark. We've all sinned, and because God is holy and just, He must punish sin. So, we're going to stand before a holy God, and we've all sinned; we've all blown it. We are all in big trouble. So, think about the judgment standing before a holy God, and you have broken His holy Law, and His wrath is going to fall. That's the bad news. It's terrible news for us.

But what I want to do is take us back to that doctor's office for a moment. Remember we started off with that doctor scene with a young couple who are excited about life. They opened an envelope with bad news...she has a deadly virus. There is panic. There is nothing good about this, but the doctor all of a sudden says 'but' it's treatable. Here's the cure. Take this and everything will be ok. All of a sudden, that doctor's office just radically changed. The worst news becomes the good news, and that is the same story the gospel tells us. The very worst news becomes the very best news. The worst news is we have sinned, and yes, God is holy and will judge sin, but the good news is God has already judged our sin in Christ.

That's the beauty of the gospel! So we're going to just marvel in the cross for a few moments.

See, what God tells Israel is there's a dark day coming. The sun is going to stop shining at noon. It's amazing; when Jesus hung on the cross, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record that at noon the sun forbid to shine; darkness fell upon the earth. Just like the judgment that came to Israel, that judgment came to Jesus Christ on the cross. Jesus Christ, the innocent Son of God stood in our place and took the full wrath of God for our sins upon Himself. See, we all deserve a dark day, but the good news is Jesus Christ took the dark day for us so that through the gospel, so that for those who look to Christ, we can be hidden in Him in His judgment and walk straight through our own judgment as righteous children of God who will face no wrath, but eternal joy from God. That's the gospel. That's the beautiful news of the gospel.

Today, we've heard a sermon you don't want to hear. The end is coming. You're not going to live forever. You're going to face eternity. Your lifestyle reveals your relationship. You're going to face judgement of God, but we've heard some really good news at the end. There's a cure. There's an answer. The answer is Jesus Christ died in your place for your sins, and if you will look to Him, if you will trust in Him, if you will turn from your sins, put your faith, and trust in Him, you will be made clean. All of your sins will be forgiven at the cross and God's wrath will no longer be upon you, but His favor, goodness, and His love will be on you as His child. That's the good news of the gospel. My prayer for you is you've heard that message you didn't want to hear, I pray you've already went into judgment in Christ and come out the other side righteous, and there's no fear in the judgment to come. The judgment for you is only eternal glory with Christ. For some of you, maybe you haven't gone through the judgment hidden in Christ. For you, that day is going to be scary. I hope today that the Spirit has worked in your heart to show you things aren't ok. God is not tolerant towards our sin, but He's wrathful and just. I pray that today you would look to Christ so you could go through the judgment hidden in Christ so that when you go through the judgment that is to come, you'll be hidden in Him as a child of His.

I pray that God has spoken to some of you about the reality of the end of your life, the reality of the judgment that is to come, and I pray that God might have shown you that your life reveals if you are not in Christ. I pray that today would be the day that you see your judgment has been settled on the cross and Christ wants to give you mercy and grace rather than judgment.