

application process

amos 2

This morning we have an intense passage to get through. It's Amos chapter 2 and for God's people it is a challenging one. Because within these verses what we have is God's judgment against His own people for not applying and living out His word.

Whether it was Abraham or the Israelites or believers throughout the New Testament age, we sometimes tend to live in such a way where we *have* God's word but we don't *live* God's word. And that is what we'll read about this morning. But when God's people live that way, we tend to give ourselves a pass for sins or pursuits that God has condemned. It's just something we're prone to do. Moses was going to confront Pharaoh but hadn't circumcised his own son. David was going to execute a man who stole a tiny lamb, yet had just committed murder and adultery himself. Ananias and Sapphira were going to come to church but were lying to the Holy Spirit. And we do this too in our own lives. That's why we're warned about it so often in the Scriptures. And what God has been doing in this passage is building up His case against His people so that they would see how serious sin is to Him *AND* how far they had moved away from what their lives really should have been.

And, here's the thing, we can't ever come to the Bible, especially a passage like this one with our minds convinced that it doesn't apply to us. We can't just open up the pages already thinking, "This isn't for me." Instead, we're to come to God's word with a willingness to be changed. We should come to even uncomfortable passages like this one with a heart that says, "Lord, *IS* this for me?" And then allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us about our own lives and our own choices and our own thoughts. Daniel read Jeremiah's book and his response was to go to prayer and confess those sins listed there, including himself in what the people had done. So, this morning, I'm asking all of us to approach God's word in humility and with a willingness to listen if God the Holy Spirit might want to correct something in our lives. Because we are not immune. We are not invulnerable. It's possible for us to follow in the missteps of Moses or David or Lot or Solomon, of whom we read in 1 Kings 3:

1 Kings 3.3 - Solomon loved the LORD and followed all the decrees of his father, David, except that Solomon, too, offered sacrifices and burned incense at the local places of worship.

So, being prepared, let's get into our text.

Amos 2.1-16 - Thus says the Lord: "For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, Because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime. But I will send a fire upon Moab, And it shall devour the palaces of Kerioth; Moab shall die with tumult, With shouting and trumpet sound. And I will cut off the judge from its midst, And slay all its princes with him," Says the Lord.

Thus says the Lord: "For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, Because they have despised the law of the Lord, And have not kept His

commandments. Their lies lead them astray, Lies which their fathers followed. But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.”

Thus says the Lord: “For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, Because they sell the righteous for silver, And the poor for a pair of sandals. They pant after the dust of the earth which is on the head of the poor, And pervert the way of the humble. A man and his father go in to the same girl, To defile My holy name. They lie down by every altar on clothes taken in pledge, And drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god. “Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, Whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was as strong as the oaks; Yet I destroyed his fruit above and his roots beneath. Also it was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt, And led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite. I raised up some of your sons as prophets, and some of your young men as Nazirites. Is it not so, O you children of Israel?” Says the Lord. “But you gave the Nazirites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets saying, ‘Do not prophesy!’ “Behold, I am weighed down by you, as a cart full of sheaves is weighed down. Therefore flight shall perish from the swift, the strong shall not strengthen his power, nor shall the mighty deliver himself; He shall not stand who handles the bow, The swift of foot shall not escape, Nor shall he who rides a horse deliver himself. The most courageous men of might shall flee naked in that day,” Says the Lord.

Last week we saw God indict Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom and Ammon. With each nation He moved closer and closer to His own people. Today we see Him first address Moab, the descendants of Lot, Abraham’s nephew. Geographically *and* relationally, it was clear that God was circling in on the Children of Israel.

Like with the other nations, we see God pronouncing judgment on Moab for the horrific atrocities they had committed. The foreign nations had committed incredibly violent acts of bloodshed against God’s people and each other, and the Lord was bringing His fire to judge them.

But now we see Amos turn his remarks to Israel and Judah. And, in his prophecy, God’s people are lumped in just like the Gentile nations. Same phrasing. Same warning. Same judgment of fire that awaited their acts. But what were *their* crimes against the Lord?

Well, looking at these verses, we see God was holding them accountable for their sexual immorality, their greed, their lies, their materialism, their subjugation of the poor and the way that they neglected spirituality in favor of physical pleasures.

These were the behaviors that God lumped in with the warcrimes and murder and torture of the Gentile nations. And, according to verse 4, it was the rejection of God’s word that led to these sins. They failed to apply what God had told them and they found themselves in the state that Amos was describing.

You know, they *had* the word. They *had* the Temple. They *had* God’s presence, yet they stopped applying what God had said to them to their daily lives and it opened the door for materialism. It opened the door for greed. It opened the door for lust. And God said that those things were just as bad, even worse than the horrifying things the Gentiles had done. And this is what can happen in our lives.

James 1.14-15 - But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

God came to His people and showed them how they were doing exactly what these other nations were doing, even though they knew better. And, in His love and in His justice, He was going to bring discipline and correction into their lives. He was going to purge that cancer out of their hearts and deal with what they were doing.

Now, again, I know at least for myself when I read something like this my mind immediately goes to a place where I'm thinking, "Yeah the Israelites were crazy. They were into crazy deep idolatry and immorality. No *wonder* God brought correction onto them."

But, when we read these charges that God was bringing, I think on one level it should concern us.

Materialism. Ungodly sexuality. Oppression of the poor. Greed. These are things that God must judge. Here's the problem: on one level, these are things that are built into our sin nature as individuals. But on top of that, we happen to find ourselves in a culture that is constantly pressing us toward materialism. Toward greed. Toward immoral sexuality. We are inundated with this stuff and these things are generally accepted within our culture and, sadly, they're starting to even become more accepted within the church. The enemies around and the enemy within are trying to drive us toward these things which bring forth death. In response God has said, "Follow Me and live," but the choice is still before us day by day.

The Lord gives us a lot of analogies in His word so that we can more fully understand who He is and what He's said. What's interesting is that He sticks with a lot of those analogies and reiterates in them in different ways. The idea of God being a consuming fire. The idea of God's people being builders. Things that are illustrated in a lot of different ways book by book in the Bible.

In Amos, as we've already talked about, God says that He's dropping His plumb line in the midst of His people so that they can evaluate how they are building. And in our passage, He talks about those sins and ungodly things that He is going to consume and destroy with fire, even when it comes to His own special people.

Now, this warning and these analogies are given directly to us as Christians in the New Testament.

1 Corinthians 3.9-15 - For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.

If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

These are warnings and instructions that we shouldn't take lightly. Because we have the same propensity within us to sin that these Israelites and Judeans had. And all they had to do to avoid it was keep God's commandments by apply His word and His power to their lives. That's it! That's the deal!

God has come and said, "Here's what I've said. Here's what I've done for you. Here's what I'm offering for your life. Here's what I'm calling you to. So, are you *living* that out? Are you living life *spiritually*?"

You notice there in verses 11 and 12 that God had raised up His people. He had set them apart. He called them out to be spiritual and to live lives dedicated to Him. But, He points out that they were putting their physical lives in a place of priority over their spiritual lives. And it led them into sin. It led them to materialism. It led them to greed. It led them to neglect the poor. And to us, in this age of grace, the age of the Church, the situation is the same. If we live lives that pursue the physical, it's not only going to lead us into sin like James pointed out, but all that we're doing is going to burn away when we stand before God. Because that kind of life isn't plumb with God's desires. It's not a vertical life. It's a life that is wasted when it comes to eternity. But, if we're honest, we have to admit that there's such a pressure in our hearts and in our culture to pile up riches for ourselves and build empires for ourselves and neglect the poor around us and neglect the spiritual things of life. And it *seems* like we can do both - live in pursuit of physical luxury while also pursuing the things of God, but the Bible out and out says we can't. We can't serve two masters.

Charles Spurgeon once said:

The Lord does not think much of riches, and, therefore, he usually gives them to the ungodly as men give bones to dogs.

The Lord is gracious and loving and longsuffering, but He looked at His people in Amos chapter 2 and said, "You guys are the Amorites. You're the same." And, you know what, when the people of the world looked at them, they thought they were the same too. God's name and God's will and God's power was being profaned in their lives because they weren't applying the word of the Lord to their activities and decisions and attitudes. God had told them to be humble. To be loving. To live sacrificially. To be spiritual and actually pursue spiritual things, not just agree with them.

And these desires we see God having here in 750BC are the same desires He has today. As God calls us out and gives us a new life and a new direction and a new purpose. But if we approach the word, which tells us to love others and to help the poor and to walk humbly and live sacrificially and treasure God in our hearts, if we come to all of that and decide, "I agree with that, but I don't really need to actually do this stuff," then we are the Israelites. We are the Amorites. And the activity of our lives is going to burn away when we stand before the Lord. That which is built must be plumb in order to be rewarded. And our goal isn't to live life like Lot or these Israelites, but to live life in the will of God, pursuing the things of God.

2 Corinthians 5.10 - For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body.

We have all that we need to build something eternal today. All we have to do is apply.