

this little roar of mine

amos 1

We're going chapter by chapter through the book of Amos and after a short introduction last week we find ourselves in chapter 1.

Amos 1 - The words of Amos, who was among the sheepbreeders of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. And he said: "The Lord roars from Zion, And utters His voice from Jerusalem; The pastures of the shepherds mourn, And the top of Carmel withers."

Thus says the Lord: "For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, Because they have threshed Gilead with implements of iron. But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, Which shall devour the palaces of Ben-Hadad. I will also break the gate bar of Damascus, And cut off the inhabitant from the Valley of Aven, And the one who holds the scepter from Beth Eden. The people of Syria shall go captive to Kir," Says the Lord.

Thus says the Lord: "For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, Because they took captive the whole captivity to deliver them up to Edom. But I will send a fire upon the wall of Gaza, Which shall devour its palaces. I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, And the one who holds the scepter from Ashkelon; I will turn My hand against Ekron, And the remnant of the Philistines shall perish," Says the Lord God.

Thus says the Lord: "For three transgressions of Tyre, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, Because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, And did not remember the covenant of brotherhood. But I will send a fire upon the wall of Tyre, Which shall devour its palaces."

Thus says the Lord: "For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, Because he pursued his brother with the sword, And cast off all pity; His anger tore perpetually, And he kept his wrath forever. But I will send a fire upon Teman, Which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah."

Thus says the Lord: "For three transgressions of the people of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, Because they ripped open the women with child in Gilead, That they might enlarge their territory. But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, And it shall devour its palaces, amid shouting in the day of battle, And a tempest in the day of the whirlwind. Their king shall go into captivity, He and his princes together," Says the Lord.

What we talked about last week was this theme of the plumb line that God uses about later in the book. The Lord said that He had dropped His plumb line in the midst of His people so that they could evaluate and align their hearts and their activity to His standard. For us, this whole book is about discovering if we're building vertically toward the Lord or if we're falling into the same mistakes that the Israelites had, despite their prosperity and physical security. And what we're trying to do is look at both the messenger and the message. To see how God uses His

servants and how He delivers His message through us and, on top of that, making sure we're not neglecting that message ourselves. We aren't *just* deliverers, but we are recipients as well.

In the first couple of verses we get to look at the **messenger**. Amos, we're told in verse 1, was a sheepbreeder from Tekoa, which was in the southern kingdom of Judah. We find out in chapter 7 that he also tended fig trees. He was not a prophet. Not the son of a prophet. Didn't go to prophet school. Didn't go to missionary school. Some scholars look at the data we're given in the book and they guess that he was a wealthy land owner. A business mogul, more than a laborer. Other good scholars look at the same data and conclude the exact opposite. That he was a shepherd who wasn't wealthy. A man who worked day in and day out and lived small compared to the people around him.

There's really no definitive answer and that's good. Because Amos represents all of us. He was a man living the life that God had placed him in, when he received the word of the Lord and was called out to minister to the people around him. He was a regular guy, living a regular life. And we can't ever forget that God does not separate His people into one group that does ministry and another group that just exists. He calls all of us, of great means or small means, to be His messengers. People who work the plow and people who collect the taxes. People who serve and people who own. Slaves and doctors and farmers and kings are *all* called by God to do His work. You and I are included.

Now, the Lord called Amos to speak and prophecy to backslidden Israel and Judah during the reigns of 2 kings: Uzziah and Jeroboam. Each of these guys had their own interesting characteristics and they each speak to us devotionally of potential pitfalls that God's people can fall into.

Uzziah started strong and started early. When he was just 16 he was installed as king. And, at first, he honored the Lord and did what was right. He walked worthy.

Listen to this from 2 Chronicles 26 verse 5:

2 Chronicles 26.5 - [Uzziah] sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God; and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper.

But then when you drop down a few verses you read this:

2 Chronicles 26.16 - But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord his God by entering the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense.

One of the great issues and sins that God was revealing through Amos, as we'll see, was the fact that in their luxury and in their opulence, God's people had stopped really paying attention to what God says in His word. They still did religious things, but they had remade God into their own image. They made themselves a convenient, surface-level religion. They had God's word, but they didn't *follow* His word. And they became full of pride and full of self-assurance.

In the northern kingdom, a different kind of king was ruling. It was Jeroboam, who was altogether wicked. He didn't start off well or end well. What he did do well was conquest. And,

because of the affliction that the Israelites had endured at the hands of their enemies, God allowed Jeroboam success in battle. He regained territory and wealth and earthly power. You can read about him in 2 Kings 14. But his kingdom was characterized by sin and paganism and violence.

So, starting here in verse one and moving through the rest of the book we will see that God was speaking to individuals, the believers in Israel and the nation as a whole.

And this is how He spoke:

Amos 1.2a - The Lord roars from Zion, And utters His voice from Jerusalem.

God was speaking loud and clear. That's what He loves to do. Throughout the Scriptures we find that He is not a God who is far, but He is a God who is near. And He speaks loudly. Roaring like a lion.

In this verse it says that He roared from Jerusalem. At that time, that was the earthly habitation of God's glory. That's where He dwelt on the earth. Of course God is omnipotent and omnipresent, but He Himself said, "This is going to be the base of my operations" during the Old Testament.

Now, luckily for us, God is not constrained to Jerusalem or the Temple. In fact, when Jesus Christ was crucified, God put an end to that system and determined to make our hearts His dwelling place! We are His Temple. We are His Body. We are His base of operations.

Which begs the question: Is God roaring from my life? Do my lips and my actions deliver the message of the Gospel? Or do I find myself trying to quiet down that testimony? Is God roaring like a lion through my life? Or do I treat Him and His message like I treat my 19 month old when we're in a restaurant? Trying to keep him quiet so no one is disturbed.

You read this text and you see that God's word stops people where they are. Verse 2 poetically states it by saying it makes the mountains wither. When properly delivered the Gospel causes people to stop and consider and choose. May we never be messengers whose testimony is ineffective. Whose testimony is so marginalized that no one even stops to consider what they're hearing from our lives. May we be messengers who God Almighty can roar through with His message of salvation.

But now we begin to see the message outright. We've gotten some context and know a little of what's coming, but there in verses 3 through 15 we get the actual message of Amos delivered to 5 different nations: Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom and Ammon. Next week we'll see 3 more added in. But each time the same formula is given. The Lord says, "You've transgressed and I've been gracious, I've been longsuffering, but now I will not withhold my judgment any longer and those things that you *think* will protect you won't protect you when I come to town."

In these 5 arraignments we see that each of these nations committed atrocities against the children of Israel. Now, there are 2 things to remember here: First, it's important to know that part of the reason God is delivering this message is to build a case against His own people. So here, He says, "this is what Ammon did and this is what Edom did" in order to then reveal to

His own people how they too were sinning in much the same ways. But second, God calls these nations out on this sin because it concerns Him.

God is concerned with Israel's enemies as much as He is with Israel. He is concerned with individuals as much as He is with nations. God is concerned with your friends and neighbors. He is a God who is concerned with your life day by day. He looks into what's going on with us and shows that He cares about those things. In our context He has to bring a message of judgment upon sin, but stepping back we see the heart of a God who is quite concerned with what happens in your life today. Because He's not far, He's close.

Now, as we read those verses, since they're repetitive and talk about specific atrocities, it's easy to get caught up or distracted by the violence. In the sense that it's easy to get distracted by the language and think, "Yeah, they butchered the people of God and that's why God was going to judge them." Which is true. That's one level of what God was talking about. But notice some of what else God was talking about:

[Because they] did not remember the covenant of brotherhood.

[Because they] cast off all pity.

[Because their] anger tore perpetually.

[Because of the violence they committed] that they might enlarge their territory.

God is talking to these nations and will talk to His own people about more than just violence and bloodshed. But He's also talking to them about their greed and their anger and their lack of compassion or pity. Their ill-gotten wealth and breaking of brotherhood. There's really a lot that the Lord is addressing because our God evaluates everything we do. And, as He looked at these behaviors and activities, He said, "This is sin. And this sin requires judgment."

And here's where it comes home to us: God's attitude concerning these sins has not changed. Just because the Ammonites are gone or just because we're not pagan Canaanite idolators doesn't mean that we get a pass to give in to greed or pride or discompassion or anger. And what the Lord was doing in this book was talking about these foreign sins, because the Israelites would've totally agreed with Him about their need for judgment. But, starting next week, He's going to turn the focus in on His own people and say, "Ok, how are *YOU* treating the poor among you? How are *you* living your life? Are you building upward toward eternity or outward toward worldliness?" That's the deal. God was going to bring correction to His own people.

And to bring this message, God sent a shepherd. Because He is a shepherd. His desire is to spend His days with His sheep. Providing them green grass to eat and protecting them from attack. But God's people had become something other than sheep. They'd become greedy. They'd become self-reliant. They'd become discompassionate. They'd become angry. And the way they interacted with people was sinful and unjust, like these pagan Canaanite nations.

And one of the overarching messages of Amos is that the way we interact with people around us matters to God. It matters very much to God.

James 1.27 - Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

Micah 6.8 - He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?

That's what God is looking for. But this isn't what Christians always do. Especially when they're in a time and place of security and affluence and comfort. When people *outside* of God's family, people in the world, fail to show these attributes to others we're incensed. And rightly so, because God has given value to human beings and we should treat each other accordingly. But, as was the case in Amos, God's people need to make sure that we have not become trapped by these same sins as well. Because God's attitude hasn't changed and we find ourselves today in a situation very similar to that of the Israelites. The sins we're talking about may not bear fruit as violently as it did in the case of the Ammonites or the Edomites, but these sins still bear fruit of destruction and they still have to be dealt with by a God who corrects those whom He loves, His people who He desires to shepherd.

God's message has been given to us. We have to receive it and then carry it and allow the Lord to roar through our lives.