

Amos: The Nobody From Nowhere
Chapter 3
Amos 2:4-5

The Lord says: I will not relent from punishing Judah for three crimes, even four, because they have rejected the instruction of the Lord and have not kept his statutes. The lies that their ancestors followed have led them astray. Therefore, I will send fire against Judah, and it will consume the citadels of Jerusalem.
Amos 2:4-5

The northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah had been through what can only be described as a messy divorce. The fracture between them occurred shortly after the death of King Solomon. It seems that Solomon, who was of the tribe of Judah, was very unsympathetic to the peoples of the northern ten tribes. In fact, he had used his immense power to abuse these, his Jewish brethren, much as one would treat his slaves, taxing them heavily and instituting a system of forced rotational labor.

Then King Solomon drafted forced laborers from all Israel; the labor force numbered thirty thousand men. He sent ten thousand to Lebanon each month in shifts; one month they were in Lebanon, two months they were at home... **1 Kings 5:13-14a**

When Solomon died the people from the northern tribes sent a delegation to the new king, namely Solomon's son Rehoboam. They pleaded with him to relent from his father's harsh treatment of their people. Rehoboam, rather than listen to the wise counsel of the elders, chose instead to listen to his foolish friends, and as a result, he vowed that he would not relent, but rather, would be an even harsher taskmaster than his father. The consequences of his foolish and prideful flexing of his royal authority brought rebellion rather than the humble submission for which he had hoped.

Then Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone to Shechem to make him king. When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard about it, he stayed in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon's presence. Jeroboam stayed in Egypt. But they summoned him, and Jeroboam and the whole assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam: "Your father made our yoke harsh. You, therefore, lighten your father's harsh service and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you."

Rehoboam replied, "Go away for three days and then return to me." So the people left. Then King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who had served his father Solomon when he was alive, asking, "How do you advise me to respond to this people?"

They replied, "Today if you will be a servant to this people and serve them, and if you respond to them by speaking kind words to them, they will be your servants forever."

But he rejected the advice of the elders who had advised him and consulted with the young men who had grown up with him and attended him. He asked them, "What message do you advise that we send back to this people who said to me, 'Lighten the yoke your father put on us'?"

The young men who had grown up with him told him, "This is what you should say to this people who said to you, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you, make it lighter on us!' This is what you should tell them: 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist! Although my father burdened you with a heavy yoke, I will add to

your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with barbed whips.”

So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, as the king had ordered: “Return to me on the third day.” Then the king answered the people harshly. He rejected the advice the elders had given him and spoke to them according to the young men’s advice: “My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with barbed whips.” **1 Kings 12:1-14**

This became the catalyst for the separation between the northern and southern kingdoms in the land of Israel. And the enmity between the two sides took them from being one nation into two, from brothers to bitter rivals. After the nation was divided, the people of the northern kingdom of Israel, crowned the evil Jeroboam as their king. And because of his fear that the people would one day return to Jerusalem in order to worship, one of his first official acts as king was to install two golden calves to serve as gods for the people. He placed one in Bethel and the other in Dan. And so idolatry was introduced to God’s chosen people. And this grievous sin would not go unnoticed nor unpunished.

After many years of bitter and jealous rivalry between these two nations, Amos’ declaration of God’s coming wrath against Judah would have been as well received in Israel as the news of His judgment upon their other enemies. At this point, Amos’ message would have been received with increasing enthusiasm from Israel. Little did the people expect, that the greatest pronouncements of woe would soon aimed to the heart of their own idolatrous rebellion against God. The noose was continuing to tighten, and the people would soon be taken by surprise as to just how black their own sins had become to a holy God.

The sins of Judah should carry a warning for all of us today. For their sin is prevalent in our generation. The people in the southern kingdom were guilty of listening to the wrong preachers, and abandoning the commandments of The LORD. While they considered themselves to be much better than the pagan idolators in Israel, the people of the Southern Kingdom were just as guilty of false religion in the eyes of The LORD, for they too had allowed idolatry to come into the land. And the great King Solomon had been partially to blame for allowing all his foreign wives to introduce their false gods in Jerusalem. For even the very worship of God can be corrupted by the introduction of false teaching. And therein lies the warning that all of us should take heed, lest we stumble and fall.

The Scriptures clearly warn us that *“those who presume to teach will be judged more strictly”* (**James 3:1**). God takes a false prophet very seriously, and we should as well. False teachers are everywhere, and seemingly these days, their numbers are on the increase. Therefore, we are to beware of those who would use The Word of God as a means to their own ends, whether that be for popularity or personal gain. A true man of God will lead others into all truth. One of the many signs of a false teacher is that they pick and choose the Scriptures they like, all the while ignoring or downright discrediting the ones that do not suit their fancy.

I grew up on a farm, and our life was fairly simple. And while we never went hungry because we grew our own food, I had no earthly idea, just how fancy food could be away from the farm. Take salads for instance. To me, growing up, a salad was some lettuce, maybe a few slices of tomatoes and if it was really fancy, some shredded carrots or cucumbers. We would drown that in some dressing and call it a day. The first time I ever saw one of those fancy salad bars in those trendy restaurants, I almost had a heart attack! I never dreamed you could put so much stuff in a salad.

Many people today treat The Scriptures much like a buffet. They pile on the verses they like and leave the rest untouched. After all, there are a whole lot of verses in Scripture that, in all fairness, leave a pretty bad taste in our mouths when we start to chew on them. Can I get a witness? So what do a lot of false teachers do? They feed us the stuff we like and leave out the painful stuff we need. It’s like living on cotton candy. We get lots of calories and yet wonder why we’re always so miserable and sick. The Word of God isn’t just there to comfort, it is also there to convict. And sadly, many there are that shun any and all conviction. They just want to be comfortable and cuddled. These people will never be spiritually mature. In fact, most aren’t saved at all, they are merely religious. They have convinced themselves that they are right with God, when truthfully He doesn’t even know them.

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, and do many miracles in your name?’ Then I will announce to them, ‘I never knew you. Depart from me, you lawbreakers!’” **Matthew 7:21-23**

The land of Judah was headed for destruction, because they had listened to the wrong people and had turned away from the full council of God. Their teachers had led them astray, and now, everyone in the entire land was about to be called in to account. The people had cherry-picked the commands of God that they had preferred and had chosen to ignore the ones they did not care for. They had surrounded themselves with teachers who had purposely led them away from the full truth of God’s Word (**vs. 4**). And for this reason, God pronounced His judgment upon them.

The Apostle Paul knew full well the responsibility he carried to teach the full truth of God’s Word to the people. And he knew that he would be judged accordingly for failing to do so. This is why he told the elders of the church in Ephesus:

Therefore I declare to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, because I did not avoid declaring to you the whole plan of God. Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Men will rise up even from your own number and distort the truth to lure the disciples into following them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for three years I never stopped warning each one of you with tears.

Acts 20:26-31

So how exactly does a godly people go from the will of God to a life of disobedience? By allowing false teachers to slip in unawares with *doctrines of demons* (**1 Timothy 4:1**) that appeal to our fallen nature rather than leading us into the holiness of God. The Bible tells us plainly that **“The fear of The LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”** (**Proverbs 9:10**). So then, when people lose their fear of God, they can allow all sorts of sin to gain a foothold in their lives. And one thing that a false teacher always does is to teach in such a way as to remove all fear of God.

Remember the buffet illustration from earlier? This is how a false teacher gains a foothold in a congregation. He teaches the things about God that are loving and compassionate, while laying aside any mention of God’s righteousness and judgment. In short, they “reinvent” a god who in some way resembles The One True God, but this “*new god*” is far more “*tolerant and lenient*” when it comes to sin. In olden days they would even carve a statue to represent this “new and improved version” of their deity for the people to behold.

Nowadays, false teachers don’t even need to carve an idol for us, they simply speak of a god that is all loving, who wants you to be healthy and happy, even if what makes you feel healthy and happy are the very same sins that Christ died to deliver you from. Its all about what you want and not what God wants. Its all about *comfort* and not about *conviction, recreation* as opposed to *repentance*. And they make it sound so very spiritual. But just as Judah was about to be judged for their sins, so will all who abandon truth for something more appealing to their own flesh.

Let me give you an example of how these fake teachers do it. **1 John 4:18** tells us that **“perfect drives out fear.”** In this passage John is saying that Christ’s atonement on the cross has delivered those who are in Him from the fiery judgment of God, nothing more. But the false teacher will take a verse like this and tell you that it nullifies **Proverbs 9:10, “The fear of The LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”** “You no longer have to fear God”, they will say, “For He loves you just the way that you are.” But a true believer, filled with The Holy Spirit knows for certain that one verse of Scripture does not “nullify” another! I am a believer in Christ Jesus. And as such I know that I have been forever delivered from the wrath of God (**1 Thessalonians 5:9-11**). But I also know that I most definitely need to maintain a healthy fear of my Heavenly Father! The false preacher will tell you that you cannot love God and fear Him at the same

time. But let me tell you this, I loved my earthly father very much, but I was scared to death of his belt! My dad had standards and as long as I lived under his roof, I knew full well that I had better live accordingly. So much for not being able to love someone and fear them at the same time.

Just this week I had a conversation with a pastor friend of mine and he was telling me about a video he watched of a "so called" abortion clinic chaplain (now there's an oxymoron, or maybe just a moron). This man was saying that he counseled the women who came into the clinic to terminate their pregnancies. And he would tell them, that if they couldn't afford to give these unborn children the good life that they deserved, then the most "*Christlike*" (his words not mine) thing to do would be to mercifully end their lives! Folks that is a textbook definition of what the Savior called "a wolf in sheep's clothing..." (**Matthew 7:15**).

So what are we to do? If we are to be the salt and light of the world then we had better pay close attention to the whole counsel of Scripture. For when we pick and choose which verses we like, and discard those we find less appealing, we are treating God's Word as a buffet, rather than a well balanced meal for the nourishment of our souls. The Church in America today, sadly, shares much of the very same guilt that Judah carried in the days of Amos. And we would do well to learn from their mistake. For God was true to His promise of fiery judgement upon them. The Babylonians would later come and destroy their beloved Jerusalem, and burn their temple to ashes. God gave them time to repent, but their leaders time and again led them back into idolatry. This should as a warning to us that we the Church of Jesus Christ must always embrace the whole counsel of The LORD!

For it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of The Living God. Hebrews 10:31