

# Amos 8

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning, church. And I bring you greetings from New Life Masikkar,! So you'd find some Americans in Southall trying to reach out to the Asian people.

So I'd like to thank you for continuing to pray for us, that God has sustained us for a number of years. It's a tough work, but we've been there. And it's also a privilege and honor today to bring God's word to you.

So I believe they have read the scripture, Amos chapter 8. A number of years ago, I had received a letter from a debt collection firm demanding I pay up.

This was the time when I was still a student. The amount was not much. It was about 60 or 70 pounds. It was due to some unpaid mobile bill. What had happened was that I had left the country. I had left England for an extended period of time and gone home. And I'd withdrawn most of my money from the bank account. It was very little money. I'd withdrawn everything, completely overlooking the fact that I had some pending direct debit for my mobile phone contract.

[ 1 : 36 ] So now I've come back to England and I get this letter. So for a brief second, I thought I would just ignore this letter. And my reasoning was quite naive, as it was.

I was out of the country for almost half the term of the contract. The second half, when I left, I did not use the services. So I should not be paying.

But as I read the letter carefully, it made me get worried. In big bold letters, it was that this is a final reminder. Now perhaps that sent other letters when I was out of the country.

And if I don't pay up, the letter warned that the bailiffs or the debt collectors would be knocking on my door.

So either I'd have to pay up then, or they'll take anything of value and auction it off and sell it off. And what is worse, I will have to pay them for their time and effort, which I assume would be more than my actual debt with the mobile provider.

[ 2 : 42 ] So one voice in me said, you know, ignore it, they're just bluffing. And the other one said, don't fool around. It could be what it is, a final warning.

And I remember the words of Jesus, you know, come to terms quickly with your creditors. While you're going with them to court, lest your accuser hand you to the judge, and the judge the guard and you be put in prison.

Truly I say to you, you will never get out until you've paid the last penny. So in my case, my accusers were the mobile service company and the guard are the bailiffs.

So I decided to treat the letter as it was, and pay up, and not risk the bailiffs knocking my door. In our passage this morning, Amos the prophet is giving Israel their final reminder.

It's only nine chapters, the book has nine chapters, this is the eighth chapter. It's the final reminder. The only difference is, there is no time to pay up. No more grace to shape up.

[ 3 : 44 ] It's not a warning, it's a declaration of judgment. God is going to judge his people now. The bailiffs would be knocking at their door, and they will be coming in the form of Assyrian soldiers, the superpower of their time, invading their country and taking most of them into exile.

Israel is hearing God's final word on their wicked behavior and unrepentant hearts. Hence, in verse 11, you have Amos prophesying, 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 ters of water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.

God is now going to stop speaking. They have been ignoring his corrections. He is going to give them the silent treatment. They are about to face the full consequences of their rebellious hearts and wicked behavior.

God has had enough with the rebelliousness of his chosen people. Look at the end of verse 2. The Lord said to me, The end has come upon my people.

I will never again pass by them. And again at the end of verse 7, The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.

[ 5 : 12 ] And finally at the end of the chapter, at the end of verse 14, They shall fall and never rise again. I will never pass by them. I will never forget.

They shall never rise. Three nevers. There is a finality to what is about to happen to them. You know we have been told, if you have read the book before, we have been told in the previous chapters as well as documented in history books.

It's in chapter 2. An adversary shall surround the land and bring down your defenses from you and your strongholds shall be plundered.

What they had taken by plunder would be lost by plunder. It's a poetic justice. What monuments they had built with that plunder, it will come to an end.

The adversaries is the Assyrians. And you can see it depicted in the British Museum. In the Assyrians had crafted on their palace walls how they took the children of Israel into exile.

[ 6 : 14 ] The sad and gloomy picture is also provided in our passage today. It's in verse 3. The songs of the temple shall become wailings in that day, declares the Lord God.

So many dead bodies, they are thrown everywhere, silence. Songs of worship becomes wailings. Wailings will turn into silence.

And there will be many dead bodies scattered. Songs, wailings, silence. The songs at the temple will be silenced once for all. Because in chapter 5, God had declared that he detested the worship of the people of Enemos' time.

You know, in chapter 5, verse 21 onwards, God had declared, I hate, I despise your feast, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them.

And the peace offerings of your fattened animals, I will not look upon them. Take away from me the noise of your songs to the melody of your harps, I will not listen.

[ 7 : 23 ] And the reason God gave for despising their worship is that they have neglected the more important matters of justice and righteousness. The God of the Bible puts it in his own words in chapter 5, let justice rule down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Instead, what they did was the opposite. And God said in the same chapter, they had turned justice to poison fruit and cast down righteousness to the earth.

These people were no different than the Pharisees that Jesus condemned. You know, Jesus said, woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. You have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faithfulness.

You know, justice, mercy, faithfulness runs through the Bible like a stream from Genesis right to Revelation. The Israelites in Amos' time, the Pharisees of Jesus' time, and some of us in our times, you know, we could put up a good act as good church-going folks.

You know, we could turn up at church events at the right time. We could say amen to all the prayers. We could sing the right hymns, but we could be busy with church, but far from God.

[ 8 : 41 ] No different than the priest and the Levite who abandoned the injured man that had been robbed and left to die on the road to Jericho. Now, both the priest and the Levite probably were busy with church stuff.

They were unlike the good Samaritan, whom Jesus praised, who took the risk at the cost of his life to save a man's life. Jesus said, But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion, mercy.

He went up to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.

And the next day, he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, Take care of him and whatever more you spend, I will repay when I come back at the cost of his life and the cost of his wealth.

The Israelites in Amos' time were the opposite of the good Samaritan, who, interestingly, is a product of the aftermath of the Assyrian invasion. So, interestingly, there is grace after the judgment.

[ 9 : 55 ] The Israelites have stepped upon and abused the poor, the needy and the disadvantaged. It's in verse 4. Hear these, you who trample the needy and bring the poor to the land to an end.

In their greed and selfishness, they have all the while been ignoring the Torah injunction. In Deuteronomy, God had said, For there will never cease to be the poor in the land.

Therefore, I command you, you shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor in your land, as well as you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

You know, as I've mentioned, the Israelites in Amos' time were very, very religious. They were church-going folks. They observed the new moon and the Sabbath. But all the time while they were in their worship services, their eyes were on the clock rather than the hymn book.

When can we get out and continue with our money-making schemes? You know, they had the system rigged for their benefit. They turned their backs against the poor as they faced the pulpit to convince themselves that they were part of God's people.

[ 11 : 08 ] Their ears were close to the deafening cry of those whom they were oppressed as they increased the volume of their worship. They were no different again than the people of Jesus' time.

You know, Jesus said, you hypocrites. Well, did Isaiah prophesy of you when he said, these people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

In vain do they worship me teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. Now, Isaiah, another great prophet of the Bible, a contemporary of Amos, who Jesus had just quoted, says this in his famous chapter 58.

You know, this is when Israel, the people of God, were complaining to God that God is overlooking their righteous acts. You know, they say, why have we fasted and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves and you have taken no knowledge of it?

We've done all these religious acts, but you're ignoring us. And God's answer to Israel is this, behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure and you oppress all your workers.

[ 12 : 15 ] What they should have done according to God through Isaiah is this, this is what God says, if you turn back your foot from Sabbath, from doing your own pleasure on my holy day and call the Sabbath a delight and my holy day with the holy day of the Lord honorable, if you honor it, not going on your own ways or seeking your own pleasure or talking idly, then you shall take delight in the Lord and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth and I will feed you the heritage of Jacob your father for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

And again, no different than the Pharisees in Jesus' time. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you clean the outside of the cup and the plate but inside they're full of greed and self-indulgence.

You are whitewashed tombs which outwardly appear beautiful but within are full of dead people's bones and uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others but within are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

All respectable and religious on the outside but rotten on the inside. Isaiah condemns the sins of the people in his time. Amos does the same in our passage.

Jesus does the same with the Pharisees. Now we might be sitting here reading and listening to these words and thinking I'm not like them. My sins are not as bad as them.

[ 13 : 42 ] I am not as evil as them. But that's just looking at the surface because the heart of the matter is the matter of the heart. Those visible sins are just symptoms of something deeper.

You know Isaiah tells us, he says, Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure. If you turn back your fruit from Sabbath from doing again your own pleasure if you honor it not going your ways or seeking your own pleasure.

At the heart of all our outward sins that is visible whatever form it is are self-centeredness, selfishness, self-pleasure.

Because we are all self-preoccupied with our own wants and needs. That's just the way we are because of indwelling sin. we are worried about our own security and our own comfort.

Self-preservation is the name of the game when survival of the fittest is the philosophy of the fallen world. God is not against wealth or the accumulation of it.

[ 14 : 52 ] In the Torah it's a sign of blessing and grace as a sign of God's favor. If you don't believe me just listen to the televangelists about that. That's a joke.

what he's against is how we abuse others in the process of accumulating wealth for our own selfish needs and what we do with it closing our eyes to the needy and using it for our own pleasure

besides putting our trust in it.

Now the people of Amos' time and we can do the same. drowned out the cries of the people they oppressed by raising the volume of worship songs.

They wore a cloak of religiosity to cover their nakedness before God. You know these are the type of folks that Jesus rebukes in the book of Revelation. for you say I am rich I have prospered and I need nothing not realizing that you are wretched pitiful poor blind and naked I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

God is against the false worship and the empty religions and the social injustice that flows out of it. all of this stems from the failure to recognize who the God of the Bible is.

[16:34] You know the people of Amos' time had a false view of God and that had corrupted everything. You know when God is first and at the center of our lives everything else our relationship our work our leisure they become meaningful and they fit into their proper place.

But when self is enthroned and let me tell you self is a punishing master it's a jealous and a punishing master it's never satisfied it will push everything else out to the margins.

When our worship is focused on ourselves and not God greed and selfishness are enthroned and the result as James puts it where jealousy and selfish ambition exist there will be disorder and every wild practice.

The people in Amos' time their standards have become wholly corrupt. Amos condemns them for selling small measures of weed for grossly inflated price and ruined struggling buyers.

If ultimately we worship ourselves which means we are very self-centered and we don't worship the true and the living God we will judge everything and everyone on how they could serve our interest.

[18:01] So in verse 6 the poor are treated as disposable items commodities to be bought and sold. That's why James the brother of Jesus warns us this is religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this to visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

That is why God has to judge his people. Now in my story in the beginning the beliefs had every right to come after me. I had signed a contract. The children of Israel had a covenant with God. It's a contract. And that covenant came with privileges and responsibilities. You know at the heart of it God had said I shall be their God and they shall be my people.

A people that will be the salt of the earth and the light to the nations. God's people Israel. God's people was Israel then and today it's the church it's us.

We are the moral compass of this world. But what happens when we are no longer fit for purpose? When we are no different in fact worse than the society that God has put us in.

[19:14] When we are just as selfish and self centered as the people that do not know! Jesus. Jesus has some very chilling words for us. He says you are the salt of the earth. But if the salt has lost its days how shall its saltiness be restored?

It's no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. God has to judge them because of the covenant he had made for them. The covenant came with privileges! character. You know at the end of the Sermon of the Mount Jesus said this everyone who hears the words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand and the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew!

God's moral law and God's ways we are playing with fire because we are messing around with God we are building our lives on shifting sands like the foolish man Paul tells us in Galatians do not be deceived God is not mocked for whatever one sows that will he also reap for the one who sows to his own flesh!

will from the spirit reap eternal life in God's universe there is sowing and reaping because God's principle of justice and mercy are infused in the DNA of our universe mess with it and you mess with your lives and destiny Amos puts it this way in verse 7 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 every one moan who dwells in it and all of it rise like the Nile and be tossed about and sink again like the Nile of Egypt first he is speaking of an earthquake and then the rising and the sinking of the great Nile now imagine you are on a boat and when that's happening that's what happens when God's moral principle are ignored as an earthquake when we do not treat others as they are made in the image of

[ 21 : 56 ] God when we abuse and take advantage of one another when we use our religion to hide from God when we assume just coming to church at certain times of the week should have God off my back Amos wants us that our world will be turned upside down you know in fact Amos actually dates his prophecies two years before the earthquake in the beginning because in his spiritual universe that is what matters in terms of timeline Amos speaks of the great Nile in verse 8 Amos is alluding to Egypt when the children of Israel were oppressed!

When they were slaves and taken advantage of God had judged Egypt for oppressing his people now he will judge his people for being no different we cannot build our lives apart from the framework that God has given us in his word there will be an earthquake there will be a storm everything will be made topsy turvy no different than the storm that Jesus had warned us at the beginning of our chapter God asked Amos Amos what do you see and he said a basket of summer fruit Israel had been living in the summer of God's grace they have neglected his warnings they have neglected his word they have neglected the poor they have lived as they pleased and the basket of summer fruit is the harvest they have reaped they are ripe but rotten therefore ripe for judgment you know verse 2 says at the end has come upon my people

I will never again pass by them God is no longer going to overlook the sins of his people his patience and long sufferings has run out he will bring upon them the curses of the covenant but we are still being shown grace you know God is inviting us to repent!

of our! God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble the people of Amos' time are facing their harvest harvest in the Bible is a sign of judgment as well a sign of vindication so are we being ripened as Jesus puts it either as wheat to be gathered furs and bound into bundles to be burned or wheat to be gathered into God's barn but the choice is ours we should not spurn God's grace the book of Hebrews tells us for if we go on sinning deliberately!

after receiving the knowledge of the truth there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins but a fearful expectation of judgment and a fiery fire that will consume the adversaries anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses That was the warning for the people in Amos' time because they lived on the covenant with Moses but for us is this how much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the son of God and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified and has outraged the spirit of grace for we know him who said vengeance is mine I will repay and again the Lord will judge his people it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God God will judge those who trample his grace there is no such thing as cheap grace why is that because when God shows us his grace he is actually risking his character and his name what is

[ 25 : 48 ] God's name and what is his character when Moses asked God to see his glory this is what God revealed to him he said the Lord the Lord a God merciful and gracious slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness keeping steadfast love for thousands forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin but who will by no means clear the guilty visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation God cannot ignore the cry of the oppressed because his reputation and character is at stake read psalm 73 the cry of God's people how long oh God is the foe to scoff is the enemy to revile your name forever why do you hold back your hand your right hand take it from the foe of your garment and destroy them every time God delays his punishment he is prolonging the cry of the oppressed and

God allows that he shows grace so that the wicked may repent grace is possible because of the blood of Jesus you know all of us in our worship and our calling as well as our responsibilities have fallen short of the standard that God expects of us only Jesus is a true and faithful worshipper who fulfill all that God expects of us yet became the lamb of sacrifice of our sins that's why the book of Hebrews urges us take care brothers lest there be any of you an evil heart unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God but exhort one another every day as long it is called today that none of you may be for we have time to share in Christ if indeed we hold on our original confidence firm to the end as it was said today if you hear his voice do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion

God is still showing us his grace if you are sitting here and you haven't put your trust in Christ he is still showing you grace and if you hear and you say I going to God of the universe and God has to be true to his character let us respond to God God's grace and repentance he's more willing to forgive than our desire to repent let us pray