

Amos

Sunday 10/31/2010

One of the many incredible books, I get into this stuff. My plan when I do my lesson is I will take Monday and Tuesday and pretty well frame everything up, what I want to say and how I want to say it, and get all my angles that I want to work into it. Then I take the rest of the week and just kind of add to it. I spend probably four or five hours Monday and four or five hours Tuesday just kind of getting it out.

The biggest problem I have is I understand the book. I could teach the book in my sleep. My biggest problem is cutting down the information so that it doesn't overwhelm you, and I miss the point. That's the biggest thing I've got to deal with because these things are loaded. Some of you that know me and have known me for quite a few years, you'll hear that many of the things that I'm talking about in here are in small episodes that you've heard me preach over the years, some maybe as long as 30 years ago, and out through my career as preaching.

I've gotten so many sermons over the years out of the minor prophets. I don't know of books that are so small in content but are just overwhelming in the material they contain. It goes from a lot of different angles. It goes from the fact, I think, from dealing with the nation of Israel. You've heard me say this before: there are just literally untold numbers of parallels between Israel's spiritual condition, what they had, what God gave them, the mission that God gave them, and then here they are completely in apostasy and losing every blessing that God had for them, and about to go into the captivity that's going to ruin them and destroy them for the next five or six hundred years.

Yet the parallel to that, which is so easy to preach, is that's where we're at today. The parallels between the Old Testament nation of Israel and the New Testament church are just incredible because we also were given a mandate. The church was given a mission. The church was given the Word of God, just like Israel was, and the church is going to be held accountable and is being held accountable for their departing from the Word of God, just like the nation of Israel was. So it's just endless.

Then from the historical side of it, just realizing that in history, the very things... wait until next week when we get into the book of Obadiah. Obadiah is a book that's only one chapter in your Bible, and it's the smallest book in the Old Testament, but it absolutely will turn the lights on with where we're at today because understanding where we're at today and where we're going tomorrow is based on understanding what's happened in the past.

Three in your Bible, as most of you know, is the number of completion. Seven in the Bible is the number of perfection. But three in the Bible is a number of completion. Stop and think about it: nothing in life is complete without the third part. Any mathematical formula you have is going to come out in a system of threes. A family is a husband and wife, but they're not a family until the third part comes in, that little baby. Everything breaks down in a completeness of the system of threes. That's why for the completeness of understanding the Bible, you've got to be able to understand the past, the present, and the future, and you better be able to tie all those things together.

I think that that's another great element of the minor prophets. I think probably the greatest one, and it's the one that has always been so rich for me, is to look at it from the aspect of how these books, from a practical standpoint, contain the great principles found in the Bible. The principles that Israel was up against in the Old Testament are the same principles that we are up against in the New Testament.

I told you last week that Christ in this book is typified as "my husband." There's a parallel right there. My husband, from the aspect, and I've already showed you that God was likened to Israel's husband and Israel likened to God's wife in the Old Testament. We looked at that in the book of Hosea. Yet we also know that the Bible says that we are the bride, and Christ is the bridegroom. So there again, it fits in both aspects, and you see here in this book that theme in Amos 5:16, "Christ my husband."

We talked about how Amos is a book before the exile, right before God's judgment falls on them for their ungodliness. Yet we're living in a day and age, and we talked about this a couple of weeks ago, we've talked about it on some Thursday nights, that we're living in a day and age right before God's judgment is going to fall. I talked about how we came down through this and how we saw that Amos's name means "the burden." I talked to you how these men, these Old Testament prophets, they had one task, and that task was to burden the people of God because of their ungodliness and their indifference toward the things of God.

A couple of Thursday nights ago, it was really bothering me that week, and you kind of got thrown up on if you were here that night, just because of the burden these books have done in my life. These books, you think I just get up here and make these so you'll get something out of it. Let me tell you something, and I've said this many, many times: you have to listen to it one time. I have to go through it probably 50 times throughout the week. When I get into these books, like the prophets, the minor prophets, or the prophets, and I see the time period that they're living in, and I see the absolute indifference of God's people, and how God sent them a man to stand in the gap, like Ezekiel talked about, to preach the Word of God to an indifferent people, and how they hated him, how they rejected what he said, and how nobody wanted to follow, and the only ones you find back there in the Old Testament, the only ones you find back there, is a remnant of people who really want to be what God wants them to be.

I see the same thing today. I struggle a lot. I'm not the kind of a preacher who just does this because this is what I do for a living. I do this because this is my life. Some of you may take your Christianity; you pick it up on Sunday morning and you leave it at the door on the way out. There are God's people like that. I've never been able to do that. I believe that Christianity is a lifestyle. I believe it. I was talking to Angel here this last week, and she was telling me about her roommate that's a little gal, a Muslim, and she's moved in with her, and looking for an opportunity to witness.

We got talking about how that is. You look at somebody, we are down on Islam and the Muslims, not because of their people, but because of their religion and how it's contrary. Of course, there's nothing biblical in any way, shape, or form about the Muslim faith or Islam or Muhammad and all that stuff. It's just another phony religion that the devil has thrown out somewhere in history

that people have gotten suckered into. But I've got to tell you, and what we were talking about, here's a little gal that's probably going to die and go to hell if she doesn't get saved. Here's a little gal that doesn't have God in her life, and yet six times a day she'll get on her knees and pray toward the east, toward Mecca, because her belief and her religion is part of her life.

We've got God's people, probably in this church, certainly in this city, that are saved and on your way to heaven, and going to heaven, and you wouldn't close your eyes and bow your head over a cheeseburger or over anything, and you never talked to God one time in the day. Those are the kind of things I look at, and those are the kind of things that concern me, and I would be dishonest if I didn't tell you that it bothered me today. It bothers me what my role is as a pastor. It bothers me. Someday I'm going to stand before God, and I am going to give an account of not just how I pastored this church, but what I preached from this pulpit.

If what I see is absolutely true, that I've caught in that parallel vortex between the Old Testament prophet and the New Testament church, with a nation of people back here that are indifferent, and God sends them a guy to hold the line and preach the truth, and I find myself today in the same concept on the other side of the cross, with God's people that are just as indifferent, and God has called men to preach the truth. It bothers me that I preach the truth because it burdens me. It's easy to back off today. It's easy not to want to offend people because we live in a world that nobody wants to hear the truth. Nobody wants to be offended.

I understand better, and I think coming through these prophets in the Old Testament has done something for me that I'm not going to say that I needed it, I'm not even going to say that I wanted it, but I got it. That is the fact that in these last days, I can't speak for you in your house. I really can't. I think Joshua said it better than anybody when he said, "I can't speak for you, but for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." I think that everybody individually has to come down, and at some place in your life, you have to draw a line and say, "That's enough." If that means you lose some friends, maybe you're better off if you lose them. If that means that you lose some relationships, maybe you're better off to lose them. If that means that you have some issues with people in your life because you're going to stand for the truth, maybe that's a good thing.

But I know this: when we stand at the judgment seat of Christ, God is not going to judge us based on how nice we were, how mean we were. He's not going to judge us on how we tried to manipulate the circumstances or play both ends against the middle to please whoever. He's going to judge us that once you got saved, what did you do with that truth that God gave you? That's a sobering thought for me. Maybe it doesn't bother you, but it bothers me. I think the thing that every child of God has to look for, I think the most important thing in your life and my life, 15 seconds after we get saved, is that everything we do, every relationship we get in, every word that comes out of our mouth, is in light of the view that someday we're going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Amos means "the burden," and I can honestly tell you that in this case, as in the other prophets up to this point, he's certainly done that in my life. He's made me look back and reevaluate my preaching, my stand on things. Yet at the same time, I understand that Jesus Christ came, and He

came with not only truth but grace, so you've got to balance it all out. But at the end of the day, you've got to stand for what's right.

I have a rule that I follow in dealing with people, and it's a good rule. It's a rule I learned the hard way. The things I've learned about God in the Bible, and it's a rule that many of you I've told, and many of you who work with me, I've given you this rule, and I hope you follow it too, because if you don't, it'll cause you problems down the line. It's a basic, simple rule, and it's simply this: you can never want somebody to do right more than they do. You just can't. I want people to do right. I want people to love God. I want people to live right. I want people to respond to the things of God. But the moment I, as a pastor, want you to do that more than you want to do that, you know what happens? Every time, I wind up getting taken advantage of because I compromise. I compromise my stand for you.

I know we live in a world in Christianity where it's all about compromise. I don't find one place in the New Testament where Jesus ever compromised for anybody. He preached the truth. He took a stand in the truth, yet He was full of compassion, and He gave people the opportunity, like the woman at the well. He gave people the opportunity, like blind Bartimaeus. You'll find all the way through His ministry that He exercised that grace and that truth, but He held the line with truth.

I look at the fact, and I think that Amos was a nobody. Everybody wants to be somebody today, but I think God uses nobodies because when you become somebody, then you think you're better than you are. I think most pastors today want to attain a place in their life where they become somebody. That's why they all follow the guys who are already somebody. I think the greatest way to be used of God is to never become a somebody, but always become a nobody.

I think back there in a little verse in Genesis about Enoch, and it says, "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." Now I know this is a play on words, but I like it. I like the fact that in a world where everybody wanted to be somebody, Enoch was a "was not." Enoch was not, and God took him. He was "was not." He wasn't part of the system. He wasn't part of the structure. He was just somebody who wanted to do what God wanted him to do and was willing to pay the price to get there. I think that Amos was that way. He's a little shepherd guy from a small town about 12 or 13 miles from Jerusalem.

Of course, we find in this book some incredible stuff. One of the things that we talked about last time was God's sarcasm. I showed you how there's a side to God that most of us do not know and understand. We think about the fact that God's sending a man here. I know people who say, "Well, God wouldn't send a man to hell." They believe that. There are preachers in this city today who stand up and say that God is a God of love, and there's no question about that, and that God would never send a man to hell. Yet, I don't believe that. The Bible doesn't teach that. But if you really take that thing to the extreme, let me tell you something, pal, not only will God send you to hell, but He'll laugh at you and mock you when you get there.

Now that's a tough message to preach. In your Bible is a little thing you ought to study sometime called "the laughter of God." You ought to find when God laughs. We have a little saying, "He that laughs last laughs best." We all use that from time to time, but that's from the Bible because

God always has the last laugh. When you live in an unsaved world where people are against God, they hate God, and they laugh at God, they make fun of God, they take God's Word and trample it under their feet, they do everything on this planet contrary to what He says, and then go out the door laughing. "He who laughs last laughs best."

Proverbs 1:26

I will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;

He tells you in Psalms 2:4:

Psalms 2:4

He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh:

Somebody says, "I really have a tough time with that." Yes, you do, and you know why you do? Because you have no concept of the God of the Bible. No concept of the God of the Bible.

I used to work in a steel mill when I got out of high school, before I went in the army. My brother-in-law got me a job at Republic Steel, and I only worked there a short period of time because I was going to get drafted, so I enlisted. But I worked there for a couple of three or four months. It was the dirtiest job I ever had. I was a hand grinder. A hand grinder in a steel mill is where these big cranes bring in at a time maybe two or three tons of steel bars; they're square. My job, and I had a partner, was with these big iron hooks. You clamp onto it, and you pull it out, and you turn it over. Then you go down with a piece of chalk, and you look for cracks in that steel bar, and you mark a circle around all those cracks. Then you go back, and you get your goggles, and you're suited up for it. You've got a hard hat, you've got steel-toe shoes, you've got goggles, you've got a respirator, and you get this big hand grinder, weighs about 30 pounds. Then all night long you grind the cracks out of that steel. When you get them down and you grind them up and you move them, when you're done with that bar, you move it, and your job was to get two or three loads done a night.

Now that steel mill had been around probably since World War II. It was the filthiest place I ever worked in my life. I never could stay clean. I would go in with brand new, I had to wash my clothes every day. I would go in with brand new work clothes on. I mean, I would go in clean. I would try to, and I never left my work area. I wasn't out where you know, but all I would do was stay at my station, and when I'd come out of there at night, I was black as the ace of spades from head to toe. I had to take a shower before I could even get in my car. I don't care how much I tried to stay clean, no matter how hard I tried to stay clean, I always wound up filthy by the end of the day.

Years later, I looked back at that in my own life, in the ministry, and as a Christian, and I thought to myself, "You know what? The world's the same way." This is what happens to most of us. You walk out in the world today; it's like going to work in that steel mill. All around you is the filth of this world. All around you are people, places, circumstances, situations, they're just as filthy and black as the abyss. What happens is in your life, in my life, I didn't realize how dirty I got until I went into the men's room before I left my shift there, where they had the lockers and everything,

and looked in the mirror. I've got to tell you, the first time I did it, I couldn't believe it because just going through the day, I never saw how dirty I got. But when I looked in that mirror, that mirror showed me that the last eight hours I was in a filthy place, and I picked up, just by being there and by association, a lot of filth and a lot of dirt I never intended to get on me.

The Bible says that this is why it's important for you and me to look through the looking glass, the perfect law of liberty, because what this book does for you, it's the reality check for all of us. It shows you and me that even though you're saved and on your way to heaven, even though you have the very best intentions, even though you want to do what's right, just by association with this world, we pick up the dirt. That's why you've got to get a shower from Republic Steel, and you've got to get washed with the washing of the water by the Word. You've got to get clean. I think that that's something that we have lost sight of today.

We looked at God's sarcasm. Then we looked at another great principle found in there, and we looked at Amos 5:8, where it talked about "seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion," and where we tied that into some things, and then we tied that into some things on Thursday night. But I told you that this book is wrapped around six great biblical principles. Some books in the Bible are that way. Philippians is that way, except Philippians is built around nine, I think, if I remember right. The book of Philippians is built around nine basic principles or verses that are absolutely incredible, and that's the way some books are.

Now in the book of Amos, he does the same thing. This is where the parallels come in. This is where you learn a lot, and this is where I've got some great sermons. In fact, I've got sermons on just about all of these. I want to walk through it today, and I want to kind of look at it. I want us to remember a couple of things: historically, this is Israel's condition right before God's judgment falls on them. Inspirationally, it's our spiritual condition, and the principles will fit right into your life and my life today, just like they did in the Old Testament. The Bible is a timeless book. The Bible doesn't have sections that are written back in it; it doesn't mean it has no value today. Maybe all the Bible is not written directly to you, but all the Bible is certainly written for you, and the principles are incredible sometimes.

I. The First Principle: Agreement for Fellowship

Now the first one is found in Amos chapter 3. This is basically the real issue that Israel has, and I think this kind of starts the ball rolling in the right direction. I don't know if Amos preached these as six different messages. I would, because I have, but boy, they would be six great messages if you ever wanted to have a Bible conference back in the time of Amos.

Now the first one is Amos 3:3. It's a great concept and a great verse because it simply says and then asks the question:

Amos 3:3

Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

Now that is the real issue, first of all, that God has with the nation of Israel. God and Israel are in a disagreement; therefore, they cannot walk together. Yet the thing that overwhelms me when you stop and look at it is that they think they're walking with God.

What the Bible does for you, and this is why people don't get in the Bible, they may go to church, but they'll never really get into the Bible because once you get into the Bible, you can look into that looking glass where the Bible says that a man beholds his natural face in a glass, likened to the Word of God. At that point, you see who you really are. That's why Israel did not like the prophets. Israel wanted to pretend they were one thing, but the prophets kept pointing them back to what they really were. That's what the Bible does, and that is the job of a preacher or a man of God, whether he's in the Old Testament dispensation or the New Testament dispensation.

He says, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Remember now, the concept here is "Christ my husband," and a husband and wife need to walk together. If they don't, they're going to have some problems. I think that this was Israel's issue, that they could no longer walk with God together, and some issues had come up, and some issues come up in your life and my life that destroy what fellowship is. I say this all the time, but we have a really warped idea of what fellowship with God is, and we think fellowship with God is getting together and having a get-together with a bunch of Christians and all of that. I'm not saying that that's not a form of fellowship, but that's not the fellowship that God wants to have in walking with you. We'll talk about it here in a little bit, but it's a great concept for everyday life. It is one of those basic principles that life is built around. You cannot walk together with someone very long if you don't agree on the same things.

We have in Christianity, the way we've gotten around that basically is through the evangelical movement, because in the evangelical movement, we don't have any doctrinal issues. You take away the things that we can all get along on: we love Jesus, we can all get along on Jesus died on the cross for everybody. Those are not issues. But when you start to talk about doctrinal things: tongues, healing, losing your salvation, the different versions of the Bible, those things at a moment begin to bring up the things that will break that walk with somebody. I think that it's just the way that it goes today. It's just the way that it is.

You're going to find that in relationships, if you don't walk together and agree on some things, you're in trouble. In marriage, it's true. 2 Corinthians 6:14, the most obvious, the Bible says:

2 Corinthians 6:14

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

Why? Because there's nothing in common between the two, and he goes down and he lists all the areas. There's no way that a saved man or an unsaved woman, or vice versa, can ever walk together with God because they can't agree. God chose a man and a woman to agree together to become one in God's sight. There's your agreement to accomplish what God wants them to do.

I think that's true of relationships. Ladies, I'll just be honest with you, if you're not married, never marry somebody that isn't going to be your spiritual leader. I don't care how good he looks, how much money he's got. I don't care what he tells you. The bottom line is this: you don't marry the man, you marry the Christ in the man. If you don't see that Christ in the man, then I'm just telling you, you can do what you want to do with it, but you're going to have a problem.

Your children are another one. Parents ought to have an agreement on a lifestyle for their children. It had to start long before you heard their first "no." It had to go all the way back that you build into their lives the things that they, you have an agreement that they understand. Most parents, the reason why they can't discipline their kids when they get older is because the kids have no pattern of discipline to bring them all the way up through it. All they ever hear is "no." They don't ever hear any reason or any biblical concept because there's no agreement.

I think it's true of the church. Churches today have issues because, obviously, for doctrinal issues, they have issues today. You have what you call church splits. Sure, I've seen church splits. Churches split over the stupidest stuff in the world. I heard of a church split one time, a guy that I knew, his church split over the fact because they were going to get choir robes and put on a choir. They had one group of people that wanted no choir robe because they thought it made it look too Catholic. They had another group of people that liked the lemon-colored choir robes. Then he had another group of people that liked the maroon one because it associated with the blood of Christ. Stay biblical, like our chairs here, which we just got a better deal on that one than we did on the blue ones. That's all I can tell you. Somebody said, "Well, you're really biblical. You've got chairs that match the blood of Christ." Well, we could have got blue ones that would have been royalty for Jesus Christ. We could have got black, and that would have been all of our hearts. So we could have done it anyway. It just happened to be they had those on sale when we bought them. But the bottom line, they split. The church split right down the middle. 40 people went this way, 40 people went that way, over choir robes. Over choir robes.

I've seen churches where families get in there, and they've got uncles and brothers and sisters and everybody in it, and somebody gets their nose out of joint on something, and a whole family bands together, and 30, 40 people are gone, and it's usually over something absolutely stupid. But how can two walk together except they be agreed?

II. God's Three Controversies

There's a great word in the Bible, and I told you about this Thursday night, didn't I? There's a great word in the Bible that you ought to study, and I've got a sermon on this one. It's the word "controversy" because I don't know if you know it or not, but there are three controversies in the Bible that God has, and they're relevant to the nation of Israel, but they're also relevant to you and me. I've got a sermon I preach on this about the three controversies God had. Most God's people don't even have a clue that there's even a controversy going on.

I'll tell you something I learned a long time ago, and I was just reading this. I was reading over there in the Gospels one time, and I've said this before, that Jesus and His family were walking. They were going somewhere, and they're all walking along on the road, going somewhere, and

then Jesus gets sidetracked, and He's down here doing something. The Bible says that after two days, I think it is, after two days, somebody in His family assembly said, "Hey, where's Jesus?" He'd been missing for two days. He had not been with the family group for almost two days, and finally, after two days, somebody in the family says, "He's not here." Now, let me ask you a question: how in the world could you walk with your family for two days and not figure out that you're missing one of your family members? A great moral that is, that God's people think they're walking with Him when in actuality, He hasn't been walking with you for quite a while. You lost Him somewhere along the way. Those are the reality things. We don't like it. I don't like it. I don't like it at all, but that's the truth. Whatever comes out of my mouth has to deal with me first before it ever gets to you.

But God has three controversies.

1. The first controversy is found over there in Jeremiah 25:31. Jeremiah 25:31

A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the Lord. Now over in Isaiah 34:8, you have the other verse that goes along with this controversy, and here it's called "the controversy of Zion." That tells me that the first controversy God has is with the nations of this planet over the nation of Israel. I don't know if you know it or not, but here again, there's someplace along the line you're going to take a stand. Someplace along the line you're going to have to take a very unpopular stand, maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but it's certainly on the horizon, and it's coming our way very quickly. That is going to be a stand for the nation of Israel or against the nation of Israel. There's no question about it.

2. Now that we know that America is going to go with the Antichrist from the times that we've studied in the Bible, I don't have time to go back over it again this morning, but there's no question about it now that America is going to turn her back on the Jew, just like all the other nations, because when the Lord comes back, all the nations of the earth are against Israel. You're seeing right now that America is probably one of the last of the few nations that are not absolutely folding up over Israel, and we're going to. It's no accident that we got a Muslim president or post-Muslim president, however you want to look at it. It doesn't matter to me whatever he says about his national policy with the nation of Israel. I guarantee you, when I read my Bible, I can cut through all the politics and all the gas that all the politicians put out, and what I clearly see is in the next 10, 5, 15, 20 years, America turning its back on the Jew. Take it to the bank. God has a controversy with the nations.

3. Then the second one is found in Hosea 12:2. Here's where he says: Hosea 12:2

The Lord hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him. That's another name for Israel. That's against the leaders of the nation of Israel. I cannot tell you, and I started my sermon this morning by talking about this, but I cannot simply tell you how terrifying it's going to be after the judgment seat of Christ for pastors. I can't even begin to tell you the accountability that God is going to hold a pastor to once you take the position of pastor. Oh, I know you look like a glamorous job because you're up in front of people, you get to preach messages, you get to do all these things. Yes, you get to lead people. I understand all that, but to whom

much is given, much is required. There is a day coming where every pastor, along with every Christian, is going to have to stand, and it's very clear in the Bible that God is much harder on religious leaders than He is the common, ordinary, garden-variety sinner.

4. Boy, I'm going to tell you something, He had a controversy with the leaders of the nation of Israel, and I guarantee you He has a controversy with the leaders today in our spiritual world that we live in, the religious leaders of America and around this world. I have never seen such an amalgamated mess of men who have missed the boat, who don't even understand what the issues are, who have just got swaddled up in all of the stuff that goes along with it that has taken this country where it's going. You can blame the Democrats all you want, and you can blame the liberals all you want, and you can go down that road all day long, and you can throw rocks at Nancy Pelosi and Barack Obama and Harry Reid and everybody else out there, whether in the Democratic world or the Republican world, or whoever you don't like or like. But the bottom line is simply this: no country ever went into apostasy and no country ever went down the tubes until the preachers of that country forsook the Word of God and quit preaching it. When that happened, it was a dead-end street, and that's where it's going to go. So before we get on the bandwagon with all the politicians, it comes back to the men who were the leaders of Christianity who had a responsibility to keep preaching the truth and for whatever reason, quit preaching it.
5. Then He has the third one here, and that'll be in Hosea 4:1. This is where He has a controversy with the people. It says in Hosea 4:1:Hosea 4:1

Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. Over there in Micah 6:2, which is the other verse you want to go along with this, He tells you that controversy is with the people. Remember I told you, you cannot separate the land from the people. "Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land because," and here's the reason He cuts right down to it now. This is a great sermon in itself. There is no truth. There is no mercy. There's no knowledge of God on the land. You see, once you lose the Bible, once you get out of the Bible, once you quit reading the Bible, once you quit getting in the Bible, once you throw away your Bible, once you don't care about your Bible anymore, don't love it anymore, once you get out of that book, there's an automatic process going down that takes place, and then you lose your mercy, and pretty soon you come to the point where you lose whatever knowledge of God you may have had. Of course, this is the controversy that He has, and these three basic controversies that God had with Israel, they affect their walk, and they affect the walk that you and I have. There was a disagreement that they could not walk together any longer.

It's a great truth. I would give you some great advice, and I think this is probably the greatest single advice I could give anybody that's a Christian today in the day and age that we live in. If you were unsaved, my great advice would be, "Get saved." But since you're all saved here this morning, I just threw that in case there's one here that's not. But I think the greatest advice I could give you today in a world that we live in, if you're a saved person, is simply this: find out what God's fight is and make that your fight. Find out who God's enemies are and make those your enemy. Find out what stand God is taking and make that your stand. Because it's a great

truth, no matter what the world does, no matter what the nations do, no matter what Christianity or the leaders of Christianity do with God and the Word of God, we, you and I, have a personal responsibility as God's people to do what's right with God and keep walking with Him if nobody else in the world does. Find out what God's fight is today, find out where God is at, what He's doing, what He's standing for, and make that your stand. If it's your friends, your family, or whoever get in the way of that, you've got a decision you've got to make. For me, that decision is pretty easy.

We think that fellowship with God is just having fun time together. We get to the point where we just get a little group together and get that nice warm fuzzy feeling, and everybody thinks we've had fellowship. The Bible says by the definition in 1 John 1:7:

1 John 1:7

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Fellowship with God is based on you walking in that book because that book is light. The Bible says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." To have fellowship with Him and walk with Him, you have to do it in the book that God has given you, or you're wasting your time.

I guess probably in a group this size, we have people that, you know, it's hard to get a group this size anywhere that doesn't fall into some of you. I bet you there are some of you here this week that you didn't crack the Bible one time. You didn't open up. I won't even get into prayer. You didn't open your Bible one time. You didn't get into that Bible for one thing this week. Yet, sitting here this morning, if somebody would nudge you on the shoulder and say, "Are you in fellowship with God?" you'd say, "Oh, yes, I am." You know what? That's an illusion in your mind because it just doesn't work that way. But that's where we're at today, isn't it? That's where we're at today.

III. The Second Principle: God Reveals His Secrets

Now the second one, and I think this is a great one. I like this one personally. I've got a sermon on this one, too. The second one is found in Amos 3:7. It says:

Amos 3:7

Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.

You know what that verse is saying? It's saying that the world will look at a circumstance and see absolutely nothing. The world will look at what's going on around us. How many times have I heard a guy saying, "Oh, are you preaching about the Lord coming back? They've been preaching about that for hundreds of years. They've been preaching about it. My granddaddy preached that, my great uncle." I've heard people say that all my life, and He still hasn't come. You see, they see it, and surely they say to themselves, "God isn't going to do anything." That's why we live the rotten lifestyles we do. That's why we do the sin in our life that we do, because

God doesn't come down and immediately whack us. When you get away with it once, you get this mindset in your idea. We all get this way because there's no real walk with God. We get the mindset that because God didn't come down and kill us the first time, we can get away with it a second time. That's exactly the attitude of heart and the mindset that leads to somebody just caught up in the world and forsaking everything with God because we think in our hearts, "God didn't come down and speedily judge my sin. I get away with it."

Of course, let me tell you something, "Surely the Lord will do nothing" is going to be offset, "but He revealed His secret unto His servants the prophets." He'll tell you exactly that it doesn't always work the way we want it to work. I've known people that were the most wicked people on this planet. I've known God's people that were selling the most divisive, wicked people on this planet. You know what? They've got more money than all of us today. They've got all the things that they could have today, and some of you and some of us could never attain to what they've got or live in a home that they live in. We look at that and we scratch our head and we say, "Wow, how did I? I thought they were wicked. I thought they were going to do this." You know what the Bible says? That in their hearts, they say, "Look at me, God isn't going to do anything." But God's going to do something. This doesn't do it in your time or my time.

I told you the story about the 1850s, 1860s. An old evangelist came through Missouri, and he preached down there, and he preached a sermon, boy, just about six, seven days in a row, and he held them back for a second week, and he just preached fire out of the place. People were getting saved left and right, and people were just getting right with God. There was one guy that was the richest guy in town. He owned, he was like the Ben Cartwright of the mid-Missouri. He had everything. He owned the bank. He owned a hardware store. He owned this. He had more land. He sat down there, and the old man preached, "God's judgment coming," and "God's judgment coming," and preached about sin and all this stuff, and how the wages of sin is death, and all of these things, and all week long. Finally, at the end of the deal, after about two weeks, people were going out the door, and the old man had preached his heart out. This guy came up to him and shook his hand and said, "Preacher, I've been here every night." The preacher said, "Yeah, I know, you've been sitting right in the first or second row." And he says, "Yep, every night." He said, "I want you to know I heard your messages, and I just came because I wanted to hear. But," he said, "I've got to be honest with you, I don't believe what you're saying." He says, "You know what?" He said, "You preached about God's judgment, God's sin, God's accountability, and God's judgment day, and all these things, and how God's going to settle all the accounts and all these things." He said, "You know what? I'm the richest man in this town. I don't believe anything you said. I don't believe the Bible. I just came here because this is for my image with this town." He says, "All that you said this week, how do you explain it? I own more land. I've got more cattle. I've got more sheep. I've got all these things going. I own the bank, I own the hardware store. I've got the biggest farm in town. My crops are here, and here it is September, and I've got my barns are full. I've got grain. I've got all the things that I've got. After what you preached the last two weeks, how do you explain that?" The old man just looked at him. He said, "It's simple. God don't settle accounts in September." He'll settle a little later.

"Surely the Lord will do nothing, but He revealed His secrets unto His servants the prophets." Now that verse right there will keep you straight. That verse right there will keep you straight. It's the secret things that God gives us. Now to Israel, let's put it into a context here. To Israel, this would be Daniel 12:4 and Revelation 10:4, wouldn't it? Remember when the Bible says that the book of Daniel was sealed up, and then the book of Revelation is sealed up, and He says, "Don't write everything," and He's going to reveal that to the nation of Israel later. That's what it's dealing with in a historical sense.

But for you and for me, it's simply in a world that we live in, in a world that we live in, in the world that we live in that looks like it's an insane asylum run by the inmates, in the world that we live in where up is down and left is right and black is white and white is black and good is evil and evil is good, it gets real confusing unless you have the secrets that God has given you.

He says in Isaiah 42:9:

Isaiah 42:9

Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.

Deuteronomy 29:29 says:

Deuteronomy 29:29

The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

You know what He's saying? He says God always does. That's why Paul says, "Of the times and the seasons, brethren, I have no need to write unto you." That's why seven things that Paul are in the New Testament, Paul doesn't say them all, but he says seven times he talks about seven different things that he says, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren." You know what? Those are the exact seven things that God's people are ignorant on today. If you threw those seven things out that Paul and Peter talked about you're not to be ignorant of, a child of God wouldn't even know what to do with it. You know why? Because we're ignorant of the very things that God wants to reveal through those things to you, that He won't give to anybody else. It's just that simple. That's why there are seven mysteries in the Bible. There are seven mysteries given to the church age, and there are 12 mysteries given to the nation of Israel. When you put that concept together and you get those mysteries and you figure those mysteries out, and God reveals those secret things to you, you'll come away with understanding what God's doing, when He's going to do it, and get an idea of the time frame He's going to do it. That's a great one.

IV. The Third Principle: The Star of Your God

Then the third one, Amos 5:26. I love this one. This one makes people mad all the time, and I just love making people mad. My spiritual gift. Look at Amos chapter 5, verse 26. I've got some funny stories on this one. I don't have a sermon on this one because I don't have the guts to

preach it anywhere, but I'd tell you some funny stuff on this one. Look at this verse 26. What do you have? Talking to Israel now:

Amos 5:26

But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves.

Now, you know who Moloch was and Chiun. They're Canaanite gods. Moloch was the fire god, and believe it or not, the nation of Israel at this particular time has gotten so far in the way of worship and so far from God, yet they're going to church every Sunday. They're in the temple. They're talking about God. They just replaced the real God of Israel with Moloch, that they've actually bought into the concept that when they have children now, and you have four or five children, you take one of those children and you offer them up as a sacrifice to Moloch. Moloch was the fire god. He was a great big brazen image that had a big hole in his stomach that they built a fire in, and he had two big hands that kind of went together like this that were run by mechanical cranks in the back, and they took those little babies and they laid them in the hands of Moloch, and then they cranked those hands, and they would dance and they would sing and have a worship service, have a praise service, and the band went up there, and they would swing and sway and talk about this, and smoke would come out from under the altar, just like it does in all the big churches around town today. They'd crank those hands up, and that little baby would dump right into that belly. Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived, got so messed up with God because of the strange women in his life that he was offering his children up.

Somebody said, "Why, I just don't think that would happen today." Are you kidding me? We may not have this big mechanical god anymore with mechanical hands, but I've seen God's people, moms and dads, lay their kids in the hands of Moloch and just walk away. The only difference is it was a physical fire back there. The fire your kid winds up in today is a lake of fire. Yes, still around, still around big time, big time. I didn't even mean to say that. I was just in here. That Moloch kind of jumped up on me like that alien thing got in my face, stuck something down my throat.

Here's what I was going to say, verse 26. See, I made some of you mad already. I mean, it's really going to make you mad.

Amos 5:26-27

But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves.

Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, whose name is The God of hosts.

If you look at the nations today, or you look on the world scene, you'll find that the nation of Israel has a flag. We have a flag, our Stars and Stripes, a beautiful flag. You'll find that every country has a flag. You'll notice that the nation of Israel on their flag today has what is commonly called the Star of David. The Star of David is that six-pointed star that they have on

their flag, and you'll find that everything connected with Israel today is connected with that star, and that star is commonly called the Star of David.

Now let me be the first to bust your bubble this morning with a great headliner: that six-pointed star never had anything to do with David. That six-pointed star is the star of their god. It came into being back here. In fact, if you go over to Acts 7:43, when Stephen is preaching 600 years later, he says in verse 43:

Acts 7:43

Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

There's the star again, and that's a quotation going back to Amos chapter 5. Now this six-pointed star never had anything to do with God, never anything to do with David. It comes out of the time period right here, right before the captivity, when they're making all these images and all these gods and worshiping and all these strange things. Yet it comes through time, and here it is today, by most Christians, when they come out here, and most Christians, they see that and they think, "Oh, that's the Star of David." No, no, no. Look at Amos 5:26, "the star of your god, which ye made unto yourselves." God had nothing to do with it. He had nothing to do with it.

One time, and I gave up a long time, I just don't say nothing anymore. I gave up a long time. I used to have a white horse. That white horse was what I got on when I rode into people's lives to help them. I would see families in distress because I was a pastor. Because I had the truth, I was sure that everybody wanted the truth. So I got me a white horse. I got me a white suit. I got me a white hat, and I would ride in the circumstances on my white horse, ride in with the best intentions of solving people's problems. I would tell people because I thought, I thought people back then, this has been a number of years ago, I thought people back then really wanted to know what was right and what was wrong. I thought when a parent and a dad and a mom had real problems with their kids, and the kid was in my youth group, that I, and he was really being a pain, I thought mom and dad really, really would want to know and that I would help them.

So I didn't live where I live now. Where I used to live, the garage was a stable, and in that stable was my white horse. Many a night, I went out there in the middle of the night, put that saddle on him. I used to like it when it was frosty because the smoke would come out of his nose. My wife many nights was woken up to the cleats of the horseshoes on that brick road, going down the road to solve people's problems. Four years after that, I took that horse out and put a bullet right between his eyeballs. I gave up my white horse. You know why I gave up my white horse? Because I came to the conclusion, people don't want to know the truth today. They don't want to know the truth. They don't want to be told what's wrong today. They want to live in the dream world they're in.

We were in Amsterdam a number of years ago. We had about 30 or 40 people that we were in a kind of a group tour thing, and there are a lot of neat historical things in Amsterdam. One of the places that we had just come out of was a place called the Anne Frank House. Of course, we know anything about Anne Frank. Anne Frank was a Jewish girl that died in Auschwitz, and for a

couple of years, when the Germans rounded up all the Jews in Holland, many of the Dutch people hid the Jews, and the diary of Anne Frank is a great book that everybody ought to read. So Anne Frank, she was a little Jewish girl, and she always had the best of ideas of mankind in life, and even while she's in Auschwitz, she's drawing little butterflies on the wall and all those things, and she died in Auschwitz. For years and years and years, the Anne Frank House was a place where you went. It was a memorial to the Holocaust.

It never ceased to amaze me that Anne Frank and the people, as good as they did, the Dutch people, as good as they did, they weren't Christians. Down the road, you get on it, go to Central Station, and get on the train, and take about a 15-minute ride south, you go to a place in Holland called Haarlem. In Haarlem, you have another little house, and it was the house of the Ten Boom family. The Ten Boom family were watchmakers, and they were Christians, and they also came to the place where they saw the Nazis rounding up the Jews, and they hid on a regular basis Jews in their shop, and they had secret hiding places for them, and they were betrayed, and they all were sent off to concentration camp. Corrie ten Boom, one of the ladies, was a saved woman. Years afterwards, she wrote the book *Tramp, Tramp, Tramp for the Lord*, and she traveled with Billy Graham for a number of years. She's dead now, and she told the story of how that they were betrayed and all of the things that took place.

It's an amazing thing. The thing I like about Europe, and I love Europe, the thing I love about Europe, being in the history as I am, is the antiquity of Europe. You go to a place in Missouri or any place anywhere in the United States, and you say, "You know, this goes back to the 1820s," and we go, "Ooh, wow!" You go to Europe, and you see some of those churches, they go back to 900 AD. There are Roman ruins in there that go back to 70, 80, 90 AD. I walked there. I've been in both places, and the canal's still there. The rails are still there for the Anne Frank House. The cobblestone streets are the same. You walk down those buildings, and on the dates in those buildings is 1620, 1640. They've been there for 400 years.

I went out there in the Anne Frank and in the Corrie ten Boom place, and they used to put a little sign in the window, a little ashtray in the window a certain way that tells you it was okay to come. It was the man across the street who owned a bakery who saw people coming and going that informed the Gestapo that really turned them in. You walk down that little street in Haarlem, and there is the Anne Frank House, and right across the street, it's still a bakery. Nothing changes there. That big cathedral's right there. I've been there, and I heard that bell ring, and I thought to myself, "That bell has been ringing for five, six hundred years." I always thought that was interesting that they always made such a big deal about the Anne Frank place, but they never really say much about what the Christians did with the Corrie ten Boom. It's not on the maps in Amsterdam. It's on the Christians who know where to go, but the Anne Frank House is all over anyway.

So we're away with his family, and his pastor and his wife are there. So we come out of Anne Frank House, and we're on a train going down to Haarlem, and she's over there, and I, and I, you know, and I'm kind of in charge of the group, and I thought she was ill. She was laying over against the thing, and she was holding on to her necklace, and she was like she wasn't feeling well, and I said, "Are you okay?" She looked at me. She says, "Oh, yes, Brother Bob." I knew

you're in trouble when they call you Brother Bob. You know you're in trouble. She says, "Oh, yes, Brother Bob." She says, "That was just such a moving experience." She says, "I was just, I was just, I just had to close my eyes, and I had to pray for the Jewish people." And I said, "Oh, and I, you know, I thought, yeah, you would clutch your hands," and I thought maybe you were not feeling well, and she, because you were kind of doing like. She says, "Oh, no," she says, "I was praying, holding on to the Star of David."

Now back then, I was still stupid. The train may have been going down to Haarlem, but that white horse was running right behind, hadn't shot him yet. Do you think that she wanted the truth that she was holding the star of the god Remphan in her hand, praying for the people of Israel with a false, phony god that they had when they dumped God? Let me finish the story. No, she did not want to hear that. I'll just go there for it. She didn't care. She didn't care whether it was the God of Remphan, flim-flam, ma'am, or any other god. She didn't give a flip-flam. She didn't care. That was her star, was the Star of David, and that was her aid in praying for Israel. How dare I? She got mad at me. She got mad at me, and I came to the conclusion with things like that, people don't want the truth today. They don't want the truth. We live in our dream world. We make God and the Bible what we want it to be. We bring in the things that we want to be religious. We add the things in our world that we think, and the people in our world that we think is, and in nine times out of ten, in most of our lives, it's the farthest thing you could ever have from God in your life.

But that's the world we live in, and the reason why preaching, you're going to see it in a minute, my best sermon's coming, the reason why preaching today is not popular, the reason why getting up and opening up the Bible and preaching the truth is not what people want today is simply because we don't want the truth. We don't want to hear it. We don't want to change what we've got to change because we are comfortable with what we have. Boy, you can see how the nation of Israel was back then. Now maybe you can better see how the prophets had a tough time with it.

V. The Fourth Principle: No More Preaching in Bethel

Now the fourth one. Oh, this is the one I've been waiting for. I've got a great sermon on this one. Amos 7:10-15. I love this. In fact, we may not even finish today. I may not get out of this one. See, this is for, I've got two left. All right, anyway, let's get going here.

Amos 7:10-15

Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words.

For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land.

Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there:

But prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court.

Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycomore fruit:

And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.

You know what he preached? He preached exactly what God sent him. The priest, the leaders of the nation of Israel, you see their reaction. "He's conspired against you." How'd you like it if I pointed you out this morning and said, "You've got 24 hours to get that sin out of your life, or God's going to kill you"? Would you thank me? I guarantee you wouldn't. You know why? Because there's no way in your mind do you even entertain the idea that God would kill you in 24 hours.

You know why they didn't like it? You like Jeroboam. Jeroboam is one of the most wicked kings that Israel ever had. He's led them in Baal worship. He's destroyed the whole nation after this kingdom split. It's an absolute mess. God sends him a man, and the priest, the religious leader who's supposed to be on God's side, has taken Jeroboam's side against God.

Let me give you a rule of thumb that you better get down if you're ever going to do the ministry. Kyle, you better learn this. Zack, you need to learn this. Danny, you need to learn this. Any of you guys who are going to have a potential to be the pastor, and many of you do, let me give you something you better learn. It's based on Amos 7:10: people who don't want to hear the truth, people who don't want to hear the Word of God, will always make you the problem. That's what you get. It wasn't Amos; he's just preaching the Word. Amaziah didn't like it because it wasn't what he wanted to hear, and he goes in to tell Jeroboam, "Do you know what that Amos is saying?"

Now I need to stop and give you a little background here. It says, "Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel." Do you know what Bethel is in your Bible? The name Bethel means "the house of God" or "the house of bread." It's a picture in the Old Testament of what a New Testament church should be. When Jacob got right with God after his life of sin and he started to get right, where does he go back to? He goes back to Bethel. Bethel is the place that God met with Jacob from where he was running from in Genesis 28. This place is the place that you meet with God every week. When God, Bethel was the place where God told them exactly what He wanted them to do. This place is the place where every Sunday the preacher tells you through the Word of God exactly what God wants you to hear. They're mad. They're mad.

Look at Amos 7:12:

Amos 7:12

Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there:

You know what the name of my sermon is on this one? "No More Preaching in Bethel."

Look what he says in Amos 7:13:

Amos 7:13

But prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court.

Yes, see, that's what's happened today. Churches that once stood for the truth, that preached the paint off the walls, where you got your hide torn off, have now been turned into chapels. Bethel was never a chapel. Bethel was a place where you got your hide torn off of you. It was a place where God got in your face and told you what was wrong with you when you wanted to get back and do what was right. Now they've taken Bethel and they've made it into a chapel. So when a real man of God steps into the pulpit of what used to be the church, nobody wants to hear it anymore because they want a chapel. "No more preaching in Bethel." "Don't give us that negative message." The nation of Israel, just like today, wanted a chapel instead of a church. They wanted to hear nice things about themselves, not negative. There ain't nothing negative or nothing positive about God going to kill you. "No negative preaching here. Teach us about positive things."

I'm telling you, my friend, this is exactly what the problem was back then, and it is exactly what the problem is now. When a man gets up and preaches, the people in his church across this country take the position of Amaziah and Jeroboam, and he said, "Don't preach here anymore. Go someplace else." They make you like the truth of God is now what I can't spare. Is that what we've come to in Christianity, that when a man gets up and tells you what to do, because that's not the man, it's the Bible and what it tells you to do, now it's a conspiracy? Yes, that's exactly where it is. Some things never change.

I had a guy years ago. He used to come to my Sunday school class, and I ran about five, six hundred people back then, and he came to me one time. I hadn't seen him for a couple weeks, and he was somebody that never really got plugged in, but I loved the kid, and I wanted to, I went over and saw him one time, and I said, "Hey, I really missed you." And he said, "He said, 'Well, I've got to be honest. He says, 'I've come now, couple about four, five months off and on, and he says, 'I just got to tell you, I just don't get anything out of your preaching.'"

Now I've got to be honest with you, I know I'm not the best preacher. Maybe I'm not even a real good preacher. Over the years, I've heard it all. I mean, I really have. You don't be in this business for 40 plus years. I've heard people say, "Well, I'm not coming back because he doesn't have any love." I've had people come back say, "I'm not going back because he's too loud." I've had people say, "Well, you know what? He just thinks that he's right and everybody else is wrong." Well, it's a nasty job, but somebody's got to do it. I had a guy say one time, "Well, I'm not coming back because you think you know more than everybody else." I said, "I don't know more than everybody else." You know what his problem was? I just knew more than him. That's something else you've got to learn in the ministry, boys, you've got to learn to translate. You've got to translate what they're saying to what they're really saying.

I've had people say, "Ain't going back because he's rude." Some of this I'm guilty of, by the way. I have been called uncouth. I had a lady last Thursday night when we talked, and I was just preaching when I talked about a dog returning to his vomit, and I said that was a picture of an unsaved man, and I said, "You ever have a dog when it goes up and throws up? If you don't do

something pretty quick, he'll come back and eat it." She thought that was inappropriate. I was, "You never had a dog?" I didn't fight with her or argue with her, but I thought to myself, "What did I say wrong?" If God can use the word "vomit," why can't I? I don't know what it says in the new work translations, maybe it's "upchuck," I don't know. She said, "You know what?" She says, "I just want you to know I think that that was inappropriate." I said, "Well, I'm sorry, ma'am." I said, "I usually didn't say what I normally say." She says, "What would that be?" And I said, "Well, I usually add to that, you know, that, but that's a great thing because when my dogs throw up, I know that I don't have to bother cleaning it up because just five, ten minutes, they'll eat it, and I won't have to worry about it." She says, "Oh, you just, oh, you just." I said, "I'm just, I'm just what?"

I've had people say, "I'm not coming back with the tax other religions." I don't mean to. If you understood how I was raised, I mean, that's a defense for everybody. A guy kills 19 people, you know, they get him, put him in jail, his defense is what everybody says. He's a serial killer. They say, "Yeah, but his home life, you know, he had a terrible home life." "But yeah, but he killed 19 people, he's a serial killer." "Yeah, I know, but when he grew up, he was the product of a serial, see, he didn't have any cereal, so he just turned into a serial killer." Yes, that's what they do. "It's my home life. Nothing wrong with me."

I had him say a while back, "Well, you know what? Bob's a great Bible teacher, but he just doesn't have any grace." Maybe so. Had somebody else say, somebody say to somebody one time, "Well, you've got a problem with Bob. Why don't you get on this, you sit down and talk with him?" "Oh, you know what? I just won't sit down and talk with him because, you know, you can't talk to Bob." Let me ask you a question, how many people, don't just raise your hand, how many people in this room right now have come over and sat in my office, and we've talked about something? Raise your hand. Let me see, let me see, let me see. The rest of you are lying. I don't know.

Now all those things probably have some legitimacy to them, but I'll tell you what, I just have a tough time. Somebody said, "Well, I don't get nothing out of your sermon." Then, you know, and I said to the kid, I said, "Well, maybe the real issue is this: maybe it isn't the fact that you don't get anything out of it. Maybe the fact is you don't like what you get out of it. Maybe that's the key." "You know, I can listen to Joel Osteen and get something out of it. I can listen to a Church of Christ and get something out of it." You know how idiotic it is to say to somebody, "I don't hear somebody preach, whoever it may be, and I don't get anything out of it." There were 500 other people every Sunday morning who got something out of it, but one person said, "I don't get anything out of it," so every 500 others is wrong. No, I'll tell you what, you got the message just fine, you just didn't like what you heard. That's the way we live today. "No more preaching in Bethel. Go south. Go south."

Now I want to tell you something. When you come here on Sunday morning, this church, any church, ought to make you do three things, and I don't get nervous because it has nothing to do with money. I saw a couple of you reach for your wallet. Okay, okay, okay. But any church, any church, any pastor worth his soul, any church that understands anything remotely about the Bible

today and the day we live in, Paul said it in 2 Corinthians 13:5. He lays it out, three things that a church ought to make you do when it's a church and not a chapel.

You know what Paul says the first thing? He says:

6. Examine yourselves.

> A reality check. A reality check. Examine yourself this morning. If my preaching doesn't make you look inward and convict you about something wrong in your life, I've not done my job. Now maybe you saw it, didn't like it, so you're going to go out and blow it off, and however you want to, you know, "ugly," "loud," "rude," whatever you want to put on it. The bottom line is every church, every pastor, ought to make you examine yourself while you're here, to look inside you.

7. Then the second thing the church does, and Paul says it, he says, "Examine yourselves," and then he says, "Prove yourselves."

> Now you examine yourself through the preaching, but you prove yourself through ministry. You ever noticed that word in the Bible? You ever notice how many times God, I think one of the greatest teaching tools, and I shouldn't even say this, it gives some of my secret things away, but I think one of the greatest things in evaluating people in the ministry is doing exactly what God did. You realize back in Exodus 16, when He brought the manna down to them, that manna is a picture of the Word of God. You know where it says down there, I don't know what verse it is, but you start reading down through there, it says that He brought this manna, a type of the Word of God, brought it right to where they were to prove them. You know why one of the reasons God gave you a Bible? To prove you. He's going to prove you by what you do with it. You're going to say, "I love God." Do you prove it? You prove your love by what you do with the Bible God gave you. So He said, "Prove yourselves." In fact, I find ten references in the Bible completely. We don't have time to go through them today, that you and I know what the Bible says in Malachi. God says, "How about your giving, your tithing?" You know what He says? "Prove me." Find out if I'm who I say I am. "Well, I can't, I don't know what I make, you can't afford to do it. I just can't do it." "Oh, no," He says, "Prove me. Prove me. Step out by faith and prove me. Let's see. Prove me if I'm going to take care of you or not." "Well, yeah, but I just, you know, I've got this happening in my life and that happening in my life." "Prove me."

8. Many times in the ministry, I'll create scenarios. Jesus did that one time. He's feeding the 5,000, and He's got no food for them, and the Bible says that Jesus looked at His disciples, and He says, "We need to feed these people." And they looked at each other, says, "How are we going to do that?" And the Bible says this, He said, He said that to prove them because He already knew what He was going to do. Sometimes I like to put people in circumstances and situations who claim that they are what they're supposed to be. But anybody can claim it. The real put-up metal, the real acid test, is what do you do in those scenarios? Do you pick and choose what scenarios you're going to do right in? Do you pick and choose, or do you just let a scenario happen? You let a circumstance take place, or maybe you even create the circumstance, then you just sit back and watch. Never say a word. Never be, never, but just watch. Watch who does what's right with any given circumstances based on the Bible, based whether it's their friends or their family or whatever the case may be. Just watch it sometime

because the bottom line says, He says, "Prove yourselves." Prove yourselves. You're certainly not going to tell me you're one thing with everybody else and then something else when it's convenient for you. Prove yourself. See, this is what I'm talking about.

9. And then he says, "Know yourselves."

> You know one of the things that we all have to work on is knowing our limitations. Knowing our limitations.

No more preaching in Bethel. We have churches today that people go to that they don't want to hear the truth. They want somebody to get up there and tell them how nice the world is, how nice they are. They'll never preach on sin. They'll never point any fingers. They'll never get anything inclusive. They'll just talk about nice, feathery, fluffy things all the time. God's people every day are one step closer to the judgment seat of Christ. God sent him a man in the Old Testament to preach the truth to him. Boy, when Amos went down there, and Amaziah the priest, he heard what they had to say, boy, I'll tell you what, he said, "No, no, no. Don't preach that here. You go down south to Judah. They really need it. We're okay."

My dad died when I was 21 years old, 20 years old. You know what killed him? He obviously had lung cancer, and lung cancer ultimately killed him, but that's not what killed him. For eight months, my dad went to a doctor with chest pains and problems in his slow of breathing and all the things that he had, and for eight months to nine months, that doctor treated him for pleurisy. At the end of nine months, when he didn't get any better, he went to a doctor, got a chest x-ray, and he found out that the cancer had spread from his lungs into his heart, into his throat, and he died nine months later. Now let me ask you a question, anybody want that doctor's phone number? When you have an issue in your life, a problem that may be life-threatening, do you want to go to that same doctor that diagnosed my father? No, of course you don't. Of course you don't.

But you'll go to a church where the guy will misdiagnose you every day, every Sunday, every time you're there. He'll tell you what isn't true about yourself. He'll let you believe the fairy tale world you're living in. He'll pat you on the back every time because he can't afford to lose you because he needs your bucks. No bucks, no Buck Rogers. He's got all the things he's got to do, so therefore, he's very careful that what he says will never offend you. I've learned a great lesson, boys and girls: when you just preach the truth in the Bible and the Bible truth, and you preach against the things that God, you take God's stand on God's side, and you do what God wants you to do, let me tell you something, there'll never be a misdiagnosis anywhere in time. You know why? Because the Holy Spirit of God is diagnosing your problem right now as we speak. The only problem is, are you going to get honest with it? Amos means "the burden." Boy, he does. He does.

The answer in Amos 7:14-15 is classic:

Amos 7:14

Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit:

Amos 7:15

And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.

He says, "Get off my back, pal. I was just a common, ordinary. I wasn't looking for this job when God called me. I was tending to her and gathering fruit, and one day God got a hold of me and sent me for this message to you. So you've got a problem, get off my back. It isn't me. You get some guts and take it up with Him." You know what he tells him? Do you know what God's going to do? God's going to come down. He's going to destroy your city. He's going to take your wife and he's going to make them harlots. He's going to kill your children. Boy, he puts it to them. They weren't popular, but it isn't popular today.

VI. The Fifth Principle: Famine of the Word

Now the fifth thing, Amos 8:11:

Amos 8:11

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord:

Amos 8:12

And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it.

Now that's talking about a famine in Israel's day, but my friend, there's a famine today. There's a great depression in America today, and God's people are so worried about the financial side of the depression, they're not seeing the real depression. The real depression is so many of God's people are in total depression today, and the reason why there's a total depression in America, we have a Zolok, we have a pill Christianity, it's because of the great famine in America, a famine of the Word of the Lord.

The Bible says in Amos 8:12, "and they shall wander," and boy, they do wander. They wander from church to church. They wander from doctrine to doctrine. They wander from one problem to another. They wander from one relationship to another. They wander from one marriage to another. They wander from one psychiatrist to another, for one favor to another, for one problem to another. The whole time, if you look at Amos 8:11, this famine isn't because the Word of God is not here. It's here. The problem is that nobody's hearing it. The book's here today. You've got in your lap, most of you, everything you need to solve every problem you've got in your marriage, in your personal life, in your relationship with your children, and your relationship with other Christians, and your relationship, whatever you've got to deal with. The problem is you just won't do it.

Three or four years ago, I heard a story of a man who they found him starved to death in his own house. He lived off the road a ways, and it was in the middle of the winter, and nobody had seen him. So after about four or five weeks, somebody drove by, called the sheriff. They drove by, and

here the man lived in this old dilapidated shack. He died of starvation, they said. He died of the elements; he froze to death. He had no heat. He had no food. They found him dead. Months later, they began to tear down that dilapidated old shack, and what did they find? They found hidden in the walls almost two million dollars. This guy had everything he needed to get through life and to live like a king, yet he died in a life of poverty, squalor, because he chose to. He had two million dollars, but he starved to death, just like God's people do today. You've got a gold mine in your lap today. You've got a hundred billion, trillion, octillion, zikillion dollars in gold bullion in that book today, and yet you're like the old man, you're starving to death. You're starving to death. Somebody says, "How ridiculous that a man would live like that." How ridiculous you would have that book in your lap today and have the problems you've got in your life that I've got in my life. Yes, I've got a message on that one too, you want to hear?

VII. The Sixth Principle: Restoration

Then the sixth one, Amos 9:13-15. Finally, the book comes full circle. He says:

Amos 9:13

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.

Amos 9:14

And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

Amos 9:15

And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.

I told you a couple weeks ago about the premillennial return of the Lord. Remember we talked about Amillennialism and Postmillennialism. Look at that. Look at Amos 9:14. Look at Amos 9:15. Watch it now. You've got a little pen there, a little more paragraph, you've got to jot this in.

Amos 9:14: "And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel." That'll be 1918. "And they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them." That'll be 1948.

Amos 9:15: "And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God." Oh, that's the Millennium, premillennial return of Christ. 1918, 1948, and the Millennial reign of Christ.

Now this is the end of their chastisement, and we see the great concept of God where we have the chastisement of the nation of Israel. Now we have the restoration of the nation of Israel, the end of the chastisement of God's people. I want you to look at something down here. I want you to look at Amos 9:14, and I want you to remember this because it's a great phrase in the Bible: "And I will bring again the captivity of my people." Sometimes it's found where it says, "turn the

captivity of my people." That's a great thing. That carries with it one of the greatest principles in the Bible for you and for me.

You see, when you find the word "God turned their captivity" or something along those lines, it means that God was in charge. Up to this point, God was against them because of their sin, and when God's against you, it doesn't matter who's for you because when God's got His hand of chastisement on you, He's got His hand of chastisement on you. It didn't matter who's for you. We see that with Israel, but I'll tell you something else: when God turns that captivity, when God lifts the hand and He starts to restore you, it doesn't matter who in this world is against you. When the hand of God comes off, "If God be for me, who can be against me?" When there was sin in God's people, when they were in sin, the nation of Israel, God was against them with everything He had. But when they got right and made it right with God, then God was for them with everything He had, and He turned their captivity, and nobody was going to stop them. Nobody.

I'm telling you what a great thing for you and for me as Christians. There's been times in my life when I haven't done what's right, and God's come down and dealt with me and chastised me, as I'm sure it has in your life, and it seems like when God's hand is on you, everything goes to pieces. Nothing goes good. Everything goes against you, and you're up against everything. But then there comes a point when God breaks down those stony hearts, and God deals in our lives, and we make it right with God, and we get it right with God, and then it's just like the difference of night and day. God turns around. God takes His hand off, and then it doesn't matter what anybody says, what anybody thinks, what anybody does, when God is for you, nobody can be against you. Yet they will be against you, but it doesn't matter.

Now, this is what you've got to understand when you're dealing with people. That's why I tell you folks, I don't care what you've done, where you've been. It doesn't bother me what took place in your life. All that matters right now is what you want to do with God because when God takes His hand off of you, I'm for you. When you're wrong with God, then I'm on God's side. When you're right with God, I'm still on God's side, but I'm for you. The job of the prophet in the Old Testament was the rebuilding of God's people, the nation of Israel. The job of the pastor in the New Testament is the rebuilding of God's people's lives, the body of Christ, the church. Anywhere you go in any of the prophets, you find one single theme: God's hand was upon them for judgment. When they get right with God, like we see here in Amos 9:13-15, then God restores them. It's just that simple.

You know, a great Bible question was asked in Acts 1:6. After the crucifixion, when everything had kind of been disarrayed, the apostles there with the Lord Jesus Christ, and they say in Acts 1:6:

Acts 1:6

When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

And the answer is found in the prophets: Yes, He will. The character of God is one of restoration. So you find in Romans 11:26:

Romans 11:26

And so all Israel shall be saved:

You find in Matthew 17:11:

Matthew 17:11

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.

You find in Isaiah 49:6 that He'll restore the preserved of Israel:

Isaiah 49:6

And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

Jeremiah 27:22 says:

Jeremiah 27:22

They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be until the day that I visit them, saith the Lord; then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place.

Boy, everybody in that verse, everybody in this building, everybody under the sound of my voice, if you're listening to this on a tape someplace, wherever you're at, everybody can understand that verse. There was a time when you and I were carried into Babylon, into captivity. Maybe even after you were saved, there was a time when you got into the world and you did wrong, and God's hand was upon you. Then the Bible says, "and then until the day that you got the visitation call from God, and you go back to Bethel, and you make right what you did wrong, you ask God to forgive you, and then He says, "Then I will bring them up, and restore them to this place.""

Joel 2:25 says:

Joel 2:25

And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.

You know what the Bible turns out into your life and my life in the New Testament? It's redeeming the time. God will take the time that you and I were out of fellowship by doing dumb things, and when you get restored and you do what's right, then God will restore those things that those things took away from you. It's an incredible concept, incredible concept. My dear friend, God will do the same with you.

Anywhere you go, the prophets are one single theme: God will judge you for your sin, but when you get right, He'll restore you. I told you last week about Amillennialism and Postmillennialism. Did you ever see the spiritual side of that? You see, Amillennialism and Postmillennialism, they're just fine with God whacking the Jew. It wasn't until Vatican II, which took place in the 70s, that the Roman Catholic Church forgave the nation of Israel for killing Christ. Up to that point, they called them Christ killers, and they held the blood of Christ on their hands. You know what? It was in Vatican II that they, you know why? Because they're fine with God whacking the Jews. Postmillennial guys are fine with God whacking the Jews, but not one of them, either Amillennial or Postmillennial, believe that God's ever going to restore the Jews. So they're just fine with Him whacking them. A lot of God's people like that.

But let me tell you something, God is going to restore the nation of Israel, whether any Amillennialist or Postmillennialist, or you or me, or anybody else, what they think about it, because that's what God does. Just as God is going to restore the nation of Israel, what you or anybody thinks about it, this church is going to restore people, whether you like it or you don't, because that's the nature of this church. You know what? It can start right now this morning for you.

Maybe you're here this morning and you're unsaved, and you've never trusted Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior, and if you were to die right now today, you don't know for sure that you'd go to heaven. Your problem is one that you need to be restored. The image that Adam lost through the fall needs to be restored, and the only way you can get restored is by you coming to the place in your life where you trust Christ as your own personal Savior.

Maybe your life's in a mess. Maybe your life's in a shambles. Maybe you've got emotional problems, emotional issues. Everything in your life is upside down. Let me tell you something, God will take you in an unsaved state, and God, just like the nation of Israel, will restore you that fallen image.

Maybe you're here this morning and you're a Christian, and maybe you've been at the Republic Steel too long. Maybe the dust and the dirt of that dirty, filthy place has gotten you so dirty this morning, it's just gotten you out of fellowship with God. Maybe you're not walking with Him. Maybe you were guilty of everything that we talked about today. I know in many things that I had to examine my life this week, and I tell you these prophets have just torn me up one side and down the other about my preaching truth and my ability as a pastor to preach the truth and follow through truth and preach the thing and hold it to the line.

Maybe you're here this morning and your life is one where you know what? You know you're not walking with Him. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" Maybe by the end of this sermon this morning, you know that in your mind is one thing, but the walk, the reality, is something else. God will restore your relationship today. The great thing about God is simply this: if you're lost, all you've got to do is come to Him and say, "God, save me," and He'll save you. The great concept of God is you're already saved, and you're just out there where you shouldn't be, and you're not doing what's right in your life. All you have to do is come back to God. You know the great story of the prodigal son, when he came back, they were ecstatic. They

were happy. They were joyful. The Bible says there's rejoicing in heaven over one sinner that repents. When you come back to God as a child of God, it's a good thing. It's a happy thing because the character of God is not judgment. The character of God is restoration. Yes, God will judge you, but God will give you every opportunity to restore you, whether you're lost or whether you're saved.

That's what the Old Testament prophets were going. How many times did they say, "Do this, and I'll do this. Do you change your ways, and I'll do this"? But they wouldn't listen, and finally it got to the place where there was nothing they could do. There comes a time in our life where we play the game so much with God that the very things that we hold against others, the very things that we do in our lives, and the very game that we play, overtakes us to the point where we get caught in our own trap. That's what happened to the nation of Israel, and now they're at a place where there's only one thing they've got to do: they've got to go through the most terrible time on planet Earth to get back to God. Don't let that happen in your life. Don't let God come down and take everything out of your life. Don't let God come, and I'm just telling you, don't let God come down and take a child out of your family. Don't let God come down and take a husband or a wife. Don't let God come down and take your job or take this or give you. Don't let that happen. If you're right with God, then you're right with God. But brother, I'll tell you what, there ain't nobody sitting here today that is saying, "Oh, I didn't get anything out of his message." You may not have liked what you got, but Doctor Holy Spirit diagnosed the problem. He doesn't make any mixed diagnosis. Every head bowed and every eye closed now.