

When God Calls The Common: Amos

Amos 5:18-20

God in heaven, I have pleaded with You and shed many tears all through the nights for days, weeks, months and still You have not answered me. This battle, this storm, is getting worse, not better—and it's more than I can endure. I see no answer from You God yet I pray and I pray. Do something Lord! Amen.

The motive of the believer's prayer here is to get God to take away the battle or the storm He allowed in the first place. Instead, It seems as though He has turned up the heat of the refining fire and this desperate soul is about to be consumed! Beloved, the spiritual reality—the raw, Biblical truth—of what's happening to this Christian is rooted not in circumstances, but relationship. God saved this believer through Jesus for the purposes of restoring a moment-by-moment, day by day love relationship through prayer and the Word of God. Mission accomplished!

(Introduction)

Beloved, God has no issue delivering each of us from toil and trouble.

Psalm 34:19

Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

But like Israel in today's passage, we are often misguided—and even presumptuous—as we pray for deliverance. We simply forget that God is love (1 John 4:7-8) and He is always seeking to restore us back to child status and in right relationship to Himself. And how might He accomplish such a thing?

Hebrews 12:5-6

And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

Israel had all but abandoned their status as children of God in favour of becoming carnal enablers of the corrupt system of the day. Their prayers were presumptuous and religious and would be met with a deaf ear from God.

*STUDY POINT: Find two Old Testament passages in which God promises blessing with obedience and cursing with disobedience. How effective are God's parental parameters and what does this reveal about His children?

Amos 5:18

(KJV) Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light.

(NIV) Woe to you who long for the day of the LORD! Why do you long for the day of the LORD? That day will be darkness, not light.

Motivated by religious presumption, the Israelites—hardened by the deceitfulness of their sin (Hebrews 3:13)—desired to see the day of the Lord as they knew it in its best possible light on paper and papyrus:

Jeremiah 30:19-24

And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small. Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them. And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the LORD. And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. Behold, the whirlwind of the LORD goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind: it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have done it, and until he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it.

Yet, because of their overflowing iniquity and disobedience to God their Father, their prayers were actually calling down God's formidable discipline—on themselves!

Isaiah 13:9-11

Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

Judge those unworthy of Your grace, Lord!

And God, through the coming Assyrian invasion, would do just that.

The ugliness of religious arrogance presumption is only matched by its dangerous stirring of God's wrath and the dark warnings of Scripture against it:

Luke 18:9-14

And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Matthew 23:27-28

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

Woe unto you. Rebukes and admonitions do not get more terrible than this.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: How might you guard yourself against “hypocrisy and iniquity?”

*STUDY POINT: Write out six Scriptures you could meditate on that would help you live with authenticity and transparency.

Amos 5:19

(KJV) As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.

(NIV) It will be as though a man fled from a lion only to meet a bear, as though he entered his house and rested his hand on the wall only to have a snake bite him.

Israel your religious self-satisfaction will be replaced by terror and you will take flight and run as if to escape from a pursuing lion—which you evade successfully—only to meet a ferocious bear and escape to a fortress wall on which you lean in exhaustion. Ah, but a snake slithers through the cracks of the brick on which you lean—and fatally sinks its fangs into your hand. Game over.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Do you remember a time when you were on the run from God? How did that work out? What did you learn about God from the experience?

Amos 5:20

(KJV) Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?

(NIV) Will not the day of the LORD be darkness, not light— pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness?

If Israel had a hint of guilty conscience, we see it in their desire for the day of the Lord. Deliverance from their troubles—caused by their own years of unrepentant sin—might be found in the promises of God to one day deliver His people. But God would not wink his eye at the more pressing issue of Israel's corrupted justice, oppression and extortion of the poor, and their widespread idolatry that now defiled all the north and the south.

Acts 17:30-31

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Very dark, and no brightness in it. Whatever misplaced hope existed in the minds of the Israelites would be blotted out like summer sunlight shrouded behind dark storm clouds. God's very dark, unstoppable judgment was to come.

And judgment for each of us must come.

Hebrews 9:27

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

If it's true that we have all missed God's standard of holiness (Romans 3:23), then we will fare no better than Israel in today's verses.

And if it is woe unto us apart from God's forgiveness, the Scriptures must also be true regarding God's love. We find it here in the next verse of Hebrews 9:

Hebrews 9:28

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Hallelujah!

~ Reverend Darren McClelland