

When God Calls The Common: Amos

Amos 5:21-24

Proverbs 15:8

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

Of this verse, Matthew Henry comments:

“The sacrifice of the wicked is really an abomination to him. Dissembled piety is double iniquity, and so it will be found when, if any place in hell be hotter than another, that will be the hypocrite's portion.”

God hates hypocrisy. God's hates dishonest worship.

So how do we keep our worship honest?

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Have you ever felt a disconnect when worshipping God—between your worship expression and where you knew your heart was really at? If so, what do you think would help realign your inside and outside spiritual life?

Amos 5:21

(KJV) I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.

(NIV) "I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me.

Hate, despise. This use of two negative words in a row indicate that God's wrath has been stirred and is about to be acted upon. God hates external religious ritual lacking real heart reality. The Israelites loved their religious celebrations and assemblies, thinking these rituals might somehow cover their rampant iniquity.

God is speaking loud and clear through Amos here: *Oh, disobedient Israel, if only your zeal for Me matched your zeal for the hagim (technical term for the three major pilgrimage festivals—Feast of Unleavened Bread, Feast of Harvest and Feast of Ingathering).* The Israelites were all over the religious celebrations, communal meals and social gatherings. However, God would not honour these extravagant external expressions of praise when the hearts of the people were far from him, and filled with idolatry.

Isaiah 29:13

Wherefore the Lord said, forasmuch, as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

Matthew 15:7-9

Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

HOW TO KEEP OUR WORSHIP HONEST #1:

Keep short accounts with God. Daily allow Him to search your heart and set right what is wrong in your relationship with Him. King David was called a man after God's own heart, and why? Because he was perfect? No, because He was honest with God and allowed God access to his heart:

Psalm 139:23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Beloved, our goal is to align our inside life with our outside life, thereby pleasing God with our honest worship.

Romans 12:1

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

*STUDY POINT: Select two champions of the faith from the Old Testament whom you believe exemplify authentic faith. Write down at least three places in Scripture where each of these saints prove their faith to be real.

Amos 5:22

(KJV) Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.

(NIV) Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them.

God has closed off His eyes and ears from what was His idea from the beginning: a way for His children to confess sin and receive forgiveness and restore relationship with their Holy Father in heaven. Without the shedding of blood—in this case the blood of acceptable animals, in our case *Jesus*—there could be no remission of sins (Hebrews 9:22).

We must remember that repentance is not a religious activity of mere lip service and religious ritual but a means of validating and restoring our authentic relationship with God. Look at David after He repented for his sin of adultery:

Psalm 51:1-4 To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from

mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

The Holy Ghost leads us into right repentance—it is real, it is painful, but leads us to a place of restored relationship with God.

HOW TO KEEP OUR WORSHIP HONEST #2:

Once God shows us what we need to repent of, we need to allow the Spirit of God to lead us into right repentance.

2Corinthians 7:10

For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

Compare the right repentance of Peter here:

Luke 22:54-62

Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not. And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilaeen. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

With the worldly sorrow of Judas here:

Matthew 27:3-10

Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.

In our house, my wife has a saying: *Sorry means making changes!* Repentance must lead to changed behavior. God is not cool with us being sorry only for the effects of our sins or for being caught in our sins (or sorrow "which lacks repentance").

We need only look to our Bibles for these two opposite—and tragic—results from two kinds of sorrow. They are written for our edification and, yes, *correction*. Peter's remorse and repentance with Judas's cold bitterness and subsequent suicide. Both men denied Christ. Peter repented and was restored to faith and service; Judas took his own life.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: How should we measure the authenticity of our own repentance? Or should we? Do you think besetting or repetitive sin is an indication of insincere repentance? How does God's grace factor in to your answers to these questions?

*STUDY POINT: Conduct your own study on the topic of repentance, comparing three positive and three negative examples from both the Old and the New Testament. As this study could take some time, make it part of your devotional time with the Lord.

Amos 5:23

(KJV) Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.

(NIV) Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps.

Who doesn't love to worship God through music? Yet the warning here to the Israelites—who took their cue from Egyptian culture and loved to participate in vocal and instrumental music—was to live out their worship through an obedient relationship with their Father in heaven. To do otherwise would render their music as but empty noise in God's ears.

We praise God, don't we, for the example of King David on his better days—oh, how his words in the Psalms give truth and anointing to our melodies! We are also taught by David that our most sincere worship may flow from the broken places in our hearts.

Psalm 51:16-17

For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

If only our zeal as God's children for *obeying* the Lord matched that of our exuberant musical offerings. Then God would see honesty in our songs of praise. Beloved, we need to learn from our ancestors of faith in this regard. Obedience precedes praise. Obedience releases revival!

2Chronicles 7:14

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Amos 5:24

(KJV) But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

(NIV) But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

God is saying through Amos here *first silence the false praise to Me, then let my justice express itself through the punishment you are about to receive.* Unlike the justice of the Israelite judges—who were subject to bribery, extortion, and corruption—God would demonstrate, through the Assyrian invasion, His perfect justice.

And finally,

HOW TO KEEP OUR WORSHIP HONEST #3:

Let God be God, in ever increasing measure. Worship is giving worth to the only One worthy of such extravagant praise.

In our life. In our song. Jesus, the Truth must grow in fame.

To conclude, these words from John the Baptist:

John 3:30

He must increase, but I must decrease.

~ Reverend Darren McClelland