

# When God Calls The Common: Amos

## Amos 6:1-3

### **Exodus 19:1-8**

*On the first day of the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—on that very day—they came to the Desert of Sinai. After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain. Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." So, Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the LORD had commanded him to speak. The people all responded together, "We will do everything the LORD has said." So, Moses brought their answer back to the LORD.*

Among all the nations on earth, Israel was most highly favoured. The Lord gave of Himself in covenant relationship with the Israelites. He loved them. All they needed to do was respond in humble obedience to Yahweh. However, with the impartation of identity as God's own favoured nation came a corresponding temptation to be proud, to be condescending to the less favoured, and to feel entitled. So even with all the benefits of being God's precious possession and recipients of His provision, Israel ended up at the receiving end of God's wrath. How did this happen?

### **Amos 6:1**

*(KJV) Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!*

*(NIV) Woe to you who are complacent in Zion, and to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria, you notable men of the foremost nation, to whom the people of Israel come!*

God-given provisions are not for flaunting and the puffing up of God's children.

### **1Corinthians 8:1**

*Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that "We all possess knowledge." But knowledge puffs up while love builds up.*

Blessings from above must be humbly received by all of us who carry His name and identity in an idolatrous land, so that the world can see that our identity in Jesus comes with His provisional care of material and spiritual gifts:

### **James 1:17-18**

*Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.*

\*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: What things in our life do you think could dull our sense of thankfulness for God's provision? What then could help cultivate thankfulness in our hearts for all that God has done and given?

Conversely, the world works up its own provision, often through wicked means and idolatry. Israel, and much of the modern church has caved in to the Evil One's offer of all that is at his temporal disposal—if we would just but bow down to him:

**Luke 4:5-7**

*And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.*

Israel's pride is rooted in spiritual compromise. This deadly practice does not develop overnight. Instead of remaining in God and His law, Israel made provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14) and gave themselves over to idols, one graven image at a time (see Exodus 20:4):

**Micah 1:6-7**

*Therefore, I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof. And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate: for she gathered it of the hire of an harlot, and they shall return to the hire of an harlot.*

**Isaiah 10:11**

*Shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?*

\*STUDY POINT: Find three passages in the Old Testament where God punishes the sin of idolatry. Then find three other passages where God rewards faithfulness.

\*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: What do you think should motivate our keeping from idols (1 John 5:21)? Why?

In the same way, you and I invite sin to conceive in us and give birth to disastrous decisions that can ripple through our walk with Christ and cause us to stumble. Then left unchecked, sin leavens itself (Galatians 5:9) right across God's grace and tramples underfoot His holiness unto our ultimate spiritual death.

**James 1:13-15**

*Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*

So, both Israel north and south has succumbed to pride. They are at ease in Samaria, trusting in their geographical positioning amidst surrounding hills and mountains:

From Smith's Dictionary:

**Sama'ria.** (*watch mountain*). This city is situated 30 miles north of Jerusalem and about six miles to the northwest of Shechem, in a wide basin-shaped valley, six miles in diameter, encircled with high hills, almost on the edge of the great plain which borders upon the Mediterranean. In the centre of this basin, which is on a lower level than the valley of Shechem, rises a less elevated hill, with steep yet accessible sides and a long fiat top. This hill was chosen by Omri as the site of the capital of the kingdom of Israel. He "bought the hill of Samaria of Shemer for two talents of silver, and built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of the owner of the hill, Samaria." (1Ki 16:23-24).

So, God provided a natural fortress protecting them from enemy invasion—and for a long time they evaded attack. But they trusted in their unique geography rather than trusting in their mighty warrior God.

**Psalm 20:7**

*Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.*

*To whom the house of Israel came.* What is this? A psychiatrist's couch for the depressed and downtrodden? Not hardly. These are the authoritative princes to whom the Israelites conferred to decide and discern judgments and controversies. Upon Israel's entry into Canaan, Zion and Samaria were esteemed chief strongholds among the heathen nations.

We see evidence of this in our next verse:

**Amos 6:2**

*(KJV) Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border?*

*(NIV) Go to Kalneh and look at it; go from there to great Hamath, and then go down to Gath in Philistia. Are they better off than your two kingdoms? Is their land larger than yours?*

I deemed it beneficial to defer to my JFB Commentary to gain historical perspective on each region mentioned here, so we can discern God's point to Israel through Amos:

**Calneh** — on the east bank of the Tigris. Once powerful, but recently subjugated by Assyria (Isa 10:9; about 794 b.c.).

**Hameth** — subjugated by Jeroboam II (2Ki 14:25). Also by Assyria subsequently (2Ki 18:34). Compare Amo 6:14.

**Gath** — subjugated by Uzziah (2Ch 26:6).

**be they better** — no. Their so recent subjugation renders it needless for Me to tell you they *are* not. And yet they *once were*; still they could not defend themselves against the enemy. How vain, then, *your* secure confidence in the strength of Mounts Zion and Samaria! He takes cities respectively east, north, south, and west of Israel (compare Nah 3:8).

Hmm, vain indeed. Their pride and sense of entitlement is motivated by their experience of military reprieve and fortress-like geography. But history tells a different story in which

God *does* avenge through Assyrian attack. Imagine a ferocious, unstoppable tornado right in your sight lines, cascading toward you. *Get ready!*

But who is too comfortable to listen, to see the coming punishment? Amos addresses this here:

**Amos 6:3**

*(KJV) Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near;*

*(NIV) You put off the day of disaster and bring near a reign of terror.*

In a very sobering sense, this is how unredeemed humankind lives life. Put off eternal matters until it's too late.

**1Thessalonians 5:1-3**

*But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.*

Jesus is returning!

\*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Spiritual procrastination can have devastating consequences. Have you experienced this truth in your life? Have you since made corrections in your walk with God to prevent it from happening again?

\*STUDY POINT: Write out six Scriptures that you believe could safeguard your heart against putting off obedience to God's clear instructions in Scripture. Then commit these verses to memory.

The Israelites are in the "peace and safety" fog of self-satisfaction and decadence, while at the same time inviting God's coming wrath. This is really the central theme of the Book of Amos. It may be the theme of our world today. Perhaps we might expect such a carnal approach to life apart from God. But from God's own?

To bring this home, let me explain that my occasional detours unto self never last long. God shows me in very humbling ways that I need Him every second of every day.

Call this final verse for today—if you will—my *declaration of dependence*. I pray it is yours also.

**Ephesians 2:8-9**

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

Amen.

~ Reverend Darren McClelland