

When God Calls The Common: Amos

Amos 7:10-13

Luke 4:13

When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

The tempting of Jesus by Satan in the desert is textbook instruction on how to be victorious in spiritual battle through the effective wielding of the Sword of the Spirit—God's Word. But after the intense temptations are done, the text indicates that the Evil One would return to tempt Jesus *when there was another opportunity*.

And so there it is beloved, the principle of pushback—as sure as action and reaction, as sure as the blows of a spiteful person. These are the negative circumstances that we can expect after we have obeyed the Lord, experienced his grace and goodness, cleansed our spiritual temples in the blood of Jesus, and have walked as Jesus walked (1 John 2:6).

Matthew 12:43-45

"When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation."

Evil returns. On this earth, in this life—no matter how diligently you rebuke every evil spirit that comes to harass you, daily you must be filled again and again with the Holy Ghost and the Word of God. Did you hear me? Filled! Not only is this filled-up, abundant life Jesus speaks of in John 10:10, it is our best defence against the demon armies Satan sends to kill and destroy God's plans and purposes in us and through us (Jeremiah 29:11).

How many times in your Christian walk have you experienced a great spiritual blessing or victory only to turn back to your daily life and be blindsided by tormenting temptations, physical and spiritual attack—doubt, discouragement, condemnation, or pain?

I recall serving for years as a worship director in a church where the Holy Spirit was beginning to break critical ground in the hearts of congregants. I led worship each Sunday through sharing of the Word, sharing transparently of my life, and leading music. When I got home each Sunday, I would be crushed by discouragement, humiliation, and doubt. I felt like quitting—every week! All of that pain was actually pushback from the devil to get at Jesus and destroy his plans for revival in that church. And somewhere in my mind and spirit, I knew all of that.

So did Paul:

2Corinthians 2:10-11

To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

However, our knowledge of the Evil One's devices does not stop him from pushing back against us with those same devices again and again.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Do you recall an instance after a spiritual victory when you were attacked? Were you aware in the midst of it that it was Satan's device to discourage you? What aspect of your victory do you think stirred the demons of hell to action? Would you respond any differently next time after a blessing or victory?

*STUDY POINT: Find in the New Testament two specific passages that describe a spiritual attack on a person(s) right after a God-sized victory.

Our part-time prophet Amos experiences in today's passage a rather devious pushback plan straight from the pit of hell. The timely and devious nature of this pushback may have a familiar dissonant ring to it, since the Father of Lies and Deception is behind it, as he was here:

Genesis 3:1-6

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, we may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

There you have it: Deceive and distract God's people. Thwart God's plan. Same heinous, subtle tactic then. And here:

Amos 7:10

(KJV) 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.

(NIV) Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent a message to Jeroboam king of Israel: "Amos is raising a conspiracy against you in the very heart of Israel. The land cannot bear all his words.

First of all, who was Amaziah? He was under God with all of the responsibilities to lead and preach faithfully the Word of God. He was also an *elected*—not anointed—priest brought on board at Bethel, the king's own place of worship, to maintain and protect all of the religious constructs of their cozy, cultic church. It's important to note here that we are not looking at a church built on spiritual foundations. Rather the temples of Bethel and Dan were both founded on idolatry, namely *calf worship*.

1Kings 12:26-31

Jeroboam thought to himself, "The kingdom will now likely revert to the house of David. If these people go up to offer sacrifices at the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem, they will again give their allegiance to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah. They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam." After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves. He said to the people, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt." One he set up in Bethel, and the other in Dan. And this thing became a sin; the people came to worship the one at Bethel and went as far as Dan to worship the other. Jeroboam built shrines on high places and appointed priests from all sorts of people, even though they were not Levites.

Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words.

Amaziah is fiercely protective of his temple, and all that it represents, so he takes word straight to Jeroboam himself, misrepresenting the message of Amos as an inside job, and Amos himself as a conspirator and a rebel-rouser. Amaziah was communicating to Jeroboam the urgent need for message and messenger to be eliminated from the Bethel church. Out of sight, out of mind. Interestingly, what Amos did outside the walls of Bethel was the last concern of Amaziah.

Amos 7:11

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

(NIV) For this is what Amos is saying: "Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land."

While Amaziah does not deny the calling of Amos as a prophet, he does distort his message. Amos delivers God's words of judgment over Israel as a group—as in Amos 7:9 *the house of Jeroboam*—not just Jeroboam alone. But because Amaziah is a designated leader, he will be judged most severely for his rejection of God and His message—leading His flock astray, *away from the truth*. In Biblical times, kings regarded the spoken words of prophets as not only warnings, but conduits for actual divine punishment on themselves. This may explain why Amaziah slants his report to Jeroboam to heighten the perceived threat to the king himself.

What is really happening is Amaziah and Israel's disobedience and guilt before the Lord has been exposed through their rejection of God's message through Amos. This is why God has called the common man Amos and spoken through him.

In the same way, God speaks through you and I to a spiritually blind and deaf world. Therefore, expect the principle of pushback to be activated:

John 15:18-27

"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my Father as well. If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.' "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Knowing what you know about the example of Jesus, what are your best defences against spiritual pushback?

*STUDY POINT: List twelve Scriptures that would serve as ready and effective weapons in the midst of spiritual battle—against you!

Amos 7:12

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

(NIV) Then Amaziah said to Amos, "Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there.

Perhaps Amaziah here has mistaken Amos for being a professional prophet—earning his living by delivering favourable visions to the masses. But Amos, as we know, is a legitimate sheep farmer and grower of sycamore fruit. A common man called of God to prophesy coming punishment to His fellow countrymen who have exhausted God's mercy.

After writing a letter to Jereboam to alert him to the dangers of Amos and his message of doom, he now plays the devil's card and tries to convince our "prophet of profit" to go earn his bread back home in Judah. What a subtle, slimy move on Amaziah's part! Amos is a common man called of God, not a self-appointed prosperity project. It is clear from this verse that Amaziah does not negate Amos, but simply wants him out of the Bethel temple immediately. Listen to this verse:

Amos 7:13

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

(NIV) Don't prophesy anymore at Bethel, because this is the king's sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom."

So, for Amaziah—and by extension his temple attendees—the real message to Israel through Amos is lost. Their perpetual disobedience and God's subsequent punishment upon Jereboam and his house are as rainwater off a roof—so entrenched in politics, religion and rhetoric are they.

We conclude today with a powerful word of encouragement. If you are walking in the will of God through His Word, staying connected to Jesus through prayer, and following the promptings of the still, small voice of the Holy Ghost inside you—God is pleased, and will be glorified through you (John 15:8).

And one more thing. If you are experiencing spiritual pushback right now, be encouraged! God will not waste a trial, a temptation or turbulent time in your life, regardless of its source.

James 1:2-4

Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Hallelujah!

~ Reverend Darren McClelland