

When God Calls The Common: Amos

Amos 9:1-4

In many Hollywood crime movies, there is usually a scene in which shady characters run to a mob house hideout with cops in hot pursuit. Perhaps a room deep within the dark recesses of an abandoned warehouse. In Biblical times, David and his crew found themselves on the run from Saul—and they found a cave to hide in:

1Samuel 24:1-3

After Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, "David is in the Desert of En Gedi." So Saul took three thousand able young men from all Israel and set out to look for David and his men near the Crags of the Wild Goats. He came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and Saul went in to relieve himself. David and his men were far back in the cave.

Hiding out can also be a cowardly response when we know we've sinned before God and we set to running and hiding from Him. In fact, this human tendency to flee responsibility for our actions began with Adam and Eve:

Genesis 3:6-8

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

Beloved, I pray that you are not having to run and hide from God today. Jesus is your Righteous Advocate (1 John 2:1) and paid the highest price for your crimes (Romans 6:23). No sense in running anymore. Besides, God knows all and He sees all (Proverbs 15:3). Call on Him right now (Romans 10:13) and be saved. If you have accepted Jesus as your Saviour, you can now run *to* Him instead of *from* Him:

Proverbs 18:10

The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Recall and write down a moment or season when you were fully aware that you were running from God. What do you think the reasons were for your turning away from His mercy? What was it like when He drew you back into His arms? What did you learn about God during this time?

*STUDY POINT: Write down three classic narratives from the Old Testament in which a Biblical figure found themselves running from God. Did the situation ever turn around, where this figure ran back to God? What were the reasons for this about face?

In this fifth vision of Amos, we see the futility of running and hiding from God—even when your military provision and prowess is legendary and your chosen-child status before God secure. These are, after all, the Israelites—provided for, protected, and promised God’s best. *If they would obey their Lord.* Amos is called to go and deliver his people prophetic judgment over their perpetual disobedience.

And none of their walls of defence or weapons of offence would protect them from God’s wrath:

Amos 2:13-16

Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves. Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself: Neither shall he stand that handleth the bow; and he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself: neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself. And he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith the LORD.

The Israelites have no physical, tactical, or military resource that can resist God. Not the skillful archer, nor the swiftest runner, nor the ready horseman will stand against the supernatural forces and mighty angels of heaven. All humans will be left stripped naked, taking flight from God Himself.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: In light of our world in 2023—the wars, the gun violence, the injustice and rampant immorality—how does Amos with God’s message of divine punishment fit into our modern version of a wicked and carnal Israel?

Amos 9:1

(KJV) I saw the Lord standing upon the altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered.

(NIV) I saw the Lord standing by the altar, and he said: "Strike the tops of the pillars so that the thresholds shake. Bring them down on the heads of all the people; those who are left I will kill with the sword. Not one will get away, none will escape.

The striking angels here carry out God’s command to bring down Bethel, the temple housing the golden calf and its worshippers. The parallel picture here—and one we relate to in our times—is that of an earthquake:

Amos 1:1

The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

If there were any survivors on the run or under the temple rubble, God promises that enemy swords would take care of them too. The text in this verse makes a harrowing point:

Not one will get away, none will escape.

Amos 9:2

(KJV) Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down:

(NIV) Though they dig down to the depths below, from there my hand will take them. Though they climb up to the heavens above, from there I will bring them down.

God loves the Israelites far too much to let them escape His love, His mercy—yes, even His discipline and justice.

Hear Paul's prayer:

Ephesians 3:14-21

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

High, low, wide or deep. We cannot escape *all* that God is.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: How do you reconcile the spirit of Paul's prayer to the Ephesians with the final message from Amos of God's coming irreversible punishment over Israel?

*STUDY POINT: What New Testament/new covenant Scriptures might help reconcile the truth of God's love and mercy with His punishing justice?

Amos 9:3

(KJV) And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them:

(NIV) Though they hide themselves on the top of Carmel, there I will hunt them down and seize them. Though they hide from my eyes at the bottom of the sea, there I will command the serpent to bite them.

Mount Carmel might well afford the Israelites plenty of hiding places behind the greenery, out of sight from enemy footmen. But not from God Who is above and Whose angel armies would instantly seize their foolish frames. And oceans deep might provide a clever enclosure amidst the coral and undersea cities. But not from the Lord Of All Creation, who sent a whale to swallow Jonah (Jonah 1:17), and here sends a sea serpent to bite the deep diver and send him back to above water wounded or dead.

Amos 9:4

(KJV) And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.

(NIV) Though they are driven into exile by their enemies, there I will command the sword to slay them. "I will keep my eye on them for harm and not for good."

So He won't defend them in battle or in captivity. Quite the opposite. And they won't be protected under His grace. What? Now is this the same God speaking? Who once said:

Deuteronomy 10:15

Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.

It is the same God.

And so now in 2023, we must love and revere God for *all* that He is, remembering Him when we are blessed *and* when we are in battle—even worshipping Who He is in discipline or divine punishment, as in our passage today.

Psalm 46:10-11

Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

Hallelujah!

~ Reverend Darren McClelland