

Amos Part 3 Focus on Amos 9:13 *The Remedy*

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills, and I will bring my people Israel back from exile."

This morning, we continue in the sermon series from the minor prophets, and today, I will close the book on the prophet Amos. A quick review of Amos reveals that he began the tradition of writing prophets, a succession of courageous voices that have defined the Word prophet to the present. Amos was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees, a fiery, well-educated man to whom the call of God came. Amos did not mince words as he passed on what God had in mind for his people. Following Amos' passionate critique of Israel, Amos returned to his hometown of Tekoa in neighboring Judah, returning to his previous life.

In the opening of chapter 9, Amos has a fifth and final vision as he sees the Lord standing beside the altar of burnt offerings in an unspecified temple. He hears the Lord command the heavenly beings to strike the capitals of the pillars that support the temple roof with such force that the thresholds of the temple shake. Here again, we hear Amos, a native of the southern kingdom, addressing the people of the northern kingdom about a coming judgment.

There were increasing divisions between the rich and the poor, a growing disparity of the haves and have-nots. Furthermore, there was a need for justice, where the judicial process was corrupted by the powerful and wealthy as a means of getting what they wanted. Lastly, the Israelite people appeared highly religious, but their actions had become divorced from any sense of God's natural and threatening presence, actions that disregarded ethical and social behavior. In the final verses of chapter 9, Amos announces the restoration of David's kingdom and the abundance of life that will follow for the restored and redeemed people: "A Remedy," where the promise of abundant life for all those "who are called by the Lord's name." **Let's pray.**

Lord, because you have freed us, we can experience abundant life. Because you have set us free, we can have a new perspective. We are thankful for your gift of salvation, for eternal life. We are grateful for the inheritance you have given us and thankful that we can communicate with you and experience the beauty of your presence. In this, we pray. Amen.

We must be careful when applying to preach from the prophets trying to identify how their predictions are being, or about to be, fulfilled by contemporary events in the Middle East, for they can be misguided. The prophets do not necessarily speak of our age but continue to speak to our age, revealing God's activity, priorities, and expectations. My primary focus as a preacher should be what the text reveals about God's character, action, and will. Therefore, we should carefully consider what God calls us to and the expectations of the Church as God's new covenant people.

We should consider these questions. How does God bless those who are faithful? How might we expect God to be at work in our world today? Great questions. In this final section of Amos' book, he concludes with a word of hope matching the prophet Jeremiah's twin call to tear down and build up (Jer. 1:7). The prophet Jeremiah writes, "But the Lord said to me, do not say, I am too young. You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you." As new covenant people, the prophetic text should encourage us with a renewed vision of God's love, grace, and mercy towards his people regardless of age, race, or creed.

Amos's text promises spiritual revival, noticing that the harvest is so great that the plowman shall begin to plow for the next crop before the reapers thoroughly gather in it. At the same time, the abundance of fruit shall be so surprising that before the treader of grapes can have trodden out all the juice of the vine, the time shall come for the sowing of seeds. When the time comes, we will see the most abundant ingathering of souls in the Church of Christ. The text speaks of revival, but I ask this question: What will the mark of a revival look like? What is God trying to teach us? What is the Remedy?

I believe that God has the absolute key to our hearts where He gives an unconditional promise of a blessing. God can induce the plowman to overtake the reaper, saying, "I am the master of the soil; however hard and rocky it may be, he can break it and can make it fruitful. When God promises to bless his Church and to save sinners, he does not add, "if the sinners be willing to be saved? We have free will, and God does not violate that will, but free will is sweetly bound with chains of divine love until it becomes more accessible than ever before. The Lord, when he means to save sinners, does not stop to ask whether people mean to be saved, but like a rushing wind, the divine influence sweeps away every obstacle; the unwilling heart bends before the current of grace, and sinners that would not yield will now seek his mercy by God's will. God is the master to say Let there be light, the master to save you and change your heart.

The power of preaching can do nothing in the conversion of people itself, for the hearts of people are hardened and indifferent. Still, the power of grace is greater than the power of eloquence or the power of sincerity, and once that power comes forth, what can stand against it? Romans 8:31 says, "What shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?" We know that God is for us because he sent his one and only Son to die for us and redeem us from the sin and rebellion that once separated us from God. But now, because of Christ, none of these things can separate us from God because he has proven that he is for us. Therefore, we have no true rivals." What an excellent "Remedy!"

Because of cold hearts, we may not see a revival in ordinary days. But we must look forward to seeing it when God's work of extraordinary grace comes forth. There is an Eastern fable of the dervish who wished to teach a young prince the fact of the existence of a God. The legend says the young prince could not see proof of the Existence of a First Cause. So, the dervish brought a little plant and set it before him, and in his sight, the little plant grew up, blossomed, brought forth fruit, and became a towering tree in an hour. The young man lifted his hands in wonder and said, "God must have done this." Oh, but, said the teacher, you said, God has done this because it happens in an hour. **Had he not done it when it was accomplished in twenty years?** It was the same work in both cases; only the rapidity astonished his pupil. You might ask, as I did, what is a dervish? A dervish first appeared in the twelfth century as a member of a Muslim religious order who had taken vows of poverty and was noted for their wild rituals.

When we see the Church gradually built up and converted, we lose the sense of a present God. But when the Lord causes the tree suddenly to grow from a sapling into a strong tree of the forest, we say, "This is God." We are all blind and stupid in measure, and we sometimes want to see some of these quick, extraordinary motions of divine influence before we fully understand God's power. Brothers and sisters, as disciples of Jesus, learn to rest on him. Look to his power and trust not in your efforts but in the Lord. Give him thanks for your progress of growth. Multiply your songs and sing to him, for everything works according to his will and not yours.

David Crowder wrote a song entitled "Remedy." The song had a place of inspiration for this sermon. The song's first half goes like this: "Here we are. Here, we are broken and used. Mistreated, abused. Here we are, Here You are. Here You are—the beautiful one Who came like a Son. Here You are. So, we lift up our voices. We open our hands to cling to the love That we can't comprehend. Oh, lift up your voices and lift up your heads, sing of the love that has freed us from sin; he is the one who has saved us. He is the one who embraced us. He is the one who has come and is coming again. He's the remedy.

I am aware that there are many who, on Sunday mornings, never regularly attended a place of worship. Many would be ashamed in any society to confess themselves as a follower of religion. Perhaps, for a long time, some have not heard the gospel preached, and hopefully, a fascination has drawn you here. Probably for the first time out of curiosity or wanting to come again. Possibly wanting to go again, watching and waiting for the next Sabbath, not giving up the sins of life, but somehow, they are not as pleasurable as they used to be. It is to such persons that I speak.

My dear friends, allow me to express my sincere joy that you are here, and let me also say in my happiness that I hope you are here for a purpose you do not as yet understand. I trust that God has a special favor in store for you, and therefore, he has brought you here. In any revival of religion, it is not often the children of devout parents that are brought in, but those who never knew anything of Christ before. For those who make no profession of organized religion, the extraordinary influence of the Spirit is real. I rest in hope that the Spirit meets you here today. If you should despise the Word which you have heard; if the impression that has been made, and you know it has been made, should die away, one of the most awful regrets you will ever have when you come to a rightful sense and reason in another world of eternity will be for the feeling that you had an opportunity, but that you neglected it. I cannot conceive a more miserable cry than the person who cries at last in hell, remembering, "The harvest is past—there was a harvest; summer is ended—there was a summer—and I am not saved."

I pray that God the Holy Spirit may remind you that it may be now or never. You may never have another warning, or if you have it, you may grow so hardened that you may laugh at it and despise it. A turning point in each person's life is when their character becomes fixed and settled. That turning point might be today. Amos provides a message of grace. God is gracious in his dealings with us, Israel, and the Church. Will we respond to God's grace or turn from it? I pray that God the Holy Spirit whispers into your heart. Jesus invites you to come. O Lord Jesus, do it! Show your love to us. Send forth your Holy Spirit now, and bring the strangers home; in this sanctuary, O Lord, many hearts may be entirely resigned to your love and grace. This is our God. He is our Remedy. We may not wholly understand the past, and we certainly do not understand the future. But we see enough to marvel at the grace of our God. Amen.