

I. Introduction

- A. Who's ready for good news today?
- B. I have some, but it's buried, and we're going to dig it out, okay?
- C. Welcome to week three in our series called A Maverick Spirit. We are listening to God speak. Specifically, we are listening to him speak to us today through this book in the Bible called Amos.
- D. The time is eight centuries before Christ. The place is Israel. Specifically, Israel refers to 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel, a nation that split after a Civil War. Ten tribes in the north called Israel. Two tribes in the south called Judah. Different kings. Different capital cities. Different destinies.
- E. These were God's people. God loved them. He showered his blessings on them. He freed them, led them, delivered them, watched over them, enriched them, and said you're free. He made them his own special people. He cared for them perfectly.
- F. There was between the people of Israel and their God, a special bond of affection called a covenant. It was a covenant of Grace in which God promised to bless them. And he did bless them over and over again.
- G. But as the years and the centuries wore on, the people did what most people do — they began to forget their God... and then other things happened.
- H. When my kids were little one of their favorite books, I mean one of my favorite books to read to them, was called *If You Give A Mouse A Cookie*.
- I. Brilliant. If you give a mouse a cookie, it's going to ask for milk. If you give it milk, it's going to ask for a straw. If you give it a straw... and it keeps building and building and getting worse, all because you did the little thing of giving a mouse a cookie.
- J. It's funny. And it's sweet. But it's also really deep. There's a deep truth in it. It's the fable of a slippery slope.
- K. All you did, was the very little thing of giving a mouse a cookie. But that led to the next thing and the next thing and the next thing until you have a mess.
- L. So I invite you to think with me today, from the prophecy of Amos, on the topic:

1. Do Weird Stuff

II. The Transgressions

- A. Here is our scripture to get started. I warn you, like everything else. In this book it is harsh.
 - 1. *"Thus says the LORD: 'For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, Because they sell the righteous for silver, And the poor for a pair of sandals. They pant after the dust of the earth which is on the head of the poor, And pervert the way of the humble. A man and his father go in to the same girl, To defile My holy name. They lie down by every altar on clothes taken in pledge, And drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god.'"* (Amos 2:6-8)
- B. This style of writing is called an oracle of judgment. It is number eight in a sequence of eight oracles of judgment. Amos comes riding into town and begins to preach. He preaches these oracles first against six other nations. Then he sets his sights on nation number seven, which is Judah. And then finally he brings it home to Israel. That is where he was. That is who he is preaching to.
- C. Let's just meditate on this paragraph for a minute.
 - 1. For three transgressions, and for four... that means they went too far and they crossed a line.
 - 2. I will not turn away its punishment... that means their nation is in trouble with God, and there's no escape.
 - 3. Then we get a list of some of the reasons why they are under God's judgment.
 - a) **They perverted justice.** "They sell the righteous for silver..." The people in power abuse their power. They take bribes. Justice is for sale. Influence is for sale. The whole power system is corrupt.
 - (1) God instituted governments to protect freedom. He established government to ensure fairness and honest laws. But when those in power abuse their power, the court of last resort is always the Supreme Court of heaven. And when God has to step in, look out.
 - b) **They oppressed the poor.** "They sell the poor for a pair of sandals... they pant at the dust of the earth which is on the head of the poor..." They won't stop taking and stealing until they get everything, even the dirt you have to brush out of your hair. The level of greed is truly over the top.
 - (1) The laws of God are loaded with protections for the working class. If those laws were followed, nobody would be poor in Israel. Nobody would be in slavery. Nobody would go hungry. That was God's plan. But again, the wealthy and the mighty abused their positions and ground the poor into dust.

- c) **They practiced immorality.** “A man and his father go in to the same girl, to defile my holy name...” For generations, now, the Jews have been worshiping idols. One of the tragic practices of idol worship in those days was called ritual prostitution. I am not going to describe it, but it is worse than you think.
- (1) Sexual sin rips at the fabric of family, which rips at the fabric of marriage, which rips at the fabric of society, which rips at the fabric of our covenant with God. God designed sex to help you create bonds of affection, and to really understand your true identity. But all of that blew up. You can never separate moral corruptions from your psychological health. And you can never separate moral corruptions from your covenant with God... “they defile my holy name.”
- d) **They practiced sacrilege.** That means they were spitting in God’s face. “They lie down by every altar on clothes taken in pledge, And drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god.” The law of God said that if a man owed you money, and he gave you his coat to hold onto it while he went to get the money, no matter what happened you had to give him his coat back before sunset. But no, they are using it as a blanket. And they are doing this by their altars. Not only are they taking advantage of the poor, they are using their evil gains for the worship of idols. And they’re sipping their wine and getting drunk in the houses of their false gods.
4. There are multiple tragedies going on. One of the greatest is that these people see nothing wrong with what they are doing. They think they are good. They think they are right. They think they are holy. They think they are better than everybody else.
5. They are blind to their own sin... and they are deluded about the righteousness of their own cause.
6. But all of this is even deeper because of where they came from.
- D. The Grace
1. “Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, Whose height was like the height of the cedars, And he was as strong as the oaks; Yet I destroyed his fruit above And his roots beneath. Also it was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt, And led you forty years through the wilderness, To possess the land of the Amorite. I raised up some of your sons as prophets, And some of your young men as Nazirites. Is it not so, O you children of Israel?” Says the LORD.” (Amos 2:9-11)
2. This is where the grace comes in.
3. All of the oracles of judgment are set against the backdrop of a promise of grace. Nothing that the Lord will do will threaten the salvation of his people. Nothing can overthrow his promise. Nothing can overthrow his grace. No matter what is happening on earth, nothing can threaten the security of the believer in heaven, and your membership in the supernatural family of faith.
4. So here, the people are doing these major transgressions.
5. So Amos reminds them of God’s grace for them.
- a) **God protected them.** He destroyed a mighty nation called the Amorites who were determined to destroy the Jews. But God swooped in and yanked that nation up by the roots and protected his people. That was a mighty miracle. That was God’s love. That was grace in action.
- b) **God delivered them.** They were slaves in Egypt, and God set them free. They were in bondage, and God redeemed them. That was a mighty miracle. That was God’s love. That was grace in action.
- c) **God led them.** He led them 40 years in the wilderness. Even when they disobeyed him, he led them. He fed them by a miracle of grace every single day. For 40 years he gave meat. For 40 years he gave water. For 40 years he even made sure that the sandals on their feet didn’t wear out. Grace, grace, and more grace.
- d) **God blessed them.** Not only did he yank up their enemies by their roots, God actually gave them the land of the Amorites and let them possess it. They moved into houses that they did not build. They drank wine from vineyards that they did not plant. They harvested crops that they did not sow. God was blessing them beyond their wildest dreams, and far beyond anything that they deserved. It was impossible to miss the overflowing, abundant, beautiful, merciful, undeserved favor and grace that God showered on them every single day.
- (1) But something little happened. Something so minor, you would never even notice. Something unexpected, and really, really bad.
- (2) What was it? We’ll see.
- e) **God taught them.** He gave them prophets. God revealed his will to the prophets. And the prophets revealed his grace to the people. All of these prophets took the written Word of God and amplified it, honored it, and explained it. All of them taught the Bible. But many of these prophets also wrote the Bible. The prophets wrote 17 books of the Bible, and that includes Amos. Above everything else, the prophets were the

mouthpiece of evangelism. They taught the gospel. They taught the people the way of salvation. And they called people to faith in the Savior.

- f) When the people were in a place of humility, the prophets had a message of grace. But when the people were in a place of pride, the prophets had a message of resistance and judgment.
- g) **God showed them.** He gave some of the young men as Nazirites.
 - (1) This is a completely different word from Nazareth, the city where Jesus grew up... which made him a Nazarene.
 - (2) No, this is entirely different. The Nazirites were individuals in ancient Israel who took a special vow of consecration to God. This was outlined in the law of Moses (Numbers 6:1-21). The vow typically involved three main prohibitions:
 - (a) No wine and strong drink, no haircuts, and no contact with the dead.
 - (3) Samuel was a Nazirite. So were Sampson, John the Baptist, and some think the Apostle Paul. Both women and men could take the Nazirite vow. It was voluntary.
 - (4) What is this? Israel had young women and men who lived among them who were visible monuments of God's grace. You could see them by their hair. You can spot them by their drink and their food and the way they operated. These are young men and women who are examples of courage, self-denial, and absolute devotion to the Lord.
 - (a) What is this?
 - i) **The Nazirite vow was an institution of the maverick spirit among the people of God.**
 - (b) These are the Jesus freaks. These are the peculiar people. The dissenters. These are the non-conformist, unconventional, Jesus loving, born-again renegades.
 - (c) The Nazirites did weird stuff. John the Baptist wore camel's hair and he ate locusts and wild honey (Matthew 3:4).
 - (d) Thank God he has sprinkled among his people some holy rebels against this soul-eating, heart-crushing, demon-infested society in which we are stuck living.
 - (e) These Nazirites were a gift of grace.
 - (f) And so are you!
 - (g) Our church, every church, the Church needs the outliers, the outcasts, the students, the homemakers, and those in recovery. We need government workers, and teachers, and administrators, and guys who do oil changes, short order cooks, and table servers and architects and professors and everybody, high and low and rich and poor and preachers and pulpits and pews to shake of the shackles of silence and comfortable compliance, and to say — *the world is lying to you, the devil is devouring you, sin is killing you, hell is waiting for you... but God still loves you, and Jesus shed blood to save you, and he is calling to you right now, so won't you believe in him?*
 - (5) Now, I'm going to come back to this, but let me hammer something home.
- h) Grace, grace, grace, grace, grace.
- i) His grace was overflowing and undeniable, and so real in their lives.
 - (1) In fact, Amos even asks them, **"Is it not so?"**
 - (2) Is there anyone who can argue this?
 - (3) Is there anyone who can dispute this?
- j) God protected them. He delivered them. He loved them. He blessed them. He taught them. He showed them a glorious and beautiful and healthy way of life.
- k) But then something happened.
- l) Something little happened.
 - (1) Something so minor, you would never even notice. Something unexpected. Something really, really bad.
 - (2) What was it?

E. The devil gave them a cookie.

- 1. It started with being too busy to go down to Jerusalem in Judah to worship, and it ended with them worshipping idols in Samaria and Bethel and everywhere else in Israel.
- 2. It started with them looking too long at the wrong person with sexual desire, and ended up with them in ritual prostitution every single week.
- 3. It started with them just cheating a little bit in their business, and ended with them becoming oppressors and thieves of workers and the poor.

4. And it started with them truly enjoying the blessing of God, and it ended with them locked in self-destructive patterns that only break your heart and corrupt your neighbors and your children.

- a) Don't you know that a fall from grace is a slippery slope, and it's greased by the dark side.

III. The Judgment

- A. *"But you caused the Nazirites to sin by making them drink wine, and you commanded the prophets, 'Shut up!' So I will make you groan like a wagon loaded down with sheaves of grain. Your fastest runners will not get away. The strongest among you will become weak. Even mighty warriors will be unable to save themselves. The archers will not stand their ground. The swiftest runners won't be fast enough to escape. Even those riding horses won't be able to save themselves. On that day the most courageous of your fighting men will drop their weapons and run for their lives," says the LORD.*" (Amos 2:12-16)
- B. Part of the Nazarite vow was to never touch wine. They'd sit in a restaurant with their friends and family. Everyone is drinking wine, but the Nazirite is drinking goat's milk. Or water, sheep's milk, or a boring fresh-crushed pomegranate juice.
- C. But that's not good enough. His father-in-law pours a big glass of wine, shoves it over, and says, "Come on, live a little." And the rest of the table says, "It's no big deal... you're taking this faith thing too seriously." They heckle and pressure and push and prod. And soon the vow is broken. The wine is consumed. The hair is cut. The power is gone.
 1. Mavericks always get pressured to conform to the spirit of the age. And the spirit of the age is demonized.
 2. They tempt the Nazarite.
 3. They tell the prophet to shut up.
- D. The prophet stands to preach, and the people say, "If you preach like that, we're leaving. And who will pay your salary then? Who's gonna keep the lights on?"
 1. Quit preaching that grace. Quit preaching that love of God. Quit preaching that Old Rugged Cross. Quit preaching the shed blood of Christ. Quit preaching substitutionary atonement. Quit preaching the gift of righteousness. Quit preaching that message of grace, abounding grace, amazing grace—because it's hyper-grace. Quit preaching that eternal security. Quit preaching once saved, always saved. Quit preaching that Jesus is the only way. Quit preaching there is salvation in no other name. Quit preaching that marriage is for life, and that sex is for marriage, and that kids do best with a mom and a dad, but that God can redeem any situation. Quit preaching that there is a way of life that brings joy and a way of life that brings pain and that the Bible reveals both, so now it's our choice. Quit preaching Jesus Christ, his pre-incarnate glory, his condescension, incarnation, sinless life, love, miracles, teachings, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, glorification, and present day intercession. No, no, no, give me something *practical*. Quit preaching he is coming again to make a millennium and establish righteousness and right every wrong and bring in the only utopia that won't crush the human soul.
- E. No, prophet. Don't preach all that. I don't want all that. Tell me stories. Give me holy-ghost goosebumps. Give me a touch of holy laughter. Make me feel good. Dumb it down. Make it short. Give me slogans. Feed my ego.
 1. Shut up, preacher.
 2. Shut up prophet.
 - a) Shut up.... God.
- F. But you caused the Nazirites to sin by making them drink wine, and you commanded the prophets, 'Shut up!' So I will make you groan like a wagon loaded down...
- G. This is Amos speaking to Israel.
- H. And just over there, a few mountains away, there is another nation called Assyria... and another king named Sargon, and his son named Sargon... they called him Sargon II.
- I. And by the time little Sargon takes over big Sargon's throne, your nation will cease to exist and your capital city of Samaria will be destroyed... all you comfortable, rich, apathetic people will be living in exile and your grandchildren well be speaking foreign languages.
 1. And don't go telling me how fast your runners are, they won't get away.
 2. And don't try to tell me how mighty your warriors are, they won't be able to save themselves.
 3. And you can have archers better than Galadriel's Elves, they will not stand their ground.
 4. And don't plan on a cavalry coming in to save you; they won't even be able to save themselves.
 5. Your most courageous warriors will drop their weapons, and run away; and I don't care if they are Army Rangers, Navy Seals, Green Berets, Force Recon, Special Tactics, or Mutant Ninja Turtles. Because this destruction that's coming your way is more than military, more than strategy, more than the fortifications of your walls.

- a) This is a spiritual war, and I am telling you, God's people, that you mentally, emotionally, and morally have taken your stand on the wrong side!
- b) Shut up, Prophet!

IV. It's the Church

- A. We Christians have an error in our theology.
- B. We have a theology that has permeated our nation. And that theology is that God judges a nation because of the wickedness of sinners.
- C. And that's the theology that the church has adopted that so many Christians believe today. That God is judging our nation because of the jacked up sinners; that he's judging us because of the corruption of the lost!
- D. Lost people have no choice but to live in sin. You can't live a holy life without Jesus.
 - 1. It's a waste of time and a massive cause of confusion to preach Christian moral virtues to them, when they've never received Christ's righteousness as a gift, and have never had their hearts renewed!
 - 2. The message to the lost is *you must be born again*.
- E. If you know your Bible, you know that sinners don't have a choice but to sin.
 - 1. God never expects the world to act like the church. But a nation is in trouble when the church acts like the world.
- F. Amos preached all this judgment against this nation, that nation, and the next nation. But then he brought it home. I am talking to you. I'm talking to God's people. I'm talking to the church of the living God.
- G. I'm here to tell you, that...
 - 1. **God does not judge a nation because of the wickedness of sinners, he judges a nation because of the complacency of saints.**
- H. When Christians depart from the Word of God, they fall short of the grace of God and they are rich but they do not spend their riches, because they don't know how. Oh, they are still saved, and they are still blessed, but their friends would never know... they don't know either.
- I. God says, "If MY PEOPLE who are called by my name..." He's talking to you. Because you, Christian, and you Church, getting right with God, and going deep with God... you are the secret of God healing this land.
 - 1. God judges a nation because the saints are shacking up.
 - 2. Because the saints are worshipping other gods.
 - 3. Because the saints are getting drunk and stoned and high.
 - 4. Because the saints are spitting on his grace.
 - 5. Because the saints are bored with the Cross.
 - 6. Because the saints are halfhearted, lukewarm, apathetic, hot and cold, go along to get along—all while the world is deep fried in dysfunction, polluted in pain, and racing to hell—while the great bulk of Christians just want a good time to be had by all with their little group of happy-Christian friends.
 - a) What's wrong with this country is not the polling place, it's the people of God.
 - b) **When the people of God have hearts for the Lord, the Lord has a heart to heal the land.**

V. Do Weird Stuff

- A. I want to go back to the Nazirites. They were believers who stood out from the crowd. Mavericks. Rebels.
- B. I'm just telling you, if you don't stand out just a little bit, you're doing your Christianity wrong.
 - 1. Christian, it's okay to do weird stuff, because you don't need the world's applause.
 - 2. You have a source of affirmation that the world doesn't have.
 - a) And that source is the grace of God in Jesus Christ your Savior.
 - 3. Now, I've got to be clear what I mean by weird. I don't need oddball. I don't mean that you're turning people off. I don't mean that you're giving needless offense. I don't mean that you're a distraction or have bad manners. I don't mean that you smell bad or dress weird.
- C. But I do want to give you some homework. And I'm going to want a report.
- D. Your homework is:
 - 1. **Do Weird Stuff**
- E. I want to give you a list of Do Weird Stuff choices... and I want you to do some of them.
 - 1. Carry an actual Bible around at school or put it on your desk at work.
 - a) Teachers and administrators, you can do this now (rfia.org)
 - 2. Next time, someone shares a struggle, say I'll pray for you.
 - 3. Do something nice for a stranger, and say I felt that Jesus wanted me to do this.
 - 4. Post you praying on Social Media. We're going to watch a 44 second video.

- a) Post a prayer that is all comfort and grace.
- b) Totally loving. Nothing judging, nothing political. Pure grace.
- 5. Pray for your meal at a restaurant, even if you're alone.
 - a) Don't do any of this for show. Do it from the heart.
 - b) Don't make people uncomfortable or invade their space.
- 6. Sign up for Prayer walking.
- 7. Show up for pre-service prayer.
- 8. Fast from cussing... say that God told you.
- 9. Fast from smoking... say that God told you.
- 10. Fast from complaining... say that God told you.
- 11. Fast from porn... say that God told you.
- 12. Marry your live-in partner... say that God told you.
- 13. Text or post an encouraging Bible verse that is not preachy
- 14. Virtual prayer requests offered to pray for anyone who will DM you in a prayer request
- 15. Post a selfie with you and your family walking into church. Don't be boastful or self-righteous about it. Just be grateful. "I love my church."
- 16. Sit in a coffee shop and just read your Bible.
- 17. Give someone a copy of Welcome to God's Family.
- 18. Invite neighbors over for pizza and say a quick prayer before you eat.
 - a) *"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, [a peculiar] people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."* (1 Peter 2:9)
- 19. Take the Maverick Pledge...

I accept God's call
To become
An ambassador of Grace and Truth
In a culture of confusion and pain
Even if it means
Doing weird stuff
By grace through faith
Amen