

I. Introduction

- A. I'm going to do something a little bit different to get started today. I'm going to read the Bible. But I'm going to change the names of people and places to modern day equivalents. Here we go.
1. *"What sorrow awaits you who lounge in luxury in Washington, DC, and you who feel secure in Beverly Hills! You are famous and popular on social media, and people go to you for help.
But go over to OJ and see what happened to him. Then go to Kanye and down to Sam Bankman-Fried. You are no better than they were, and look at how they were destroyed.
You push away every thought of coming disaster, but your actions only bring the day of judgment closer.
How terrible for you who sprawl on ivory beds and lounge on your couches, eating the meat of tender lambs from the flock and of choice calves fattened in the stall.
You sing trivial songs to the sound of the harp and fancy yourselves to be great musicians like Drake, or Elvis, or Taylor Swift.
You drink wine by the bowlful and perfume yourselves with fragrant lotions. You care nothing about the ruin of your nation."* (Amos 6:1-6, NLT)
- B. Other than the words that are underlined, this is word for word from the Bible, in the New Living Translation (a very readable translation).
- C. Welcome to our series called A Maverick Spirit. We have been asking God to speak to us through the Bible. And specifically through a book in the Bible written by the prophet Amos. My talk today is part seven in the series. Today's title is:
1. **Kryptonite**
- D. In case you don't know, kryptonite is the one element that cancels out all the super-powers of Superman, the Man of Steel.
- E. We have arrived at Amos chapter 6. In this chapter, Amos points to the single most destructive element that cancels out all of the super powers that could be yours, if you belong to Jesus.

II. Today's Situation

- A. The world is hurting. So many things are broken. Violence. War. Family breakdown. Moral breakdown. Financial systems where the math doesn't work. I'll stop.
- B. Wait, I won't.
- C. Because these things have pretty dramatic consequences, especially on a younger generation.
1. We can state those consequences in four words: depression, anxiety, despair, suicide.
- D. You cannot separate morality from psychology. The moral choices that people make, and the moral choices that society makes, have an effect on the heart.
1. The human heart is fragile. It is delicate. Yes, there's a lot of strength. Yes, the human heart is capable of great acts of nobility and courage. We can bounce back. We can cope with a lot. We can rise above horrendous circumstances.
 2. But deep inside of every heart, there's a vulnerable little kid sitting in the corner taking the hits and getting hurt.
 3. Your heart keeps score.
 4. Every sin. Every evil. Every dishonor. Every crime. Every exploitation. Every betrayal. Every abandonment. Every violation. Every scary thing. Every hurt.
 5. Your heart keeps score. Everybody hearing my voice knows that your heart is extremely breakable.
 6. That's why we do so many things to numb the pain, deny the troubles, or fight back.
- E. That is also why God is so clear. It's why God's prophets are so fiery. They see a reality so clearly that most people never figure out.
- a) **There are two paths, two ways, two roads.**
 - (1) **The first way: life**
 - (2) **The second way: death**
- F. God says, "Choose life." Real life, true life, abundant life, the God-blessed life here on earth. Which goes hand in hand with eternal life, everlasting life, the most real possible life forever in heaven. God says Choose Life.
- G. But here's the problem:
1. *"There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death."* (Proverbs 14:12)
- H. One way leads to life, one way leads to death.
1. **The way that leads to death is camouflaged to look like the way that leads to life.**

- I. Are you getting this? It seems right. It seems right. It feels like you're choosing life, but you're actually choosing death.
 - J. Well, how did that happen? That happened because:
 - 1. Satan happened.
 - 2. Sin happened.
 - 3. The Fall happened.
 - 4. So deception happens.
 - K. This all boils down to one inescapable, self-defeating, self-chosen, error.
 - 1. **Whenever you choose the way of death, it's always because you have told yourself you know better than God.**
 - L. We know better than God. Everyone does what is right in their own eyes. This is the best summary of the human condition I know.
 - 1. *"Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God."* (Romans 1:21)
 - 2. *"Professing to be wise, they became fools."* (Romans 1:22)
 - 3. *"They exchanged the truth of God for the lie."* (Romans 1:25)
 - 4. *"They did not like to retain God in their knowledge."* (Romans 1:28)
 - M. There is a way of life. There is a way of death. The epic danger is to confuse the two, which is what the human heart always does, because sin and Satan have messed us up so much we actually think we know better than God. So even though it's the way of death—depression, anxiety, despair, suicide—it *seems* right.
 - N. So you make wrong choices. Immoral choices. Unbiblical choices that go against the grace and truth of Jesus.
 - O. At first, your conscience kicks in. You hear alarm bells. You might feel a little guilty. But don't worry. If you keep choosing this way, the guilt wears off.
 - 1. If you keep at it long enough, you'll find yourself in a place where making bad choices feels good.
 - 2. It seems right.
 - P. But something begins to happen that you never saw coming.
 - 1. **When you continually pretend you know better than God, you will one day find yourself in a place characterized by one word: pain.**
 - Q. For some of you hearing right now, this is the story of your life.
 - R. There's a blindness in all of this: you never make the connection between your pain and the path you have chosen.
 - 1. I have to say right now that a lot of things happen to us that cause pain, and they are not our fault. Not one bit. That's not what I'm talking about. I acknowledge that.
 - 2. I am just asking you to own the reality that a lot of the pain in your life is mainly because you have taken the path that leads away from God...
 - 3. But you don't know it. You don't realize it. You've never made the connection.
 - S. So galloping in on his horse comes the prophet, Amos. "Wake up! Wake up! Alarm! Alarm! Turn around! The bridge is out!" he says.
 - T. All your life long, this warning is echoed through preachers, through your friends, your wife, your husband, your children, your parents, your teachers. Wake up! You're on the wrong path.
 - U. But the warnings don't work.
 - V. You are convinced that the way you are on is right. It seems right. You tell yourself, *It's right for me.*
 - W. But there are these nagging questions. Why isn't life working? Why the loneliness? Why the anxiety? Why the pain?
 - X. Why the broken heart?
- III. Amos
- A. The people Amos describes here have everything their hearts desire.
 - 1. They lounge in luxury. They feel secure. They are famous and popular. They sprawl on ivory beds. They stretch out on their couches. They dine on the finest delicacies. They entertain themselves with beautiful music. They compose their own music. They drink wine by the bowlful. They perfume themselves with fragrant lotions.
 - 2. By every human measure, they are living the highlife. They've got it going on.
 - B. Amos literally says they see themselves as the "first" among all the people (v. 1).
 - C. That's what they say.
 - D. Later on, Amos says, "Oh, you're first, all right."
 - 1. *"Therefore they shall now go captive as the first of the captives, And those who recline at banquets shall be removed."* (Amos 6:7)

- E. That's because when you are on the way of death, sooner or later the party's over. All the minor bad choices add up to a major breakdown in your soul, in your psychology.
 - 1. Whether it is loneliness, addiction, depression, anxiety, dysfunction, or despair, you can't outrun the consequence of a life lived without God forever.
- F. The nucleus is pain.
- G. No one outruns a broken heart forever. It catches up. The party's over.

IV. Grace

- A. There is one force in the universe that can make your heart whole. It is the force that heals, forgives, comforts, and gives hope.
 - 1. This force emanates from the heart of God.
 - 2. It runs like a current through the whole universe. More powerful than the force of gravity. More elemental than the forces of physics.
 - 3. That force is called the wonderful, infinite, matchless GRACE OF GOD.
 - 4. I wish we had a different word to use, because Christians use the word Grace so much that it hardly has any meaning any more.
- B. But what is grace?
 - 1. **Grace is the loving-kindness and endless blessing of God poured out on people who don't deserve it, only made possible by the sacrificial death of Jesus on the Cross.**
- C. Grace does not mean God is nice. It does not mean God is lenient. It does not mean God lets sinful actions go unpunished.
- D. That's why you can never separate GRACE from the death of Jesus on the Cross.
- E. There was nothing nice happening on that Cross. The crucifixion does not even whisper a hint of leniency on the part of God. On the cross, God did not let even a single sin go unpunished. When Jesus died there, he suffered all the intense pain and all the punishment for all the sins of all the world. Thank God, he died for my sins. Thank God, he died for your sins.
- F. Without that bloody, death-dealing, Old Rugged Cross there could never be grace in the world. Instead, there could only be justice. If Jesus didn't balance the scales of Justice, we would have to do that, and that would mean punishment and condemnation and hell.
- G. But Jesus did satisfy God's justice, so now God's grace can freely flow.
- H. What is grace? Grace is all that God is free to do for us on the basis of the Cross.
- I. It is "God's Riches At Christ's Expense."
- J. Grace is so big and so huge you have no idea. Whatever you need, God's grace is there for you. There is no bad thing that grace can't undo.
 - 1. Grace is you not earning, not deserving, not meriting, not winning, not working, not performing.
 - 2. Grace is God empowering, the Spirit indwelling, and Christ living through you day by day.
 - 3. Grace is the gift of God, the work of God, the power of God, the love of God, the provision of God, the presence of God, the peace of God, the comfort of God.
 - a) If you need it, grace provides it. If you break it, grace fixes it. If you lose it, grace finds it. If you spoil it, grace restores it. If you regret it, grace forgives it. If you hurt it, grace heals it. If you dirty it, grace washes it. If you're down low, grace lifts you up. If you're up high, grace brings you down. Where you hurt, grace comforts. Where you fear, grace fortifies. Where you doubt, grace convinces. Where you can't, grace can.
 - 4. Are you thankful for such grace?
 - a) For the confused, grace brings truth. For the addicted, grace brings sobriety. For the dysfunctional, grace brings wholeness. For the stuck, grace brings freedom. For the lonely, grace brings love. For the guilty, grace brings pardon. Where there's depression, grace brings joy. Where there's desperation, grace brings hope. Where there's fear, grace brings courage. Where there's shame, grace brings acceptance. Where there's death, grace brings life. If nobody cares about you, grace does. If nobody notices you, grace does. If nobody shows up for you, grace does. If nobody wants you, grace does.
 - 5. What wondrous love is this, O my soul, O my soul.
 - a) Grace never forgets you. Grace never forsakes you. Grace never fails you. Grace never condemns you. Grace never lets you go.
 - 6. Grace says you are fully known.
 - 7. Grace says you are fully loved.

8. Grace says you are eternally saved.
9. Grace. Grace. Grace. Grace. Grace. Grace. Grace.
10. What is grace? Grace is God's fierce, kind, joyful, gentle, rough, gruff, never-failing fathering of his adopted children through all life's crazy twists and turns, always with an eye toward the Cross and the blessings Jesus Christ secured.
11. Under grace, God loves you as much as he loves Jesus Christ.
12. Under grace, God can't love you any more than he does right now.
13. Under grace, your failures are not final.
14. Under grace, your mistakes don't define you.
15. Under grace, you are glorious.
16. Under grace, you are powerful.
17. Under grace, you are finally free.
 - a) Oh, I wish I had lips to say something worthy of the Grace of God.
- K. There is one force and only one force in the universe that can truly mend a broken heart, and that force is this blood-bought Grace of God.
- L. Can we just say thank you to God for such grace? Can we just bow in humble adoration of a God of such grace? Can we just be grateful for the blood that was shed on that beautiful, horrible, Old Rugged Cross?
 1. Why oh why does Amos write such difficult words?
 2. Why are you so hard on the people, you prophet Amos?
- M. I'm harsh because I love the people. I'm harsh because they are in a very dangerous position. They are in danger because there is one and only one force that can mend a broken heart... and that is grace.
 1. And there is only one force in the universe that can disqualify them from receiving that grace, living that grace, experiencing that grace.... And they are on the edge of that cliff.
 2. So yeah, my words are hard.
- N. Do you know what that force is?
- V. Kryptonite
 - A. I said my talk was called Kryptonite and here it is. Here is the force that separates a person from grace. Here is the element that disqualifies you from grace.
 - B. Here it is:
 1. **The only way to disqualify yourself from the grace of God is to say you don't need it.**
 - a) The Bible has a word for this:
 2. **Pride**
 - C. Pride means that you can listen to that whole long list that I just went through on the blessings and the wonders of grace, and then actually say, "I can do that all myself."
 1. I don't need God for that. I can do that. I can make that happen. I can build that life for myself. I'm smart enough. I'm good enough. I can do it. I don't need God."
 - D. Can you imagine?
 - E. It's pride. It's arrogance. It's hubris. Pride is grace's kryptonite.
 1. I lounge in luxury. I've built my walls. I am famous. I am popular. I've got my ivory beds. I dine on the finest delicacies. I entertain myself with beautiful music. I compose my own music. I drink wine by the bowlful. I perfume myself with fragrant lotions.
 2. I'm living the high life. I've got it going on. I am all that.
 3. I've built my castle.
 4. And I did it all myself. I did it my way.
 - F. That's exactly what King Nebuchadnezzar said:
 1. *"Behold the great kingdom that I have built by my mighty power and the honor of my majesty!"* (Daniel 4:30)
 - G. And then a minute later he literally lost his mind, got down on his hands and knees, and ate grass like an animal... out of his mind for months... till he humbled himself and said, God I need you.
 - H. Amos sounds an alarm to every self-satisfied, self-made woman or man, to every one who deludes themselves into thinking they have built themselves a castle in the sky.
 1. *"Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall."* (Proverbs 16:18)
 - I. Your pride is the kryptonite that cancels out all the grace that could be yours in Christ.
 - J. Pride is grace's kryptonite.

VI. Amos

- A. Amos warns them. These people are on the edge of a cliff. Unless they return to God, they're going to be destroyed. But they don't hear. They don't listen. They're still partying. They're still worshiping their idols. They're still ignoring the God who made them.
- B. They put it in their minds that they could bless themselves.
- C. God became an afterthought. God's truth became forgotten. God's Word became nothing. So God's grace became something they didn't need. They could handle life on their own and bless themselves.
- D. Pride. Arrogance. Narcissism.
- E. So right in the middle of chapter 6, Amos speaks for God.
 - 1. *"The Lord GOD has sworn by Himself, The LORD God of hosts says: I abhor the pride of Jacob, And hate his fortresses; Therefore I will deliver up the city And all that is in it."* (Amos 6:8)
- F. God's grace is your shield. It is your umbrella from the horrors of a fallen world. But when you fold up the umbrella and tell God to leave you alone... this is what you get.
- G. It is devastating.
- H. God says he hates your pride.
- I. And he hates your fortresses. These are your strongholds.
 - 1. The strongest brick and mortar fortress you can build can never protect you like the grace and love of God.
 - 2. The strongest emotional fortress you can build will never heal you and strengthen you as only the grace of God can do.
 - 3. The wealthiest financial fortress you can build will never make you rich in things that only grace can give you.
 - 4. To make Jesus and his love your fortress, that's the goal.
 - a) But when you make something else your stronghold?
- J. God hates the stuff you replace him with.
- K. Let's finish the chapter. There are two paragraphs left. Amos warns them their nation will be destroyed. And then he tells them why, and this is the bottom line of it all.

VII. National Destruction

- A. Here are the people living in luxury. And over there, two nations away, is another nation with a king named Sargon who has a son named Sargon. And when little Sargon is king, he will sweep over many nations, including Israel, and take them away.
 - 1. *"(If there are ten men left in one house, they will all die. And when a relative who is responsible to dispose of the dead goes into the house to carry out the bodies, he will ask the last survivor, 'Is anyone else with you?' When the person begins to swear, 'No, by . . .,' he will interrupt and say, 'Stop! Don't even mention the name of the LORD.') When the LORD gives the command, homes both great and small will be smashed to pieces."* (Amos 6:9-11)
- B. But hey, bring me another glass of wine!
- C. God had his hand of protection on them, his grace.
- D. But they pushed his grace away, so he took his protection away, and he gave them what they asked for.
 - 1. When you reject grace, all that's left is justice.
 - 2. Won't you turn back to God and his grace today?

VIII. Reality Check #2

- A. This last paragraph is so powerful, but it's a puzzle. Let's put it together.
 - 1. *"Do horses run on rocks? Does one plow there with oxen? Yet you have turned justice into gall [poison], And the fruit of righteousness into wormwood [bitterness], You who rejoice over Lo Debar, Who say, 'Have we not taken Karnaim for ourselves By our own strength?' 'But, behold, I will raise up a nation against you, O house of Israel,' Says the LORD God of hosts; 'And they will afflict you from the entrance of Hamath To the Valley of the Arabah.'"* (Amos 6:12-14)
- B. The second part is pretty clear. You are going to be destroyed from one end of your nation to the other.
- C. But the first part is powerful, but not clear, and let me finish with this.
 - 1. Do horses run on rocks? No. It doesn't happen.
 - 2. Do you plow rocks with oxen? No. It doesn't happen.
 - 3. Is justice poison? No. But you make it so.
 - 4. Is the fruit of righteousness bitter? No. But you make it so.
- D. Four questions. Four examples of the same thing: absurdity, craziness, and unreality.
- E. There's a word here that needs to be translated. It's left untranslated, in Hebrew.
 - 1. **You rejoice over Lo-Debar.**

F. Literally...

1. **You rejoice over not-a-thing.**

G. You rejoice over what is unreal.

1. **The pride by which you turn away from grace reveals a mind bewitched by unreality.**

IX. Heaven

A. When I was studying for this message, I put in my notes the word heaven. I know that in one sense it's a leap, because Amos doesn't talk about heaven here. Not directly at least.

B. But he does talk about God, and He is eternal.

C. And he does call him the **Lord God of Hosts**, which means the Armies of Heaven.

D. So there's a hint here.

E. But why heaven?

F. You don't have to go too far back in history to times when the entire culture lived and breathed the daily consequences of believing in a literal heaven and hell. Those two realities impacted everything.

G. The entire philosophy of society was permeated with Christian thinking that this world is not all there is. There is a far greater and vast eternal realm. There is heaven and there is hell. There is nature, yes, but there is that which is above nature as well... a supernatural God and his realm too.

H. Over the last two generations, we have watched what happens when a culture, erases heaven and hell.

1. Postmodernism erased truth.

2. Secularism erased heaven and hell.

3. And both of them erased God.

I. The people Amos described in this chapter live as if there is no heaven. What I am trying to say to you is that mindset is the ultimate unreality. It is deception. It is satanic.

J. When you live for this world, all you can do is rejoice over what is not-a-thing. Everything is temporary. Everything will fade away. One day even you will be a just a memory. Not long after that even the people who hold those memories will be gone.

K. This is nihilism at its finest. And this is the shortest distance between the human heart and despair.

L. I've been talking about kryptonite. And I say that it separates a person from Grace. But that doesn't mean it separates you from salvation. You can never lose your salvation. But you can lose the joy of your salvation.

M. Here in this world, we are possessors of all the blessings of the grace of God. But as awesome as this is, it is nothing compared to the grace that awaits you in heaven. You don't have a clue.

N. God saved you so...

1. *"that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."*
(Ephesians 2:7)

O. Are you saved? Have you received the grace of God? Are you going to heaven?

P. This is me, your pastor, asking you to live like it.