

Amos 1-4 • Judgment on Israel's neighbors and Israel herself

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We are going to start a new Old Testament study this evening. It's actually the book that we skipped over in order to do Obadiah. We're going to go back now to Amos, and you might think, "Well, Pastor Paul, why did you kind of skip around?" Honestly, it doesn't matter a whole lot.

I get a lot of questions from people regularly wanting to know about how to read through the Bible. They assume that the Bible is in a chronological order, and it is not. The first eleven books, I think, or so, maybe, of the Old Testament will give you some semblance of chronology. But then after that, they jump all over. And particularly as we are in, now, the prophets, and particularly the minor prophets, they bounce all over the place. And so as we start the book of Amos we're going to prove that as we get into it here.

So let's pray, and then we'll dive into Amos. Heavenly Father, we give You this time tonight to speak to our hearts. Lord, this is Your Word. And even though we're studying a book of the Bible that was spoken many, many years ago, and to people who are since long-gone, there is an enduring message for all of us who open our hearts to the ministry of Your Holy Spirit. And that's what we want to tie into tonight. And Lord, it's good for us to learn about the historical context and the background of these various things and how they played out. But Lord, most of all, as we spend time tonight in Your Word, we want to hear a fresh word, a fresh message of hope and life and truth, and so we pray that You would do that tonight, Lord, that You would speak to hearts, speak to each heart. Lord, I know that You're able to do that, and You can enable us, Lord, also to be hearers, and not just hearers, but doers. So we pray that You would do all of this, Lord, and we ask it in Jesus' precious name, amen.

The very first verse of the book of Amos gives the date of the writing, and it goes like this: *"The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa..."* And we think, by the way, that's literal. Many times leaders in the Old Testament are referred to as shepherds. We talked about this in our study of 1 Peter 5 last Sunday, that "shepherd" and "pastor" is the same Greek word.

In the Old Testament, God would sometimes refer to the leaders of Israel as shepherds, but in this particular case, we think that Amos was literally a shepherd, a farmer, and that he was literally called from that position to give a message at the time to Israel and Judah, because they were in a period of the divided kingdom at that time. Anyway, he says, *"...who was among the shepherds 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."*

So given the relative dating of what he is telling us here in terms of who was on the throne in both Israel and Judah at the time, we think that this message came within—somewhere— a 10-year period between 760 and 750 BC. And in case you're wondering about this earthquake that he is mentioning here, we don't know anything about it. It's completely unknown. And so it doesn't help us to date anything related to these prophecies. But apparently it was known by the people at the time, and they were using it as a dating thing, like we did with Snowmageddon. We'll say, "It was two years from Snowmageddon that we had here." It's a local thing, that helps us to figure out the passage of time.

Anyway, I find it interesting as we get into this, that the name Amos, we believe, is a shortened version of what we think was Amassiah, and that name means, "the Lord carries," or, "the Lord upholds." And this is the man that God gave this message to, a sheep farmer, who received this message from the Lord at a particularly interesting and difficult time in Israel's history from the standpoint that, remember, Israel was a divided nation: Northern Kingdom, which retained the name of Israel; Southern Kingdom, which had the name of Judah. They are all Jews, and it is all technically Israel, but it's a divided kingdom.

And at this particular time when this message is being given, they are really doing quite well from the standpoint of somebody's spreadsheet or their checkbook register. It was a time in Israel's history when they were enjoying a degree of stability, and everybody knows that whenever a nation goes through a period of stability, it also tends to bring prosperity.

But the problem with prosperity is that it tends to stir up backsliding, and that was what was going on at the time in Israel when Amos received this message from the Lord. So you can imagine what it's like to be a prophet of the Lord and to receive a message to be given to a people at a time when they're really not in a very good mood to listen to anything related to the word of the Lord. Why? Because things are going okay. They were stubborn and refused to listen even when things were not going okay.

You'll remember that Jeremiah was essentially told at the beginning of his prophetic ministry: “Jerry,” He said, God said, “I’ve got a message for you. I want you to give it to the people of Judah. Oh, and by the way, they’re not going to listen.” He was told right from the get-go. They’re not going to listen. In fact, they’re going to oppose you. Well, that’s a fun message to get. “I have a ministry and nobody’s going to respond.” Isn’t that exciting? We tend so many times to look at ministry or the success of ministry based on what we consider to be the fruit of it, which is what our understanding is, the fruit of success. Do you understand, people, that God does not judge ministry that way? God judges ministry by one thing and one thing only. And that is, faithfulness. Now, that’s not to say that fruit isn’t important. There are many times in the Word of God that we read about the fruit of someone’s ministry.

For example, in Acts 2, we find out that after Peter preached that wonderful message on the day of Pentecost, there were thousands of people that came to know Christ as Savior (verse 41). And that number was given to us to help us to understand that God cares about people. And when the fruit equals people getting saved, that’s a big deal.

But the point here, that I want to make, is that perhaps God has given you a ministry, and what He’s asking of you is, not to sit and constantly look at the fruit that you think is coming from that, but it is to be faithful, to give the message, to do the thing, to serve in whatever way God has told you to serve, do it! And we get all tied up in the fact that, “Well, this isn’t happening, or no one’s coming, or it’s not happening the way we thought it was going to happen.” That’s not what is concerning God. What concerns Him is faithfulness. Are you being faithful in your ministry? Are you doing what God told you to do?

That’s the important part. Leave the fruit to God. The Bible says, “God gives the increase” (1 Cor. 3:6). So if He’s the one who’s going to give the increase, then that means you just get out and do whatever planting or watering or whatever it is that He’s given you to do. So this is something that Amos, I’m sure, had to keep in mind during this time of ministry, because this was not a time when people were likely to listen.

He definitely had his work cut out for him. But what he’s going to begin with here, and what we’re going to see as we get into Chapter 1 is that Amos is going to begin by giving a series of prophecies about Gentile nations that surrounded Israel and God’s judgment upon those nations. Now keep in mind, Israel was probably happy to hear these prophecies that we read about here in the beginning of Chapter 1.

They were probably happy to hear that God was paying attention and that He was planning on bringing judgment to these nations. Look what it says, verse 2: “*And he said, ‘The Lord roars from Zion and utters his voice from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds mourn, and the top of Carmel withers.’*” And that's just because the presence of the Lord is here.

His judgment is coming and it says: “³*Thus says the Lord:(verse 3) ‘For three transgressions of Damascus and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they have threshed Gilead with threshing sledges of iron.’*” So the first prophecy is against Syria, all right? So Syria is the focus of this.

And again, the Jews would have heard this and said, “Amen. We're happy to hear about God's judgment on Syria.” And God saw what happened when the Syrians came into that area of Gilead, and so forth. And so what does God say? Verse 4: “⁴*So I will send a fire upon the house of Hazael, and it shall devour the strongholds of Ben-hadad. ⁵I will break the gate-bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitants from the Valley of Aven, and him who holds the scepter from Beth-eden; and the people of Syria shall go into exile to Kir,’ says the LORD.*”

And all the people of Israel said, “Amen.” There you go. So it continues on, verse 6: “⁶*Thus says the Lord, ‘For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they carried into exile a whole people to deliver them up to Edom.’*”

All right, well, we know this. This prophecy is directed now at the Philistines, right? So what is the prophecy? “⁷*So I will send a fire upon the wall of Gaza, and it shall devour her strongholds.* (Notice the similarities in the judgments.) ⁸*I will cut off the inhabitants from Ashdod, (these are major cities in the Philistine nation) and him who holds the scepter from Ashkelon. I will turn my hand against Ekron and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish,’ says the Lord GOD.*” And all the people of Israel said, “Amen.” They're liking this. This Amos guy, he's a good guy so far.

“⁹*Thus says the Lord (verse 9): ‘For three transgressions of Tyre, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they delivered up a whole people to Edom, and did not remember the covenant of brotherhood.’*” So we know that this is a prophecy that is aimed at the Phoenicians, right? You've got Tyre and Sidon, but they're talking specifically about Tyre here. And so what do we read? “¹⁰*So I will send a fire upon the wall of Tyre, (against a similar sort of a judgment) and it shall devour her strongholds.’*” And the people of Israel all said, “Amen.”

Verse 11: *“¹¹Thus says the Lord: ‘For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because he pursued his brother with the sword and cast off all pity, and his anger tore perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever.’”* So this is a word, a prophecy that he's being given against the kingdom of the Edomites.

Now you'll remember the Edomites were descendants of Esau, who was the twin brother of Jacob. The twin sons of Isaac, all right? And that's why God accuses him of pursuing his brother. So the Jews are pretty happy about this prophecy too, because they're like, “Yeah, God noticed.” Verse 12: *“¹²So I will send a fire upon Teman, and it shall devour the strongholds of Bozrah.”* And all the people of Israel said, “Amen.” You notice, I'm just throwing that in there.

“¹³Thus says the Lord: ‘For three transgressions of the Ammonites (you remember the Ammonites were the descendants of the youngest daughter of Lot, who was Abraham's nephew; and she had a child, the descendant who the Ammonites came from, who was born of an incestuous relationship with her father.) He says ‘For three transgressions of the Ammonites, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they have ripped open pregnant women in Gilead, that they might enlarge their border. ¹⁴So (look at the same judgment coming) I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour her strongholds, with shouting on the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind; and their king shall go into exile, he and his princes together,’ says the Lord.” And once again, all the people of Israel would have heard a prophecy like that and said, “Amen.” Well, it continues here. Amos is going to continue to be in their good graces here for a bit.

“¹Thus says the Lord (this is chapter 2 verse 1): ‘For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because he burned to lime the bones of the king of Edom.’” Now again, the Moabites were descendants of the other daughter of Lot, his elder daughter, who actually had the idea to sleep with their father incestuously and therefore have children by him, because they were afraid there were no other men who would be available to help them carry on their family line. This is after Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed.

Anyway, so the Moabites are the descendants of the elder daughter of Lot. He says, *““²So I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the strongholds of Kerioth, and Moab shall die amid the uproar, amid shouting and the sound of the trumpet; I will cut off the ruler from its midst, and will kill all its princes with him,’ says the LORD.”*

And again, this would have been a pretty popular prophecy for the Jews to hear. I'm sure they would have shouted, "Yes, and Amen," after hearing this. But now after laying out all the judgments to all of Israel and Judah's enemies from these neighboring Gentile nations, the Lord has some stinging words that He's now going to speak to His own people as the judgment of the Lord comes home to roost.

It says in verse 4: *"Thus says the Lord: 'For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, (and I want you to notice what He says they did wrong) because they have rejected the law of the LORD, and have not kept his statutes, but their lies have led them astray, those after which their fathers walked.*

"So I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the strongholds of Jerusalem." I want you to notice—we've already highlighted it— but I want you to think here about the charge that the Lord levies against Judah, that they have rejected the law of the Lord. Your Bible may say, "despised," if you have a different translation, "despised the law of the Lord."

Here's the situation, because the Jews had received the Word of God in a very unique and incredible way, and the revelation of God's holiness to them was a higher accountability than the nations that God called out previously. And whereas the people probably would have said, "Yes," and "Amen" when God spoke all of these various judgments to these Gentile nations, now when the Lord speaks to them, there's a higher level of accountability. It isn't just the fact that they've done things. We've all done things. The issue with them is, "They have rejected the Law; they have rejected Me. I showed Myself to them in a unique way, and they rejected that revelation." And we know in the Word of God, there is a principle that follows, and the principle is actually outlined by Jesus Himself.

Let me show you this on the screen from Luke 12; it goes like this:

(slide)

Luke 12:48b (ESV)

Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

Again, that's a spiritual principle that applies. It applied to Israel; it applies to you. None of us are exempt from that principle, so there is a level of accountability. In fact, that level of accountability increases every time you

come to church. I'm not saying that to discourage you from coming to church. Or every time you open your Bible and learn about God and about His ways and about His plans, His will, His righteous requirements—not that we're saved by those righteous requirements, mind you—but the more we learn, the more accountable we are from the standpoint of understanding. Walking in the Word of God. Walking in what we know. There are people in this world, there are people right here in this country, heavens, I'm sure there are people right here in our communities, who don't know, who literally don't know the things that you know. You know things they don't know.

But rather than focusing on the fact that they don't know, you need to remember that, it's the fact that you do know. And that's the reason God is going to hold you— us— accountable. I'm not talking about accountable from a salvation standpoint. You understand that. *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”* (Romans 8:1, ESV).

We have to remember that you will not be judged for your sin from a salvation standpoint— ever— because Jesus was judged for you. But that doesn't mean God will not hold us accountable for what we know. That's an important thing to remember. It doesn't mean He doesn't love you. It doesn't mean that you're going to potentially even lose your salvation. That's not going to happen. The issue here is what you know.

Going on here— verse 6 (The Lord moves on now to the Northern Kingdom of Israel): *“⁶Thus says the Lord: ‘For three transgressions of Israel and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals—⁷those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and turn aside the way of the afflicted; A man and his father go to the same girl, (it literally says, go into the same girl. And that's a sexual connotation there) so that my holy name is profaned; ⁸they lay themselves down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge, and in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined.’”*

I want you to notice here that the charge against the Northern Kingdom of Israel is their idolatry, which has led to sexual immorality, which has led to almost a complete backsliding from the Lord, so that as He says, His “holy name is profaned.” And He doesn't say the same thing He says to Judah. He doesn't say, “They've rejected My law or My covenant.”

I think the time for that accusation is long-since passed. Israel went downhill much faster than did Judah. And so He calls them out for their injustice, their cruelty. The wealthy were using the poor to gain even more wealth; and He

called them out for their sexual immorality, which of course was tied to their idolatrous worship of pagan idols. And the Lord promised judgment. He said, “I will judge. I will judge.” Now, the Lord is going to take some time to remind His people of His relationship with them in the past, and this is important for us to hear, because it's like the Lord is bringing these things up in a court of law—in other words, to make a point. And he begins in verse 9 by saying: “⁹*Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars and who was as strong as the oaks; I destroyed his fruit above and his roots beneath* (meaning took him out completely).

“¹⁰*Also it was I who brought you up out of the land of Egypt and led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite.* ¹¹*And I raised up some of your sons for prophets and some of your young men for Nazirites. Is it not indeed so, O people of Israel?’ declares the LORD.*”

Notice what God is doing. He's reasoning with them. “¹¹*Is it not indeed so, (that I have done these things) O people of Israel?*” He says. But look what He goes on to say: “¹²*But you made the Nazirites drink wine.*” You'll remember the Nazirite vow was a vow that certain people took to the Lord, saying that they would not cut their hair. They would not drink wine. There's certain things they would not do, touch a dead body, and so forth. It was a vow of holiness unto the Lord. And God says, “You made them drink wine.” In other words, you made them break their vow to the Lord.

But furthermore, He says, “*...and (you) commanded the prophets, saying, ‘You shall not prophesy.*” ¹³*Behold. I will press you down in your place, as a cart full of sheaves presses down.*” He's using illustrative language to help them understand the prophecy speaks of judgment. “¹⁴*Flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not retain his strength, nor shall the mighty save his life.* ¹⁵*He who handles the bow shall not stand, and he who is swift of foot shall not save himself, nor shall he who rides the horse save his life; and he who is stout of heart* (in other words, courageous) *among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day,’ declares the LORD.*”

Chapter 3 (So God goes on confronting His people saying): “¹*Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt:*

²*You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.* ³*Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?* (And this is the beginning of several rhetorical questions.) ⁴*Does a lion*

roar in the forest when he has no prey? Does a young lion cry out from his den if he has taken nothing?

“⁵Does a bird fall in a snare on the earth when there's no trap for it? Does a snare spring up from the ground, when it has taken nothing (or caught nothing)? ⁶Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid? Does disaster come to a city, unless the Lord has done it?’”

And look what he goes on to say: “⁷*For the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.*” If that verse isn't underlined or highlighted in your Bible, I would encourage you to do that, because the Lord is telling us something very important here. That is, that, “If I'm going to do something, I'm going to tell people about it. I've got prophets, and I'm going to speak to them about what I'm going to do.” And He has been very good to do that. In fact, He has spoken prophetically so that we know what is going to happen through the end of the age.

We know it's going to happen after the end of the age. We know it's going to happen after the Millennial Age because He told us. And there's a promise here that says that He will do nothing without revealing it to His servants, the prophets. Verse 8: “⁸*The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken; who can but prophesy?*

“⁹Proclaim to the strongholds in Ashdod and to the strongholds in the land of Egypt, and say, ‘Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria, and see the great tumults within her, and the oppressed in her midst.’ ¹⁰They do not know how to do right,’ declares the Lord, ‘those who store up violence and robbery in their strongholds.’”

“¹¹Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: ‘An adversary shall surround the land and bring down your defenses from you, and your strongholds shall be plundered.’” And that is no idle threat. We know from history that it is no idle threat.

There were, before the final downfall of both of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, other nations who came against them and made trouble for them throughout the years— Egypt being one of them— and so forth. But ultimately, the enemy did come and completely wipe out— not in the sense of eliminating all the people— but literally took over their kingdom. The Northern Kingdom fell to the Assyrian Empire first, and then many years later, the Southern Kingdom fell to the Babylonian Empire. And so what the Lord is saying here in verse 11 is something that we know has in fact come to pass.

Verse 12: *“¹²Thus says the Lord: ‘As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel who dwell in Samaria be rescued, with the corner of a couch and part of a bed,’”* which is really an interesting sort of a way to say that after this thing takes place, there's only going to be a small remnant of people that will survive or who will remain.

It's an interesting picture, isn't it? He says, just like a shepherd who finds an animal, one of his lambs or whatever, that has been devoured by a beast, a predator, he may only find an ear or a leg lying around somewhere. And by the way, that shepherd was required to bring those body parts back to the owner of that sheep, to prove that he had not stolen it. That was required. But that is really kind of beside the point. The point is, God is saying, just as a shepherd may only have a small part of the whole animal to bring back an account for its loss, so also it will be the same for those who survived. That will be how they are rescued. Just a small part, a very small part.

Verse 13: *“¹³Hear, and testify against the house of Jacob,’ declares the Lord GOD, the God of hosts, ¹⁴that on the day I punish Israel for his transgressions, I will punish the altars of Bethel, and the horns of the altar shall be cut off and fall to the ground.’”* That is that terrible altar that was built when the two nations first divided: the golden calf that King Jeroboam made. God says in verse 15: *“I will strike the winter house along with the summer house, and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall come to an end,’ declares the Lord.”* And so He's even speaking now a word against the wealthy: *“There'll be nowhere to run. You can't run to your summer home or your winter home. Doesn't matter. I'm going to judge completely.”*

Chapter 4: Now this gets a little rude, I'll just tell you at the beginning, but you know, God's Word is kind of like that. He doesn't really, it's not that big of a deal. *“¹Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, ‘Bring that we may drink!’”*

Now again, none of this is politically correct at all, to say nothing about being polite, but this is a message to the women of Israel, who Amos refers to as fat cows. That's what he's calling them. It's not me, it's him. So you'll have to talk to Amos about it. He says to them, *“²The Lord GOD has sworn by his holiness that, behold, the days are coming upon you, when they shall take you away with hooks, (I want you to take note of that) even the last of you with fishhooks. ³And you shall go out through the breaches, each one straight ahead; and you shall be cast out into Harmon,’ declares the LORD.”*

This is not illustrative language. This is literal language. The Lord is telling Israel that a day is coming, and a day of judgment, when an enemy would not only conquer them—and again, we know that to be the Northern Kingdom being conquered by the Assyrian Empire— but He's telling them that after they are conquered, the Assyrians would depopulate their nation by deporting the people to some other surrounding nation, which they had also conquered. And what they would literally do, the Assyrians would literally take people captive and tie them up and drag them along tied one to another over hundreds of miles (if you can imagine). And as they walked along, they had a fishhook piercing their lower lip.

And that's what the Assyrians would do to humble the people that they had conquered, to humble them into a place of submission. And God told them, it's going to be humiliating, and it's going to be painful. So he says in verse 4, “*“⁴Come to Bethel, and transgress to Gilgal, and multiply transgression; Bring your sacrifices every morning (meaning to your pagan gods), your tithes every three days; ⁵offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving, of that which is leavened, and proclaim free will offerings, publish them; for so you love to do, O people of Israel!’ declares the Lord.*” So He's basically saying, “So keep it up. Just go the way you're going. And fill up the iniquity.”

Now, this is an interesting statement in verse 6, where He begins to talk about all the things that He's brought upon them in the form of temporary judgments to get their attention, but for which they did not respond. And He begins by saying, “*“⁶I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities... ”* Now, that doesn't mean He passed out an Oral B toothbrush to all the people of Israel. What He's literally saying here is, this is a way of saying, “I made food very lean so that you had nothing to chew on.” That's what he means by saying, “*I gave you cleanness of teeth.*”

We would say today, “I gave you empty stomachs.” Now He's talking about things of the past, not necessarily things that are going on in the present, but He's talking about in years past, “I did these things to get your attention.” He says, ““⁶...*And (I gave you) lack of bread in all of your places, yet you did not return to me, ’ declares the LORD. ⁷I also withheld the rain from you when there were yet three months to the harvest (some of those critical times when the crop needs to be watered); I would send rain on one city, and (then saying) send no rain on another city; one field would have rain, and the field on which it did not rain (the crop) would wither; ⁸so two or three cities would wander to another city to drink water, and would not be satisfied; (And look what he says) yet you did not return to me, ’ declares the LORD.*” In other words, “I did these things in the past and you didn't hearken.”

“⁹I struck you with blight and mildew; your many gardens and your vineyards, your fig trees and your olive trees the locust devoured; yet you did not return to me,’ declares the LORD.”

“¹⁰I sent among you a pestilence after the manner of Egypt; I killed your young men with the sword, and carried away your horses, and I made the stench of your camp go up into your nostrils; yet you did not return to me,’ declares the LORD.”

“¹¹I overthrew some of you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were as a brand plucked out of the burning (a brand is like just a piece of burning wood); yet you did not return to me,’ declares the LORD.”

“¹²Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel.”

If that statement sounds ominous, it is. But it reveals something interesting that I think few people consider when we're walking into a period of sin in our lives. It reveals the fact that, when we walk in rebellion—and I'm not talking about sinning,--we all sin, we all mess up, that's not what we're talking about here. We mess up every day. I'm talking about when we walk an open rebellion against the Lord, we fail to realize sometimes that we become enemies of God.

That sounds like a very harsh statement. And it is a harsh statement. But God is calling them out here, in a sense, and saying to them, *“Prepare to meet your God.”* In other words, “Prepare to meet the judgment that you've brought upon yourselves by putting yourself in an adversarial relationship to Me.

“You are My children. I have given you everything you needed, and yet you walked away from it. You ignored Me. You completely walked away. You threw Me behind your back. You've put yourself in this place, in this adversarial role, so prepare to meet your adversary.” It's kind of frightening when you stop and think about it.

And then the last statement is almost as ominous. He says, *“¹³For behold, he who forms the mountains and creates the wind, and declares to man what is his thought (in other words, who reveals himself to man), who makes the morning darkness, and treads on the heights of the earth—the LORD, the God of hosts, is his name!”* And you of course know that the capitalized version of the word Lord there is Yahweh. He's saying, “I am Yahweh. The God of hosts is my name.”

And so He just wants them to know whom they've put themselves in an adversarial role against. Ultimately your battle is not against Assyria, Israel. And Judah, your battle is not against the Babylonians. You've put yourself in an adversarial role with Me. God may use the Assyrians. He may use things in our lives to discipline us in the same way God disciplines those whom He loves. We tend to look at the thing that is disciplining us at the time and think that's our enemy.

Sometimes it's even our spouse. Sometimes God will use your spouse to get your attention, and we think that that spouse is our enemy. Even though Paul told us our battle *"is not against flesh and blood."* (Eph. 6:12, NIV) Oh, we're going to make it flesh and blood. No, you set yourself up against the Lord.

I guess the real question to all of us to consider here tonight as we get ready to close is, Are you ready to meet God? Are you ready? And the reason I ask that is because that day is in the future for all of us, and the fact is, none of us can stand against Him. And you never, ever want to go up against God as an adversary. You want to appear before the Lord as a child. But the only solution for us to stand in God's presence is for us to be robed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. And the way that we are robed in that righteousness is by completely trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. That is how we are robed in the righteousness of Christ, and that is how we can stand. Because otherwise the last thing I plan on doing is standing before the Lord robed in Paul.

I'm not even. I'm not even thinking. I'm not going to go there, that never even entered my mind, because Paul's not good enough. Paul doesn't measure up. Jesus measures up, right? And so when I stand before Him, I know that Jesus is going to say, "This one is mine." Because I've been good? No, because I trusted Jesus and what He did on the cross. That's it. So, are you ready to meet your God? Not as an adversary, but as a loving father? Well, that takes Jesus. Make no mistake about it.

That's where we're going to stop for tonight. We'll pick it up in chapter 5 next time. We'll probably finish the book next time. We'll have to take, I think it is, probably, five chapters. I think there's a total of nine, but I think we can do it.

So let's pray. Father, we thank You so much for Your Word tonight. The book of Amos is kind of sobering. But it's insightful at the same time. Father, forgive us when we've played the double-minded person, when we have opened our heart to the gospel of Jesus, but we've continued to live as if we're living in the world, and we haven't changed anything in our lives.

Forgive us, Lord, because that is double-mindedness, and it creates great instability. We ask you to forgive us. We recognize, Lord, that we cannot stand in Your presence apart from the righteousness that robes us through Jesus Christ, our Savior, that we literally put on as a garment. And I pray, my Father God, that everybody here, and everybody watching us online, will have done that very thing, been robed in the righteousness of Christ by trusting completely in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

But if there are any who have not done so, I pray they would do it right now, even as we're praying together, I pray that they would just call out to you, Lord, and say, "Lord, save me. Yes, I believe that You died for me, and I accept Your death on the cross as my very own. You paid my penalty, and I will forever live for You." Thank You, Father. We pray all these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and King, amen.