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AMOS 5:1-27

For the past several weeks, we've seen Amos pronouncing judgment on Israel. We've seen how he rebuked them for their false worship. We've seen how he reminded them of calamities God had already brought upon them. We've seen how Amos reminded them that the calamities had been sent for a purpose and that purpose was to draw them back to God...but we also saw that God said over and over and over **"Yet you have not returned to Me."**

Finally, we've seen how Amos told the children of Israel to prepare to meet their God. And if the **Book of Amos** ended right there, we would certainly believe that God had said His final word on the subject, wouldn't we?

But, the **Book of Amos** doesn't end there and as we look at the **fifth chapter of Amos** today, we see Amos as he gives forth words of great sorrow...in fact, Amos himself calls his words **a dirge...a lamentation.**

Amos 5: 1-3...

In his mind's eye, Amos saw a land **already defeated** by the Assyrians. Amos says, "Your cities which once were so full of people are now empty."

Verses 4-7...

Amos tells the people not to depend on Bethel or Gilgal or Beersheba.

The golden calves they had erected at Bethel wouldn't save them.
The false altars they had bowed down before at Gilgal wouldn't save them.
They would find no refuge in Beersheba in the Southern Kingdom.

In fact, only one thing would save Israel... What was it?

Verses 5 and 6...

Deuteronomy 4:29 tells us of a promise God made to His people many generations before... God said, **"Seek the LORD your God and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul."**

Can you just feel the heart of a loving Father for His children in these verses?

I believe many times we overlook or take for granted the patience and longsuffering of God. God has pronounced judgment upon these people, but He hasn't acted **quickly** or **rashly** or **impulsively**. He has waited and pleaded with them. He has sent prophet after prophet to warn them and to preach repentance and revival and recommitment and rededication to them.

I want to ask you...

Where would you be if God were not a God of patience?

Where would you be if God were not a God of grace?

Where would you be if God were not in the business of going after lost sheep?

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It never ceases to be an amazing thing to me that God loved me enough to keep calling me to Himself. Then, when I wandered away from Him, He loved me enough to call me back! Not only did He call me back to Himself...but He gave me something I'd never had before. He gave me a deep hunger and thirst for His precious Word. That's how much He loves me and that's how much He loves you!

I'm reading a great little book by Beth Moore. It's called **FEATHERS FROM MY NEST...** In it she said she came to a time in her life where she cried out to God, "I want to love You more, God. How do I do it?" And you know what He said to her? **He told her to pray to love Him more.**

See, I believe we don't automatically love Him more or to love His Word more, but **He** puts that desire within us and then He honors our prayers in that direction. I believe He says, "If you do your part, I'll do Mine. If you'll pray to love Me more, I'll answer your prayer. If you'll pray to hunger after My Word, I'll answer your prayer. If you'll seek Me, I'll let you find Me."

He loved Israel and He longed for Israel to be obedient to Him and when they weren't, He was willing to wait. As a matter of fact, God waited more than **200 years** from the time the kingdom was divided to the time He brought the Assyrians upon Israel...

Two hundred years of provision and protection...

Two hundred years of pleading...

Two hundred years of prophets and their preaching...

But, now God's patience has just about run its course.

Verses 8-9...

Amos reminds them here just who they're dealing with...the very Creator of the earth and the stars...the very Creator of the day and the night...The One who controls the seas and the tides and the rains...

These people had worshiped false idols so long they had forgotten that Jehovah was the One who made the earth and all it contains, hadn't they?

Their conception of God has become blurred and distorted and perverted, hasn't it?

Think about this...

St. Augustine said,

"Teach me, O Lord, which is first...to know Thee or to praise Thee...to know Thee or to ask of Thee... for if I know Thee not I may ask of Thee other than Thou art."

What Augustine was saying was this,

"If I don't have the right conception of God in my praise and my praying I may be asking God to do something that is contrary to His nature."

Our conception of God will determine two very important things in our lives. The first thing it will do is it will determine how we **worship**. See, if we forget who God really is or if our conception of God is less than He really is...we're not going to give Him first place in our lives. We're going to allow idols to come in and take first place away from Him, aren't we? Our worship will be false...it will be less than the kind of worship God demands, won't it?

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Not only that, our conception of God will determine how we **walk**. If we forget who God is we're going to forget how He has commanded us to walk. God has called us to a pure walk and a holy walk, hasn't He?

It's interesting when you stop and think about it...that when God said, "Be ye holy," He did it for only reason...

For example...

When God gave the rabbinical health laws to the children of Israel back in the Old Testament, He didn't say, "Now if you eat like this you'll live longer."

Nor did He say, "If you'll eat this kind of meat and you don't eat that kind of meat, you'll be healthier and you won't have **indigestion** and you won't have **ulcers** and you won't have **high blood pressure** and your **cholesterol** will stay down and you'll live longer..."

He never says that! The only reason He gave those laws is "**because I am the Lord and I am holy.**" There might **be** some great blessings on their health for being obedient to God, but the only reason He gives them back in **Leviticus** was because He is the Lord and He is holy.

I believe we would do well if we tested ourselves on this regularly. What do we really conceive God to be? Does our conception of God line up with how He has revealed Himself in Scripture? Does our worship reflect that He is the true God and there is no one beside Him? Does our walk reflect the purity and holiness to which He has called us?

These Israelites had forgotten who God is! They had so many gods they had forgotten Jehovah! And Amos reminds them again what will be the consequences of this...

Verses 10-13...

I believe Amos is speaking of himself and other prophets of God in **verse 10**. The leaders of the community were the men who were in the gates and they didn't want to hear words of integrity.

In (**Verses 14-17**), Amos implores the people again to seek good that they may live and he warns them again that God is about to pass through their midst.

Verses 18-20...

The folks back then believed the day of the LORD meant a day of victory for God's people and a day of disaster and defeat for all their enemies. And they, Amos said, were longing for that day!

Now, do you see the irony here? These folks are worshiping idols and yet they long for the day they believe God will rescue them and give them total victory and give all their enemies total defeat.

We don't do this do we? I mean...we never say, "I wish Jesus would just come back tomorrow!" Do we? Of course, we do! I've said it many times and many times I've said it rather flippantly.

But I think we need to be reminded what that means...

When Jesus comes back, yes, we'll go to heaven with Him, but it also signals a time of great tribulation for those who are left behind.

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When Jesus comes back, many folks will never have another opportunity to be saved.

When Jesus comes back, it also means those of us who are truly Christians will stand before Christ's judgment seat. There our works will be judged...

So, I want to ask you...

Are we **really** ready for all that?

I believe we should desire for Jesus to come again. I believe Scripture teaches that. When Jesus told the Apostle John that He would come quickly, John replied "Even so, come Lord Jesus."

I believe we should look for the blessed hope! I believe we should get excited about it!

But, I believe more than anything, we should be ready for it!

Are we doing all we can to warn and witness to others about Jesus so that we'll take as many folks with us when we go?

Are the things we do for the Lord going to be pleasing to Him when we stand before Him? Our sins are paid for...we don't have to worry about our sins even being brought up at the judgment seat of Christ...Jesus paid for all of them at Calvary...but God's Word teaches that one day you and I must appear before God and give an account for our deeds done while we enjoyed a life of forgiveness!

Ephesians 2:8-10... "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. for we are His workmanship, **created in Jesus Christ for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**"

Paul tells us in **1 Corinthians 3** that one day our works will be tested by fire...so with that in mind, I want to ask you...what are your motives for the works you do as a Christian?

Do you do them for praise? Do you do them for recognition? Do you do them for the applause of those who see you doing them? In other words, will your works be burned up...are your works wood, hay and stubble that will just go up in smoke? Or are your works gold, silver and precious stones that will stand the test of fire?

I said all that to simply say this...the Israelites longed for the day of the LORD and Amos asked them "for what purpose will it be to you?" In fact, Amos says, "Folks you'll be in much worse danger at the day of

the LORD when God really gets hold of you than you are right now. You'll be like a man who's being chased by a lion only to meet up with a bear...or gets bitten by a snake in his own home."

I believe Amos is saying, "Folks you're not ready for the day of the LORD" and I wonder if he would say the same thing to me today and to you!

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Well, let's see what else God says to these folks...

Verses 21-24...

You know, when you think about it there's something worse than being an atheist... Think of Cain. Cain wasn't an atheist. Neither was Cain a worshiper of a false god. **He was a false worshiper of the true God!**

Cain's religion had elements of beauty and order and even sacrifice. But, God rejected Cain's religion and He rejected the false religions of Israel and He rejects much that is religious today.

God said He hated and rejected their **festivals**.

God said He was not pleased with their **solemn assemblies**.

God said He didn't accept their **burnt offerings and their grain offerings**.

God said He wouldn't even look at their **peace offerings**.

God said He didn't even want to hear their **songs or their harps**.

How I pray God doesn't look down on our worship service this morning and say the same things!!

Verses 25-26...

God didn't say they didn't offer sacrifices...He said they didn't offer sacrifices to HIM! The words **"unto Me"** or **"present Me"** in **Amos 5:25** are emphatic. "Have ye offered unto **Me** sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O Israel?" (KJV)

See, after God decreed that they would wander in the wilderness for forty years and that the adults would die without entering the Promised Land, their worship became half-hearted. They offered a half-service to God in the wilderness. They criticized and murmured and complained. They doubted Him and they dared Him. They made a golden calf and worshiped it. And even though they knew God had rebuked their forefathers for this, that didn't stop these folks from doing the same thing, did it?

Look again at

Verse 26...

Amos told them they carried idols with them and the implication it seems is that these gods were carried by them in the wilderness...

This reminds me of a passage back in Isaiah 46... I believe this is such a graphic picture of what happens when folks have false gods...

Let me close by asking you to turn to

Isaiah 46 and let me say while you turn there that this refers not to the Northern Kingdom, but to the Southern Kingdom. Judah has been taken captive by Babylon...but the same principle applies...

God is getting ready to deliver Judah from Babylon. In **Isaiah 45**, God tells how that's going to be done. Cyrus, a pagan king, had been raised up by God and he is going to come and deliver them. Now, in **chapter 46**, you have a description of what's going to happen when Cyrus moves in...

Isaiah 46:1-2...

Now who in the world are Bel and Nebo? They are the gods of Babylon. They are the primary gods of Babylon...Bel and Nebo.

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This is Isaiah almost poking fun at the Babylonian gods. Now, here comes Cyrus invading Babylon and what's the first thing you have to do? You have to save your gods! We've got to save our gods! We don't want our gods to be captured by the enemy!

So, they get Bel and Nebo and they load them on these donkeys. But Bel and Nebo are so heavy, they're such a burden that the donkeys can't move! As a matter of fact, they just sort of bend down and stoop and they are captured and taken away into captivity!

Verses 3-7...

Now, do you know the difference between a false god and our God?

A false god, you have to carry. The true God carries you.

A false god can only go as far as you can carry it. The true God carries you.

You have to save a false god, but the true God saves you.

Here's the picture. He says, "Let's compare gods...the gods of Babylon...Bel and Nebo. I mean, they made them out of all this gold and silver..."

He's saying, "You took it to a blacksmith and they turned it into these gods and you set them in their place and wherever you set them that's where they stayed..."

They can't move on their own and you cry out to them and they cannot answer and then when the enemy comes in you load them on these donkeys and they're so heavy the donkeys can't get out of town and so they're captured by the enemy... but he says, "**our God carries us...even from the womb to our graying years...He carries us.**"

What a graphic contrast between **any** false god and the one true God!!!

Maybe someone here today is weary because you've been carrying your "god" with you. Why don't you just put it down this morning and allow the true God to carry you?

Well, Amos ends this chapter by telling the folks once again the consequences of all their sin...

Verse 27...