

The Minor Profits

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[0 : 0 0] Viewing our exposition of the book of Amos, and I would ask you to turn, if you would please, to Amos chapter 6. We are not dealing with this in any great amount of detail, simply because we have elected to undertake the minor prophets, of which there are twelve.

You've got a song sheet there before you, and we won't be using it today because I've left the music in the van. But we'll get to it in our next week. Meanwhile, you might want to just take that sheet that you've got and tuck it away in your Bible so it'll be there for our next reference, because we will be using it in the future, and it is a wonderful guide to the memorizing of the twelve minor prophets.

And we will have it down pat so that when we get finished with this, you're going to know the minor prophets backwards and forwards, and you can say them in your sleep, and your wife will attest for that.

Okay? So, in Amos chapter 6, we've got a powerful message delivered by Amos.

It will be, as almost all prophetic messages are, it will be unpopular and not well received. And the reason is simple, and that is because God is raising up a minority, in some cases, in many cases, with the prophets, individuals, to speak truth to power and truth to the majority.

[1 : 3 7] The prophet of God is one who is always swimming upstream, always against the current. I do not know.

Well, there are a few instances where God reveals to the prophet that he has good news to deliver, and that is an exception.

There is good news that is going to be delivered by a prophet regarding the birth of the Messiah, and Isaiah will be talking about that, and Zechariah will be talking about his coming into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, on the riding of an ass, and the foal of an ass.

And these are good news things, but they are in the minority. And most of the time, the prophet is called upon to deliver warnings of coming judgment because of bad behavior.

And what's this bad behavior thing all about? Well, it is the common tonic of humanity ever since the fall. You've got to remember that the greatest, perhaps the most significant consequence of our parents' first disobedience to God meant that they were somehow, in a way we don't understand, they were somehow injected with an element that God did not put in them.

[3 : 0 7] That is a sin nature that they took upon themselves in exercising their volition, and as a result, their focus turned away from God and into self.

And self-centeredness is the largest calamity that mankind has to deal with. And it has been so from Genesis 3 on to the present.

And when you take this self-centeredness and multiply it by millions, you have a self-centered nation. And frankly, that's where we're at. So those who are not self-centered, but who are God-centered, are in a minority.

Always have been. I mean, what kind of contrast would you use to explain the minority of Noah and his family as compared to the rest of the world?

Tiny, tiny minority. But that's the way it was then, and that's the way it is now. So what we have come to appreciate in studying the prophets and their messages is this, is that anyone who is intent on being sensitive to God's direction and being pleasing to God, the only people you are going to click with are those who want to be pleasing to God.

[4 : 29] And those who are self-centered want to please themselves. And that's where the conflict arises. So we were all that way until regeneration took place and changed the heart and gave us an ability, a capacity to be God-centered rather than man-centered.

But even then, it isn't automatic, because as Paul made it very clear when he wrote to the Corinthians and to the Galatians and to the Ephesians, it is possible for Christians to live like non-Christians.

Whoa. Where do you get off of that? Are you so foolish, having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect in the flesh? Paul says when he writes to the Galatians. So there is a constant battle that is going on even in the life of one who is a believer, because the tendency is to revert to that which is in your surrounding.

And one of the reasons that we are gathered here every Thursday and in your churches on Sundays is that we might surround ourselves with the kind of environment that will encourage and strengthen us in our walk with Christ as opposed to that which is out there in the world around us.

So the prophet is addressing really nothing new. It's been this way. And it continues to be this way. So we have a dynamic that is provided us in the gospel of Christ that actually contains the power to change a life, its direction, and its destiny.

[6 : 15] And this is why, among other reasons, that Paul said, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for in it is the power of God.

And that word for power is dunamis. And we get our English word from dunamis called dynamite. For in the gospel is the dynamite, the power of God, through faith unto salvation.

And there isn't anything else that can do that job. So, people have been aligned with God from Genesis on. And the prophets that God raised up, which we refer to as the minor prophets, all had a message to deliver.

And the message was mixed, but it usually contained more bad news than it did good news. And the bad news is, you people better get your act together because judgment is coming.

You think you, as a covenant people, chosen people of God, you think you could go on living and acting like you are without God bringing judgment upon your house? Just because you enjoy this special privileged position of being the chosen people?

[7 : 26] Actually, that makes you more responsible. Not less, because unto whom much is given shall much be required. And he tells us in Amos 3 that we've already looked at, where the Lord said, You only, Israel, you only, of all the nations of the earth, have I known.

That means, that doesn't mean that God didn't know about the other nations, but he means you are the only ones that I have known in a personal, intimate way among all the other nations.

Therefore, you are more responsible than they are, because you have a connection with me that they don't have. They are behaving like pagans, and what else can you expect?

But you, you have no cause to be behaving like they are, because you are the enlightened people of God. So, where do you get off? Living like you are.

And that's where we come to in chapter 6. Woe to those who are at ease in Zion. Woe? W-O-E.

[8 : 30] It's not good news. It is calamity. It is a time of darkness that is coming. Woe to those who are at ease in Zion.

Relaxed. Comfortable. And to those who feel secure in the mountain of Samaria. Samaria is the new capital of the northern kingdom.

Now, we related to you earlier how that in 911 B.C., about 900 years before Christ was born, the ten tribes in the north seceded from the union of the twelve tribes of Israel, leaving the two little tribes, Jerusalem, the capital of which is the south.

Jerusalem is located in the tribe of Benjamin. And then the other tribe is Judah. And those of Judah are going to eventually pick up the name Jew, which is just shortened for Judah.

And today we refer to Jews. We spell it J-E-W. But the name was given to those of the tribe of Judah. And they were just called Jews for short. And it kind of stuck there in the south.

[9 : 48] And this prophet, Amos, is raised up of God as a non-professional. The guy's a farmer. Sheep herder. Gatherer of sycamore fruit.

So, I haven't been to the seminaries. I haven't been to the theological training. I don't know any of that high lingo. But I do know this. God has called me to deliver a message. And, of course, in part, it will be Amos' lack of credentials that will make him less than well accepted among the intelligentsia.

They will deride him. They will ridicule him and so on. They will mock him and make fun of him. And that goes with being a prophet. You need to expect that. So, in the mountain of Samaria, that's where the capital is, the distinguished men of the foremost of nations.

These are what we call, you've all heard of down and outers. These are up and outers. These are people well positioned, well educated, well bankrolled, in influence and everything that you could imagine that was going on in the culture at that time.

And these are the intelligentsia, the clientele that he is addressing. The distinguished men of the foremost of nations, to whom the house of Israel comes.

[11 : 12] Go over to Kaona and look. And go from there to Hamath the Great. That is, from north to south. From the extreme in the north to the extreme in the south. Now, then go down to Gath of the Philistines.

Gath is where Goliath was from. And this Gath is down in Gaza Strip, which by today is a hot spot. It is from the Gaza Strip that the PLO fires their rockets over into Israel.

So, this is a very ancient land and it was very much contested back then and it still is today. Are they better than these kingdoms? And, of course, the question, the rhetorical question and the answer is obvious.

No, they are no better than those kingdoms. Or is their territory greater than yours? Do you put off the day of calamity? And would you bring near the seat of violence those who recline on dead survivors?

We would say these are the people that haven't made. They have got all kinds of assets just pouring in from their 401ks. They are living in the laps of luxury and retirement and just cooling their heels.

[12 : 24] And they are reclining on these beds of ivory, which is a pretty expensive thing in that day. And they sprawl on their couches and eat lambs from the flock and veal or calves from the midst of the stall.

They have the very utmost in dining and propriety and finery and all of the accoutrements that go with luxury.

These people are living it up. And you've got to remember, they are still riding on the crest of the wave that Solomon was able to establish in his reign.

Because when David, the king, defeated all the surrounding enemies, he pacified the whole region and literally subdued everybody so that there was peace in the land.

And that enabled Solomon to turn all of his efforts toward domestic things. The finery of the land, the buildings and the improvements and all of the rest.

[13 : 25] So that when Solomon reached his peak, it was said that the land of Israel had reached the epitome of elegance, extravagance and opulence that no other nation in the world had ever known.

And these are still basking in the light of that kind of provision. So they are living it up. They sprawl on their couches, eat lambs from the flock, calves.

We would say they dine at the five-star restaurants. They are really living it up. They improvise to the sound of the harp and like David have composed songs for themselves.

Who drink wine from sacrificial bowls. We would today say somebody is so imbibed that they drink right out of the bottle.

They don't even bother to pour it in a little shot glass. They just glub it right out of the bottle. These just saturate themselves. Drink it right out of the bowl. By the bowl bowl. While they anoint themselves with the finest of oils.

[14 : 31] Yet, they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph. Now, Joseph is not being spoken of here as an individual. Joseph, of course, has been dead and buried for a long, long time.

What this is talking about is Joseph's descendants. In the same way that many times the Bible or the prophet will refer to Israel. And he's not talking about Israel the man who originally was Jacob.

And Jacob's name was changed to Israel by God. Remember? At the brook Jabbok. So, when the scriptures use the term Israel, they are more often than not, not referring to the individual man.

They are referring to his descendants. Jacob's descendants. The twelve tribes of Israel. And sometimes they are called Joseph. Sometimes they are called Ephraim. Ephraim. And the name Ephraim is often used in connection with the northern ten tribes.

Probably because Ephraim was the largest of the tribes numerically. There were more people in the tribe of Ephraim in the north than there were in any others.

[15 : 39] So, sometimes it just kind of became known as Ephraim. But more generally, the northern ten tribes were referred to as Israel. The two tribes in the south are going to be referred to as Judah.

But historically, all twelve were Israel. And in the future, all twelve will be Israel. So, keep that in mind. It's a little distinction that helps to clarify things.

The Lord God, or verse 7, They have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph. And the ruin, of course, is speaking of the spiritual and moral ruin.

It isn't talking about breaking down the buildings and tearing up of roads. It's talking about the moral, spiritual ruin of the descendants of Joseph. Therefore, and here is a purpose clause.

Therefore, that is why they will now go into exile at the head of the exiles. And the they here is referring to the wealthy, the well positioned, the opulent.

[16 : 42] But they are going to be at the front of the line. When they are led away into exile by the enemy, the Assyrians that will subdue them.

And lead them into captivity. And these, who always insisted on being first in everything. They're going to be first as captives.

Who will be led to a strange land. And that will be the land of Assyria. They will exile at the head of the exiles.

And the sprawlers banqueting will pass away. That's the lavish feast that they put on. The parties that went on day after day.

To impress everybody and all the rest. All of that's coming to an end. The Lord God has sworn by himself. The Lord God of hosts has declared.

[17 : 41] I loathe the arrogance of Jacob. And there again. There is that name. That corporate name. That refers to a mass of people.

Not an individual. He's not talking about a single man Jacob. Any more than he was talking about a single man Joseph. He's talking about his descendants. And it is a sad, sad case.

The arrogance of Jacob. Arrogance. Arrogance is always born out of ignorance. Someone has said that arrogance is ignorance on steroids.

Ignorance. Ignorance is when you just don't know. You just don't have the information. But arrogance. Arrogance is a kind of.

Well. It is based on ignorance. Let me put it this way. One of the. One of the sociological catastrophes.

[18 : 48] That we've been dealing with now for. Well actually for a couple of hundred years. Not just since the Civil War. But even before that. Is racism. Racism.

And. The two engines. That drive. Racism. Are these.

Ignorance. And arrogance. And ignorance. Means. You don't really understand. Origins.

Your origin in particular. Other people's origins. You don't understand. Something that. Actually our founding fathers. Others. Understood. At least to a degree. And you have to wonder about.

Those who had the slaves. In the early days. Because they said that. All men were created equal. Well. How did that work out. For those who were slave owners. So there was a little bit of blindness.

[19 : 45] And hypocrisy there. But. But. Really. I just wish. I've said this before. And I'll say it again. I just wish that. Everyone in America.

Could see. Answers. In Genesis. Video. Video. Of one blood. And one race. And if people could see that.

Understand it. Buy into it. What we have been struggling with. As racism. For a long long time. Would die effectively. At midnight tonight.

Because we are. Of one nation. Of one blood. And there is. No such thing. As a superior race. Adolf Hitler. Was wrong.

There is no. Super. Aryan race. There is no race. That is. Superior to. Or inferior. To others. We are all cut.

[20 : 41] From the same. Bold. Of cloth. We all have. The same. Red blood. And there is. An equality. In humanity. That is. Unmistakable. And the bible.

Points this out. But. We're slow. To pick up on it. And. And then. The arrogance. That comes from the ignorance. Is actually. Embracing the idea.

That. We are superior. To them. Because of the color. Of our skin. Or because of the money. And our pocketbook. Which makes us. Monetarily superior.

Or whatever. And. The truth be known. It's just. It's just. Ignorance. But. We are. Steeped in it. And.

Ignorance. That is not enlightened. Easily. Lapses. Into arrogance. And arrogance. Is that. Air of superiority. And so on. The good. You know.

[21 : 35] Any. Anyone. Who realizes. Who they are. In Christ. And how they got there. And what makes them. What they are.

Your arrogance. Just has to go right out the window. I mean. The apostle Paul said. I am what I am. By the grace of God. To me. Who am blessed. In the least.

Of all apostles. Was this grace given. That I should preach. Among the Gentiles. The unsearchable riches of Christ. And Paul knows. That. He has no basis.

For pride. He has no basis. For arrogance. A. A Christian. Who. A Christian. Who. Is plugged in. Is going to be.

A humble individual. And we are. We are. We are. We are urged in scripture. Peter said. Humble yourselves. Therefore. Under the mighty hand of God.

[22 : 31] And he. Will exalt you. In due time. And. How many of us are intent on. Exalting ourselves. Before the time. Humility.

Is that. Which characterizes. Our Lord. And it is to be modeled in us. And all it is. All it is. Is a realization. Of the pit. From which you were dug. And you know.

That you have no basis. For pride. You have every reason. For gratitude. And thanksgiving. But no basis. For pride. And that's part of what these.

We're dealing with. I loathe the arrogance. Of Jacob. And I detest his citables. Therefore. I will deliver up the city.

And all it contains. And it will be. If ten men. Are left in one house. They will die. Wow. I don't know if this is going to be a plague.

[23 : 27] Or what. But let's read on here. Then one's uncle. Or his undertaker. Some translations render this. The one who makes the fire.

And that is disposing. Of the bodies. Particularly in the case. Of some kind of disease. Or plague. Where burning is considered. The most. Beneficial way.

To deal with the remains. Because of the plague. That's his fault. One's uncle. Or his undertaker. Will lift him up. To carry his bones. From the house. And he will say.

To the one. Who is in the innermost part. Of the house. Is anyone else with you? Any other bodies here? Anybody else in the room? This is a solemn.

Sad situation. But this is what Amos says. Is coming. And of course. Are the people going to believe this? Nope. They're going to reject it. They're going to say. He's just a crazy old coot.

[24 : 21] He's got this. Thing about God speaking to him. And he's supposedly telling us. What God told him. We know that it's divine. You know who this guy is? He's a gatherer of sycamore fruit.

For crying out loud. What does he know? And this is the kind of derision. That Amos is going to experience. And so will the others. Is anyone else with you?

And that one will say. No one. Then he will answer. Keep quiet. For the name of the Lord. Is not to be mentioned. What this is suggesting is.

That there is going to be the suspicion here. That their activities. Have brought God's judgment. Upon them. Which is going to be true. So.

Don't say anything. That you might regret. Don't say anything. You wouldn't want God to hear. Because it may get worse.

[25 : 18] Isn't that something. Anyone else. Then he will say. Keep quiet. For the name of the Lord. Is not to be mentioned. For behold.

The Lord. Is going to command. That the great house. Is smashed to pieces. And the small house. To fragments. Is there. Is there. I'm going to. As far.

are the estates that have been built up and finely furnished. They are going to be leveled. And the hubbles, the huts, they are going to be leveled as well.

The small and the great. To fragments. Do horses run on rocks? Rhetorical question. Well, of course not. Any fool would know that.

Horses don't run on rocks. Or does one plow them with oxen? Of course not. Yet, you have turned justice into poison.

[26 : 14] Justice simply means doing the right thing. And with the right motive. And someone has said that what was true back then is all too sad sometimes true right here in the good old USA.

Where it has been said that many times in the USA you get the best justice that money can buy.

It ought not to be that way. Why is it? Because human beings are administering the laws. Human beings are enforcing the laws.

And human beings are breaking the laws. And what do you get? An automatic built-in potential for corruption. And Springfield, Ohio is no different from any other city.

Because it's made up of the same kind of people. I've often said that the thing that is wrong with Congress is that it is made up of people just like us.

[27 : 21] That's the problem. You know? That's the way it is. And sometimes these things are hard to come by. And it is systemic to humanity.

Justice is hard to come by. And this is going to be Amos' this is going to be his number one arrow. It's the injustice of it all.

And the paying lip service to God as opposed to truth and righteousness. You turn justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood.

You who rejoice in Lodibar and say This is kind of like a resort type area. Have we not our own strength taken Karnaim for ourselves?

That's another place of opulence and luxury. For behold I am going to raise up a nation against you O house of Israel declares the Lord of hosts.

[28 : 18] Well who is he going to raise up? He's going to raise up the Assyrians. Well for crying out loud they're worse than the Jews. And that's the irony of it all.

God is saying I am going to use a wicked nation that does not even know me that worships multiple gods I'm going to use them to judge you.

I'm going to take you to the woodshed and I'm going to use pagan nations that don't have an inkling of what's really true and I'm going to use them to chastise you.

Wow. And that's exactly what he's going to do later in the south with Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar when he carries them into captivity. Amazing thing here. They will afflict you from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of the Arba.

This is from the north and the south extreme in the north to the extreme in the south. Thus saith the Lord the Lord God showed me and behold he was forming a locust swarm when the spring crop began to sprout and behold the spring crop was after the king's mowing.

[29 : 36] King's mowing is when the first cutting goes to the king. That's part of your taxes you know that you pay. And the first mowing would go to him and after that came about when it had finished eating the vegetation of the land that I said Lord God please pardon how can Jacob stand for he is small.

The Lord changed his mind about this. It shall not be saith the Lord. Thus the Lord God showed me and behold the Lord God was calling to contend with him by fire and it consumed the great deep and began to consume the farmland and then I said Lord God please stop how can Jacob stand for he is small.

Talking about land territory the Lord changed his mind about this. This too shall not be saith the Lord. Thus he showed me and behold the Lord was standing by a vertical wall with a plumb line in his hand.

Now if you know anything at all about plumb lines they are used to determine whether something is straight. True. We talk about it being plumb.

That means it is situated at the angle that it is supposed to be. If you build a wall and the wall is not plumb and you hang a plumb line from the top of it with the string and the weight on the end if it doesn't hug that wall all the way down we say it is out of plumb.

[31 : 13] It needs correction. It is leaning. And God is using the plumb line here to show the people of their moral laxity how far afield how off the line they are when it comes to their behavior.

and he is doing this using an item that they are very much familiar with. He asks Amos in this vision and says Amos what do you see? Plumb line.

And the Lord said behold I am about to put a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel. This is their moral crookedness that will be revealed.

And the plumb line is nothing more well actually it is like a metaphor but it is not going to be an actual line with a weight on the end but what it is going to be is moral spiritual information delivered by Amos to these people who are living wicked evil lives and the contrast is going to be dramatic.

And fellas do we ever have an application here today? Where in the world would America be revealed to be if God's moral spiritual plumb line were hanging over this nation?

[32 : 35] Makes you wonder how far off that mark we would be. How out of plumb is this country? I well I will resist the temptation to become a modern day Amos and we'll just go on and stay with the old fashion Amos but I tell you this thing has got me this message has got me stirred up.

I've already changed my message for Sunday for Memorial Day and and it is due in part to the influence that has come to my own soul from our study in the Minor Prophets and well I will spare them no longer.

The high places of Isaac will be desolated. There again is that personal name that refers to the aggregate people. This is Isaac's descendants of course.

Wow. And the sanctuaries of Israel laid waste. These are the temples and they are temples that are given over to idolatry and the worship of false gods.

Then shall I rise up against the house of Jeroboam with the sword. Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent word to Jeroboam king of Israel.

[34 : 12] Now this Amaziah is a phony priest. He was just appointed to be a priest. But the real priesthood still resided in Judah and Benjamin in the temple there.

And you absolutely could not be a priest for any amount of money or anything else. you could not be a priest if you were not descended from the tribe of Levi.

You had to be a Levite in order to be a priest. John the Baptist was a priest. His mother was a Levite and his father was a Levite.

And John of course was a Levite. And Zacharias was the Levite. These people had the credentials that God had established.

But these in the north, they didn't have the priesthood. The priesthood remained in Judah at the temple when the twelve tribes pulled away. And so did the sacrificial altar and everything else.

[35 : 16] So when they go up north to build this new country, they've got to install all of these things because they realize, the powers that be realize, and particularly starts with Jeroboam who was the first king of the north, they realized if we don't do something to keep our population, and you've got to remember, we've got the population of ten tribes in the north, as opposed to just two tribes in the south.

Yeah? Is this Jeroboam the big brother of Rehoboam who's the king of the south? No. Actually, this Jeroboam here is actually, we would call him Jeroboam the second.

Jeroboam the first was the one that Solomon chased into exile in Egypt. And then when Solomon died, Rehoboam came to the throne, and Rehoboam said, you think my daddy had a high tax rate, I'm going to make it higher.

And then they said, no you're not, we're getting out, we're leaving the union. And the ten tribes pulled away to the north, and guess who they brought in for their first king?

The same guy that Solomon had chased out of the country. It's so reminiscent of Ayatollah Khomeini. You know that? The Shah of Iran chased Ayatollah Khomeini out of the country because he was making too much noise.

[36 : 44] You see, the Shah was westernizing Iran. Western influence. I mean, the women in Tehran wore Levi jeans.

that's about as western as you can get. And Ayatollah Khomeini and the Muslim mullahs rebelled against that, started writing editorials, holding demonstrations, everything, and the Shah of Iran says, well enough of that, and he kicked him out of the country, and he exiled him, and he went to France.

and remember when the students took over the American embassy in Tehran, and I could still see, it's plain as day, I can still see Ayatollah Khomeini come into Tehran in the midst of hundreds of thousands of people cheering him and welcoming him, and he landed in a helicopter.

And the Shah of Iran, meanwhile, had died. He came to the United States for treatment, remember? Cancer? And he died, and they had this revolution, and these young people that took over the American embassy there were the beginning of that, and that meant that the government of the Shah was toppled, and the son of the Shah had the plea for his life to another country, and he's still exiled, and Ayatollah Khomeini and his Muslim clerics came to power, and they remain in power to this day.

So, there are some parallels here. You know, what we're talking about is where all of these things played out, and let me put it this way, this is also where all of these things are going to come to an end, in this same part of the world.

[38 : 38] Hey, guys, I appreciate you being here this morning. Thank you.