

The Minor Profits

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Date: 02 December 2018

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[0 : 0 0] And Amos, we've got to go by way of 1 Corinthians chapter 1. So let's go there, please. 1 Corinthians chapter 1, we need to establish a principle before we get to Amos, and it has to do with the man himself.

And I am confident that Amos is one of many who would be an excellent example of this. So if you would, please, 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 26.

Verse 26. The Apostle Paul says, Consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many mighty, not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble.

Now he doesn't say not any, but he says not many. So I guess we can say here a few in number. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world, and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, that he might nullify the things that are.

That, this is a purpose clause, or so that no man should boast before God. But by his doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, that just as it is written, let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.

[1 : 3 8] The principle that is being set forth here is that contrary to the way humans operate, God delights in using nobodies. We usually are eager to eliminate the nobodies, and we will go for the somebodies, because they are the ones who are most outstanding among us.

They are the ones whom we select. But God works in an opposite vein. Matter of fact, this is the way the world usually operates in contrast to God.

Because we tend to look on the outward appearance, God looks on the heart. It's all a matter of perspective. Our perspective is human, and that of necessity severely limits our perspective, because we just have a little corner of the truth of what's going on.

But God's perspective is inclusive and expansive, and He's able to see the end from the beginning, and the beginning from the end, and nothing is hidden from Him. So when it comes to the principle of being used of God, God is far more interested in our availability than He is our ability, because He is willing to make up that which we lack once we have committed what we do have to Him.

And it is in our weakness that we are made strong. Not in our strength, but in our weakness we are made strong. And God is committed to making up the difference when our lives are committed to Him.

[3 : 1 4] And it's a beautiful concept, and once again, it is completely contrary to the way the world operates. There are all kinds of principles like this in the Scriptures, and our Lord gives one in the Gospels when He talks to His disciples, and He says, you know how it works in the world?

How that men in positions of power and authority, they are determined important and valuable by how many people are serving them? That's the way the world operates.

How many people do you have at your back and call? How many people can you move when you just pick up the telephone and make a phone call? That's the way the world works. And then Jesus said, but fellas, it is not to be so among you.

You are going to be working on a completely different principle. He who would be chiefest among you, let him be servant of all. Well, what is that?

That's not the way we operate. That's the way God operates. And God's ways are not our ways. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts, saith the Lord.

[4 : 19] So what we need to do is understand God's methodology and get with that program rather than go with our natural tendency.

Another example could be given with David. Remember when the Lord told Samuel He wanted him to go to the house of Jesse, and he was going to anoint one of Jesse's sons as the new king of Israel.

And there was Samuel ready to pour the anointing oil on this one who would be the choice of God and would succeed Saul.

And Jesse had seven sons. And he prayed in the first six pime. And the first one, you know, they came in age because that's the way the Hebrew culture does.

It is the oldest first. And he prayed at his oldest son and then his next oldest son and the next oldest son. And Samuel was waiting for the Lord to whisper in his ear, that's the one, anoint him.

[5 : 23] And he went through all of them. And the Lord didn't give him any sign at all. And Samuel's confused. And he says, I don't understand. The Lord sent me here to anoint the next king of Israel.

This all the boys you got? And Jesse said, well, actually, we've got one more. He's just a kid. He's out tending the sheep. You know, he's out minding the flock. And Samuel said, bring him in.

And he came in. And the Lord said to Samuel, that's him. That's the one. He was the youngest of all. And yet the great exploits of David are still things of common talk, are they not?

So, that's the principle in which God operates. And the reason I bring that to your attention is because that's the kind of guy that Amos was. Humanly speaking, he was probably the least qualified one for the prophetic ministry of anybody that you would find.

And he even admits, as he goes on through what he has written here, that I'm not a prophet, he said. I'm not a prophet, and I'm not the son of a prophet. And the only reason I'm in this position is because God called me.

[6 : 34] Because I want you to know one thing. I'm not qualified. I'm not educated sufficiently. I'm not capable. I have these problems, etc. But the Lord called Amos to deliver a message.

And by the way, Amos is in many respects Amos, the most thunderous of the prophets, the most to the point, the most severely critical, the most lay it on the line.

That's the kind of guy Amos was. And some of the other minor prophets are going to kind of, and they're all speaking truth, but they have different ways of doing it. But Amos, we would call, rough around the edges and right to the point.

He didn't pull any punches. And he is surfacing at a time when the kingdom has been divided between north and south.

Remember, there are ten tribes to the north that seceded from the Union and two in the south. And Amos is called to prophesy or to minister to the northern ten tribes.

- [7 : 43] And these are people, north and south actually, that are still benefiting from the tremendous domestic program and progress that Solomon brought.
- And Solomon built his kingdom on the backs of David and his military exploits because David succeeded in literally pacifying all of their neighbors.
- And it ushered in a period of peace that the whole territory had never seen before because there was continual conflict, particularly with the Philistines. And now they are all pacified and everything is calm and all of their direction can be turned to domestic affairs.
- And as a result, Solomon brought the kingdom to a period of prosperity, a peak of affluence that none of the world had ever known at this time.
- And this place was the elite of the Mediterranean thanks to the ability, the wisdom of Solomon. And when Amos arrives on the scene, both the north and the south are still bathing in all of that prosperity.
- [8 : 58] So the times are pretty good. There's going to be a rapid change later on because things are going to go downhill. But for the time being, let's get into Amos and see what he's got here for us.
- Verse 1, the words of Amos, who was among the sheep herders from Tekoa. This is about 12, 13 miles south of Jerusalem.
- Which he envisioned, envisions, concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah. Now you've got to remember we're going to be talking about two different kingdoms here and the way this time frame is identified is that Uzziah was the king of Judah and Jeroboam, the son of Juash, was the king of Israel.
- You've got to keep these two separate because they are the result of the cleavage of the kingdom. Remember they had the big fight and when Rehoboam came to the throne he said he was going to increase everybody's taxes and the people of the north said enough of this nonsense.
- What interest have we in Jesse? Two are tens O Israel and they pulled out of the union. These ten tribes consisting of the majority of the population pulled out of the union and they are going to be known by the name Israel.
- [10 : 21] And that's a little confusing because previously the whole twelve tribes were called Israel and they are still called Israel today. But for the purposes of the divided kingdom the ten tribes in the north are going to bear the name Israel probably because they had ten of the twelve and then the two tribes in the south are going to bear the name Judah.
- And actually it will be two tribes. It will be the tribe of Judah and the tribe Benjamin. Benjamin is the smallest of all the tribes but Benjamin is key because Benjamin is where Jerusalem is located and the temple and that is the very nerve center of Judaism.
- So we've got a time frame here that is identifying when he came on the scene it was when Uzziah was the king of Judah and Jeroboam is the king of Israel.
- And this Jeroboam by the way is Jeroboam actually it's Jeroboam the second. This is not to be confused with Jeroboam the son of Nebat that made Israel the sin that is found numerous times.
- This is the Jeroboam the second and Jeroboam the first was the one who was the first king of the northern kingdom after they seceded. So here we've got beginning in verse 2 and Amos said the Lord roars from Zion.
- [11 : 50] That's an interesting expression because he doesn't say the Lord speaks from Zion but he says the Lord roars from Zion and the emphasis that is being placed upon it with that word is God has really got something to say and he opens up through this prophet Amos and it is going to be a heavy message.

You better get this. You better pay attention. The word roar you've all seen the opening clip the scene the movie every time the MGM movie comes on you got that lion there that male lion and he gives out this roar you know and we've probably all one time or another been at a zoo and you've got these beautiful beasts behind cages and they can't get to you but every now and then one of them will roar and when they do you can hear that sound and you're just glad that it's behind those bars.

Now if you ever happen to go to Africa and go out on one of those safaris where you're looking at the wildlife and everything and you're walking down this path and you hear a lion roar you're going to feel a whole lot different than you do when you were in the zoo because you know what the possibilities of that is and he uses the word here deliberately because he wants to emphasize that God is going to be speaking very clearly and very loudly through this prophet and this prophet considers himself the least capable and the least likely to be delivering a message like this.

Fellas here is an example of a nobody speaking truth to power and you can really get into trouble that way.

because when you are committed to God and committed to speaking the truth when you are I've got a phrase here that came to my mind if you are going to please God you must accept the fact that the only people you are going to please are those who also want to please God or are heading in that direction because most people don't.

[14 : 18] Let's face it this is what's wrong with the world. Most people want to please themselves. Number one that's human nature.

We call it fallen human nature and how many times have we emphasized that perhaps the most significant consequence of the fall that took place in Genesis 3 with Adam and Eve the most significant consequence is that as a result of their disobedience to God they took unto themselves a nature that God didn't put in them and it is called self centeredness.

It is the curse of the fall. It is the problem of humanity we are all naturally ingrained self centered.

That's part of our fallenness. It's me myself and I and after me you come first. That's the typical thinking and that's the way we operate.

So when you are committed to pleasing God he's got to come first and he says the Lord roars from Zion and from Jerusalem he utters his voice and the shepherds pasture grounds mourn and the summit of Carmel dries up thus says the Lord for three transgressions of Damascus.

[15 : 49] Damascus was the capital of Syria. By the way I've shared this with you before I think Damascus Syria is the oldest continually inhabited city in the entire world bar none oldest continuously inhabited city in the world is Damascus of Syria.

I remember back in the 1990s when Jerusalem celebrated its 3000th birthday but Damascus Syria is even older than that.

So he's talking about the people of Syria and he says I will not revoke its punishment because they threshed Gilead with implements sharp iron.

What is that all about? Well I don't want to get too involved in this but this goes back to a time of military conquest and it had to do with extreme brutality. Fellas there is an honorable way of conducting warfare and there is a dishonorable way.

And we try to keep things honorable. This is one reason why the nations of the world came together when was it?

[17 : 02] Back in the 1930s or something like that. And it was called the Geneva Conference and the involved nations signed on to the Geneva Conference that was a committing to the humane treatment of prisoners of war and how you would conduct yourself against the enemy and it had to do with just the milk of human decency.

And several nations were signatory to the Geneva Convention. Germany was one of them. And to a certain extent Germany upheld that with POWs.

Of course what they did with the Holocaust is an entirely different thing. But that was not under the Geneva Convention. It had to do primarily with the treatment of prisoners of war. And we all know that Americans were incarcerated in stalags and they were prisoners and yet there was a certain amount of humane treatment and I'm sure that the Germans didn't treat the Americans nearly as well as the Americans treated the Germans.

And we even brought them over to this country. But if you will recall our conflict with Japan, the incredible brutality with which Americans were treated by the Japanese.

And I mean it was absolutely vicious and inhumane and just beyond the pale of any kind of way for a human being to treat another human being even though they are your enemy.

[18 : 40] And they exceeded that. And they justified it on the basis that, hey, we never signed on. We were not signatory to the Geneva Convention.

Don't try to hold us to the standards of the Geneva Convention because we never agreed to it and we didn't sign on to it so we'll treat our prisoners any way we want. And they were especially brutal. And this is exactly one of the cries that Amos is going to have is going to be against the severe injustice that men are going to perpetrate upon one another.

And he's taking the task not only those of Israel but their neighbors around them as well. And he's talking about Damascus here. And by the way, these are Gentiles. These aren't even Jews.

People in Damascus, Syria, they're not Jews. They are Gentiles. I will not revoke its punishment because they threshed Gilead with implements of sharp iron.

This has to do with the way they treated them in combat and they went beyond the pale. And I will send fire upon the house of Hazael and it will consume the citadels of Benadad.

[19 : 55] I will also break the gate bar of Damascus and cut off the inhabitants from the valley of Avon and him who holds the scepter, that would be the ruling monarch from Beth Eden.

So the people of Syria will go exiled to Kerr. So Amos has got a message to deliver, not just to Israel but to several throughout the area. In verse 6, thus says the Lord, for three transgressions of Gaza and for four.

You know where Gaza is. Gaza is that little geographical strip of land that separates Israel from Egypt. And you go right through Gaza, well you probably wouldn't today because the Gaza Strip is totally occupied by Palestinians.

And they are the ones, and Gaza Strip is the place from which the rockets that they launch into Israel come from. And this is the area, all along there, the area of the ancient Philistines with whom David is going to have so many contests.

This is Gaza and it is to this day a hostile area to the nation of Israel. I will not revoke its punishment because they deported an entire population to deliver it up to Edom.

[21 : 15] And this is the way these people were treating one another. And the Edomites of course are descendants of Esau. So I will send fire upon the wall of Gaza and it will consume her citadels.

I will also cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod. That's another place that's identifiable today by the way. It's closer to the Mediterranean coast. And him who holds the scepter from Ashkelon, that too is a modern city or at least the ruins of it.

And I will unleash my power from Ekron and the remnant of the Philistines will perish says the Lord God. For thus says the Lord for three transgressions of Tyre and for four.

Tyre is that city that's located right on the Mediterranean coast up north and it is also in the land of Gentiles and it goes kind of with Tyre and Sidon their right sister cities and these are also Gentiles.

I will not revoke its punishment because they delivered up an entire population to Edom and did not remember the covenant of brotherhood. Now that's something that we don't have time to go into but I guess you could say this covenant of brotherhood was something akin like to the Geneva convention that these people agreed to back in their day long long time ago.

[22 : 33] So I will send fire upon the wall of Tyre and it will consume her citadels. Thus says the Lord for three transgressions of Edom and for four. Now Edom is modern day southern Transjordan and the Edomites are the descendants of Esau and King Herod was an Edomite and this is the area in which Petra is located down in the south and in our prophetic studies we saw that this is where many scholars believe the remnant of Israel is going to be holed up during the tribulation period supernaturally provided by for the Lord.

He says I will not revoke its punishment because he pursued his brother with the sword while he stifled his compassion. His anger also tore continually maintained his fury forever so I will send fire upon Teman and it will consume the citadels of Basra.

Basra is the place or very close to the place where Christ is going to return to in the second coming and Isaiah talks about this when he says who is this that comes from Basra with his garment stained with blood.

That is Christ and he arrives there at Basra which is a significant city even to this day and Teman as well that's where he's going to return. This fascinating stuff.

Thus says the Lord we've got to hurry through this chapter. Three transgressions and four of the sons of Ammon and for four will not revoke its punishment because here's some more human brutality. they ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to enlarge their borders.

[24 : 11] Ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead. Can you think of anything more brutal more inhumane for somebody to do something like that?

You know we have actual footage and it's pretty difficult for anyone to watch footage of German soldiers tossing a Jewish baby in the air only to be caught on a comrade's bayonet.

Where does that kind of inhumanity come from? Deep within the recesses of our fallen nature. How could anyone live with themselves doing something like that?

And you know what? This is probably the kind of thing that German soldiers would have never done on their own. But there is something about humanity that when they get in a number there is an emboldening, an emboldening, an empowering that would not exist with a sole individual.

This is the mob mentality. This is the lynch mob mentality. How people are able and willing to do things when they are surrounded by people of like mind that they would never do if they had to do it on their own.

[25 : 47] And that's partly what is involved here. Ripping open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to enlarge their borders. So I will kindle a fire on the wall of Rabbah and it will consume her citadels amid war cries on the days of battle.

A storm on the day of tempest. Their king will go into exile. He and his princes together says the Lord. Now what does all this stuff mean to us today? As you read over it, it is so easy to just let it slide right over.

It means nothing to us. This is ancient history. Shouldn't have done it, but they did. What's done is done. Doesn't have any effect on me. None of my business. I'm divorced from all of this. But there are principles and actions that are conveyed in here that ought to grab our attention and give us the kind of picture of humanity that is real.

And fellas, it's not a pretty picture. Thus says the Lord. Three transgressions of Moab. And for four, I will not revoke its punishment because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime.

So there are a number of things of human behavior that God Almighty considers of going just beyond the pale. Now the question is this. Why, why if God was so opposed to these things, why didn't he just step in and prevent it?

[27 : 11] He had the power to do that. This is a common question that people have been asking through the ages and we do to this day. If God is so opposed to these things, why doesn't he just put a stop to it?

Where is God when these atrocities are taking place? The Jewish people are still struggling with this. And there is a disproportionate number of Jews who today claim to be atheists.

Make no bones about it. They've never gotten over the Holocaust. And their thinking is quite logical when you stop to think about it. this God, this God of Israel who calls us, the Jew, his chosen people?

Ha! Is this any way to treat your chosen people? Where was God when Hitler and Eichmann were constructing those furnaces and those places of atrocity?

Why didn't God intervene? Remember in the movie Fiddler on the Roof? Remember Tevye the Milkman? Says, so we are your chosen people? Could maybe you choose somebody else for a while?

[28 : 24] You know, give us some rest from your chosen. We're paying an awful price for being your chosen people. That was what he was saying. And it's a good question.

And fellas, all this points out is the fact that humanity has a dynamic, responsible thing called a volition, a human will.

And when we use that in a negative way, in a self-centered way, the results can get pretty ugly. And we see this every day.

All you have to do is listen to five minutes of news, and you get a pretty accurate picture of what's going on with human volition. And God gave that to Adam and Eve, the power to make choices.

And even though he didn't tell them this, if I were to read in the white spaces of the Bible, which I don't have the authority to do, but if I did, I would say something like this.

[29 : 32] God is speaking to Adam and Eve, and he says, look, you can use your will to do your own thing, or you can do my thing. And if you do your own thing, you are going to set in motion a whole series of consequences that you're not going to like.

But that will be your decision. And that was a decision that they made. And we are living with the consequences of that because whatever that thing was, whatever that principle, you see, before Adam and Eve succumbed to the temptation from Satan, God was their center.

He was their focus. God was their focus. And when they rebelled against God, their focus was transferred from God to themselves.

And that's the basis of self-centeredness. And it is because of that that the world is the way it is. And if God is going to step in and prevent human beings from doing ugly things to other human beings, then it tends to make a mockery of the volition that He has given us.

And I don't know about you, but I've seen a whole lot of situations where I would have preferred God to intervene and put a stop to something, whether it's a tsunami or carnage or an active shooter that is murdering a bunch of people in the theater or something like that.

[31 : 02] We would have God step into that and prevent that, but He doesn't. And we ask ourselves, and the Jew ask themselves about the Holocaust, and all kinds of people ask themselves about the Columbine shooting.

Where was God? How could God allow something like this to take place? And the reason is because He charged humanity with this thing called a will, a volition.

And it can get downright ugly. Sometimes, fellas, you know as well as I, sometimes God does intervene in extraordinary ways where there is no human explanation, and man is almost forced to give God the credit, and when that happens, we call it a miracle, don't we?

But there aren't very many of them. It doesn't happen very often. And what Amos is dealing with here is the kind of brutality that men are inflicting upon their fellow man because they have the ability to do so.

And this is what hatred will drive us to. This is what animosity will drive us to. This revenge factor, this urge to kill, to maim, to torture, to wound, to hurt.

[32 : 24] It's systemic to the human race, and it is just so sad. Let's read on. I want to get through these first two chapters here because what we're really getting at is chapter 3 and Israel, but this is incidental to that.

in verse 6, three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke its punishment. They sell the righteous for money, the needy for a pair of sandals, those who pant after the very dust of the earth and the head of the helpless and turn aside the way of the humble.

The man and his father resort to the same girl in order to profane my holy name. This is the kind of sexual immorality that was taking place then.

So we would ask you today, so what's new? Now this is the same old story, just the names are changed, that's all. This is the stuff that's going on. And in garments taken as pledges, they stretch out beside every altar, and in the house of their God, they drink the wine of those who have been fined.

Yet, it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them. We'll look at this guy later, the Amorite. And though his height was like the height of cedars and as strong as the oaks, I even destroyed his fruit above and his root below, and it was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt, talking about Israel of course, and I led you into wilderness forty years that you might take possession of the land of the Amorite.

[33 : 50] Then I raised up some of your sons to be prophets, some of your young men to be Nazarites. Is this not so, O sons of Israel, declares the Lord? But you made the Nazarites drink wine.

Well, we'll be looking at that next week too because that involves some very interesting things. So, I wish I had time to open it up for Q&A;, but I don't because I took all your time and the food is here.

So, I have a sneaking suspicion that you are self-centered enough that you want to eat right now. So, I will acquiesce to that, but thank you all for being here.

Hey, we have just scratched a scratch on the surface as we get through Amos, and there's some really great stuff that is coming ahead too. So, thank you for being here and enjoy.