

Amos Chapter 1 v 1 - Chapter 2 v 6

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Date: 03 June 2018

Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] Good evening. It's good to welcome you this evening. Please would you turn with me to Psalm 100. Psalm 100. We'll read a psalm together. It's only five verses, but it's a great psalm of praise, subtitled A Psalm For Giving Grateful Praise. And we'll do what we haven't done for a little while.

We'll all read it. So if you've got a Bible to hand, then we're going to read the verses out loud together rather than just myself or just one other person and remind ourselves of why we should praise God, why we should be here to worship him this Sunday evening. So it's Psalm 100. And we'll begin reading from verse 1 through to verse 5. So please read with me.

Shout for joy to the Lord.

Praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever. His faithfulness continues through all generations.

That means even up till today, his faithfulness endures. He is good. And we've read there, he is the one who made us, our creator and our maker. And our first hymn tells us to arise and bless our maker.

[1 : 49] 625. Oh my soul, arise and bless your maker. 625. Let us pray together. Let us all pray.

When we sing those words of seeing you face to face, our hearts lift, our spirits rejoice at the thought, at the hope, at the longing for that day when we shall be with you. When all that is sorrowful, all that is mournful, all that is grievous, all that is painful, all that is sinful will be gone forever.

Not just a passing time of pleasure or joy or distraction, but an eternity of being with you, of rejoicing and delighting and adoring you.

And, O Lord, we thank you for this hope, this hope which is steadfast and certain, this hope which is absolutely real.

We do not see it yet, but we know it's coming. We long for the day. We long for the day when we shall be with you. We long for the day when you will come again in glory and praise and power.

[3 : 18] We long, O Lord, when you will come to, as it were, roll up the earth and the universe as a scroll and there will be a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness lives.

We pray, O Lord, that until that day you would help us to be faithful. We pray that until that day you would keep us persevering, keep us pressing on, keep us, O Lord, trusting you.

You've not let us down. You've not failed us. We can sing that psalm which the psalmist of old sang, your faithfulness is for generation to generation.

And, Lord, how true that is. How true it has been in our lives, young or old. Lord, you have been good to us, better than we deserve.

For, O Lord, we confess again that we are sinful. We confess again that we are men and women whose hearts, whose lives are not as they should be. O Lord, but we thank you that we are not saved by our good deeds, our works, our own righteousness, but we're saved by your grace, by your goodness, and by the faithfulness of your Son in taking our sin at the cross, suffering in our place and rising again.

[4 : 35] O Lord, we thank you that we have such a great Savior in Jesus. Help us to worship, to praise, to rejoice, to delight in him this evening. Help us, O Lord, to understand afresh something more of who you are and what you are like, that, Lord, we might walk before you as we should, and that we might be those messengers, those heralds of our God to the world around about us, which is lost and blind and in darkness.

We pray, Lord, that you would help us then in this time. We pray that, Lord, you would strengthen and encourage and meet with us. For we ask all these things in and for the name of Jesus Christ,

your Son.

Amen. Now, as you can see, we are prepared for the Lord's Supper, Lord's Table this evening, and if you are a Christian this evening, that is, you know that Jesus died for your sins, you're trusting him as your Savior, and with his grace and help, seeking to live that life which pleases him.

Not perfectly, we're none of us perfect. It's not the perfect people who can take the communion of the Lord's Supper. It's those who know they are sinners but know that Jesus is our Savior. And please share with us in this table.

Share with us as we rejoice in and remember the sacrifice of Jesus for us. No notices because we have the Lord's Supper, but just to remind you that it is home groups this week, so there's no meeting here on a Wednesday, as usual, no Bible study, but in your home groups, which hopefully you'll know which one you're in.

[6 : 13] And we're going to read now from the book of Amos. We did a sort of an overview, an introduction last week to Amos, this minor prophet.

If you've got one of the church Bibles and you're not sure where he is, he's found on page 917. Hopefully by the end of our series on Amos, you'll be able to turn to him without even opening your eyes because you'll know where he is, hidden away there amongst the minor prophets.

917. And we're going to read chapter 1 and partly into chapter 2 as well to make a good start into this wonderful portion of God's Word.

Now, as you know, I'm not giving you a Bible study on Amos, okay? I'm not giving you a commentary on Amos. I'm wanting to preach Amos to you.

But if you want to know more about Amos, in other words, you want to know a bit more the nitty-gritty, as it were, the Bible study, the commentary, what's going on in the background, all those sort of things, then this little book, The Roaring of the Lion, a commentary on Amos is available.

[7 : 22] Well, John and Alison, very kindly. I've actually got this one, but the 1969 edition, which I probably picked up somewhere from some of these second-hand books. But this is an updated one.

It's not updated in the print, but just a flashier cover. And ten of those provide it. If you ask Alison or John, they'll point you in the right direction. If you want to know a bit more about Amos, what's going on, I think they're very cheap from ten of those, and that'll be helpful as well.

And that's called The Roaring of the Lion. So we're going to read now. So Amos in chapter 1, beginning at verse 1, and reading through to chapter 2 and verse 6.

The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoia, the vision he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake, when Uzziah was king of Judah, and Jeroboam, son of Jehoash, was king of Israel.

He said, This is what the Lord says.

[8 : 35] For three sins of Damascus, even for four, I will not relent, because she threshed Gilead with sledge, having iron teeth.

I will send fire on the house of Haziel, that will consume the fortresses of Ben-Hadad. I will break down the gate of Damascus. I will destroy the king who is in the valley of Avon, and the one who holds the scepter in Beth Eden.

The people of Aram will go into exile to Kerr, says the Lord. This is what the Lord says. For three sins of Gaza, even for four, I will not relent, because she took captive whole communities and sold them to Edom.

I will send fire on the walls of Gaza, and that will consume her fortresses. I will destroy the king of Ashdod, and the one who holds the scepter in Ashkelon. I will turn my hand against Ekron, till the last of the Philistines are dead, says the Sovereign Lord.

This is what the Lord says. For three sins of Tyre, even for four, I will not relent, because she sold whole communities of captives to Edom, disregarding a treaty of brotherhood.

[9 : 49] I will send fire on the walls of Tyre, that will consume her fortresses. This is what the Lord says. For three sins of Edom, even for four, I will not relent, because he pursued his brother with a sword and slaughtered the women of the land, because his anger raged continually, and his fury flamed unchecked.

I will send fire on Timan, that will consume the fortresses of Bosra. This is what the Lord says. For three sins of Ammon, even for four, I will not relent, because he ripped open the pregnant women of Gilead in order to extend his borders.

I will set fire to the walls of Rabba, that will consume her fortresses, amid war cries on the day of battle, amid violent winds on a stormy day. Her king will go into exile, he and his officials together, says the Lord.

This is what the Lord says. For three sins of Moab, even for four, I will not relent, because he burned to ashes the bones of Edom's king. I will send fire on Moab, that will consume the fortresses of Kiriath.

Moab will go down in great tumult, amid war cries and the blast of the trumpet. I will destroy her ruler and kill all her officials with him, says the Lord.

[11 : 13] This is what the Lord says. For three sins of Judah, even for four, I will not relent, because they have rejected the law of the Lord, and have not kept his decrees, because they have been led astray by false gods, the gods their ancestors followed.

I will send fire on Judah, that will consume the fortresses of Jerusalem. This is what the Lord says. For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not relent.

We'll stop there. Very sobering words. So let's get back then to Amos and to chapter one, this serious and sober opening to the prophecy of Amos, which is directed specifically and particularly to the people of Israel.

Remember, we looked last week and saw that Amos himself is from Tekoia, which is in Judah, the southern part of the two kingdoms. There was Judah and Israel, the two kingdoms that were separated.

Not long after Solomon, the king, his son, they were separated into two kingdoms, Israel in the north, and Amos was sent to the north, to Israel, to preach to them and proclaim God's word.

[12 : 36] Now, if you drive a car or you have driven a car in the past, you'll notice that there's, on the dashboard, two large sort of dials, as well as others, you'll have one for the, perhaps a dial for the, for the temperature, one for the petrol.

I've got two big ones, one which of course is the speedometer, which you must be very careful to look at and not ignore, and one is the rev counter. Okay?

The rev counter is a gauge which measures how fast the engine is spinning, how many revolutions are taking place inside the engine. Usually it's, just in increments of one thousand, so you just have one, two, three, four, five, six, and so on.

But probably about number five, possibly number six, it will suddenly change from black to red, you'll have a red band, a red line there. What's that red line for?

Well, if you were to ask most teenage boys learning to drive, they would say, that's the place the needle must go before you change gear. But of course, that's what it's there for.

[13 : 42] Caleb, you wouldn't do that, would you? No, certainly not. He's not a teenager anymore, so he's an old man now, so he's sedentary. But of course, that red line is a warning.

It's saying, don't let the engine rev beyond that mark. If you do, then you will damage the engine, possibly even causing it to break permanently. But that red line appears in other places as well. It appears on steam engines, of course, I imagine as well, to make sure that the pressure doesn't get too high and cause the engine to explode. And often, if you've been seeing action films and movies, there'll always be the hero, as it were, trying to battle against time as the needle encroaches towards the red line.

Perhaps it's the red line for the bomb to explode or the red line for the engine to explode or whatever it may be. And so the camera flicks between the hero rushing to the rescue and the needle moving towards the red line.

Then the hero, is he going to make it in time? Is he going to save the people in time? And so on. And even though when we get caught up with the tension, we think he's never, ever going to make it. He always does, doesn't he?

[14 : 55] He always manages just in the nick of time somehow to get there and to save the day. Before the red line is reached and the explosion takes place.

Amos' preaching really was a red line mark for the people of Israel. It was a warning to them that they had crossed over the red line and now were on their way to destruction, grave danger, terrible, terrible harm.

Chapter 2 in verse 6, we see there that God speaks to them and says, this is what the Lord says, for three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not relent.

And really, as I've said, we go on from there and the rest of the book is concerning God's judgment and the reasons for his judgment against Israel. God doesn't make warnings to be ignored. Manufacturers don't put red lines on rev counters to be ignored. When God says something, he means it. When he makes a promise, he keeps it.

[16:14] When he speaks of a warning, he expects that he will fulfill it and we're to expect he'll fulfill it as well. So Amos, this shepherd, this farm worker, we might say, who suddenly was called to be a prophet by God, is not rambling some strange, empty message when he goes up to Israel.

He's not like one of those, sadly, people with some illness who might go around shouting about, the end is nigh, the end is nigh. Rather, he's somebody, we're told here, who is roaring like a mighty lion for Almighty God.

Verse 2, the Lord roars from Zion. Some time ago, a long time ago, in fact, when we were in Devon, we visited Payton Zoo and as we were walking around Payton Zoo, every now and then we hear this incredible booming noise.

It was almost like thunder, but it wasn't raining and there was no clouds in the sky. It wasn't until we reached the big cat section that we saw that it was a Bengal tiger impatient for his dinner.

This incredible brrrr and boom. And anybody who thought that his bark was worse than his bite only needed to look in his mouth and see these massive fangs were there.

[17:42] God's bite backs up his bark. God is not someone who makes a loud noise but has nothing to back it up with.

He roars his warning to the world and particularly here to Israel. He has teeth to back up what he says.

And so now, as I've said, Israel have crossed the line. They have crossed the line of sinning against God and God is going to bring judgment upon them but it may be surprising that to begin with Amos' ministry is to tell Israel of the sins of others and God's judgment against others that they likewise had pushed God beyond the limit.

Now again, when we think of God we recognize that he is a God of infinite mercy, infinite grace, infinite loving kindness, everything about him is infinite and yet of course our God, the God of the Bible is not a God who can be trifled with or mucked around with or treated as if he is going to do nothing, an empty mouth sort of threat.

There is a line to be crossed. Men and women can live their lives as they choose but there is a line to be crossed. Once that line is crossed then there is no longer mercy, grace, patience.

[19:11] It's a terrible thing. So why does Amos begin to tell Israel about all the sins of everybody else? Apart from of course it's, they probably enjoyed it didn't they?

These people who were written against these several nations were all at one time enemies of Israel. They were the surrounding nations. Some of the Philistines and the Amorites and all the others as well.

So they were quite pleased to hear that God was going to judge them. Perhaps to begin with as he begins to preach in Israel this message to begin with people are flocking around saying this is great. Oh that's right Amos socket to them those Philistines they're going to really feel God's judgment against them. Yes this is excellent. The Amorites and the Midianites and the others fantastic until of course get to chapter 2 verse 6 for three sins of Israel and for four.

Even Judah of course comes off badly doesn't it? The southern kingdom which in many ways was better than the northern kingdom it lasted longer God was more patient and gracious with them but even they were judged by God.

[20:22] So why what do we learn here? What do we learn about these pronouncements particularly that God makes through Amos against these other nations before speaking to Israel?

Well I think first of all what we do is we recognize the fairness of God. The fairness of God in the sense that he does not treat anybody with favoritism but is utterly fair.

Now these nations had done sinful things unacceptable things and so God accordingly rightly determines to punish them. Israel isn't able to say well you know you're picking up on all our sins God and you're treating us differently to the rest of the world.

God had the right to do that but he doesn't. He treats all people the same. We are all the same in God's sight. We're all sinners.

We've all fallen short. We've all broken his commandments. In the world in which we live and even amongst ourselves there can be that sense of comparison.

[21 : 33] We compare ourselves. We compare ourselves to other nations even as Great Britain and say oh the terrible things that are happening in this country or that country they could never happen here because we're much more civilized or we're much more Christian.

Truth is that we're not. The civil wars, the bloodshed, the terrible things that happened in places like Bosnia and Herzegovina just 20 years ago. Things are happening even now around the world where a nation is against itself and so that could happen here.

We've got to be very careful that we do not think in some way that God is going to treat us any differently to any other nation. And the same with us as well as people.

We cannot think that somehow God will let us off because our sins are not as bad as other people's sins. Thank you Peter. We are those who have a God who is utterly fair.

Utterly fair. Fair. Sorry, I've just lost my place for a moment now.

[22 : 54] God. What does this passage then teach us about God that should make us pay attention to him?

We see first of all that his fairness, that he deals with all people the same. Every single one of these nations he says that he will act against, including Israel and Judah.

Secondly, it reveals his knowledge of us as well. Notice that for three sins of Damascus, even for four, and for the others. And he lists those sins, he lists those failings, he lists those iniquities of each nation.

As I say, again, I'm not going to give you a Bible study on them, but you can find out for yourself that each one of these nations did atrocious things. some are particularly atrocious, as we see there in chapter 113, ripped open pregnant women.

This having sledges with iron teeth is a terrible thing. The atrocities that we see in the world today have gone on before again and again.

[24 : 03] And God keeps a record of them. He sees them, he counts them, he knows them. No matter how many they are, God is the God who counts the sin of men and women and us too.

Jesus warns us in Matthew 12, I tell you that everyone will have to give an account on the day of judgment for every empty word they've spoken. Even our words, not just our actions.

And in Revelation we are told that at the end of the world books will be opened in heaven and we're told that the dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.

So all of my life and your life, life every single person, there's a record God knows and sees everything that you and I have done. It's there laid bare and will be laid bare on that day of judgment.

This is part of the omniscience of God. He knows all things. Nothing is hidden from him. Nothing is secret to him. For the believer, of course, the omniscience of God, that he knows all things, is a great comfort.

[25 : 15] He knows all about our needs, all about our sorrows, all about our griefs, all about our troubles. But also it's a fearful thing that God knows everything about us.

Things that nobody else knows. We can trust him, dear friends, as believers, believers. But we cannot hide anything from him.

He has this record. And when God speaks as he does to the nations here, he speaks not from ignorance or guesswork or presumption, but always from knowledge.

Therefore, we should be very careful to listen to his word. Remember, when we read the scriptures, God has written us the scriptures in his knowledge of us as human beings.

His knowledge of us according to our relationship to him. The word of God is precise, not general. Since God knows everything about you and I, how do we live each day?

[26 : 21] Do we live each day in that sense of being in the presence of God? Do we live and speak every word aware that we are being recorded? it? Do I live each day aware that God sees all that I do, both the good and the bad?

When God met with Abraham, he spoke to him and he called him and gave him this challenge to walk before me and be blameless. It's a challenge that you and I have still, dear friends.

Is my life a life which is blameless before God? Does he see everything that I say and do? What does he think of those things? It's in that God is fair, God's knowledge is revealed.

We see, of course, his justice is revealed, isn't it, here? All sorts of different sins were carried out by the nations. Some were atrocities, as we spoke about.

Some were broken promises. Some were selling people into captivity. Some were murderous. Some were disrespectful. For Judah, it was idolatry.

[27 : 29] But none of them had an excuse before God. God excuses no one's sin. Yes, Judah had the law and they particularly were held up, but these other nations that did not have the law were not cleared of their guilt before God.

The law reveals to us what is pleasing to God, what he wants, what is right, what is proper, but he has placed within every human being a conscience, so that even though we may not have the law of the Lord, we have it written in one sense upon our hearts and lives, that conscience which is evidence that we are created by God, but that conscience that will accuse us before God.

Do we listen to the conscience that God has given us or do we snuff it out, do we quiet it?

Nowadays, of course, as you know, we live in a blame culture, so everything is somebody else's fault.

So somebody who's caught up in a terrible crime or somebody who's done something which is against the law always has an excuse. Well, I was doing 100 miles down the motorway because I didn't want to be late for my dinner, or I did this because I didn't have enough money to pay for the holiday that I wanted, or so on, or so on, and so on.

But none of those excuses count. None of our excuses count. We can't blame it on our parents, whether they were good or bad.

[29 : 05] Can't blame it on our society or upbringing. Though these things that influence upon us and affect us, there's no doubt about it. But in the end, we stand before God on our own merits with no excuse.

God is just. We see that here with the way he deals with these nations. Do I excuse my behavior? Do I excuse my even the things of omission? Put it this way, do I excuse my prayerlessness? Do I excuse my faithlessness? Do I excuse my whatever it may be, fill in the blanks?

We do, don't we? We seek to excuse ourselves, God does not. We see also, of course, that God's justice leads to his judgment.

He is fair, he sees and knows all, he is just, and he is, we see his judgment. Each one of these people that God and nations that God speaks against are to be punished by God, and many of them are going to suffer very much the same punishment, particularly fire.

[30 : 19] Did you notice that when we read God spoke about I will send fire, verse 4, verse 7, I will send fire, verse 10, I will send fire, verse 12, I will send fire, and 14, the destruction of their fortresses, the things that they put their trust and hope in for their protection, and their leaders as well were either going to be put to death or to be exiled.

In one sense God is saying I'm dealing even handily with every person and every nation. The punishment upon one is a punishment upon all. The book of Amos is a declaration that God does not turn a blind eye to sin, but he judges sin.

That he not only has the authority to accuse, but he has the authority to execute. justice and judgment. And indeed all these promises that God made, warnings and nonsense that God made against the people came true, were fulfilled.

Not one of them failed to be accomplished. Dear friends, we must remember again that when we are dealing with the people of the world, we are dealing with those who are under judgment. Paul says, like the rest, we were objects of wrath. We were those upon which God's anger and judgment rested, rightfully and justly.

[31 : 58] It's not pleasant, it's not comfortable, but it has to be right. That God does not brush sin under the carpet, does not let people off because we can somehow bribe him, but that he acts with justice and judgment.

But there's one thing else here particularly that I want us to pick up on in these opening chapter or so. On several occasions, God says, I will not relent.

Verse 3, I will not relent. Verse 6, I will not relent. Again and again, God says, I will not relent. In other words, I will not stop from punishing these nations.

But in one sense, there's a part here that reveals the very patience of God that up until this point, he hasn't punished them. Up until this point, he hasn't.

He sent warning after warning, particularly to his own people, to Judah and to Israel. In one sense, he has kept back his judgment and his punishment unto this time, but now the red line is crossed and now judgment must fall.

[33 : 12] In Acts chapter 17 and verse 30, Paul as he preaches to the men of Athens says, in the past God overlooked such ignorance when they sinned against him, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.

God's never ignored sin, but he's been patient to withhold his judgment until the proper time. And now again, we live in a world where it seems that sin is abounding over and over, wickedness and evil and atrocity again and again, and people cry, well, where is God?

Why isn't he doing something about this? Can't God see? Can't, doesn't God know? Is he impotent? No, he's not. But here again is a demonstration of the gracious mercy and long-suffering of God that he has not brought this world to judgment yet.

And for those of you here, perhaps there may be some who have not yet trusted in Christ but are still in your sin. This mercy, God has not brought you to judgment yet.

It's given time for repentance, given time for people to turn to him and be saved. When Moses saw the Lord God, in Exodus 34, God spoke to him and declared himself to be slow to anger.

[34 : 38] Many of us are very naturally quick-tempered. God is slow to anger. If he was quick to anger, then none of us would be here because as soon as we sinned, as we all have done, then we would have been judged.

And so now, as Amos begins, as we'll see in the weeks ahead, begins to lay into and to speak to the Israelites particularly about their sin. What has he done?

He's laid the ground foundation. He's laid for them a clear explanation. The God who is speaking to you about your sin is a God who justly judges all people according to his knowledge of their sins. How can you ever think that you're going to escape? How can you ever think that somehow God will be different with you? Are you listening?

Are you paying attention? This message of God, this roaring of God, has to be noticed and has to be responded to.

[35 : 43] And dear friends, if we know that God is like this, and he is, how attentive are we to his word?

How careful are we to hear what he has to say, whether it be words of judgment or not? God is like this. And isn't it fitting that in a moment we're going to come to remember the one who is our propitiation?

We're going to remember the one who turns aside the wrath of God unto himself and away from us. because that's what we're going to do now as we come to the Lord's Supper.

Let's sing once more as we prepare to remember and to think upon how our Lord Jesus bore our judgment and punishment.

590 is the hymn that we're going to sing. Not what these hands have done can save this soul. 590. Let's stand as we sing.

[36 : 57] 590. How great the pain of searing God.

Let Father turn his face away. As mercy's father's chosen food, bring many sons to glory.

He holds a man upon a cross, my sins upon his shoulders.

God. He holds a man upon a cross, my heart, my heart, my heart, my heart, my heart, my heart.

This is the one who turns out the cross, my heart, my heart, my heart, my heart. Now, the heart, my heart, my heart, my heart, my heart, my heart.

It was my sin that held me there Until it was accomplished His dying breath has brought me life I know that it is finished I will not boast in anything I will kiss the cloud of wisdom And I will boast in Jesus Christ His death and resurrection Why should I live from His report

[39 : 41] I doubt the answer But this I know with all my heart His wounds have gained my ransom Let's say the words of the grace The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ And the love of God And the friendship of the Holy Spirit Be with us all And at all Amen For everyone Amen Amen That was a really wonderful Amen