

Amos Chapter 2 v 6 - Chapter 3 v 2

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 July 2018

Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] Lord, we have so much to thank you for, more than we could ever count, more blessings than we could ever number. You are the God who gives and gives and gives again. You're not stingy or tight, you're generous and lavish. And, oh Lord, we ask that our hearts may be opened, that they might be open to praise and thank you and delight in all that you've done for us. And our lips, too, may sing your praises, not just on this day, but throughout every day and every week. May we be people who delight in the Lord and give him the praise he deserves in our conversation, as well as in our worship.

Be with us now and help us in this time and cause us again to give you the glory and the praise that you deserve through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Saviour, we ask it now. Amen.

Amen. As well as possible. And so you teach them accordingly, wanting every one of them to get good grades as they lead up to their exams. You're equal in your encouragement of each child, equal in your instruction and in your correction and your discipline of them as well, except for one child.

This child you're a little bit more strict upon. This child you correct and discipline more keenly. You want this child to do even better than the rest. And so you don't give them such an easy ride. When they don't bring their homework in, they get seriously in trouble with you. Even their excuse of the dog eating it, you know is not true. When they get things wrong, when they fail to put all their work in as they should, you come down on them. Why? Why do you pick on this one child? Why are you harder on them than the others? Is it because they're the brightest child? Or is it because they're the naughtiest child? No, in fact, you act this way towards this particular child because she is your daughter.

[2 : 10] It's your particular love for her that motivates you to teach her in this way. Because she is special to you, you act towards her differently to the others.

Amos is a prophet. He wasn't always a prophet. He'd been a shepherd. In Tekoya, in Judah, the southern part of the nation that once was Israel, divided between Israel in the north and Judah in the south, God had sent him to preach to the northern people a message of judgment from God, a message that God was angry with them.

Amos had already been speaking and prophesying about the other nations around about, seven other nations that were sinful as well and surrounded Israel. We looked at that in chapters one and the first part of chapter two.

God was showing that he is the God who is fair. He is the God who does not look upon sin differently from one person to the next. He treats sin the same with perfect justice.

He never turns a blind eye. He never brushes it under the carpet. He always is faithful and righteous. But when we get to chapter two and verse six, and Amos's words are directed particularly to the people of Israel, we find that his words become harsher and even more severe.

[3 : 41] Why? Why does God pick out Israel above all the other nations? They were just as wicked as Israel. In fact, some of them were far more wicked.

The reason that God deals with them in this way is because they are special to him. They are that group of people, that nation that he has chosen out of all the nations of the earth.

That's what we read there in chapter three, verse two. You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth. This theme of God's choosing his people runs all the way through the Old Testament, from right before even Abraham, all the way through the historical accounts and into the prophecies as well.

God's choosing of a people for himself. Choosing a people to love. Choosing a people to delight in. He says to them in Exodus 19, through Moses, you will be my treasured possession.

Be a treasure to me. Precious. This is something very personal to God. A personal relationship with him based upon a covenant, an agreement, something that could never be changed, in which God promises great blessing to those who are his.

[5 : 10] So much so that God speaks of that covenant, that relationship, that agreement, as being like a husband and a wife. A perfect marriage. In one of the prophets, Isaiah, God speaks and says, Your maker is your husband.

The Lord Almighty is his name. So when Israel worshipped false gods, when the people stopped loving God and gave their love to what was not true or real, to other gods, God felt like a husband who'd been cheated upon.

Jeremiah, the prophet says, But like a woman unfaithful to a husband, so you've been unfaithful to me, O house of Israel. That's how it pained his heart. That's what it felt like.

But that language of choice, that language of selection, that language of taking a people for himself, is not just limited to the Old Testament. We find that theme running through the whole Bible into the New as well.

We have that same language concerning the richness of our relationship with the Lord our God and his church. In Peter's first letter, he writes to the Christians, You are a chosen people, a holy nation, God's special possession.

[6 : 28] It's very similar, isn't it? And in Ephesians in chapter 5, God speaks to husbands and wives and says to the husbands, Christian husbands, Love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Church is often spoken of in the New Testament as the bride of Christ and he, our faithful, loving husband. Why should God choose Israel?

Why should God choose men and women today to make up his beloved possession? Not because of anything in them or in us. Nothing even lovable in them or us.

But only because of God's amazing grace, undeserved favor, unmerited loving kindness. As Paul writes in Ephesians chapter 2, it's by grace that you've been saved, rescued, brought into relationship with God, not by works, so that nobody can boast.

Both the Israelites and the Christian cannot say that God is our God because we're better than others, because we're good people, righteous people, holy people, just people.

[7 : 43] In fact, just as we shall see, we are like the people of Israel, sinners, who do everything really to deny God's love, but whom he loves nonetheless.

And because there's a loving relationship, of course, therefore, there are loving actions, just like in any friendship or marriage or family. When we love somebody, we act towards them in a particular way.

And there were great privileges and blessings that the Israelites enjoyed that Amos speaks about in part of this chapter. Not only that they were chosen, but the things that God had done for them. Look at verse 9. How had God treated them? He says, I destroyed the Amorites before them. That's before the Israelites. Though they were tall as cedars and strong as oaks, I destroyed their fruit above and their roots below.

What's he talking about? He's talking about Exodus and talking about the days of Joshua afterwards when the people had come through the wilderness and they entered into this glorious land, this land of Israel, the land of Canaan.

[8 : 56] And in that land at the time, there were wicked people, the Amorites. So wicked that they used to offer their own children to their gods by burning them to death.

That's how wicked they were. Don't think that they were just ordinary people. And God drove them out. God defeated them so that they might be scattered and so that God's people might enjoy living in that land.

We read about the battles that go on. Battle of Jericho, particularly, of course, we know so well in the book of Joshua. How did they win those battles? How did they defeat those enemies?

When they saw them to begin with, they said, they're like giants and we're like ants. It was God who fought for them. God who delivered them.

I destroyed the Amorites, he said. I destroyed their fruit below and their roots, sorry, their roots below and their fruit above. In other words, from top to bottom, completely. Deuteronomy chapter 20 says, The Lord your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory.

[10:05] God brought them into this wonderful land, a land described as a land flowing with milk and honey, a land in which there were vineyards and crops, there were houses that they had not even built or planted for themselves, a spacious and fertile land from which all their enemies had been driven out.

What has God done for you, dear Christian? What has he done for me? Our blessings in Christ are not merely material in the sense of the buildings that we have, the homes we have, the clothes we have.

Yes, there are those general blessings, those general good gifts of God's grace, but for you, dear Christian, and for me, he's done much more than that. Heavenly blessings, eternal blessings. Ephesians chapter 1, verse 3, God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ. New and everlasting life, joy unspeakable, sins forgiven, the fullness of heaven's treasures are ours. Not because we won them or earned them, but they're the free undeserved gift of God. He's done great things for us as he did for his people there, but he did more than that, didn't he?

[11:19] Even before he had driven out the Amorites, he'd brought them to freedom. He delivered them from the Egyptians. Verse 10, I brought you up out of Egypt. As he says later on in verse 1 of chapter 3, the whole family I brought up out of Egypt.

We know the story, don't we? For 400 years and more, God's people, the Israelites, the descendants of Abraham and of Jacob, were slaves in the land of Egypt, suffering under the terrible terrible authority and despotism of the Pharaoh.

And again, let's not think that these were just naughty people. The order from the Pharaoh was this, every boy born must be thrown in the Nile and killed.

Okay, these weren't nice people and they certainly didn't treat the Israelites that way either. But God did amazing things through Moses, didn't he? With those terrible plagues that he brought upon the nation to show them that they must submit to God and he set his people free.

He brought them release and deliverance. And as he goes on to say, I brought you up out of Egypt, verse 10, and led you for 40 years in the wilderness to give you the land of the Amorites.

[12:38] God generously provided for them on their journey through that desert land. Remember the manna that came from heaven, the food, the bread of heaven that they were fed with every day. When they were thirsty, God would crack open a rock so they could drink from its refreshing waters.

We're told at the end of 40 years, their sandals hadn't worn out and their clothes had not become rotten. God had preserved them and provided for them in a most wonderful way after delivering and rescuing them.

And what about us, dear Christians? What about us? Haven't we been set free from a tyrannical master, sin? A master that demands of us total obedience and slavery and yet rules us with abuse, treats us terribly, destroying, ruining, harming every day those who follow sins, desires, and lusts, and pleasures?

Haven't we been provided for since that moment we came to Christ and were set free from sin? Hasn't God poured his Holy Spirit into our heart so that we live for him in the strength that he provides?

Don't we have every need met as Christians in the goodness and grace of Jesus, our Savior? But God didn't stop there.

[14:00] He didn't just deliver them from Egypt. He didn't just put them in a promised and wonderful land and provide for them. He did even more, verse 11. I also raised up prophets from among your children, Nazarites from among your youths.

Is this not true, people of Israel? In one sense, he's holding this up before them. You know what I've done. You know exactly how I've cared for and treated and blessed and given.

Not only has he delivered but he's also directed them by these prophets, by these Nazarites. Now a Nazarite was an individual who had committed themselves to serving God.

And to do that they would abstain. They wouldn't drink fermented alcohol and they would let their hair grow long. Samson's the most famous of those Nazarites.

They were people who were examples to the rest of God's people. This is living for God, totally given over for him. And God's prophets spoke God's word to them, telling them the good from the bad, leading them in the right paths, helping them to live day by day in accordance with God's will and purpose.

[15:12] They knew God had done all this for them. They knew that God was such a good God. Do you know God is such a good God? What about us, dear friends?

Hasn't God directed us by his word? Aren't we privileged to have the scriptures, the Bible, the word of God? This is everything that we need for life and godliness in this world.

And we're led and guided by God's Holy Spirit revealing and speaking to us through his word. We are blessed. And we know it. At least we should know it.

So God was good to Israel, to these people, to this nation, in a way that he had not been to anybody else. Though he'd blessed them and though he'd provided for the world, he particularly loved them.

And how had they responded? What was the way that they reacted to this love of God towards them, to these blessings, to this wonderful relationship? Well, that's what Amos picks up, doesn't he?

[16:22] In fact, he speaks about their sin and the wicked things they've done before he talks about the blessings of what it is to know God. In one sense, he's saying, look, how could you act this way? How could you treat God in this way after all he's done for you?

We see that God is very, very much involved. This aren't just the rantings of a wild prophet. This is God speaking, I destroy the Amorites.

I raised up the prophets. I brought you out of Egypt. I did this for you. It's very, very personal. How have they treated God?

How have they responded to him? Well, we have this terrible list of their sins in verses 6 and following. For three sins of Israel, even for four, I'll not relent. What did they do?

Well, first of all, they were unmerciful in their treatment of the poor. They sell the innocent for silver, the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads to the poor as on the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed.

[17:29] In the courts of law, the judges took back handers and bribes from the rich so that those who were poor never had a chance when they brought their case to court.

They would have to come and say, look, I've been withheld my wages for a month. How can you expect me to feed my family? And the judge would dismiss it out of court.

They would come and speak about how poorly they were paid or how badly they were treated. And because the rich man had offered him a pair of sandals to the judge, the poor man was sent away. Basically sent away into virtual slavery, having to sell himself. Just to keep his head above water. See, God is concerned about social justice.

Don't ever think he's not. Don't ever think that God is only concerned about the soul. Yes, he is because the soul is everlasting and eternal. But he cares about people where they are and what they are like and how they are treated.

[18:33] God has a keen interest. When you look at the laws of God given through Deuteronomy particularly, you see again and again, they're particularly pointed to caring for the fatherless and the widow and the poor and the needy.

Even farmers were given clear instructions that around their fields they must not, as it were, harvest to the very edge so that the poor can come and glean and get food for themselves.

God always, always has an eye for and a heart for the underdog and for the needy. So should we, dear friends. So should we.

So they had been unjust, unmerciful. They had lacked the compassion of the God who was compassionate towards them. But worse than that, if we could put it that way, they took part in wicked idolatry.

They took part in the worship of false gods. And I know we have young people here and I'm not wishing to distress anybody, but we see there in verse 7 that the men and even their sons took part in sexual immorality with these prostitutes.

[19:42] That was part of the worship of the false gods. It comes out particularly again later in the New Testament. Part of worshipping these gods was to desecrate yourself, to profane God's name, to act in the most lewd and wicked way.

And God did not take that lightly. Even as they are involved in that sexual immorality, they are lying down beside the altar of this false god upon the garment of someone who's given it in pledge.

Now God had made a very specific law and command in Exodus 22. He said, if you take somebody's cloak, as it were, as a cloak, as a cloak, as a pledge for money that they've borrowed

from you, you must give it back at night so they will be able to keep warm in the night. But here they're lying down upon those garments. They've complete disregard for the word of God, complete disregard for what God has said. And more than that, we find as we go on later into verse 12.

They enjoy corrupting God's servants. Remember what I said about a Nazarite? He mustn't drink intoxicating liquor and wine. But they made the Nazarites drink.

[21 : 02] They made them compromise. They made them deny and be corrupted. And what is this? And they commanded the prophets not to prophesy. When God's word was declared, they said, shut up and sit down.

We don't want to hear what God has to say to us. Almost certainly because like Amos, they were denouncing their sin. It was contradicting their own behavior.

Because of all these sins and more, the Lord God says, I'm not going to withhold my anger any longer. I'm going to punish them. I'm going to punish them with judgment.

Verse 13, now then, I will crush you as a cart crushes when loaded with grain. Imagine seeing an ox and a cart taken to the farm and the grain is loaded onto the cart and the farmer says, just put more on, take more on, put more on, and put more on.

Eventually the axle snaps. That cart's not going anywhere. And God says, you're not going to escape either from my judgment, from the weight of your sin upon you and the judgment that it brings.

[22 : 12] It doesn't matter, as he said, if you're swift, if you're the fastest runner in your class, you're not going to escape. If you're strong, if you've got big muscles and biceps, you're not going to be able to get away.

If you're an incredible warrior, somebody, not somebody who's always anxious all the time, you know, not that kind of warrior. If you're a great fighter, you're still not going to be able to save yourself. An archer with skills, you're still not going to be able to escape.

Fleet footed, on a horse, no. Brave, no. It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter how good you are at doing what you do.

If you have sinned against me, says God, then you're going to have to face my anger, my judgment, my just judgment. It's just, isn't it?

We can't look at what God has accused them of and say, well, God's being unfair in treating them this way. God is being totally fair. In fact, he's being more than that. He's being gracious.

[23 : 12] He's given them time to repent. He's given them time to change their ways. He's given them time again and again to the prophets to say, no, I'm not going to go that way. I'm not going to live that kind of life.

I'm going to do it God's way. But again and again, they put their fingers in their ears to God and they've gone their own way. And God says, now there's a limit for threesomes and for four.

The red line's been crossed. Now my wrath must fall. Let me address two types of people here this evening.

First of all, let me address the Christian. Those of us who've received those wonderful blessings we've been thinking about and talking about, those good things that God has done for us in choosing and saving and rescuing and blessing and giving and guiding and so on.

How have you responded? How have you responded to God's grace? Only you can answer that question.

[24 : 17] I can't answer it. I can't say what you've done. I can answer for myself. And I can say this and I believe it's true of you as well. Dear friends, we've all fallen short of that.

We've not lived up to the privileges that God has given us. We've not been consecrated. We've not lived in lives which are fully devoted and given over to God. We've not responded to those blessings of God that have been lavished upon us in the way we should have done.

We've not loved him with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength. We've forgotten him. We've turned our hearts at times to love the things of this world.

We've stubbornly at times heard his word and said, not today, maybe tomorrow. There's not one of us, dear friends, as Christians who can stand before God and say, I'm perfect.

We sin daily. We fail the God who saved us. We're not the people we should be. However, however, God in his mercy and grace does not punish us for our sins even though we acted in the way that Israel have done.

[25 : 39] He will not punish us for our sins because the punishment for your sin and mine, dear Christian, has already been taken upon the Lord Jesus in our place. That's the wonderful message of the gospel.

That though we have sinned and though we do sin and though we still sin, and there will be not a day in your life and mine in this world when we shall not fail and fall and sin, yet every single one of your sins and mine has been placed upon Jesus as our substitute and he has paid for and suffered the punishment that your sin and mine deserves.

And he said, you know, you know, you know, you know, you know, you know, you know, you know, you know, you know, looking forward to Jesus coming and giving himself willingly for us in our place. He was pierced for our transgressions.

The punishment that brought us peace was on him. By his wounds we are healed. Now, God does not punish you, dear Christian, nor shall he ever.

No matter what hardship or trial or difficulty you go through, it is not punishment, but it is discipline. It is correction. Hebrews in chapter 12 tells us, endure hardship as discipline.

[26 : 54] God is treating you as his children. For what child is not disciplined by their father? That means that when we go through hard times and difficult times and painful times as we all do as believers, it is not because God is punishing us for something we've done wrong.

We may say that, we may think that, but we are wrong. But he is disciplining us as a loving heavenly father would do.

And it isn't easy. Later in that same chapter of Hebrews 12, no discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who've been trained by it.

You see, God has a purpose in that discipline to bring out the best in us. God has a purpose in that correction. God has a purpose in that difficulty to change and transform and to bring out in us something more of the luster and the glory and the beauty of the grace of God.

God has a purpose of the grace of God. It's not a mistake. It's not bad luck. It's not, the world is all against me.

[28 : 09] Dear Christian, everything God does is for our goods. We'll see even when we go through Amos later on that God has a purpose even for Israel's punishment because of his love for them to bring about goods.

But there's another person here. Somebody who's not a Christian. Somebody who's not enjoyed the forgiveness of their sins. Somebody who's not received the love of God in their hearts. Somebody who doesn't know just how wonderful a loving Heavenly Father God is. Let me urge you. Let me plead with you.

Let me say to you, get to know him. You see, he's already given you so many blessings. The fact that you're alive.

The fact that you have health and strength. The fact that you have food to eat and a home to live in and clothes to wear. The fact that you have friends and family. The fact that you have work to go to tomorrow.

[29 : 15] And over and over, the blessings that God has given you, they have come not because you are better than anyone else. Because God is good. But you've only got that much.

A grain of sand size amount have you enjoyed of the grace of God. And he wants you to have the whole beach. And all the beaches in all the world.

Let me urge you, as he points out to you by his spirit in your heart those sins. That you've been ungrateful to him and unthoughtful of him. And you've given him no time, no space, nothing of yourself.

You've just taken and taken and taken. How should he treat you? He should treat you with judgment. And yet, he gives you time now, dear friend, to receive grace and forgiveness. forgiveness. How much longer will you go on resisting and plowing your own furrow and living a life without him?

[30 : 23] In conclusion, dear friends, there's nothing that you and I can give to God to repay him for what he's given to us. He doesn't want us to do that. But dear friends, if you love him as he loves you, dear Christian, if you appreciate the blessings that he's given you, then isn't it your longing, isn't it your desire to live for him this week?

Isn't it the passion of your heart to show him the love that you have for him, which is the reflection of his love that he has for you? See, God has great expectations of you, dear Christian.

And you may say, well, I just can't do it. I can't live this life. I can't be the person that God wants me to be. No, you and I can't. Not in our own strength and not in our own power and not by our own will. But God has given us everything that we need to live for him. That we need to live holy lives, godly lives, devoted lives, faithful lives, Christian lives.

Here's Peter in 2 Peter, his second letter. His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

[31 : 43] Dear friends, we can live for Christ in a way which glorifies him and pleases him because he is the giver of every good gift.

Let's pray together. Let's pray together.