

Amos Chapter 5 v 18 - Chapter 6 v 14

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[0 : 00] the passage in a few moments. So from chapter 5, verse 18, reading all the way through to the end of chapter 6. Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord. Why do you long for the day of the Lord? That day will be darkness, not light. It will be as though a man fled from a lion.

Only to me to bear. As though he entered his house and rested his hand on the wall. Only to have a snake bite him. Will not the day of the Lord be darkness, not light, pitch dark without a ray of brightness? I hate, I despise your religious festivals. Your assemblies are a stench to me. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings.

I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs. I will not listen to the music of your harps.

But let justice roll on like a river. Righteousness like a never failing stream. Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings for forty years in the wilderness, people of Israel?

You have lifted up the shrine of your king, the pedestal of your idols, the star of your God, which you have made for yourselves. Therefore I will send you into exile beyond Damascus, says the Lord, whose name is God Almighty. Woe to you who are complacent in Zion and to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria, you notable men of the foremost nation to whom the people of Israel come. Go to Kalmer and look at it. Go from there to great Hamath. Then go down to Gath in Philistia. Are they better off than your two kingdoms? Is their land larger than yours? You put off the day of disaster and bring near a reign of terror. You lie on beds adorned with ivory and lounge on your couches. You dine on choice lambs and fattened calves. You strum away on your harps like David and improvise on musical instruments. You drink wine by the bowlful and use the finest lotions, but you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph. Therefore you will be among the first to go into exile. Your feasting and lounging will end. The sovereign Lord has sworn by himself. The Lord God Almighty declares, I abhor the pride of

[2 : 55] Jacob and detest his fortresses. I will deliver up the city and everything in it. If ten people are left in one house, they too will die. And if the relative who comes to carry the bodies out of the house to burn them asks anyone who might be hiding there, is anyone else with you? And he says no, then he will go on to say, hush, we must not mention the name of the Lord. The Lord has given the command and he will smash the great house to pieces and the small house into bits. Do horses run on the rocky crags? Does one plow the sea with oxen? But you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness? You who rejoice in the conquest of Lodibar and say, did we not take Karnain by our own strength? The Lord God Almighty declares, I will stir up a nation against you that will oppress you all the way from Lebo Hamath to the valley of the Arabah. Well, may the Lord help us indeed as we seek to... If you have Amos and chapter 5 and 6 open in your Bibles, that will be a help to you as we study and look together at this portion of God's Word. We've been going through Amos, as you know, for these past few weeks or so. And we've read there from verse 18 through to the end of chapter 6.

In the days of Harry Houdini, another great escapologist, all sorts of daring do's and amazing feats were carried out by various magicians and stuntmen and all sorts. A man you probably haven't heard of was a man called Bobby Leach. In 1911, he went over Niagara Falls in a barrel, a steel drum, and he lived. He survived. He had made sure that that barrel and drum was well packed and padded and so on and so forth. It was specially made for the event. He was a bit battered and bruised, as you can imagine, even so. But he'd done everything needed to protect himself from harm in that situation and the tremendous dangers involved in such a daring feat.

Several years ago, he was, sorry, several years later rather, he was walking down the street in a town in New Zealand and he happened to stand upon a discarded orange peel. He slipped and badly broke his leg, taken to hospital. But he died later of complications from that fall.

You see, he was not prepared for the danger that was there before him. He had assumed that walking down the street was a safe place to be. Previously, when he knew there was danger, he was prepared.

But when he thought all was well, he was unprepared. The people that Amos is preaching to, the people of Israel, were a people who would not accept that they were in extreme danger. They were complacent.

[6 : 32] They thought that all was well. And for that very reason, God sent Amos to them to prepare them for God's judgment against their sins. A hit that would be harder than even the fall from the Agra Falls.

But they kept on ignoring God through Amos. They kept on ignoring the pleading invitations as we saw there earlier in chapter 5 of God to these people, seek me and live. Seek the Lord and live. Seek good and live.

God was still pleading with them, inviting them to come to him that they might receive a place of safety, security, security, salvation. And because they kept on ignoring Amos, so Amos had to continue preaching God's judgment using even more powerful language, we might say. Here in chapter 5 and verse 18, he says, woe to you. And again, over in chapter 6 and verse 1, woe to you, terror to you, anguish to you, grief to you, sorrow to you.

I want us to briefly examine this passage, which is linked clearly by these two prophetic utterances that God speaks through Amos. But there's other similarities too. At the end of chapter 5, God assures them that he will send them into exile, into Damascus. Sorry, beyond Damascus, into the Assyrian kingdom.

And again in chapter 6, verse 7, therefore you will go into exile. But also we're told as well of the things that God hates and abhor. Notice what he says to them in verse 21 of chapter 5, I hate, I despise your religious festivals. Over in chapter 6 and verse 8, I abhor the pride of Jacob and detest his fortresses. So what is this all about? What is it that God wants to say to his people there?

[8 : 43] What does he have to say to us in our own day and generation? There's that message which is coming through loud and clear.

These people were convinced that they were safe. But they weren't. Far from it. Quite the opposite. They were in grave, immediate danger. Why did they feel so confident then? Why did they feel so sure that all would be well?

Where had they placed, or rather misplaced, their confidence? And in our day and age, isn't it true that the vast majority of people have no fear of hell?

The large majority of the people in Whitby and in the rest of the UK have no fear of God or his judgment? Why is it that people are so indifferent to matters spiritual and religious?

[9 : 57] Why is it that people do not see that they have a very great and real and pressing need for Jesus Christ? The simple answer surely must be that the people of our day and generation feel safe.

They feel comfortable. They feel confident that they have no need to fear these things. They think that all will be well. There is no coming judgment.

Therefore, there's no reason to seek God or to fear that day. I want us to look here in Amos at the false foundations of confidence that these people had, the Israelites.

And we shall see in their false foundations a mirror of the people of our own day, perhaps even ourselves. But also, I want us to look at what are the true grounds for peace.

What is the only place and the only things that we can be sure and certain of that give us deliverance from fear of judgment?

[11 : 08] Well, the first thing we see, that's in the remainder of chapter 5 of Amos, verses 18 and following, is that they felt safe because of their actions.

The things that they did, especially as we see verses 21 to 23, where God makes mention of their religion, their worship, the events that they took place in, the offerings that they brought.

Look at that. Your religious festivals, your assemblies. Verse 22, you bring me burnt offerings, grain offerings. Verse 22, choice fellowship offerings.

Music of your harps. They were having great religious events, great religious acts, where they would bring these offerings to God and these sacrifices and their worship.

And it really was something of a party, it seems. The noise of their songs. It wasn't only their confidence in what they did for God, but also their confidence in what they believed and thought

about God.

[12:19] Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord, verse 18. They viewed the day of the Lord, which Amos was preaching, and in fact nearly all of the prophets of Amos' day preached and spoke about, the day of the Lord is coming, the day of the Lord is drawing near.

They thought that would be a time of great blessing. Well, if the Lord is coming, if it's the Lord's time, it means all our enemies are going to be scattered, and we're going to have great peace and blessing from God.

And so they looked with a certain expectation to the day of the Lord. They were longing for the day of the Lord. They thought it was going to be a good thing. But in fact, the day of the Lord, throughout the preaching of Amos and throughout the preaching of the prophets and the Bible, spoke mainly about God visiting his people with judgment and bringing an end to all wickedness and sin.

Isaiah spoke about that day in his letter, and rather his prophecy, in chapter 13 and verse 9. See, the day of the Lord is coming, a cruel day with wrath and fierce anger to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it.

And Joel as well, another prophet, preached about the day of the Lord being salvation and blessing to God's people. He says in his letter, rather, in his prophecy, Joel chapter 2, I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke.

[13:57] The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. From Mount Zion and in Jerusalem we deliverance, as the Lord has said, even among the survivors whom the Lord calls.

They saw the day of the Lord as God driving out wickedness and bringing in blessing, which is right. For the believer, that was the case. But these Israelites didn't realize that they were the sinners.

They were the ones who were acting evilly. They were the ones who were acting wickedly. Rather, their confidence was in the fact that they were Israelites. They had the temple.

They had the worship of God. They had all these things, which showed that they were God's people. And therefore they had nothing to fear from the day of the Lord. Only good things to gain. Isn't it true that in our own day and age, the vast majority of people believe that they are good people? There's a lot of people even now in the UK who still believe in God.

[15:12] They try to live a good life. They try to be helpful, charitable, caring. Whether or not they're religious, they have a confidence in what they do.

But somehow, if there is a God, he will accept them. They don't fear judgment. They don't see any need to change.

Because God probably thinks of them as rather nice people. But it's a false confidence in our own goodness, our own actions, our own kindness.

It will come as a terrible, terrible shock for those who have confidence in their own actions, either when they die and face God, or when that great day of the Lord comes, when Jesus returns as the judge of the living and the dead.

A terrible shock. And Amos uses a picture, doesn't he, of a man who is in great danger. In verse 19.

[16:33] Just how shocking it will be for those who are confident. He says it's like a man. He's walking down the street and he sees a lion. And so, naturally, he recognizes he's in danger.

So he runs from the lion. But as he runs around the corner, there's a great bear. Even more fearful and powerful. And so he runs and manages to get in his house.

And he's, whew, leaning on the wall. And suddenly there's a snake that bites his hand. Just when he thought he was safe, that's when he was in the most danger. Just when he thought all was well, he was in the most perilous place.

The day of the Lord is coming. In fact, again, when you read through the prophecies of the Old Testament, you find that there were several, if you could it, days of the Lord.

Several occasions when God would come and visit his people with judgment because of their sin and sort them out. But all of them were sort of ripples, if I can put it that way.

[17:41] Ripples looking to the great day of judgment. The one day of judgment. Doomsday, it may be called. The end of the world. That final day of the Lord when indeed all the world as we know it will come to an end.

When all people will stand before God. Here's what Peter writes. Repeating really the very words of Jesus.

The day of the Lord will come like a thief. In other words, when you don't expect it. When you're off guard. When you're not ready. When you're walking down the road. Heavens will disappear with a roar.

The elements will be destroyed with fire. And the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. The world as we know it is not going to continue infinitum.

The world isn't going to keep on going through the cycles of life and death and seasons and millennia. Forever and ever. The world has an end date. The end date.

[18:50] Which God has set. When this world as we know it will no longer exist as it is. But we shall all pass into the very presence of God.

And there will be judgment. Upon every single person who's ever lived. And if our confidence is that we are good people.

And we have done good things. And that we shall be accepted because of them. Then we have great reason to fear.

Just as the Israelites should have done. See God shows very clearly that all their offerings. All their sacrifices. All their gifts to him.

Were absolutely worthless. Verse 21. I hate. I despise your religious festivals. Your assemblies are a stench to me.

[19:50] Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings I'll accept them. Though you have choice offerings I have no regard for them. What was the problem? God was saying those things that you were doing you were doing with a wrong heart.

Your lives are sinful. You can't atone as it were for the wrong things you do by doing good things. There's that great thought isn't it? This great understanding upon the majority of people.

There we are. Our lives are set upon scales. On one side of the scales are the bad things we do. The wrong things we say. The bad attitudes. There. But on the other side are the good things we do.

The religious things we do. The charitable things we do. Surely at the end of time when God weighs the balance it'll tip in our favor. And God says no not all the amount of good things you can do can never remove the bad things that have been done.

The sacrifices that you make cannot undo your sins. Cannot make them disappear. There's only one offering that can be given for sin.

[21:03] We can't give it you see because if we give an offering ourselves it's tainted with our sin it's corrupted it's already horrible. Elsewhere Isaiah talks about giving good gifts to God or living a good life for God.

He calls them righteous acts. And he makes a very unpleasant statement. He says all your good things that you do are to God like please forgive it but this is exactly what it means a menstrual cloth.

they are unclean they're dirty it's something that you throw away. Now the only way that our sins can be forgiven the only way that we can be accepted by God the only sacrifice he accepts is one given by a perfect and sinless person.

And there is no such person in this world but there has been once Jesus Christ the Son of God he's the only person who could make an offering to do enough good if I can put it that way to undo our bat and that's what he did when he went to the cross and he died in our place.

Here's what the writer of the Hebrews has to say about the Lord Jesus and his dying for us Hebrews chapter 7 and like the other priests who sacrificed in the temple he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people he sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself God had been looking for a perfect sacrifice for sin right from the very beginning even when they were in the wilderness do you notice that did you bring me sacrifices and offerings for 40 years in the wilderness did you bring me those things which are pleasing to me did you do enough to make yourselves right with me no you didn't because as he goes on to say in verse 26 you lifted up your idols you worshipped false gods you were trying to do good with one hand and carrying on doing bad with the other hand and you thought that that would be okay and I'd accept all that but God is holy there's only one thing left for people whose confidence is in their goodness and that's judgment and so the question to you and I dear friends is this is my confidence in the cross of Jesus is the place that I look to to give me peace

with

[24 : 05] God my own deeds my own works my own religion my own faith or is it in what Jesus has done for me in bearing my sin at the cross where justice and righteousness were satisfied and forgiveness fully bought so their confidence their false confidence was in their actions but then when we go into chapter 6 we see that they had false confidence in their assets in their assets verse 6 sorry chapter 6 verse 1 woe to you who are complacent in Zion why were they complacent look at what it says in verse 4 you lie on beds adorned with ivory you lounge on your couches you dine on choice lambs and fattened calves so on what was their confidence in their confidence in was their riches they were comfortably off they were well off at least the rich were the influential were they looked around at their lives and the circumstances of their lives and they said look how God has blessed us with all these material things we must be in his good books gave them a sense of well being all these material blessings are a sign that God is with us and pleased with us is that the case perhaps today in the UK in one way or another isn't our confidence as a nation in our wealth in our abilities in our in what we've been able to achieve is that the case throughout the UK and the West we are the wealthiest we've ever been we're the richest we've ever been you've never had it so good we still complain moan and say we wish we had more and so on there's a sense of material contentment isn't there in our day and generation this relative opulence we see around about us makes people very insensitive to spiritual poverty they say well as long as

I've got enough money for my holiday as long as I've got enough money in my pension park as long as I can manage to buy a new car every four five years or whatever it may be then why should I worry and be concerned about spiritual things it's the here and now that we're living in it's the here and now that we're to draw our our fun from our joy from eat what's it say eat drink tomorrow we die but we'll eat and drink today Israelites looked at some of the surrounding countries as well didn't they and thought that they were better than them isn't it how sarcastic God is at times look at what he says in verse verse 1 to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria you notable men of the foremost nation isn't it it's sarcasm you think you're better than everybody else every other nation around about you you're as bad as those people who put great before your nation like

Great Britain who gave us that title or did we give it to ourselves isn't there a sense of that in Europe I'm not going into political Brexit all that trash isn't there a sense in which we British look what we've accomplished look what we've achieved look at what we've done for the world look how wealthy we are well off we are look at the advance that we've got we've got real reason to think that God is with us more than any other people but was it that that really made God angry was it their trust in their own riches was it their greed that made God angry no this is what God says says verse 6 you drink wine by the bowl full and use the finest lotions but you do not grieve over the ruin of

Joseph what does he mean you're not bothered about the spiritual and moral state of your nation you're content to live in this lovely cozy bubble where you have what you need but there are no tears for your sins there's no remorse for your wickedness be careful what I say just over 50 years ago we passed a law in our nation that meant that children inside the womb were unsafe and since that time we have murdered millions of them and we're so good the reason that Great Britain was a great nation was because basically just about killed everybody who stood in its way there's no remorse over our sin is there politicians don't grieve people of our nation are not saddened by the injustices and the wickedness and the way that people have been treated the way the nation has been built where we continue to slide away from what is right and good where we embrace evil in every type and shape if our confidence is in what we possess confidence then we have got false confidence none of those things are going to matter on the day of the

Lord God's not going to look at you and I and say well you've lived a comfortable life haven't you you've obviously done well for yourself and worked hard none of those things will matter what did Job say naked I came from the womb naked I go take nothing with us whatever we own see our confidence and dear friends is not on what we possess of ourselves but actually again it brings us back to the Lord Jesus Christ our confidence in what God has given us and we possess in Christ and in Christ we possess his righteousness his goodness his accomplishments his achievements Paul speaking to and writing to Philippians says this in chapter 3 in verse 9 he talks about what he longs for what he desires he says

[31 : 23] I long to be found in Christ not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but that which is through faith in Christ the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith we come to God empty and naked we have nothing to present or to show to say this shows that

God is with us or accepts us but when we come to faith in Christ what happens is this that Jesus his goodness righteousness his faithfulness to God's commandments the life he lived it's credited to our account God sets a standard and says only the righteous will get into heaven anybody who falls below that 100% righteousness can never enter into my holy heaven Jesus takes our sins at the cross and wipes away our debt but we still have 100% righteousness lacking but Jesus lived that perfect life in our place that 100% righteous life and what does he do when we become one with him his righteousness becomes our righteousness we pass the mark in God's sight because of who we possess by faith is Jesus your savior is Jesus your righteousness is he the one that you are trusting in to make you right with

God or are you finding your pleasure your hope your comfort your help in what you possess materially there's one final thing here I believe in the rest of this chapter 6 that we see the final self-confidence that Amos undermines in the Israelites is their confidence in their own awesomeness it's hard to find a word a which really talks about pride so I kind of used lots of peas but we ate them all at lunch so I had to use some a's tonight not in our actions not in our assets not in our awesomeness but that's how they thought they thought of themselves as pretty awesome look at what he says in verse 8 I abhor the pride of Jacob and detest their fortresses what do you mean in other words their confidence in themselves in what they have built he talks about a battle and how they boast about a battle there in verse 13 you rejoice in the conquest of lo debar you say did we not take car name by our own strength the word lo debar actually means nothing emptiness did we not take car name by our own strength car name was a symbol of strength and power it means horn there was their pride that God abhorred their trust in their military prowess their trust in their forces their armies their chariots their battlements they thought they were safe because they were well fortified nobody's going to attack us nobody's going to harm us but actually God was going to send them a much more powerful army verse 11 the Lord has given the command verse 14 the Lord Almighty declares I'll stir up a nation against Israel that was the Assyrian nation the great superpower of the day was going to come against them and they would be utterly destroyed for their sin for their pride for their self righteousness the destruction that God is going to bring is going to be so awful upon them that before where they spoke about the Lord being on our side and God being for us and where God's people notice in verse 10 they won't even be brave enough to mention his name hush we mustn't mention the name of the Lord fear would overtake them and the reason again that's given is this they had turned upside down what was right and called it wicked verse 12 do horses run on the craggy rocks well of course they can't run on craggy rocks it's against their nature they need a flat sword do you plow the sea with oxen of course these things are unnatural these things are wrong that's what we've been learning all the way through the people turned upside down

God's natural laws kind of bit careful what I say dear friends it seems to me not only because scripture teaches it but it seems to me so obviously clear that a man cannot marry a man a woman cannot marry a woman it just doesn't make any sense it's unnatural natural we are made to be compatible a man with a woman and a woman with a man that's what marriage is about that's why it's impossible for two women to have a family and to have children of their own or two men to have children of their own it's just not natural the very nature that God has created in this world is one man one woman for life the world in which we live thinks that it is so clever and awesome that it is able to smash as it were to destroy to put aside all the natural things that God has put in this world said look how clever we are look how advanced we are they don't see that coming down on their heads is the very judgment of God because they have rejected his good laws they've rejected his mercy and his grace they've rejected his loving kindness they've rejected the one hope the one place the one person that they can have confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ do we boast about ourselves do we boast about what we've achieved without God what we've accomplished is there a sense again in our nation we don't need God don't need him we we can conquer cancer we can overcome dementia we can deal with all the enemies of life and death and we don't need

[39 : 04] God to help us to do it because we are so awesome and it's just foolishness because dementia is here cancer is here death is here we haven't overcome these things thank God we've made great advances thank God that things are better than they were but we still need Christ because not all the problems of life are associated with our bodies the vast majority of the problems of our society are associated with our souls because our hearts are not right with God and so we

hate him and we hate one another and so we strive to get those things which we cannot have and we long for some satisfaction and contentment in this world and we never find it because it's only found in

Christ he's the one that we are to put our confidence and hope in not only what he's done for us on the cross not only what he's done for us in that perfect life of righteousness but what he's accomplished in every aspect of our salvation he's the awesome one he's the one who assures us of safety on the day of judgment it's solely down to him if you have any confidence confidence in yourself or in anybody else and anything you've done or anything you possess if your confidence and hope is that when I face death I should be entered and brought into heaven because of this or that or the other then you have a false and empty confidence which will fail you utterly it is solely completely totally eternally because of

Jesus he has done it all he's from top to toe the complete and perfect saviour Paul as he writes to the Romans to the Christians in Rome in chapter 5 says this some of these words will close and come to our final hymn we have now been made right with God by the blood of Jesus therefore how much more shall we be saved from God's just anger through him for if while we were God's enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his son how much more having been reconciled now shall we be saved through his life not only is this so but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have now received peace with God