

Amos Chapter 7

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[0 : 0 0] Bibles from the prophet Amos, the prophet Amos, and if you have one of the red church Bibles, it's chapter 7, page 922, page 922, chapter 7.

Just when you're turning there, just to give you a little reminder, Amos is prophesying, he's in other words bringing God's message to the people of Israel, they were in the northern part of the country, there were two parts of the country, they almost became two countries, Israel to north, Judah in the south, and Amos was from the south, they'd come to be a prophet north, and he was able to speak to them about the things of God, warning them of their sin, warning them of God's judgment against them, which was going to come through the Assyrian Empire.

And for these first six chapters, that's really what he's been doing, warning again and again, but in the midst of all those warnings, there have been these wonderful invitations, as it were, gospel invitations from God, seek me and live, seek the Lord and live.

God calling his people back to himself, they had engaged in all sorts of sin, particularly in idolatry, worshipping and serving foreign gods, while they continued to do the bits that they should do, maybe towards God, but also they had been wicked and greedy, the rich had sort of subjugated and cheated the poor, and God was saying through Amos, enough's enough, judgment must come.

And so from chapter 7 and verse 1, we're going to read the whole chapter, but we're going to particularly be concentrating on the first part. So Amos chapter 7, beginning at verse 1, page 922.

[1 : 5 9] This is what the Sovereign Lord showed me. He was preparing swarms of locusts after the kingshare had been harvested, and just as the lake crops were coming up, when they had stripped the land clean, I cried out, Sovereign Lord, forgive, how can Jacob survive?

He is so small. So the Lord relented. This will not happen, the Lord said. This is what the Sovereign Lord showed me.

The Sovereign Lord was calling for judgment by fire. It dried up the great deep and devoured the land. Then I cried out, Sovereign Lord, I beg you, stop.

How can Jacob survive? He is so small. So the Lord relented. This will not happen either, the Sovereign Lord said. This is what he showed me.

The Lord was standing by a wall that had been built true to plumb, with a plumb line in his hand. And the Lord asked me, What do you see, Amos? A plumb line, I replied.

[3 : 1 2] Then the Lord said, Look, I'm setting a plumb line among my people Israel. I will spare them no longer. The high places of Isaac will be destroyed.

The sanctuaries of Israel will be ruined. With my sword I'll rise against the house of Jeroboam. Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent a message to Jeroboam, king of Israel.

Amos is raising a conspiracy against you in the very heart of Israel. The land cannot bear all his words. For this is what Amos is saying.

Jeroboam will die by the sword. And Israel will surely go into exile away from their native land. Then Amaziah said to Amos, Get out, you seer.

Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there. Don't prophesy any more at Bethel. Because this is the king's sanctuary, the temple of the kingdom.

[4 : 13] Amos answered Amaziah, I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet. I was a shepherd. I also took care of sycamore fig trees. The Lord took me from tending the flock and said to me, Go prophesy to my people Israel.

Now then, hear the word of the Lord. You say, Do not prophesy against Israel and stop preaching against the descendants of Isaac. Therefore, this is what the Lord says.

Your wife will become a prostitute in the city. Your sons and daughters will fall by the sword. Your land will be measured and divided up. And you yourself will die in a foreign country.

And Israel will surely go into exile away from their native land. And we look to the Lord because we need his help to be able to... So back to Amos.

Back to Amos in chapter 7. And page 922 if you have the church Bible. I think some of you probably have read or heard about a man by the name of David Brainerd.

[5 : 27] He lived over 200 years ago. And in fact, nearly 300 years ago. He was one of the very first missionaries to take the gospel to the native Indians of North America.

And often he would ride for days to reach particular tribes where they were camped. And one of the tribes he felt he should go and share the gospel with were particularly aggressive towards any outsiders.

People had gone before and traders and others and they had been killed. And so before he got to their camp, when he was a little way away, he set up his tent. And he prayed.

He got down on his knees and he began to pray. Prayed that the Lord would give him an opening, an opportunity, a way in to share the gospel with these people. And little did he know, but as he set up his tent, some of the men of the village were watching, waiting, looking for perhaps an opportunity to kill him.

But then he went into the tent. The doors were open. He was in the entrance of the tent kneeling and praying. And so they watched and waited. And as they watched and waited, a very dangerous and poisonous snake approached David Brainerd.

[6 : 43] And the Indians who saw it thought, that's great. It's going to attack. Whenever it sees, it attacks. It's a violent, vicious, poisonous snake. Save us the trouble of killing this man.

The snake would get him. And the snake actually crawled over the back of his calves and slithered on its way. David Brainerd was so fervently in prayer, calling on God, he didn't even notice the snake had been there at all.

When he finished praying, he got up, packed up his tent, went into the village. And he was welcomed. The men were curious. They wanted to know what he was doing.

And why was it that this snake had not bitten him and had not killed him? God opened the door for him to preach the gospel.

And many, many of those Native Americans came to faith in Christ. The Apostle James writes in his letter near the end in chapter 5, he says, The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

[7 : 53] And although James was thinking of the prophet Elijah in particular, And he talks of him as an example who prayed, and for three years there was no rain. When he prayed again, there was rain.

We find that throughout the Old Testament, we have men and women of prayer. And he could have easily pointed to this particular passage in Amos and chapter 7 To speak about the prayer life of Amos.

We see a side of him that we've not seen before. We've seen him as one who is faithful and bold and clear. We've seen him as one who will preach not only the mercy of God, But also the very holiness and wrath of God.

But here for the first time, we see him as a man of intercession. A man praying for the people of God with great effect. With wonderful outcome.

Chapter 7 is really a turning point in the whole of this prophecy of Amos. From chapter 7, Amos starts receiving visions from God.

[8 : 58] God begins to show him things, to reveal things to him. Whereby before he was simply proclaiming what God's word had been given to him. Here in chapter 7, then in chapter 8, beginning of chapter 8, Then into the last chapter and chapter 9, we have these visions.

We also here in chapter 7 begin to see how Amos' preaching was received. Or not, as the case may be.

So I want us to think about this matter of prayer. Particularly this matter of intercessory prayer. This prayer life of Amos. And think about our own prayer life.

And think again. And be encouraged again, I pray, by the power of prayer. The importance of prayer. And the way that God uses prayer. So let's ask ourselves a few questions about these prayers of Amos.

Surely the first and most simple question is this. Why did he pray? Well, that's a natural question in all situations. Why pray?

[10 : 05] Why did Amos pray? What motivated him to pray? We know that often when we pray for ourselves, it's because of something that's happening to us in a situation. It may be that, sadly, the only time we actually pray is when things are horribly wrong.

When there's a problem or a difficulty, or we're facing a situation, suddenly then we begin to pray. Shouldn't be the case, of course. We should be, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, as those in relationship with God, people who spend every day, part of every day in prayer.

In fact, I would say even more than that. I would say, dear friends, that we should spend the whole day in a spirit of prayer. Paul tells us to pray constantly. We're to be always in that sense of being in the very presence of God, aware that we can speak with him, and talk with him, and pray to him.

But motivation is one of the hardest things for us to summon up, to pray. We know we should pray. We even may, at times, feel like praying. But what motivates us to pray?

Sometimes we're so busy. Sometimes we're so caught up in the things of life. So often we may even say, I'm too busy to pray. When reality is, we're too busy not to pray.

[11 : 25] And when we do pray, we don't pray for all that long. We pray maybe just a short prayer, or five minutes prayer, or prayer just before we close our eyes in bed, or prayer when we're brushing our teeth in the morning. Why do we pray?

Why, what should motivate us to pray? What should move us to pray? Well, we can see here what motivated Amos to prayer, what God revealed to him, or what God showed him.

Verses one and two. This is what the Sovereign Lord showed me. He gave him this vision. He gave him this insight, this vision of something that was going to come, something that God was going to do to the people of Israel.

He made plain to him that there was this great swarm of locusts coming to strip the land. If you know your minor prophets, you'll know that these locusts appear in other places as well, particularly in Joel.

Prophets, the swarms of locusts. The locusts were the most terrible, fearful thing that any farmer or agricultural worker could ever expect in the Middle East.

[12 : 30] They could blow in with the wind, strip the whole land of everything in a matter of hours, and just move on and be left with absolutely nothing.

But there's something here that God reveals to Amos concerning these locusts. They were going to come at a particular time of the year.

He says this, he was preparing swarms of locusts after the king's share had been harvested, just as the lake crops were coming up. Now, there were two harvests in the calendar in Israel.

The first one was given to the king. It was part of your protection from the king. Part of his, he took for his expenses to run the country, to look after his army, to protect the people.

And the first cut, as it were, of that harvest was his. The second harvest was for the people, to keep them through the winter and through the year. And so they would have food to feed themselves, their families, and so on.

[13 : 34] But what does God say? The locusts will come after the first harvest, when the king's got his lot, but before the people get theirs. So all the people would be starving.

There'd be nothing for them. It would be God's judgment upon them for their sin. That these locusts would ravage the land at this most crucial time of the year.

And that's what motivated Amos. That's what moved him to prayer. He saw what God had promised was going to take place as devastating, terrible, crippling.

It's exactly the same, isn't it? With the second vision that God gives to him as well, this time concerning judgment and fire. This is what the sovereign Lord showed me, verse 4.

The sovereign Lord was calling for judgment by fire, dried up the great deep, the waters, as it were, devoured the land. Everything would be decimated, not just the crops and the fields and the plants, but everything destroyed with fire.

[14 : 40] And so there's a similar reaction from Amos when he sees God's judgment being made plain to him by God. See, Amos didn't pray in a vacuum.

One of the things that sets apart a true living Christian faith with that of every other type of Christianity or every other type of religion in the world is that often people pray these prayers just repetitively.

Just the same words being spoken over and over again, a form of prayer, with nothing of the heart. It's just done in a vacuum.

It's done in a deadly way in one sense, in a cold way. It's just done in some way to appease or to please or to, I don't know, get God on your side. But no, when God's people pray, like Amos, we pray because we are moved to pray.

See, God's promised judgment against sin, his warning of that day of judgment should motivate you and I to pray. As plain as God made it to Amos concerning the locusts and the fire, as plain as that, God has made plain to you that there is a day of judgment coming when the wicked will be punished with an everlasting punishment, when hell itself will be opened up and men and women will be sent there because of their sins.

[16 : 16] He's made it plainer than a vision because he's written it down in his word again and again and again. Think of Hebrews in chapter 9, verse 27, just by itself.

People are destined to die once and after that to face judgment. Didn't our Lord Jesus speak about the realities of judgment again and again to those?

Better to have your right hand cut off than to enter eternity, to enter the everlasting fire where the worm does not cease, the fire doesn't cease. Dear friends, if we're not motivated by the reality of the day of judgment to pray for men and women to be saved, then what on earth is going to move us to pray?

Moved Amos, it should move us, it should motivate us. Why should it motivate us? Because what we see as well, not quite so clearly, but surely, we understand that Amos, rather, was motivated by his great love for the people.

That's why he prayed, comes out in his reaction, Sovereign Lord, forgive. Sovereign Lord, stop. I beg you, stop. You see, his heart's engaged in this.

[17 : 33] When God speaks of the judgment against Israel for all of its idolatry, for all of its greed, for all of its godlessness, for all of its rebellion, what does Amos do? He doesn't say, yeah, they deserve it, let them have it.

His heart is moved with a compassion and with love for these people. He was a man devoted to these people, even though they rejected him. We read there, didn't we, later in the chapter about how he was a shepherd down in the southern country, and how God took him and said to him, go to Israel and prophesy.

He went and sacrificed his ministry, as it were, his job, his land, his welfare. He sacrificed himself to go. Why? Because, yes, the call of God was upon him, but because his heart loved the people.

He wasn't indifferent to them. Can it be, dear friends, that there are times when we engage in evangelism and we're doing it out of duty rather than love?

we're doing it because it should be done or when we're praying, we're doing it because we should pray, not because we cannot help but pray, not because our hearts are breaking and caused to pour out from us such love and compassion.

[18 : 55] He must genuinely loved and was concerned for these people. And isn't it true, dear friends, that sometimes the reason we don't pray for the lost is because we don't care.

we're indifferent. We're saved, we're going to heaven, we're in church. People are wicked and selfish and godless and worldly.

Isn't it time for us to pray, Lord, give me a greater love for the lost? Isn't it time we pray, Lord, give me a heart for those who are without Christ, cause me to be stirred and moved? Lord, my heart is cold.

Isn't it more the case that when we see an animal suffering, we are more moved than when we think about a man or woman who is dying and hell bound? Isn't that wrong?

And if we lack love for the unsaved, let's remember what it was like before we were saved. Dear friends, we were hell bound, we were sinful, we were godless, we were ignorant, we were foolish, we rejected out of hand the things of Christ, we lived our lives with no thought or concern for him until somebody came and ministered to us and spoke to us and shared with us Christ and witnessed to us and almost certainly prayed for us.

[20 : 32] haven't we become, dear friends, cool and cold? Hasn't the curse of Laodicea fallen upon the church in the west that we're neither hot nor cold?

Amos was a man who was hot. God showed him what he was going to do. God revealed to him and God has spoken to us and told us again and again from the beginning of the Bible to the end that sin must be judged, that judgment must fall, that punishment must be received and given otherwise God just is not just.

We can be so busy and concerned with so many different things, important things, but are we praying as Amos prayed? Are we moved to pray?

The second question surely is this, how did Amos pray? He prayed because he was moved by what God had shown him and therefore it moved his heart to engage in prayer for these people but how did he pray?

How can we pray as he prayed? Well first of all we must pray with faith in God's power, mustn't we? Sovereign Lord, what does that mean? Almighty God, the God who is in control of all things, the God who can do all things, the God for whom nothing is impossible.

[21 : 58] Prayer itself is an act of faith, isn't it? People who don't believe don't pray. People who believe pray. We believe that God hears us, we believe that God answers us, we believe that God works in this world through these people when they pray.

He knows that God had the power over nature, God had the power to be able to bring in the locusts or to drive the locusts away. Even the locust is under his control.

And Jesus said even when a sparrow forced the ground, no sparrow forced the ground apart from the will of my Father in heaven, even the insects and the animals of this world are all under the sovereign control of God to be used for his glory and for his purposes.

He believed that. Do we? Do we believe that all what's going on in the world around about us, all the things that are happening in the Middle East, all the things that are happening throughout the United States or America and Brexit, all these things, do we believe that God is in control?

Do we believe that God has his hand over all these things and is working all things for his purposes, for the blessing of his church, for the saving of the lost, for the glory of his name? If we don't, what sort of God are we believing in?

[23 : 10] He's sovereign. He had power. He knew that God had the power to change circumstances.

Again, is it, dear friends, that the reason we don't pray is not because we're indifferent about the lost necessarily, though that may be the case. It's not because our hearts don't go out to them. We long for them to trust Christ.

It may be simply this. Well, I've prayed and I've prayed and I've prayed and nothing's happened. And I've lost faith in the God who can do all things. I say it with my head but I'm not sure that I believe it in my heart anymore.

None of those doubts were in Amos' mind, it seems to me. He was able to pray with absolute faith in the power of God to change and to step in and to work in those situations of judgment and bring mercy.

And that's the second thing. He had faith not only in God's power, but he had faith in God's mercy. Sovereign Lord, verse 2, forgive. Only a God of mercy can forgive sin.

[24 : 26] And that's exactly who this God is. As I've said, we've seen it again and again through these chapters. Seek me and live. Haven't we got this incredible lament at the beginning of chapter 5?

Hear this word Israel, this lament, this sad song, fall in this virgin Israel. It's a heartbreaking heart, if I can put that way, of the Lord God whose longing and desire is to restore and to heal and to save.

We must never forget the love of God. Yes, dear friends, we must be those who declare God is holy and he is just and he is righteous and he is judging and he is angry with sin.

Dear friends, if we never remember, if we don't keep into balance the mercy, the grace, the loving kindness, the faithfulness of God, that's everywhere through Scripture, just as much as judgment is.

Haven't we experienced for ourselves the mercy of God? Don't we know what it is to walk day by day in the assurance of our sins forgiven? Don't we look again and fix our eyes upon the cross and see justice and mercy meet?

[25 : 47] Forgive. His faith was in the mercy of God and God's mercy and God's power. Dear friends, let us never forget that.

Let us never forget. Let us never forget that God does not delight in the death of the wicked but rather that men and women would turn and be saved.

He also prayed having no faith in humanity or rather he prayed with understanding about humanity's weakness.

He had faith in God but he had no faith in people. Look what he says, Sovereign Lord, forgive. How can Jacob survive? He's so small. He's so weak. He's so helpless. Now on to Jeroboam, this was a time of great prosperity for Israel.

They were doing pretty well for themselves actually. They were materially and territorially strong. Jeroboam extended the borders of the country. That's why they felt safe if you remember when God speaks to them in verse 1 of chapter 6.

[26 : 58] Wotee who were complacent. They thought they were doing okay and things were well. But they named Amos' eyes. They were small and helpless and weak and if God were to bring his judgment against them they would be utterly cast aside and destroyed.

They were destroyed. The world in which we live, the people of this world in our day and generation are the most boastful people there have ever been.

Look at our scientific discoveries. Look at our medicine. Look at our technology. Look at what we've done. Look at what we've achieved. Look at what we are able to do.

But we're still as weak and as small and as helpless and as powerless as we ever were even in Israel's day. We can't solve the problems of life.

We can't heal the brokenness in our society. We can't save ourselves. We certainly can't rescue ourselves from the coming wrath of God. Whatever the boasts of the people around about you.

[28 : 01] Whatever their pretense that all is well in their lives. Whatever they think. Whatever they say. Whatever mask they wear. Be sure of this dear friends that underneath it all they are lost sinners. And whether they know it or not or sense it or not or will accept it or recognize it or not they are utterly, utterly without hope in this world.

Unless God steps in with his mercy with his grace with his gospel there is no hope for them when they stand before God on that day of judgment.

Amos was motivated to pray and he prayed with faith but with realism as well. Recognizing the weakness and helplessness of the people.

But then let's ask ourselves well what did this sort of prayer accomplish? What did Amos' prayers do? Well incredibly on not one but two occasions Amos' prayers are heard by God and God relents from sending judgment and is merciful to the people.

Now dear friends we are not meant to understand as we may think that somehow Amos twisted God's arm or that God somehow was persuaded by Amos to change his mind.

[29 : 28] We don't understand the mind of God but we know this that God always does exactly what he wants. When it says God relented it means ultimately that God did exactly what he had chosen to do.

The reason he showed Amos these things was that Amos would pray so that he might show mercy. God had revealed these visions to Amos to prompt him. His intention all the time had been patient and merciful and gracious to these people.

In fact that's the reality of our God. If God did not want to show mercy then at any moment even now he could send judgment on this earth and wipe out all of humanity into hell.

The reason he hasn't is because he is merciful and gracious. Because he gives us dear friends time to pray and to witness and he gives time for sinners to repent.

Remember back in Abraham's life a very similar situation happened in Genesis 18. God said I'm going to move away from Sodom and Gomorrah because I'm going to send destruction upon them.

[30 : 36] Abraham wonderfully bargains with God in prayer. Well Lord if there were 50 good people there wouldn't you spare the city? Yes if there were 50 I would spare the city.

Well if there were 10 good people there wouldn't you spare the city? You've seen Abraham interceding. You've seen Moses as well interceding. Prayer changes people.

prayer works. Prayer is the means by which God has purposed to save by which he has chosen to bless by which he has chosen to have mercy.

He must pray. He prayed because God had warned and shown him and his heart was moved. He prayed because he believed that God would hear and act.

He prayed because he had faith that God was merciful and desires to save and he prayed because he knew that without God's mercy these people were lost. There's one final thing we mustn't ignore here dear friends.

[31 : 49] It comes out particularly in verse 7. After Amos had prayed on these two occasions and God said this won't happen God showed him one more vision didn't he? He showed him a wall a straight wall a perfectly built wall and there was the plumb line I'm sure you've all seen a plumb line it's basically just a piece of string with a weight on the end that shows if something is straight or crooked but it's standing vertically as it should and God said here's a plumb line I'm putting it amongst the people and what do you think God saw when he put the plumb line of his righteousness against the people?

he saw that they were crooked and that they were out of line and that they were bent and that they were misshapen and that they were not as they should be he said the truth is this dear friends we must pray now because the time will come when it will be too late to pray the Lord said look I'm setting a plumb line along among my people Israel listen to these words I will spare them no longer what a terrible thing isn't it I'll spare them no longer I've spared them I've been patient I've been generous I've been gracious I've called again and again seek me and live I've called and I've given opportunity after opportunity and I've heard your prayer and I've held back my judgment but now it's going to fall and high places of Isaac will be destroyed and the sanctuaries of Israel will be ruined and my sword will rise against Jeroboam the king dear friends we must pray now while we have opportunity to pray while it is the day of

God's grace while it is the day of God's favor because there is coming a definite day a day of judgment when God will righteously justly judge the living and the dead when there'll be no more time or opportunity for repentance there'll be no more time or opportunity for mercy as we read before from Hebrews 9 it's appointed for people to die once there's no second chance after death or no second chance after Jesus comes back again here's what Peter writes to the believers by the same word that's God's word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly but do not forget this one thing dear friends with the

Lord a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day the Lord is not slow in keeping his promise as some understand slowness instead he is patient with you not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance is there any more reason we need to pray and to cry and to call for the lost to be saved I want us to do just that now I want us to spend just some time to bow our heads perhaps in the quietness of our hearts to bring before the Lord those who we long and desire to be saved perhaps to pray for and name and then there may be and then there will be that has been

Oh, God.

[36 : 11] Oh, God.

Oh, God.

Oh, God.

Oh, God. Oh, God. Oh, God. Oh, God. Oh, God.

Oh, God. Oh, God. Oh, God. Oh, God. Oh, God.

[38 : 05] Oh, God. Oh, God. Oh, God. Oh, God. Oh, God. Oh, God.

Oh, God. Oh, God. Oh, God. CHOIR SINGS CHOIR SINGS