

Prayer

I praise You, Jesus Christ, for the victory You give me over sin;
I praise You, Jesus Christ, for the love You have planted within me;
I praise You, Jesus Christ, for the glorious church of Your people;
I praise You, Jesus Christ, for the expected coming of Your Kingdom;
I praise You, Jesus Christ, for being You, and saving me! AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: The Deaf

Pray, and ask the Lord to heal the deaf. Ask Him to do again those miracles of grace amongst needy people that will set them free and demonstrate again His authority in the world.

On-going prayers

- *Pray for those working for justice and peace in Afghanistan*
- *Give thanks for the miracle of life and the love of the Creator*
- *Pray for those who suffer because of preventable flooding*

Meditation

Oh my soul, turn a corner;
Redirect your life towards a heavenly goal.

Oh my soul, see the light;
Shine forever brightly in this gloomy world.

Oh my soul, listen for the voice;
Hear and do the will of God throughout your life.

Oh my soul, seek peace;
Accept God's purpose for the whole of His creation.

Oh my soul, speak the truth;
Declare what God alone has put upon your heart

Oh my soul, accept Christ's love;
Release the devil's grip upon your life for all eternity.

Oh my soul, stay open for your God.

Bible Study - Amos 7:10-17

¹⁰ Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent a message to King Jeroboam of Israel; it said, 'Amos has conspired against you here in the heart of Israel; the country cannot endure all his words. ¹¹ This is what Amos has said, "Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel will surely go into exile, away from its own land."

¹² Then Amaziah said to Amos, 'Get out, seer, run away to the land of Judah and earn your food and do your prophesying there; ¹³ don't ever prophesy at Bethel again, for it is the king's sanctuary, and a temple of the kingdom.'

¹⁴ Amos answered Amaziah, 'I am not a prophet or a son of a prophet; no, I am a herdsman, and a forester who looks after sycamore trees. ¹⁵ The LORD took me from shepherding the flock, and said to me, "Go, prophesy to my people Israel."

¹⁶ 'Now then, listen to the word of the LORD. You say, "Do not prophesy against Israel, and stop preaching against the house of Isaac." ¹⁷ Now, this is what the LORD says: "Your wife will become a prostitute in the city, and your sons and your daughters will fall by the sword. Your

land will be measured and parcelled out; you yourself will die in a pagan land, and Israel will be exiled far away from its land.”

Review

For the first time, and at the height of his prophecies against the Kingdom of Israel, Amos was challenged directly. He had spoken vigorously against the people and had clearly raised something of a storm. He openly told the people that their worship of God was an insult (e.g. 5:21f.) and that they had lost their sense of justice and what was right (e.g. 5:10-13). It is not surprising that Amos had some opposition!

The man who dramatically interrupted Amos' visionary flow (in chapter 7) was Amaziah, 'the priest of Bethel' (7:10). We can safely assume that Amaziah was the senior priest at Bethel because he had authority to act against Amos, firstly by writing to the King of Israel to warn him of Amos' words (7:10,11). Even if we have read Amos prophecies only casually, we cannot fail to have noticed that he said Israel would be defeated in war (6:8-14), and to say such things at a time of international uncertainty amounted to treason. Certainly this is how Amaziah saw things; he said of Amos 'the country cannot endure all his words!'. He then reported to the King (Jeroboam II) that Amos had prophesied the king's own death in battle and the exile of the nation (7:11). We cannot find any such prophecy against Jeroboam within the Biblical prophecies, but it seems quite likely that Amos could have prophesied in this way against the monarch, given what we have read!

We do not know king's response to Amaziah's message, but at some point, there was a head to head confrontation between Amos and Amaziah, and the words that flew between these two men take up the majority of our reading (7:12-17). Disparagingly, Amaziah dismissed Amos' claims to be a prophet and told him to return to the south and go home. A sanctuary such as that at Bethel employed prophets who had specific duties to perform, but they were not at liberty to speak against the king! He called Amos a 'seer', an old Hebrew word for a wise man, which was used rather dismissive.

Amos' reply is a remarkable speech in two parts. Firstly, Amos defended himself and his calling (7:14,15), and secondly, he insulted Amaziah by turning all his prophecies on him personally (7:16,17). In the last verse of our passage, Amos delivers a stunning insult; he said that Amaziah's wife would desert him just as the people of Israel had deserted their God, and his children would die in war just as God's own people Israel would perish. In addition, Amaziah's own land would be passed on to pagans, thus symbolising that when Israel was taken into exile the Promised Land would be lost (5:5, 5:27, 6:7 etc). In this way, Amos declared a deep spiritual truth; the leaders of God's people would personally experience the judgement of God on His people.

But the most interesting feature of this passage is Amos' defence of his own prophecy. There is something deeply human about the way that Amos declared without shame to Amaziah that God had called him and given him a word to speak (7:14,15). He was no specialist or paid prophet, but a working man called by God to do something special. He had received the highest of calls which was to 'go, prophesy to my people Israel', and he had been faithful to the call. The passage may not seem to us to be inspiring, but they show a remarkable insight into God's work through the prophet.

Throughout the centuries, when the church of God has become staid and set in its ways, God has called men and women to take a stand and declare His Word. What God has said through his servants has never been 'new', but He used Luther, Wesley, Edwards and many others in different times and places to call His people back to the truth of His Word and the revelation He has given through Jesus Christ of His plan of salvation for the whole world. Now, you may not feel that the prophecies of Amos are comparable because they were given before the time of Christ, but they are part of Scripture. Amos' courage to do what God required of him and stand against injustice and irreligion was unique in its day and it is an inspiration to us now. Throughout the centuries, the church of God has always had to listen to people like Amos, who have challenged it to reject wrongdoing in justice and faith and turn again to God to rediscover the Spirit of joy, love, energy and fruitfulness by which the Kingdom grows.

There are Amos' around today. Let us pray that they hear the call and act on it, and that the church of God is prepared to hear the sharp challenges they bring.

Questions (for use in groups)

1. How would you summarise the prophecies of Amos which you have read up to this point of the book?
2. Can we recognise the calling of a prophet today? Where should we look to find the prophets of God today, and how should we support them?

3. Why does the church of God need to be challenged constantly to return to the truths of the Gospel?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

Have you ever felt that the Lord is calling you to say something and you have agonised over whether it is right to speak? Of course, other people will quickly tell us that we should say what is on our minds, but have you ever waited on the Lord to make it clear that it is His will to speak, not the will of men and women? In my experience, most Christians have felt something of the call of Amos, which is to leave work and go to declare God's Word, but few have concluded that it is right to act on the call. Why is it that we do not follow through on our convictions? What would happen if we did?

Ideas for exploring discipleship

- *Reflect on those occasions in your own life when you have made a stand against someone, and you have felt that it is a matter of justice and truth. What has the Lord done through such instances, and how have you been affected in the long run? If this exercise raises emotions in you, pray about what happened, and ask the Lord to help you gain a good perspective on everything that happened.*
- *Pray for the people God uses in your own church to challenge the status quo. They may be unpopular and yet they may have an important part to play in God's will for His people. Ask the Lord to help you discern the truth about this.*

Final Prayer

Lead us Lord God; guide us in our pathways, tell us when to speak Your Word, lighten the darkness of this world, and ease the heavy loads we bear. We do not ask for an easy life, but for Your presence by which we know we are not alone, but loved and helped along our way. Thank You Lord God: AMEN
