

Can I Get a Witness?
February 3, 2013
Allen Power

Amos Chapter 7

Opening questions: What are some things that make you most uncomfortable about sharing your faith with unbelievers?

In this passage, Amos is an example to remind us that God works through His people who, as obedient witnesses, pray for and share God's message with others.

A refresher on Amos. As we've learned, he was a sheep herder and sycamore fig tree grower that God called as a prophet to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. He was preaching to a nation that had grown very prosperous. Though they had "religion" and "ritual" they had grown far from God and focused on amassing more and more wealth, usually by oppressing and cheating the poor. It was Amos' calling to warn them of their need to repent and turn back to God.

In Amos chapters 7-9 God gave this prophet five visions. Today we deal with the first three "warning" visions. Let's look at the first two:

Amos 7:1-17 (ESV)

Warning Visions

7 This is what the Lord God showed me: behold, he was forming locusts when the latter growth was just beginning to sprout, and behold, it was the latter growth after the king's mowings. 2 When they had finished eating the grass of the land, I said,

"O Lord God, please forgive!

How can Jacob stand?

He is so small!"

3 The Lord relented concerning this:

"It shall not be," said the Lord.

4 This is what the Lord God showed me: behold, the Lord God was calling for a judgment by fire, and it devoured the great deep and was eating up the land. 5 Then I said,

"O Lord God, please cease!

How can Jacob stand?

He is so small!"

6 The Lord relented concerning this:

"This also shall not be," said the Lord God.

- **Question: What was God planning for the rebellious Israelites in these two visions?**
- **What did Amos pray to God for in both cases?**
- In verses 2 and 4 Amos pleads with God asking "How can Jacob stand? He is so small!" **To whom does it refer? What do you think that means?**

- **Can you think of any other times in scripture when God “relented” because a dedicated man of God pleaded on behalf of sinful people?** (See Gen. 18; Exodus 32:11-14; Num. 14; also, Romans 9 and 10)

Genesis 18:22-33 Moses 50, 40, 30, 20, even 10 righteous men?

Exodus 32:11–14 (ESV)

11 But Moses implored the Lord his God and said, “O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? 12 Why should the Egyptians say, ‘With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.’” 14 And the Lord relented from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people. (Emphasis mine)

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul wrote passionately about his prayers for Israel: Romans 9:2–3 (ESV)

2 that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

Romans 10:1 (ESV)

Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.

- Amos prayed and God relented. Now, how about a tough theological question?
- **Does that mean that prayer can cause God to change his mind?**

R.C. Sproul writes:

The mind of God does not change; God is not a thing. Things change, and they change according to his sovereign will, which he exercises through secondary means and secondary activities. The prayer of his people is one of the means he uses to bring things to pass in this world. [10 highlights] So if you ask me if prayer changes things, I answer with an unhesitating “Yes!” — Sproul, R. (1996). *Following Christ*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

C.S. Lewis wrote:

Can we believe that God ever really modifies His action in response to the suggestions of men?...He could, if He chose, repair our bodies miraculously without food; or give us food without the aid of farmers, bakers, and butchers, or knowledge without the aid of learned men; or convert the heathen without missionaries. Instead, He allows soils and weather and animals and the muscles, minds, and wills of men to cooperate in the execution of His will.

God is sovereign and omniscient (all knowing) however, He has ordained that we are to play a part in the unfolding of His will. Not only does He INVITE us to PRAY, He COMMANDS us to PRAY.

How is Amos' response to these two visions an example for us today?

Greg Laurie in his book Making God Known (a very practical book on sharing our faith), writes: *"Effective evangelism always begins with a burden."*

Here's a question I thought of: Do I spend as much time praying for God to SAVE lost people as I do asking Him to HEAL them; PROTECT them; or meet their earthly NEEDS? Am I more burdened about their physical situation than their eternal destination?

Amos was burdened and prayed for God to have mercy on Israel. We should be as burdened for the lost around us.

- We're not only to pray for the lost, we're to give them the WHOLE Gospel message.
- Look at the third vision God gave Amos:

7 This is what he showed me: behold, the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. 8 And the Lord said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A plumb line." Then the Lord said,

"Behold, I am setting a plumb line
in the midst of my people Israel;
I will never again pass by them;
9 the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate,
and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste,
and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword."

- **What is a plumb line? How is it used? What eventually happens to a wall that isn't plumb?**
- **What do you think this vision of the plumb line meant for Israel in that day?**
- **What is the plumb line for us today?**
- In verse 8 God said: "I will never again pass by them (Israel)" What did He mean?
- **Would you rather tell someone about God's mercy or about His judgment? Explain. Why must we speak of both if we're going to be truth-telling witnesses?**

Quoting Greg Laurie again:

"When it comes to sharing the Gospel we must present both the 'good news' and the 'bad news'...just as a jeweler will display a beautiful ring or necklace against a dark velvet background to accentuate its beauty, God has sought to show us just how good the God News is by first telling us the bad news. Seeing our complete weakness, our inability to do anything whatsoever to alleviate our miserable condition, God did the ultimate for us: Romans 5:6 (ESV)

6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly."

God's law is the plumb line that reveals our sinful nature. When we share the GOOD NEWS of the Gospel, we can't leave out the BAD NEWS of sin and hell.

Of course, when you witness boldly, it can make some people upset.

10 Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words. 11 For thus Amos has said,

“ ‘Jeroboam shall die by the sword,
and Israel must go into exile
away from his land.’ ”

12 And Amaziah said to Amos, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there, 13 but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom."

- Amaziah was the priest of the church at Bethel attended by the King, Jeroboam.
- He didn't like this troublemaker and his upsetting message.
- Verse 10: **What did Amaziah whisper in the King's ear?**
- **What did he mean "the land is not able to bear all his words?"**
- Verse 11: **Amaziah quoted Amos. Was his quote accurate? Look back at verse 9.**
- Verse 12: Amaziah confronted Amos directly. Take a HIKE! You are not APPROPRIATE for the King's church.
- Sort of like, "You can't pray at our inaugural, Louie!" "You're too upsetting to people."
- Or as the Inaugural Committee spokesperson said: *"As we now work to select someone to deliver the benediction, we will ensure their beliefs reflect this administration's vision of inclusion and acceptance for all Americans."*
- But Amos wasn't intimidated by the politically correct, hypocritical priest:

14 Then Amos answered and said to Amaziah, "I was no prophet, nor a prophet's son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs. 15 But the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'

Amos is saying, I'm not a great theologian, just a farm boy that God called, but I'm DETERMINED to deliver God's message with no apologies. And by the way Amaziah, I have a specific message for YOU from God:

16 Now therefore hear the word of the Lord.

“You say, 'Do not prophesy against Israel,
and do not preach against the house of Isaac.'”

17 Therefore thus says the Lord:

“ ‘Your wife shall be a prostitute in the city,
and your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword,
and your land shall be divided up with a measuring line;
you yourself shall die in an unclean land,
and Israel shall surely go into exile away from its land.’ ”

- When we share the WHOLE message of God, it will upset some people.
- We need to share the Gospel in a loving and winsome way, but NOT water it down or retreat because we face opposition.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- God has called on all of us to share the Gospel of Christ with those around us.
- Our Pastor has challenged us all to think of at least ONE we need to reach.
- It starts with praying for those who are lost and asking God for mercy on them, and to soften their hearts for the Gospel.
- We need to be careful to share not only the GOOD NEWS but the BAD NEWS that makes it GOOD NEWS. The plumb line of God's law and His word show us all to be "crooked walls." The Gospel can STRAIGHTEN our crooked lives with the righteousness of Christ.
- Finally, don't be surprised when the Gospel message causes opposition. We're simply called to be obedient and let God do the work of salvation.