



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Amos 9:1-10

“The Sinful Kingdom and the Sieve”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] For those of you who are in our service perhaps for the first time today, we have been reading and studying the Book of Amos, over the past two three months. In fact, I believe that today is the thirteenth of the messages through the Book of Amos. And we began at chapter 1, verse 1, and next Sunday, the Lord willing, we will complete our study of Amos. And we have been engaging in a little reading in the Book of Amos, and I have been calling upon the members of the congregation to signify that they have read the Book of Amos week by week. And if they would read it in the English, I would read it in the Hebrew text each week. So how many of you read the Book of Amos this past week? Would you raise your hands?

Now, next week for those of you who did not raise your hand, next week the question is going to be how many of you did not read Amos this past week? [Laughter] So this is your last chance to read the Book of Amos and I'm looking forward to it because I've been enjoying reading Amos again in the Hebrew text. Many years ago I read Amos a number of times. But it was ten years ago that I spent a little time reading the Book of Amos in the Hebrew text, and, frankly, I've not read it again until we started this study. So it has been profitable for me.

We’re turning to Amos chapter 9, verse 1 through verse 10, for our Scripture reading this morning and that will be the section that we will expound, the Lord willing, in the time of study that follows in a few moments. Amos chapter 9, verse 1 through verse 10, and also for those of you who may be here for the first time I’m reading out of the New American Standard Bible version. And Amos writes in verse 1 of chapter 9.

“I saw the Lord standing beside the altar, and He said, ‘Smite the capitals so that the thresholds will shake, and break them on the heads of them all! Then I will slay the rest of them with the sword; they will not have a fugitive who will flee, or a refugee who will escape.’”

Incidentally, a capital was that part of the building probably the head of the central pillar upon which the roof rested, and the threshold is the great stone slab on which the doorposts were fixed. And so, consequently, this command of the Lord “Smite the capitals so that the threshold will shake,” meant that the whole building would come down. In fact, the Jerusalem Bible renders this strike the capitals and let the roof tumble down. So we are talking about a roof falling in upon those who are in one of the high places or one of the places where the sacrifices were made in the northern kingdom. Amos continues.

“Though they dig into Sheol, from there will My hand take them; and though they ascend to heaven, from there will I bring them down. And though they hide on the summit of Carmel, I will search them out and take them from there; and though they conceal themselves from My sight on the floor of the sea, from there I will command the serpent and it will bite them. And though they go into captivity before their enemies, from there I will command the sword that it slay them, and I will set My eyes against them for evil and not for good.”

That last statement is very striking for someone familiar with the Old Testament because the expression, “I will set my eyes upon someone,” was very frequently used for God setting his eyes upon individuals for their good, but now the term is obviously used of the Lord setting his eyes against someone for evil and not for good.

“And the Lord God of hosts, the One who touches the land so that it melts, and all those who dwell in it mourn, and all of it rises up like the Nile and subsides like the Nile of Egypt; the One who builds His upper chambers in the heavens and has founded His vaulted dome over the earth, He who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the face of the earth, The Lord is His name.”

Now, notice as you read through the prophecy, the different terms that Amos uses for the Lord. In verse 1, for example, the term I saw the Lord standing up beside the altars the Hebrew term Adonai which means something like “the master” or “the sovereign Lord.” But now we have in verse 6 and we’ve had this through the book, the Lord is his name, and the capitalized Lord is a reference to Yahweh the covenant-keeping God. So Yahweh is his name.

“‘Are you not as the sons of Ethiopia to Me, O sons of Israel?’ declares the Lord. (or Yahweh) ‘Have I not brought up Israel from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir? Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth; nevertheless, I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob,’ declares the Lord. ‘For behold, I am commanding, and I will shake the house of Jacob among all nations as grain is shaken in a sieve, but not a kernel or a pebble will fall to the ground. All the sinners of My people will die by the sword, those who say, ‘The calamity will not overtake or confront us.’”

May God bless this reading of his word. Let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Our heavenly Father we turn to Thee with thanksgiving and praise for our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the great covenants that thou hast made and which are recorded for us in Holy Scripture. We thank Thee for the Abrahamic covenant and the Davidic and the New covenant and for the ratification of them in the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on Calvary’s cross. We thank Thee, Lord, for all of the blessings that are ours by virtue of that which the Triune God has accomplished. We look forward to the future with anticipation and with joy as we reflect upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus and upon his unfinished work in which he is engaged at the present moment to secure all of the things for his people for which he has purchased by virtue of his death.

We thank Thee and praise Thee for the other promises of the word of God which are so rich and so marvelous and so necessary for our well being. We pray for the whole church of Jesus Christ wherever it may be over the face of this globe. May thy hand, Lord, be upon the church for the glorification of the Triune God. In the preaching of the word today and wherever it goes forth, may there be individuals brought to the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and may the saints be strengthened and edified. We pray for our country.

We ask, Lord, Thy blessing upon the government in Washington and in the state of Texas and in our city. We ask that Thou wilt give wisdom and guidance to those who are the ministers of God in the political and civil spheres. And we thank Thee, especially, for the ministry of the chapel and its outreach. We thank Thee for our elders. We pray thy blessing upon them, upon the deacons who serve with them and upon the members and the visitors and friends who are here with us today. Lord, we pray that by Thy grace we each may be strengthened and built up in our faith and encouraged. We pray for

those who are sick for those who requested our prayers especially we pray for them. We ask thy blessing upon them. Give encouragement and support and the sustenance necessary. And for those who are suffering in the hospital or otherwise we bring them before Thee and pray, Lord, that Thou wilt, if it be Thy will, give healing. Bless the singing of the hymn that follows and the ministry of the word. May our savior Jesus Christ be lifted up.

We pray in His name. Amen.

[Message] When I was standing up here a few moments ago, I knew that there was something that I had forgotten to say but could not remember what it was. And as Merle led us in that last hymn with Roberta, his wife, playing the piano over here I remembered what I should have said. As many of you know two three weeks ago we were told by someone afterwards that there were people who were reading the Book of Amos more than once a week. And, in fact, I found out that Roberta had read Amos something like five or six times. And so in consultation with the elders, we decided that we would award them a trip to Hawaii at Merle’s expense. And we want you to know they did take up our offer and they went to Hawaii, and they’ve enjoyed a visit out there enjoying Christmas out on the beach and they’re back with us. So Merle we’re glad you enjoyed the trip, and we’re sorry that elders were Scottish enough to make you pay for it. But, nevertheless, we want you to regard it as something we’ve given you at your expense. [Laughter] We’re very glad to have you back and we appreciate Roberta and her playing the piano as well.

Returning to Amos in our next to last study and the subject is “The Sinful Kingdom and the Sieve.” There are three principal themes in this section. I’m sure you noticed them as we read through in our Scripture reading. There is the certainty of divine judgment and discipline on the northern kingdom of Israel. In fact, as one reads this chapter the thought of the statement in the apostle’s Creed comes to mind that the Lord

Jesus will return again to judge the quick and the dead. And so that is a parallel to one of the themes of these last few verses of the 9th chapter. Another theme that is here is the consolation that the judgment is not total that God does remember his covenantal promises which have been made to the ethnically. And, finally, and perhaps the most important thing for us today is the ultimate penalty of pretense and the war against it begins here as the prophets sees the Lord God standing beside the altar.

The scene I think is clearer if we review the inception of the problem, and we’ve referred to this several times in the exposition of the Book of Amos. It goes back to 1 Kings chapter 12 in verse 25 through verse 33 where in the story of Solomon’s death and the succession of Rehoboam, his son, led to ultimately the division of the northern kingdom by the hand of the rebellion of Jeroboam the First. About a hundred and eighty years before the time of Amos in roughly nine thirty-one or nine thirty BC, Jeroboam the First led off ten tribes to make them Israel, the northern kingdom. But he knew his position was insecure because the children of Israel were supposed to go to Jerusalem to celebrate the festivals each year.

The feast of tabernacles was a feast that was to be held in the capital city, and he realized that Rehoboam’s folly, his refusal to accept the advice of the elders and his following of the advice of the young men who urged him to be very strict and severe with the people, he knew that they would forget about Rehoboam’s folly after a while as they constantly made their trips up to Jerusalem, and so he devised what the Bible calls the sin of Jeroboam; the use of religion in the interests of politics. As you know he made two calves and he called upon Israel to worship the calves. He set one up in Dan and one in Bethel, and the worship of Jehovah was, therefore, counterfeited. And he contrived also a feast that was similar to the feasts of tabernacles to be observed in the eighth month in the fifteenth day rather than the seventh month in the fifteenth day.

And so as a result of this what had transpired in the northern kingdom was a counterfeit kingdom. On the fifteenth day of the eighth month the feast like the feast of

tabernacles just like the feast in Judah. Jeroboam, himself, and this was one of the outbreaking forms of his crime a rebellion officiated at the altar, stood there during it. So we are told three times in verses 32 and 33 he offered sacrifices or offered on the altar. In other words, what had transpired was in the northern kingdom a worship of the Lord God the same Lord God was set up falsely. The whole thing was a counterfeit, a counterfeit feast on a counterfeit altar to prop up a counterfeit monarchy. Everything was in rebellion against the word of God. It illustrates most clearly that God does require conformity to his word. And that it’s not possible for us to say, “Well we are religious or we are worshipping God but we’re worshipping God in our own way.” In the Scriptures the worship of God is set out in detailed fashion.

And so the Northern Kingdom came into being with the ten tribes in the north and the two in the south. Years passed and Amos comes on the scene by this time another Jeroboam is on the throne of the northern kingdom Jeroboam the Second, not Jeroboam the First. And so there is Amos to see him take his stand by the altar as they observed this feast in the eighth month the fifteenth day not a surprising thing takes place amid all of the celebration of this autumnal presentation of ripe fruits. As Amos looks and sees Jeroboam the Second standing beside the altar suddenly the picture changes Jeroboam the Second fades from view and Amos tells us in verse 1, I saw the Lord, the sovereign Lord standing beside the altar. And he said, “Smite the capitals so that the thresholds will shake and break then on the heads of them all. Then I will slay the rest of them with the sword they will not have a fugitive who will flee or a refugee who will escape.” So the counterfeit succeeded by the real, the human by divine, the King Jeroboam the Second by the King, the Sovereign Lord, and he will throw the dynasty down. So as Amos sees the vision and as one ponders it, it’s quite clear that what God is saying through the prophet is that the day of pretense is over and the war on it has begun.

We’ve been noting as we’ve been going through Amos that the description that Amos gives at the worship of the northern kingdom is of a very active religious worship

of the Lord God but all are counterfeit. And as you go back and read the chapters of the Book of Amos you will see all of that set out. God calls upon them to look to him, to seek him in order that they may live, the prophet states, giving the words of God, “I hate, I reject your festivals nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies even though you offer up to me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them. I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. Take away from me the noise of our songs. I will not even listen to the sound of your hearts.” But then he adds, “Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” In the sixth chapter after that chapter he says, “I loathe the arrogance of Jacob. I detest his citadels therefore, I will deliver up the city and it contains,” and so in the northern kingdom, the day of pretense is over; the counterfeit, the façade, the artificial, all of the shallow things that characterized an active religious life. Now, face the reality of a sovereign God. That’s what Amos speaks about in the first four verses where the vision of the sovereign Lord is described.

His final vision, incidentally, of five is a terrifying one; the destruction of the temple by greater than Samson who destroyed the temple in Gaza from below. Now, the temple destroyed from above. And in verse 1 when Amos writes, “I saw the Lord standing beside the altar,” the ominous stance of an insulted God is suggested by that. The altar is reeking with hypocritical blood; the sacrifices that are constantly made by people whose lives are thoroughly unconfirmed to the word of God. It’s evident that as the prophet thought of the moral condition of the people, he saw that their hearts were rotten, but, nevertheless, they carried on the facade of religion, the facade of the sacrifices, the facade of reverence for the festivals. All of the things that characterized what they thought was the divine religion characterized them, but it was rotten to the core.

It’s not surprising that biblical students look at this and reflect on the way in which it represents so much of our Christianity today because we have large congregations, we have active congregations that do all of the things that you might expect believing people

to do, but when the light of God’s word is shown upon the lives of the individuals a different picture is often seen.

What does God expect? Well Amos doesn’t tell us like Micah does specifically. Although he said, “Let justice roll down like the waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream.” That’s in essence what he expected. He expects the service of an honorable public and private life. He expects those who represent him to be gentle and just in all their relations with one another. And he wants them to have the kind of relationships in their families and otherwise that are reflective of the truth of Jesus Christ.

Why is it that in our day in evangelicalism we have so much of evil that characterizes the lives of husband and wife with one another of children and parents. At the same time while we are proclaiming that we are followers of the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Have we them in Believers Chapel. We have individuals who outwardly acknowledge the sovereignty of the Lord God and the authority of the word of God, but in their lives in their relationships, husband and wife, wife to husband there is no recognition of the teaching of the word of God concerning those relationships, divorce, affairs and that kind of thing characterize the evangelical world today. In fact, in one theological institution they became so concerned they hold to the word of God so concerned that they wanted to invite in someone to speak to the particular problems that existed in the theological school. That’s not unusual today.

And, I think, that Amos’s words speak directly to the problems of the lives of many in evangelicalism today. Listen to the voice of the Lord dreadful words of no escape. “The central pillar in the great stone slab on which the doorposts were fixed is to be smitten.” In fact, in the Hebrew text this is very striking. One little short word for smite, *nakab*. “Smite the capitals so that the thresholds will shake and break them on the heads of them all.” There’s no escaping the holocaust either supernatural or natural. Listen to verse two, “Though they dig into Sheol, from there will My hand shall take them; and though they ascend to heaven, from there will I bring them down.” Or even the

natural, there is no escape, verse 3, “Though they hide on the summit of Carmel, I will search them out and take them from there; and though they conceal themselves from My sight on the floor of the sea, from there I will command the serpent and it will bite them.” This is Amos’s equivalent of Jaws. And one can see no matter where one is that the hand of God reaches there.

Notice the emphasis that the prophet gives in that little prepositional phrase “from there” verse 2, “From there shall my hand take them.” “From there will I bring them down. I will search them out and take them from there,” verse 3, “From there I will command the serpent and it will bite them.” And even though they go into captivity that is no escape; for God is not the god of Palestine, only or the land of Israel, he is the God of the whole earth. And so we read, “And though they go into captivity before their enemies, from there I will command the sword that it slay them, and I will set My eyes against them for evil and not for good.” A withering gaze leading to their destruction.

Of course, it’s obvious from this that as one reads this that God’s sovereignty reaches to all the nooks and crannies of the whole world about us. About a few years back I read an article written by a minister of a Presbyterian church in North Carolina. He’s a pastor of the Covenant Presbyterian Church in Waynesboro. And in the article which was entitled “Leave it to God.” He gave an interesting little story about a woman in his congregation, a very lovely woman, evidently, very involved in some of the practical work that the congregation was carrying on, but this woman had certain doubts. And as he expressed it she doubts the Calvinists application of the sovereignty of God. Now, she doesn’t doubt that God rules, but she does doubt that God rules in every crack and cranny of the universe in just the way reformed theologian says that he does.

Well, I think that Amos could have answered that question very well. He does rule, but he rules also in all the nooks and crannies of this universe. In fact, there is not anything that transpires in our world that is not the object of the decretive will of the Lord God. And as Amos puts it here, it’s from there that God controls all of the affairs of the

inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom. In other words, he’s not the God of part of the world; he’s the God of the whole world. And not only does he have authority over what happens in the United States but in the Soviet Union or in the African countries or South American countries and also in the islands of the sea and Tony even in New Zealand as you well know.

We have in our congregation today Mr. Tony Cluse who drove me back and forth from O’Hare Airport to Trinity seminary for two three years, and Tony is now in a Bible school in New Zealand and serving the Lord there, and he’s back on some work for the school in Dallas. We’re glad to have you Tony. We’d have you stand up but I didn’t see your face in time.

He controls all of the affairs of our universe. Now, as if that suggests to Amos a hymn to the sovereignty of God, in verses 5 and 6 he reminds his readers who the Lord God is. In verse 5 he writes and, “The Lord God of hosts, the One who touches the land so that it melts, and all those who dwell in it mourn, and all of it rises up like the Nile and subsides like the Nile of Egypt; the One who builds His upper chambers in the heavens and has founded His vaulted dome over the earth, He who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the face of the earth, Yahweh is His name.” In other words, he, the Sovereign God, is the one who is responsible for all of these things.

Now, that would have special meaning in Amos’s day because they knew about the religion of Baal. There were Baals for various individual places in before and other times I’ve made reference to the fact if we were living in that kind of land we would have a Baal of Dallas and a Baal of Fort Worth which would be more wicked of course than the Baal of Dallas. [Laughter] But, nevertheless, a Baal of Fort Worth and there’d be a Baal of Waxahachie and various places like that and there were fertility Baals that is fertility gods. And the pitch of the Baalites was that if you worship Baal then your crops will be fruitful and your cattle will increase, expand. You’ll do well economically if you

worship Baal. And, of course, he was regarded as the god of the rain, the god of the things that made a nice harvest.

Well, Amos is just saying that it’s God, the loved God, Yahweh, who is truly the rain god and the sun god. In fact, he controls all of this universe. It ultimately goes back to him. This, incidentally, is not the first of these hymns that God gave to the prophet Amos. Back in chapter 4 in verse 13, you might notice this when you read Amos this week for the last time in your life. Amos chapter 4 in verse 13, “For behold, He who forms mountains and creates the wind and declares to men what are His thoughts, He who makes dawn into darkness and treads on the high places of the earth, The Lord God of hosts is His name.”

And then as you know in chapter 5, verse 8 and verse 9, we have another one of these hymns. Verse 8, “He who made the Pleiades and Orion, and changes deep darkness into morning, who also darkens day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the surface of the earth, Yahweh is His name. It is He who flashes forth with destruction upon the strong, so that destruction comes upon the fortress.” So Amos has a high view about the Lord God. In fact, that’s really the source of all of our doctrinal problems, the right view of the Lord God. If we really have a right view of God that will settle almost all of our theological problems, and if we understand that he is truly a sovereign non-frustrateable deity, we’ll begin to think right with regard to the Lord God.

Now, the destruction of the sinful kingdom is described in verses 7 through 10 and we learn here the identity of those provoking the hostility of Adonai. The them of verse 4, “I will set My eyes against them,” are those who are living in a spiritual dream world. They are forgetful of the holiness of God. They’re forgetful of sin and its rewards. They fancy themselves that a date in past history has put God eternally in their debt and that irrespective of character they may count upon his cooperation in all of the things that they’re doing. They appealed to what God had done for them in the past. They thought

of the Exodus and the promises associated with it. They thought of the Abrahamic promises and how in the Exodus, they were confirmed to them and they rested in that. They felt themselves to be the chosen people of God, and there was, of course, a sense as we shall see in which that was true. But the chosen people of God manifest their election in a certain kind of life, and the kind of life lived by these people is evidence of the fact that they’re not really what they think they are but they appeal to their past.

And so Amos has a word for Israel and the nations. He reminds them that actually they are no different in one respect from all of the nations of the earth. Notice the words of verse 7, “Are you not as the sons of Ethiopia to Me, O sons of Israel?” In other words, there is a sense in which there is no difference between Israel and the sons of Ethiopia. He goes on to say, “Have I not brought up Israel from the land of Egypt?” Well yes, but then he says, “And the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir?” So they’ve had a migration too. And so those who appeal to the past to Exodus and what God did for them, well the Philistines and the Syrians and the Ethiopians, they have things to appeal to as well. God’s the god of all the migrations of the nations. And he says, “Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are on the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth.” There are certain things that are true of all nations and there are certain ways in which God acts toward all people exactly the same. There is no respect of persons with God and, consequently, he expects of the children of Israel that which he expects of the Ethiopians and the Syrians and the Philistines.

One might ask the question is he no longer Israel’s God? Has the covenant relationship been broken? Well, in one sense yes with this generation. This generation has reached to the limit of the loving kindness of the Lord God and the relationship with that generation has been severed. Just as in our Lord’s Day when our Lord spoke to the generation of his day, he signified that the covenant relationship had been broken with that generation. But the promises, the promises made to ethnic Israel, is there still going to come a day when God will fulfill the ancient promises to the nation. Well, we read

about that in our last study next week. But, of course, from our study of the word of God and from the things that will say in just a moment, it’s evident that those covenantal promises still hold for generations and generation to come. But this is a warning. It’s a warning to the effect that a generation cannot appeal to the past or even to the future, but a generation must stand before the Lord God as a generation. And so God finally said, “I’ll destroy this generation from the face of the earth and Sargon did it when he came and the Northern Kingdom went into captivity.”

Now, in the last few verses of our section that we’ve read chapter 8 and see through verse 9 and 10 listen to what he says, “Nevertheless, I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob,” Declares the Lord.” There is a remnant. There’s a remnant even days of apostasy as today, for example, there is a remnant in the church of Jesus Christ, a remnant according to the election of grace called by Paul also in the Galatian Epistle in the 6th chapter, “The Israel of God.” True-believing ethnic Israelites who don’t trust in the law for their justification or in their good works for salvation but who trust in the grace of God, not Judaizing, but believers in the grace of God. And so, “Nevertheless, I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob,” Declares the Lord.”

It’s very striking to me to read the comments of interpreters of today because so many of them not understanding, in my opinion, not understanding the fact that these ancient covenantal promises will find their consummation in the future, find this statement to be totally against the flow of thought of Amos. And, therefore, suggest that this statement, “‘Nevertheless, I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob,’ declares the Lord,” must have been inserted in the prophecy of Amos by a Judean redactor. That is, someone from the Southern Kingdom who felt that the statements that Amos was making didn’t pertain to the Southern Kingdom and so they inserted this, “‘Nevertheless, I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob,’ declares the Lord.” There is no documentary evidence for this, of course, nor, I think, any other kind of evidence. But, nevertheless, this is the

view of some substantial commentators that what we have here is something inserted by someone from the south.

But you can see that if that were true that would reflect the same kind of attitude that Amos is speaking against. That is, that one can be saved because of something that God has said for us or for our benefit in the past and not for the present. In today we can live as we please, but we can be sure that we’re going to be saved. It’s one of the ways in which even the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints or the security of the believer is sinned against in evangelical circles.

Now, Amos states in verse 9, “Behold, I am commanding, and I will shake the house of Jacob among all nations as grain is shaken in a sieve, not a kernel will fall to the ground.” Not a pebble.

Now, when I grew up, this is back in the dark ages and I can remember cooks in our kitchen taking out a flour sifter and flour would be put in it. In fact, I’ve heard missionaries say that the flour sifter in missionary lands often was used in order to sift out the bugs and the other types of things that might be found in their flour. I only remember shaking the flour to loosen in it up to make it more useful I guess or easier to cook with, and if there were some things that were in it that would be the way to get rid of them. Well, there is a difference of opinion on the exact force of the sifting and the use of the sieve but let’s use it in that sense. The sieve, after all, Amos has just spoken in the preceding chapter about a plumb line. And the plumb line is applied to Israel and Israel has failed the test. And so this is like the plumb line. It’s an instrument of discrimination.

And so Israel is going to be shaken in the sieve and that that is false will be kept in the sieve. That which is true will fall out upon the ground as that which is true. So when we read here, “I’m going to shake Israel or the house of Jacob among all nations as grain is shaken in a sieve and not a pebble will fall to the ground,” the Lord is saying simply that there is not a single sinner in the northern kingdom who will escape his

judgment. It’s a discriminating kind of judgment. And, furthermore, it’s a purifying kind of judgment. That is, that the nation is going to be scattered over, as he says, “Among all nations and that itself will be perigative in its force.” And the result will be that all of the sinners of the people will be destroyed, but those that are true will be preserved. So not a kernel, not a pebble will fall to the ground of the false. And he concludes in verse 10, “All the sinners of My people will die by the sword, those who say, ‘The calamity will not overtake or confront us.’” This category of the sinner is purged. The one who says it cannot happen to us.

Now, my dear friends in Believers Chapel, many of you have heard the word of God for many years. You regard yourselves as Christians. I certainly hope so. I know the elders pray for you and pray that your faith is genuine faith. But very often in our congregation there are evidences that there are some within us who may not have a very strong hold on the things of the Lord God. Of course, we realize there are many times and there many of us who don’t have a strong hold on the things of the Lord God but we know that God has a strong hold upon us. But it’s entirely possible because after all Amos could speak to the covenant people as he does that in the midst of our congregation there are people who attend Sunday after Sunday who open their Bibles, who sing the hymns, you don’t have the opportunity of putting in a collection plate, but other things that go with the profession of religion they are characteristic of your life, but as Amos says in the chapter that we have just read and the verse that we have just read.

Does justice roll down like the waters in your life? Is righteousness like an ever-flowing stream in your practice, in your business, in your family life, in your relationship with your friends? Do people when they think of you say, “Well, one thing I do know about him or her he’s a Christian. He is a genuine Christian. He’s honorable in his business. He’s loving, Christian loving in his relationships in his family. His children honor him and he respects his children and instructs his children. His children have grown up instructed in the word of God. And as they’ve grown to maturity they too are a

credit to the truth of God as revealed through Jesus Christ.” Is that said of you? Can that be said of you? For those you in the congregation who are raising your children, how important it is that you love them sufficiently to discipline them and instruct them in the things of the word of God, so that as the mature they do reflect the grace of God that you have come to know in Jesus Christ.

In the final analysis, of course, there’s only one safe place and that’s Galgava and if your faith and trust in him who is god for sinners that’s the safe place. So this is what God thinks of pretense then. Religion made a tool of self. When Amos was carrying on his prophesying, the children of Israel were meeting in the great festival that was a counterfeit of the feast of tabernacles. And as they listened to the things that were said by the priests or done by the priests and as they listened to the prophets speak like Amos, I’m not sure there were happy with Amos, but as others spoke the word of God as the word of God was read, as they sought objectively to carry out the things, of course, it was false but, nevertheless, they sought to adhere to the things of the word of God, as they were going through all of their ceremonies what were they thinking.

Well, Amos has told us. They were thinking when is the Sabbath ever going to end because we need to get to business. We want to make the ether small and the shekel large. Their minds were not on spiritual things at all. Their minds were on the next day. Is that characteristic of any of us? As we think about the word of God in the meetings of the chapel or other churches that you may attend. Is your mind upon the ministry of the word of god or is it on the things that are going to transpire tomorrow when you’re out in the midst of the world? The true people of God are sinners too, but the difference between the sinners of the sinning nation and the sinners of those of whom Amos speaks when he says that he will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob is this, those who are sinners and belong to the Lord God bear the marks of moral and spiritual concern. They long for holiness. They love the word of God. They rest in the grace of God and by God’s grace they call upon him earnestly and sincerely and constantly to use them for the

glory of the Lord God’s name. To enable them to live in such a way that God may be glorified in their lives. That’s my prayer for me and for each one of you.

If you’re here today and you’ve never believed in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, it’s obvious that it’s impossible for you to live that kind of life. Your first responsibility is to turn to him who loves sinners and gave himself for them. There is no such thing as the universal love of God. That is that God loves everybody and, therefore, everything is going to be all right for everybody.

Just a few months ago in the Dallas Morning News a letter was written by an individual from Euless. And this individual was complaining about some evangelical leaders who’ve made some foolish statements, which they may well have done, but at the end of his criticism of them he says, “Yes, I do believe in God, a god who loves all of us regardless of our beliefs, regardless of our race, way of life or what we read. He forgives us for mistakes and still loves us.” Oh, the error of the universal love of God without sufficient attention to the distinguishing grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you’re here today and you do not know the Lord, we remind you he has offered a sacrifice for sinners and you may pass from death to life through faith in him who offered that sacrifice that saves. We invite you if you’ve never believed in the Lord Jesus to turn to him at this very moment acknowledge the fact that you abide under the guilt, wrath, and condemnation of God because of your sin because he judges sinners and at the same time flee to him. Believe his word that Christ has offered that saving sacrifice ratified the new covenant. Flee to Christ. Receive him as your personal savior. May God and his marvelous grace enable you to do that.

Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful indeed for the blessings of life which have been showered upon us. We look back to a day also, the day in which by God’s marvelous effectual grace Thou didst turn our hearts to the Lord Jesus, caused us to see the saving

sacrifice that he offered for sinners, caused us to see that we are sinners, and caused us to lean upon him. Lord, we thank Thee for all of the marvelous things that are ours through Christ. And, Lord, at this very moment in this auditorium, if there are some in this auditorium who have never believed in the Lord Jesus, may at this very moment the thoughts of their hearts turn to Thee and they say to Thee, Lord, I know I’m a sinner. Christ died for sinners. So Thy word says. I plead the work that he did the blood that he shed I receive him as my own personal Savior.

Father, by Thy grace work in the hearts of any without Christ, and for those of us, Lord, who claim that we know our Lord Jesus Christ deliver us from the shallow facade of the artificial, the pretense the hypocrisy that was not only the sin of ancient Israel, the Northern Kingdom but is the sin of so many of us, of me, of others in our day. May Thy grace and mercy go with us. May the Lord Jesus be honored in our lives.

For Christ’s sake. Amen.