



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Amos 6:1-14

“The Fearful Solemnity of Spiritual Error”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are turning to Amos chapter 6 and reading verses 1 through 14 for our Scripture reading, Amos chapter 6, verse 1 through verse 14. And remember next week we're asking you if you've read the Book of Amos. And I know I can tell by the looks on your face you've been putting it off and you're going to be disappointed when Sunday night as you're getting ready to go to bed you remember I should have read Amos this week. And usually when that happens sleep wins out over duty. So in this case sleep over privilege. So I hope you will be reading the Book of Amos and just to make you feel real bad I want you to know I've already reading myself because I was thinking about this announcement that I would make so I had to read a little bit ahead of time so I could tell you I started too. Make you feel bad. Embarrass you.

So anyway next week I hope you will have read Amos at least once. And for those of you who almost finished Amos. A couple came to me this past week and said, “You said how many finished Amos and just a few were able to raise their hand.” Someone came to me and said, “You should have asked how many of you almost finished because we could have raised our hands. We almost finished.” Well, almost doesn't really go in reading the Book of Amos. So, unfortunately, for those of you who almost, you have to remember close but no cigar or is that the right cliché to use?

[Laughter] At any rate, please read Amos. I know you’ll get a blessing from reading it and you’ll thank me ultimately but particularly Amos for the privilege of reading this marvelous little prophecy.

Our Scripture reading is Amos 6:1-14.

“Woe to those who are at ease in Zion and to those who feel secure in the mountain of Samaria, the distinguished men of the foremost of nations, to whom the house of Israel comes.”

By the way, you’ll notice that this is one of the rare places in Amos where the prophet turns to the Southern Kingdom as well as the Northern Kingdom for he was the prophet to the Northern Kingdom but the opening line, “Woe to those who are at ease in Zion,” is a reference to the Southern Kingdom as well.

“Go over to Calneh and look, and go from there to Hamath the great, then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are they better than these kingdoms, or is their territory greater than yours?”

Now, that was a piece of propaganda because these little places were little places actually not very significant. One of them was called Hamath the great, but it wasn’t really the great. It’s almost as if we would say, “Waxahachie the great” and Waxahachie wouldn’t really qualify as being a great city. So this is the propaganda of the citizens of the Northern Kingdom who were pushing the Northern Kingdom, and they are saying, “Look we have it a lot better than other people, don’t we?”

“Do you put off the day of calamity, and would you bring near the seat of violence? Those who recline on beds of ivory and sprawl on their couches, and eat lambs

from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall, who improvise to the sound of the harp, and like David have composed songs for themselves, who drink wine from sacrificial bowls while they anoint them selves with the fines oils, yet they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph.” Joseph again is one of Amos’s terms for the Northern Kingdom. “Therefore, they will now go into exile at the head of the exiles, and the sprawler’s banqueting will pass away. The Lord God has sworn by Himself, the Lord God of hosts has declared, ‘I loathe the arrogance of Jacob, and I detest his citadels; therefore, I will deliver up the city and all it contains.’ And it will be, if ten men are left in one house, they will die. Then one’s uncle, or his undertaker.”

That literally is something like one who burns him because the Hebrew word *saraph* is a word that means to burn. And so this shows the desperate condition of things there because among the Jews the burning of bodies was an abomination but because of the plague that has come it’s necessary to do that. That’s the reference of undertaker.

“Will lift him up to carry out his bones from the house, and he will say to the one who is in the innermost part of the house, ‘Is anyone else with you?’”

Evidently, there is a sound made by one person in the house as these two have come to this plague infested home and someone calls out, “Is anyone else there with you,” when they hear the noise of this one person. And they receive the answer, “No one.” Then he will answer, “Keep quiet for the name of the Lord is not to be mentioned. For behold, the Lord is going to command that the great house be smashed to pieces and the small house to fragments.” So both rich and poor shall be subject to the catastrophe that he will announce in just a moment.

“Do horses run on rocks or cliffs? Well, that’s absurd. “Or does one plow the sea with oxen?” Incidentally, you’ll notice that I have taken a different pointing of the

Hebrew text. Does one plow the sea with oxen? Well, that too is an absurdity. “Yet you have turned justice into poison.” That’s a moral absurdity. “And the fruit of righteousness into wormwood (or bitterness) you who rejoice in Lodebar.” That was a military victory. “And say, ‘Have we not by our own strength taken Karnaim for ourselves?’” Another military victory. “For behold, I am going to raise up a nation against you, O house of Israel,’ declares the Lord God of hosts, ‘And they will afflict you from the entrance of Hamath To the brook of the Arabah.” So from north to south the land shall be afflicted as Amos announces the judgment that is going to come to the Northern Kingdom which, of course, came to pass in seven twenty-two B.C.

May the Lord bless this reading of his word and let’s bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father when we think of the prophecies that the prophets have uttered and when we look upon them from the standpoint of our day, it’s a solemn thing for us to see how the word of God has been fulfilled and how the individuals who had the privileges of hearing those spiritual men did not respond and, thus, experienced the prophesied judgment to their eternal harm. Lord, may we listen to the word of God and may we be properly warned and may we be submissive to the truth of God about which we read.

We thank Thee and praise Thee for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who has come according to the prophecies of the word of God and the mercy and grace that are manifested in him have come to be the experience of countless numbers of the saints down through the centuries. And we thank Thee for the privilege of proclaiming the grace of God today and for the fruits of that preaching but we pray Lord that there may be more who flee to the Lord Jesus Christ can earn delivered from the judgment that is sure to come. Announced by the word of God b the prophets and the apostles and sure to take place upon this earth.

We give Thee thanks Lord for the Church of Jesus Christ all of it, all of those faithful individuals who in their many places over the face of this globe have yielded allegiance to the Son of God and who read the Scriptures as the word of God and who seek by Thy grace to live in accordance with him. We fail so often, Lord, deliver us from our sins, our rebellion, our weakness and enable us in the day in which we live to serve Thee in a way that will glorify Thy name.

We pray for the whole church. We pray for this particular church for its leadership, for its members, and, particularly, for those who are suffering for various reasons and have requested our prayers. We pray for them. We pray for those in the hospital. We thank Thee for good news with regard for some this week. And we pray that Thou will give healing in accordance with thy perfect will, and we pray for our elders and for our deacons. Bless them and bless their ministry to us. We pray also especially for the radio ministry and other forms of outreach.

May, Lord, Thy hand be upon it for spiritual good. We thank Thee for this time of the year and we pray that we may take opportunities that are afforded us to give testimony to him whose birth we celebrate at this time of our year. Now, we thank Thee for the privilege of singing together, of listening to the word together, and may, Lord, Thy blessing be upon us in this hour.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

[Message] Our subject for today as we continue our exposition of the prophecy of Amos is “The Fearful Solemnity of Spiritual Error.” One of the major problems in studying the books of the prophets is the difficulty often of seeing the wood or the forest for the trees. And that’s true. The prophets are filled with remarkable sayings that stand out and the tendency in our reading is often to lay stress on individual verses or even some sections that are remarkable expressions of spiritual truth. And the result is that we often fail to see the overall plan of the books that we call the prophecies.

It’s very unlikely that a man of the skills of an Amos, for example, should write a book and not have some plan. And so it would be natural for us to assume that they would have a plan and to look for one, and that’s the way in which we should read these prophecies until they prove to us that there is no plan by careful study of them. In Amos’s case it’s quite plain that he does have a plan and to the point that we are now we could set it forth this way. That in chapter 1, verse 1 through chapter 3 in verse 8, the lion and, of course, that’s Amos’s figure for the Lord God the lion roars against the nations in prophecy of coming judgment. That nations round about the Northern Kingdom and then the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom as well are objects of Amos’s prophecy. And then in chapter 3 in verse 9 through the end of the 6th chapter the die is cast and judgment must come because of social, personal, and religious conditions that have arisen in the land from its unbelief. True repentance and its fruits are missing. And Amos says, “Sincerity and ceremony are not enough.”

I think of the apostle’s statement in Romans chapter 10 in verse 1 and verse 2 where speaking about Israel he says, “Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.” They were sincere and they had the religious ceremonies but that’s not enough. Sincerity is not enough and religious ceremonies are not enough. The theme of the 6th chapter is probably retribution. There is an exact reward for one’s deeds, and naturally that’s one of the great truths of the Old Testament. So naturally we tend to think about passages in the Law of Moses that express this. And I’m going to read a couple of the passages because they’re very striking I think and they’re passages I think we need to keep in mind because they are revelatory of the nature of God. In Exodus chapter 21 in verse 23 and verse 24, Moses writes.

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“But if there is any further injury, then you shall appoint as a penalty life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.”

I think he’s pretty well made his point, but he does it again in Leviticus chapter 24 in verse 19 and verse 20 he writes.

“The one who takes the life of an animal shall make it good, life for life. And if a man injures his neighbor, just as he has done, so it shall be done to him: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; just as he has injured a man, so it shall be inflicted on him.”

And that’s not simply an Old Testament doctrine in the New Testament the Lord Jesus in Matthew chapter 5 in verse 38 says this.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.’”

Now, our Lord was just going beyond the statements of the Old Testament not doing away with them at all as we know. So complacent security based upon proud assumptions of belonging to the first of the nations ends in Amos chapter 6 with the arrival on the scene of a nation that is more superior than the nation in the Northern Kingdom; the voice of propaganda which says, “Look around, look at Hamath, look at Gath of the philistines, look at Calny, aren’t we better than they, gives way to the facts of the situation and propaganda in that day will not help the Northern Kingdom.

So we’ve already looked at Amos chapter 6. It’s a striking chapter and even for the choices to the saints of God it speaks to us of some important spiritual principles. The first seven verses are a kind of description of the affluent society that characterized the Northern Kingdom. And remember Israel’s relatively dominant position under Jeroboam the second. Jeroboam the second was a successful king. The nation was unthreatened at the time. Assyria lay off in the distance, but so far away that they weren’t paying attention to the nation that would be the nation that would supplant them and rule that territory. But what was happening within the Northern Kingdom was something far different than that that appeared outwardly. The rich were getting richer, and the poor were getting poorer. Oppression, iniquity, bitterness, the poison of injustice had infected the society and, consequently, the seeds of ultimate judgment were already showing to the spirit-enlightened prophets of the Old Testament. You read Micah and Hosea and Isaiah and Amos who prophesied in the same century in the same principles are principles that pertained as they saw it in those kingdoms both in the Northern Kingdom and in the Southern Kingdom as well. The great society which they thought was great was built upon the misery of the poor and the injustice that was committed with reference to them.

Now, of course, I don’t have to say to you, we’ve been saying this all along that the trends that were existent in the Northern Kingdom that are the trends of our society today. We need, however, to keep one thing clear in our minds. Israel was a theocratic kingdom and, therefore, the civil laws were religious laws. They were under the law, so that the politics was biblical politics so to speak, the civil life was biblical life, and the personal life was biblical life, the religious life was biblical life. In our society things are different, but the God of the Old Testament is the same God and those principles that move him are principles that still move him, must move him because he’s the immutable triune God. And, therefore, we can expect that individuals and also societies and nations that do not live according to the principles of the triune God, the things that reflect his

being and his attributes they will suffer. Kingdoms suffer, kingdoms rise and fall and when they depart from biblical principles they fall. The same thing is true with individuals. Individuals even non-Christians, we know those great saying of the word of God we can find them illustrated in non-believers life, be sure your sins will find you out. That’s illustrated in believers and unbeliever’s lives. So the principles that Amos is talking about are principles that pertain to all of us in the United States of America and the Western world in fact over the face of this globe.

Now, we look at our society in the United States, and there is good reason for thinking that the rich are getting richer and many of the poor are getting poorer. And many of the injustices of our society are in injustices that many of us could do something to alleviate. And the question is, are we living up to the principles that ought to move us as the children of God?

Let’s listen to what Amos has to say. He says, “Woe to those who are at ease in Zion And to those who feel secure in the mountain of Samaria.” He doesn’t hesitate to include the Southern Kingdom. Ordinarily he doesn’t but here he includes the Southern Kingdom as well. And optimism in the light of the future was incredible folly as far as Amos was concern. “Woe to those who are at ease in Zion,” and thinking that everything is going wonderfully. And for those who are on the mountain of Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, with its impressive situation and who looked out from their impressive situation and thought about how they were the darlings of God in heaven. They are failing to recognize the facts of the situation and are exhibiting what Amos would have called, no doubt, incredible folly.

They feel secure in their impregnable mountain and it wouldn’t be but less than forty years approximately before the Assyrians would come and they would discover that their mountain was not impregnable. He says, “The distinguished men of the foremost of the nations,” he’s talking about the leaders in the Northern Kingdom. Those distinguished men to which people come or to whom people come for advice and counsel and for legal

decisions. “The distinguished men of the foremost of the nations to whom the house of Israel come.” All the people came to the top men of the top nation for legal advice. That’s all set out in the Old Testament and how it should be done. Exodus 18 is one of the passages one might refer to. But you could hear them in the Northern Kingdom. “We have the Abrahamic promises. We are the covenant people. Look over there at Calny, look over there at Hamath the great, and look over at Gath at the Philistines. We are certainly greater kingdoms than they. Who would want to live over there in Gath of the philistines and suffer the indignities and the other things that go to do have to do with a nation that cannot compare with ours.” Like we say who would want to live in Moscow or who would want to go to and we can name the places over the face of this globe that we think are benighted capitals or benighted cities that don’t have the advantages that we do.

But, unfortunately, the nation was not living up to its place before the Lord God. So the piece of propaganda that he recites and there isn’t another way that one might take verse 2, but I think this is the most likely way to take it. This 2nd verse is best understood then as a quotation that Amos puts in the mouths of the leaders the voice of propaganda. It’s from the government’s publicity handouts. Choose comparisons that whatever you like but we are enjoying the blessed of God. It was kind of unmitigated bragging. Very much as Americans do when they talk about belief in manifest destiny. They had no patience I’m sure with Amos. They regarded him as a country Cassandra who was always going around with pessimistic kinds of statements. I don’t know. We don’t have any Gallup poll but I’m sure that if they had had a Gallup poll in the Northern Kingdom for the most unpopular character in the Northern Kingdom it might well have been Amos if it had not been one of the other prophets it would have been Amos.

Now, notice how he describes their life in verse 4 through verse 6. “Those who recline on beds of ivory and sprawl on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall,” here’s the self-indulgent opulence of the men of Israel

expensive furniture, indolence, succulent food. Incidentally, it was not very common for meat to be eaten at all but they not only eat meat, they eat the lambs. Now, that would have been very much of an offense to a godly shepherd to eat the lambs and then the calves. So he had the best of lamb, and they had the best of veal. They were really enjoying life in the Northern Kingdom. It was, well I started to say U.S. grade, it was Northern Kingdom grade. It was kingdom of Joseph grade triple A kind of meat.

They had their private orchestras or else their little gatherings where they got together and talked about art and music. And they said there’s nothing wrong with music is there? And so they spent their time plucking away at their harps and trying to compose something that might compare with David’s psalms. So they improvised to the sound of the harp and like David composed for themselves. And while they were doing that, of course, they were imbibing the nicest and choicest liquids no cablis, no beaujoulais, no common wines like that, the most expensive wines that they could possibly put in their mouths. They drank wine and, furthermore, they drank wine not from little wine glasses like individuals over here do. They drank the wine from sacrificial bowls. That is the things that religious associations in which sprinkling took place according to the ceremonies that had been set up by the Lord God for Moses. And so from sacrificial bowls, they were drinking the finest of wine.

And not only that, not only did they have all of these lovely things, they had the finest of cosmetics -- no Brut for the men or Shalimar or Joy fragrance for the women. This morning Martha put on her perfume. It was Joy. I didn’t say anything in the first service because she was here, but I’ll say it now. [Laughter] I told her, however, I was going to say it, so she’ll hear about it. But at any rate, it was no Brut or Shalimar or Joy for the women. They had the finest of cosmetics. Look he says, “They anointed themselves with the finest of oils.” They really were living the life in the Northern Kingdom, the well-adjusted member of the elite core of the Northern Kingdom.

But listen God was nauseated with the noise of the amusement as with the sound of the worship. Take a look back at chapter 5 in verse 23 where he says, “Take away from Me the noise of your songs.” And as they plucked away on their harps on their other instruments and tried to make up some hymn that might compare with David’s psalm God found it very disagreeable to even listen to them. He said, “I won’t even listen to the sound of your harps.” And further I hate, I reject your festivals. I don’t delight in your solemn assemblies. You bring to me your offerings but I will not even accept them. So God was nauseated then with the noise of the amusement as well as with the sounds that came from their carrying out of the ceremonies as they understood it.

Incidentally, it was not the custom for people to sit previous to this time. Reclining is a further indication of the way in which the society had disintegrated in the Northern Kingdom. We think, of course, by New Testament times when reclining became the customary way of sitting at a table. One reclined at a table and one can see this in the case of the apostles at the last supper. They reclined but that custom actually grew up in the Old Testament time and in the earliest times if you will read passages in earlier parts of the Old Testament you will see that this was a development that came indicative of the sense of affluence that had come to the kingdom.

But the thing that particularly disturbed the Lord is the thing that is stated in the last line of verse 6, “Yet they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph.” Now, remember Joseph is one of Amos’s terms for the Northern Kingdom as I’ve mentioned previously. They have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph. That Hebrew word is the word from which the root of which means to break, so, in a sense, we could translate it they have not grieved over the breakup of Joseph -- the catastrophe, spiritual catastrophe that has been happening in the Northern Kingdom. The Northern Kingdom has been mortally wounded and the Southern Kingdom will soon follow them. And the fact that he uses the term Joseph is, I think, extremely instructive because go back to what the Bible says about Joseph and reflect on it a moment. Remember the history of Joseph and, of course,

one of great events in Joseph’s early life is when he was sold into captivity. And in Genesis chapter 37, we have the description of that in verse 23 through verse 25 of Genesis 37. I’ll read it for you.

“So it came about, when Joseph reached his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the varicolored tunic that was on him; and they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was empty, without any water in it. Then they sat down to eat a meal.”

That’s interesting isn’t it? They took their brother. They wanted to kill him some of them Ruben stood up for him. So they didn’t kill him. They threw him into the pit and they sat down to eat a meal.

Now when you turn over to chapter 42 in verse 21 you read something else. That is not given in chapter 37. This is later on when the brethren are beginning to realize their guilt. And so they said one to another, this is Genesis 42:21.

“Truly we are guilty concerning our brother, because we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen; therefore this distress has come upon us.”

And so Joseph, the picture that we get here is Joseph in the pit wailing out his heart and asking them to deliver him from the pit for as far as he was concerned it meant his death and all of the time what are the brethren doing? They are sitting over eating a meal. And Amos, the wise prophet the student of the word of God, as God the Holy Spirit guides him selects this particular term for the Northern Kingdom at this point because that’s precisely what’s happening in the sense of the spiritual application. What’s the nation doing? Well, they’re sitting around their tables reclining on beds of ivory

sprawling on their couches eating the finest food decked out in the finest of attire drinking wine from sacrificial bowls playing with their little musical instruments and in the meantime Joseph is in the pit and is destined to die, and they are not wailing at all over the things that have happened to Joseph the Northern Kingdom. So the picture of the brethren is the picture of the nation at this time except this time the whole of the Northern Kingdom is like the brothers, and Joseph is in the pit, the nation is in the pit and no one is doing anything about it. Later on they confess their guilt but it’s too late.

So you can see why Amos’s prophecy is found in the word of God. He’s a man who studies the word of God and through the Holy Spirit shrewdly uses Scripture in order to make his points. And they would have understood it. We are so unacquainted with the word of God, we miss so many of the things that are found in it. Therefore, one of the commentators has said, “Whenever Amos uses the term “therefore” we learn to tremble because something bad is usually coming and something bad is coming here. And not only that which is bad come but listen to what he says, “Therefore, they will now go into exile at the head of the exiles.” Now, these are the individuals who are called the distinguished men among the foremost in the nations. We are at the top of the list of the nations and Amos says, “Yes, when the judgment comes you’re going to be the top. You’re going to be at the head of the line of exiles that will go over into Assyria.” So those who are the first, in this case, they’re not going to be last. They’re going to be first but the first is last in this case. So the first will be first but first at the head of the exiles. Amazing these things and their lessons are lessons that are directed precisely to us today.

Now, in verse 8 through verse 11, we read of the abasing of the crowd. “The Lord God has sworn by Himself, the Lord God of hosts has declared, ‘I loathe the arrogance of Jacob, I detest his citadels; therefore I will deliver up the city and all it contains. And it will be, if ten men are left in one house, they will die.’” And then this reference in verse 10 so striking the picture that he pictures is of a plague that has come. Some kind of infectious disease that is taking everything and everybody is dying from it. And they go

to one house where ten people live and because of the plague and the stench of it it’s necessary to burn the bodies contrary to that which was desirable and practiced among the Israelites generally. But as two men go into the house, an uncle and the one who is to carry out the burning of the bodies, one person is left. And they hear a noise of that one person and one of the men calls and says, “Is there anyone else in the house with you and the word comes, ‘Not one.’” Only one survivor and his voice is weak because he’s going to die too. And then one of them says to the other, “Keep quiet. The name of the Lord is not to be mentioned.”

In other words, don’t say anything like leap in a word of prayer. Don’t let us hear the name Yahweh because after all they had imbibed the philosophy of the heathen by now, and the philosophy of the heathen was is if you name one of the gods then that god will pay attention to you and take account of you. Leave him alone. Don’t have anything to do with him. So don’t mention the name Yahweh. You could see they’re fearful. They’re in the midst of the calamity now, and they’re beginning to see that maybe these prophets were right. It was Yahweh after all that is responsible for the destruction and catastrophe that has come to them so don’t mention the name Yahweh. It’s almost like today. Don’t mention the name God, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ in business, in our schools, even in our meetings in which we gather together for counsel and wisdom. God ruled out of our society and here don’t mention the name of the Lord, he’s not to be mentioned. Don’t do anything that might cause him to turn to us. There are so blind they don’t realize hat’s happening is that Yahweh has already spoken, and they are the objects of his catastrophic judgment and retribution.

And, finally, in verse 12 through verse 14 the absurdity of the retribution is set out. “Do horses run on rocks? Or does one plow the sea with oxen? Well of course not, “But yet you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood.” You can see how Amos’s is famous texts about justice rolling down like the waters and righteousness as an eternal stream is one of the burdens on the prophet’s mind. “You

who rejoice in the military victory at Lodebar, and you who say, "Have we not by our own strength taken Karnaim" and general so and so was our general at that time. "Look" Amos says, "I'm going to raise up a nation against you house of Israel and they will afflict you from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of the Arabah. We'll see who is the great military leader at that time." They are boasting. They're boasting is opposed by the plan of God, a boast of power and war are contrary to the old theology of the holy war. The punishment corresponds to the sin, and the nation is carried off into captivity.

I'd like to close with a few moments and point out several principles that it seems to me that are set forth here. And first of all, I think this is something that pertains to churches like Believers Chapel or other churches where the word of God is preached or where those who unfold the word of God try to proclaim the word of God. And very often in churches like this and in societies like this it's not long before people go around who in the congregation they say we're not like the other churches we have the word of God. We're not like this and that church. They're talking about ethics all the time but we have the word of God. We hear the word of God. We even hear the word of God consecutively on Sunday morning chapter after chapter book after book. We are among the foremost of the churches to use Amos's expression.

Well, there is a lesson here for churches like Believers Chapel and other churches where the word of God is ostensibly honored. And one of the lessons is never be content with the status quo. For example, if someone should say "How are things at Believer's Chapel?" And we say, "Well they're about the same." Well, you can be sure they are not the same. We are always either advancing or we're not advancing. We're either advancing in the knowledge of the Lord God or we're not advancing. We are departing from the knowledge the Lord God that we may have. The seeds of disaster are always present in every body of believing saints. And the seeds of disaster are always present in every individual who names the Lord Jesus as his own personal savior. We individually are either advancing or we're declining. And Amos's word to us is, "Seek the Lord. Seek

Me that you may truly live.” And that’s my word to you too, I just pass it on from Amos. “Seek the Lord that you may truly live.” If you don’t seek him you will go the other direction. You’ll decline. That was the tragedy of the Northern Kingdom. They didn’t seek the Lord. Amidst all of the things that the Lord God had done for them they turned from him.

Secondly, the welfare of the fellowships takes precedence over individual pampering. In the Northern Kingdom there were the affluent, the rich, the wealthy who lived up to the latest of their affluent style. All of those things that Amos talks about in verse 4 through verse 6, no need to repeat them but instead of thinking about the body, instead of thinking about the group, instead of thinking about the kingdom in that instance they thought of themselves. And others within the kingdom who were of them, recipients of the promises of God, they didn’t care for them. They even oppressed them. Instead of justice, injustice, instead of the fruit of righteousness, bitterness. No wonder God was nauseated with the claims that they were making. They couldn’t even live as covenant people among their own people much less in the world of that day. There is a lesson for us in this too because in all societies that tendency develops, the tendency of the elite and the rejected. We need to pay attention to that.

There is a third thing, I think, that’s of great significance here, and it’s simply this moral considerations, moral and spiritual considerations, take preeminence over everything else. No strength can possibly save us individually or as a church or as a nation for that matter that is not grounded in the moral and spiritual principles of the divine revelation. If there is anything that history proves to be true it is that.

Now, I want you to understand that when Amos talks about the rich, he’s not objecting to them because they are rich. He’s not even objecting to them because they are capitalists. He’s objecting to the rich because they are godless. That’s what he’s objecting too. They are godless rich.

Now, when we think about the history of the western world and we go back to the French revolution in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and then we see how the principles of the French revolution have worked themselves out in our western society. One can trace the rebellion against the word of God that took place in French society straight to Moscow straight to Berlin and one can see the seeds of it in the United States of America in this present day. We are living in a godless society. We are living in a society that is doing everything it can often unwittingly to prevent the word of God as taught in Holy Scripture as seen in Holy Scripture and taught by men of God to permeate our society and have an influence in it. What we need are a lot of Amos’s in our society. We surely do. And we have reached the scene or the situation in which words from Dostoyevsky have significant meaning. He said, “If God exists everything is possible. If there is no God everything is permitted.” And we are living in such a godless society today that everything is permitted, unfortunately.

That’s the society of which we are a part and many of us who are Christians are not saying anything about it even in our private lives. It’s a striking thing. I’m going to use one illustration. I hope you don’t misunderstand the illustration I’m going to use. It’s about AIDS. Our society has taken a very strange view with regard to AIDS. We are told that AIDS is a dangerous disease but all we need is education. And if we have education, then we’ll survive. Now, we tend to think as evangelical Christians that AIDS direct product of abandonment of the word of God. And we tend to think that since AIDS is associated with homosexuality that that’s just simply confirmation of what Scriptures says about homosexuality. The Scriptures say it’s an abomination to the Lord God.

And believing students of the word of God cannot take any other view of that generally speaking. There’ve been lots of rationalizations to seek to avoid this but they cannot stand up to the exegesis of the word of God. But a striking fact has appeared just in relatively recent times. The head of the World Health Organization has said this, “We stand nakedly in front of a very serious pandemic as mortal as any pandemic there ever

have been. I don’t know of any greater killer than AIDS. Not to speak of its psychological, social and economic maiming.” We need to be warned about things like AIDS. But look, now we have discovered AIDS among heterosexuals. Swedish doctors have discovered a third AIDS virus carried by West Africans who usually get the disease through heterosexual conduct. So the new strain may elude tests designed to detect the original AIDS in blood supplies. The progressive voices twenty to twenty-five years ago hailed the sexual revolution that had come to the United States of America. Read the media. They are the propagators of a lot of evil. Look at *Time Magazine*. Look at the front page of *Time*. The sexual revolution when one finishes the article one begins to think it’s not so bad after all. Do you know why? Because the inhibition of the Puritans and the Calvinists and especially the Victorians we’re getting rid of them.

Now, we are truly getting educated. The only problem is that they’re abandoning the true education that comes from the Lord God in the divine revelation. If we don’t have divine revelation anything goes. That’s true. So now what do we have? We have our society permeated by deadly disease, deadly disease. And what are they saying. What are these people who brought the sexual revolution telling us? You know what they’re saying? They are saying that AIDS is really unrelated to any major shift in moral culture. In other words, the hypocrites of the Calvinists and the hypocrites of the Puritans and the hypocrites of the Victorians as they have taught us are now the hypocrites of the sexual revolution. And our society, now so infected by that evil is in mortal danger, physically.

When God speaks in his word his word comes to pass. We can be sure of that. So I say and it’s obvious it was true in Israel. They weren’t helped by their military strength. They weren’t helped by all of the kind of things that they thought made their society strong: economics, social life, military defense. God is stronger than all of that. It’s like paper to him and the Assyrians came and executed the divine judgment. Moral considerations, spiritual considerations are the things concerning which we should be

interested. And these are the things that should dominate our lives. If they don’t, we’re heading for the same kind of thing that happened in France, in Soviet Russia, in all of those many nations that have fallen under the call of that wicked empire and the things that happened in Nazi Germany and in any other kingdom for that matter that departs from the principles of the word of God.

And one final thing, sincerity and ceremony are not enough. Truth is necessary. The judgment of 722 B.C. did come and I can imagine a panel discussion some time later the Assyrians didn’t allow panel discussions afterwards but you can imagine a panel discussion and discussing why it happened. And I can imagine one Hebrew saying, “Well as I look at it our leaders were at fault. They told us everything was all right but it wasn’t all right. They didn’t tell us about the Assyrians. They didn’t look far enough.” Well, I can imagine people would say yes they were at fault. They did not exercise foresight. And then someone else speaks up and says well to my mind it was simply the Assyrians. Their army was stronger than ours. They’re wicked men.

And, consequently, having no principles whatsoever like we have having no principles whatsoever they defeated us. That’s all there is to it. And I can see there is a fellow over there who has leanings toward Calvinism long before this time. And so I won’t call him a Calvinist. That would be a bit anachronistic except that those principles go all the way back to the beginning of the Bible. And he said, “Well to my mind God caused it. God brought it to pass. As I see it, God’s responsible for that evil and as a matter of fact, he can point to Scripture. ‘If a calamity occurs in his city, has not the Lord done it?’ The prophets said that in more than one place. So God did it.”

Well actually of course all of those are right. God did it in retribution. The leaders were responsible their spiritual wickedness. The Assyrians were responsible. They were the tools of a God that they did not know. Then I can imagine another fellow saying, “I agree with everything that is said so far.” Good ole Mr. Wimp he agrees with everybody but he’s got some truth to add it. He said I believe it was our pride. It was

our arrogance. It was the fact that we didn’t seek after the Lord God. That’s why and he’s right. All are right. It’s true, God does it. It’s true the leaders are responsible. It’s true the Assyrians are responsible, and it’s also true that they were responsible. We talk about the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man, those are great truths and they are the truths that apply in this instance. It was the Assyrians. It was the leaders. It was God and it was their pride.

May the Lord God deliver us. May the Lord God help us to look at things in the light of the word of God and respond thereby and may God give us the courage in our day nineteen eighty-six and eighty-seven to stand for these great principles and preach them as the word of God.

If you’re here today and you’ve never believed in Christ, we invite you to come to him who died on Calvary’s cross that sinners might be saved and you have a wonderful invitation that comes from his ambassadors to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Come to him. Believe in him. Trust in him. And let him be your life and satisfaction from now on and spend your life seeking to know him that you may truly live. Come to Christ. Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for this marvelous prophecy of the word of God and for the latent principles of it that are so fundamental for our life in nineteen eighty-six and eighty-seven. Deliver us O God from the blindness of trusting in the arm of the flesh rather than in our great God in heaven. We praise thy name. We worship Thee. We adore Thee. Oh God save our country, the church. Deliver us from the forces of evil. May we have the experience of a time of spiritual revival that Christ may be honored and glorified. And for those, Lord, who may be here who do not know the Lord by thy grace bring conviction and conversion.

For the glory of Jesus’ name, in whose name we pray. Amen.