

**Amos**  
**“The Transgression of Israel”**  
**Amos 2:6-16**

Well, it has been my goal in this series to not only walk through the Book of Amos, to try to give you tools as we go for the reading and the understanding of the prophets themselves. And so as we go along the way, I'll just make some observations that I hope will start to build a tool belt for you, or a toolbox that you can use to apply, into the reading of the prophets. One thing I know from teaching the prophets in seminary, and Bob McGregor actually was in that class the last time I taught it, and one of the things that that I know from it is that when you start getting into the prophets, they seem very strange at first. It doesn't read like, you know, the Pentateuch. It doesn't read like the Psalms. It doesn't read like Paul. And yet once you start to get used to the way that they talk and the things that they say, you'll start to find that they're very often saying the same thing. As a matter of fact, if you understand what the prophets are trying to do, the real question doesn't become, you know what? What is their agenda. But rather, how do they relate to where they are in relations to the exile and the restoration? Are they before it or are they in it? Are they after it? And then at the end of the day, why are they use this word and not that word as we'll see you name it, why say Amorites and not say Canaanites or Philistines, which is what we find throughout the rest of the histories.

So you can ask yourself those questions. But generally speaking, they're all saying the same thing. As I said in the first session that we had the first sermon on this book, they are as though standing in front of a bridge on a foggy, dark night when the water is washed the bridge out and there's no warning, and cars are zooming right at it, and they're jumping up and down in the middle of the road, and they're trying to get your attention. You must always read the prophets as doing that, because their goal is whether they like it or not, and sometimes they don't. Right? In the case of Jonah, maybe even Amos, whether they like it or not, the reason why they are there is to save lives. It's to draw people back to the Lord.

So as we now delve into this last of the oracles against the nations and Amos's opening section, the opening act of his letter, he's been going through oracles against nations that are outside of the land. He's been warning them because of their injustice, both to people in general. But especially to the people of God, of the judgment that is coming. Then it's quite possible. By the way, in this opening section, the sermon of Amos, the prophecies that he's giving are meant to be accompanied by the earthquake that he's anticipating. David, you notice that, by the way it says his earth, his sermons, which came several years before the earthquake. This is an earthquake everyone knew about at the time. And then notice how he opens. He says the pastors are mourning, right? The hilltops of Carmel are grieving. Why is that? What is that? It is

because there's an earthquake happening, and that this earthquake is kind of a sign that is attending to the prophecy of the Lord, bringing judgment. As a matter of fact, Amos is saying, is it that the earthquake is in some way the lion roaring from Judah? The earthquake goes out around the region. Everyone would have felt it. That's the lion roaring out of Judah. And so he's warned the individual nations. He's culminated with Judah saying, look, even Judah is going to be under the judgment of the lion, the one who roars. And you can imagine the Israelites saying, yes, all right, our biggest enemies, right. Those guys down there who think they are so self righteous because they have the temple in Jerusalem. And then notice, as we read tonight, he saves his last statement of judgment, his last condemnation for Israel itself. What's important here? Notice that this follows the same format as the other nations. Israel is no different. She has become like the other nations. She is being judged for three transgressions no four transgressions. So, let's read Amos chapter two, verse six through 16...

## **Judgment on Israel**

**<sup>6</sup> Thus says the LORD:**

***“For three transgressions of Israel,  
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,  
because they sell the righteous for silver,  
and the needy for a pair of sandals—  
<sup>7</sup> those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth  
and turn aside the way of the afflicted;  
a man and his father go in to the same girl,  
so that my holy name is profaned;  
<sup>8</sup> they lay themselves down beside every altar  
on garments taken in pledge,  
and in the house of their God they drink  
the wine of those who have been fined.  
<sup>9</sup> “Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them,  
whose height was like the height of the cedars  
and who was as strong as the oaks;  
I destroyed his fruit above  
and his roots beneath.  
<sup>10</sup> Also it was I who brought you up out of the land of Egypt  
and led you forty years in the wilderness,  
to possess the land of the Amorite.  
<sup>11</sup> And I raised up some of your sons for prophets,  
and some of your young men for Nazirites.  
Is it not indeed so, O people of Israel?”  
declares the LORD.***

***12 "But you made the Nazirites drink wine,  
and commanded the prophets,  
saying, 'You shall not prophesy.'  
13 "Behold, I will press you down in your place,  
as a cart full of sheaves presses down.  
14 Flight shall perish from the swift,  
and the strong shall not retain his strength,  
nor shall the mighty save his life;  
15 he who handles the bow shall not stand,  
and he who is swift of foot shall not save himself,  
nor shall he who rides the horse save his life;  
16 and he who is stout of heart among the mighty  
shall flee away naked in that day,"  
declares the LORD.***

Now it's important, as we delve into this text, to recognize that Amos is kind of doing a thing with these oracles against the nations. I don't want to move past the method. And it's important for us to recognize the method of the prophets. They are aware of their being a kind of genre. They're aware of their being ways of saying things. And sometimes they will play with those ways of saying things in order to make a point that you might not have expected.

So every Israelite would have been used to prophets having oracles against the nations. Right? We have you know, Isaiah has his from chapter 13 to 23. In his book Ezekiel, in the very middle of his book, chapter 25 to 32, Jeremiah puts them at the end of his book. Everyone has oracles against the nations, and it's always there to remind the people that God's justice is not just bound to Israel, and Israel can be comforted knowing that even their enemies, not just them, but their enemies too, will be judged. It's a remembrance, as we talked about last week, that the Lord's justice will extend over the face of the earth, that he will settle things to write. And so notice how Amos, knowing that, uses the oracles against the nations to sort of come at the northern Kingdom in a way that they're not expecting. Remember we said it's like the prophet coming to David and telling him a story about a Ulam so that they're not quite he's not quite ready and he's not doesn't have his defenses up. And let's see how Amos is doing the same thing. He's getting them. He's drawing them in. And then doing a kind of ironic. It almost feels like a postmodern thing. He's playing with the genre. He flips it at the very end. He says, what about you? As if he's saying to them, you are the man, right? As the prophet says to David.

Now this prophecy, this oracle begins quite terribly. It begins with an opening catalog of the offenses that Israel has committed. Notice that these offenses, as they're laid out in general, sort of span the whole range of offenses that we find in the Old Testament -- starts with injustices. And there's three different kinds of injustices that are laid out here. And we'll talk

about this three different kinds in a second. Then it moves on to sexual sin and then finally onto false or synchronistic improper worship.

It's interesting throughout the prophets, there's a there's an easy sliding scale between injustice, sexual sin and pagan worship. They do not separate these things out as kind of different kinds of realms of behavior or something like that. If you worship a pagan god, you will start doing injustice and you will fall into sexual sin before you know it. If you fall into sexual sin, you will start worshiping pagan gods before you know it. If you are an oppressor, if you are unjust, you will fall into sexual sin. You will end up corrupting your own worship. These things all are a piece with the general problem, the malaise of apostasy and unbelief in Israel.

So notice he starts with injustice and he gives us three different kinds of injustice. He gives us injustice in exploitation. He gives us injustice in disregard, and he gives us injustices that come out of an avoidance.

Okay, look at the first one, exploitation, he says, because they sell the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals. See what he's saying here? Is that Israel, or at least the leadership in Israel, has become known, like those nations that he just critiqued for selling people out, whether that's in slavery or in unjust working situations that are that are precluded in Deuteronomy, precluded in the Pentateuch. They are using the poor in order to get rich themselves. Not just that. Notice what he says. They're not just doing it for silver and gold. They're doing it for sandals. They're doing it casually for little gain. They're selling out the poor. So that's the kind of exploitation.

But then notice he goes on, he doesn't just stay there. He goes on and talks about another kind of injustice. It's the injustice of disregarding those who are around them. Good. He says, those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth, those who trample the heads of the poor into the dust of the earth. Now this is one of disregard. They just whatever they're trying to get done, they just blow right past the poor, right past those who have no control, no, no protection of themselves, no one to vouch for them and to be their champion. They blow right past them. They just crush them under their feet as they're going over after the goals that they desire in life. So it's exploitation, it's disregard and it's avoidance.

The last one they turn aside from the way of the afflicted, they turn aside. They're going towards the afflicted. If they see him, they turn aside so they can avoid him. They don't want to deal with that life. They don't want to deal with what's going on in front of them. And yes, you'd be right to recognize, oh, isn't this what Jesus is accusing Israel of in the parable of the Good Samaritan? Right? That they turn aside when they see the afflicted, unlike the Samaritan, who doesn't turn aside but goes straight way through and takes care of the one who is in need.

So where do we see exploitation? Let's just talk about these briefly. Where do we see exploitation in the world around us? It's in any situation where we find those with power, those with wealth, those with authority exploiting those who have no power, who have no wealth, who have no authority for the benefit of those who have power, who have wealth, who have authority.

Yes, this can happen at a large scale. In industries, there's some whole industries that are built off of exploitation. Predatory lending, where you go after the poor and you give them loans that will just destroy them, crush them. That's something the Bible talks about. Don't do that. Don't crush people under debt. The pornography industry, you go to someone who doesn't have money, they don't have affluence. They don't they don't have the strength, the ability to get what they need. All they have is their youth. And you exploit them for their youth so that they can get money so they can survive so they can pay the bills. This is true of so much of the offenses of the sex trade, whether it's sex trafficking or prostitution. It is the exploitation of those who do not have the means to protect themselves.

See, exploitation is all around us. It's in industries, but it's also just in our daily lives. Be careful. Be careful about treating those who work for you, whether they are vendors or employees or people who just work in your house, perhaps treating them unjustly, treating them without dignity. If you find yourself ever saying this well, they're just happy they've got a job right? Be careful as we see it. It wasn't hard for Israel. She had the law. She knew not to do it. And it was easy for the people of God to fall into a spirit of exploitation.

But it's not just exploitation. It's also disregard of those made in the images of God. There are also industries that we have the disregard, the dignity of human life in order to achieve other ends. If you think about some of the great injustices that the church has been vocal about in history, whether it's abortion or now, the new movement that we're seeing across the United States and in the UK as well, where people are passing laws to legalize physician assisted suicide. What is this all about? What is it for? Right. It's pushing past those who have no one to defend themselves so that I can achieve the thing I want, whether that's the freedom I need or financial stability. Or maybe it's just the family members who are saying we don't. We don't want to pay the bills. And you really are you've become kind of a you've become a hindrance to the to the medical system in our country or in our region or to our insurance plans.

A good friend of mine and I wrote an op ed in the Washington Post years ago. He was the head of critical care at Georgetown Hospital, and he was a graduate of our seminary, is a very thoughtful Christian doctor, and he talked about working in critical care, and he said how much he gave thanks at the time for the mandates against physician assisted suicide, because he knew that was a stopper. It meant that you couldn't just come out and say it right. But he feared. And what happened was what he was fearing is that when New York city, the District of Columbia

passed laws that then allowed that to happen. Physician assisted suicide said it's going to be like taking a stopper out of a drain in your bathtub. It's like I fear for those patients who are being pressured to take the option. It's the only thing I've ever written that got me death threats, by the way, that was not expected that people would respond so emotionally to that kind of idea, to that kind of teaching, that this was somehow unjust. You see, we have to be careful because even the people of God, even Christians, can oppose these things because we go, oh, come on, come on. Hey, I mean, they're so young, they don't even have voices. They're still in the womb. Do we really need to worry about what they say, what they think, what they feel, who they are in the image of God. So you have to be careful in the church, just like the northern Kingdom did. Who had the law? They knew better. They had to be careful about disregarding the image of God.

Lastly, avoidance turning a blind eye to the suffering of those around us. It's easy to do when you live in an affluent area, to turn a blind eye to the suffering in your context, even in your church. It's a great place to start. By the way, I think this is for at Briarwood Church. It's a great place to start. If you feel like you're convicted of any of these things, just start being just in your church. If the Church of Jesus Christ did that, the whole world would change. We just started caring for and not avoiding those who are in need by the way Briarwood does a wonderful job at that, but I would encourage you in this even more. Don't turn a blind eye to the suffering, to the mental health issues, to the financial need, to the substance abuse, to the addictions that we see in the community around us.

By the way, there's a subtle form of avoidance. So when you see a problem, that's a complex problem. It's a spiritual problem. It's a relational problem, it's a mental health problem, it's a substance abuse problem. And you throw money at it and then walk away feeling better because, well, I did something ...right. That's a special way that we can avoid actually dealing with the problem.

But notice what Amos says here. He says don't avoid it. Don't turn away. Don't act as if it's not happening. Get involved. So notice he calls out the northern kingdom for injustices. But then look very quickly. We're only at verse 7 B okay, bear with me. Okay? Very quickly he moves out of injustices now to what looks like sexual sin. Now, the explicit thing that he talks about here, and I recognize that your common sense media would probably not approve of us preaching this passage here on Sunday evening. And so I want to preach the whole counsel of God. And yet I also want to do it recognizing that we are families here, and I want to do it in a way that is appropriate. But whatever is going on, whatever he's describing here, we have to say it is not just a problem in the northern kingdom of Israel where Amos is serving. This is something that is zeal points out as being a problem in Ezekiel 22. This is still a problem in Corinth. In first Corinthians five. Whatever is going on here now, I think, I think the text hints at what's going on.

But whatever's going on here, it's not just an ignoring of God's biblical mandates about sexuality and sex being properly operated or properly happening within the bounds of the marriage of one man and one woman. There's more than just that problem going on here. There's something else. According to the law, this is a form of incest for father and a son to share the same partner. It's especially grievous to the Lord. It's not just having sex outside of marriage. It's an especially grievous sin to the Lord.

And yet we have to ask the question, why is this a common thing? Why do we see this here? Why do we see it? Music? Why do we see it in Corinthians? And I think the very next verse gives us a hint at what's going on. Notice what it says after saying that the father and the son are sharing a partner says they lay themselves down beside every altar on garments taken in pledge. So it's not just sexual sin though, it is that it's a grievous sexual sin. And yet what we see again is that that easy slide from injustice to sexual sin. Now into what? Into false worship.

Is it possible that what he's talking about here is something that we see throughout the ancient world, through our archeology and our other readings, and that is the use of temple prostitutes as a way of coming and glorifying your god, whoever that might be. And it may be Baal. Interestingly, they may be worshiping Adonai this way. That's one of the sins that we'll find out of the northern kingdom is that they're worshiping the Lord, but they're doing it in ways that he said not to do it. It's not the object of their worship. It's the manner of their worship. It's a matter of fact, as we see in verse seven, D through eight A, sexual sin that the father and the son seem to be participating in is tied somehow to the altar. And that's why it is profane in what the Lord's holy name. It's not just that they're doing something that's wrong, though, it is that. But they're profane in his name, and as a result, they're calling down justice on themselves. We then move on to the second part of the third, rather the third of the sins that Israel is being accused of. We talked about injustice. We talked about sexual sin. It now seems as if the sexual sin is something that's happening in pagan worship.

And then notice what do we finally see now in verse two eight B -- improper worship. In general, they are just mixing worship with oppression. Notice when they lay down to do whatever the sin is that they're doing next to the altar, which is false worship. How did they do it? They did it on garments that were taken in pledge against. That's something. That's the kind of thing that the Proverbs are talking about in Proverbs six where it says, don't be going into pledge and kind of a predatory way, exploiting others. So in other words, what are they doing? They're doing a sexual sin in an altar in a high place that the Lord said not to build on garments that were taken through exploitation. You see, they're increasing the judgment upon themselves.

Lastly, we find out that they themselves are getting drunk, even in worship, and they're getting the priest drunk. But notice, it's not just that they're getting drunk in worship, they're getting

drunk on wine that they got from the people who they were unjustly finding. I think this is a throwback to the abuse that we see in, first Samuel two, where Hophni, Phinehas, the sons of Eli are seen to be going around and using their Levitical fines, their taxes by which the temple is supposed to be fed. They're using it for their benefit. So they're walking out and they have this. Now, the rule was that you could stick one fork into the stew and whatever you pulled out with your fork, that was what the priest could take. But they showed up with this like 20 pronged fork, and they would stick it in. And every all the meat in the whole stew bowl would come out with the fork. And so in that way, they were stealing from the people. And the Lord said, this is a grievous thing for me. They're described in second Samuel 12 as being scoundrels. But we see something like that happening here in the high places. They're taking wine that they steal from the people, and they're using it to get drunk. And the worship service, as I said, this opening passage verses six through eight, okay, we're just looking at three verses so far. This is a catalog of the sins of Israel for which it will be judged over the course of the rest of this book.

So now a change happens. Do you notice it in verse nine, he's giving kind of an introduction. Imagine this being a court case where the lawyer walks out and he says in this court and he gives his opening statement, we're going to be doing X, y and Z. And this is a kind of court case. It's a covenantal court case, though, and so it follows the rules of the covenant. We get the opening statements of the offenses that Israel is committed. But then look what happens in verse nine. He now begins the covenantal lawsuit. And how do we know that? Because anytime someone in the Bible starts talking about the past and kind of listing what the Lord has done, it's called a listing of divine benevolence, a catalog of divine benevolence. What the what the lawyer is doing. And that's what prophets are at the end of the day, they're like constitutional lawyers. But instead of the Constitution, they're looking at the covenants. And what are they doing? They're opening up the lawsuit by reminding the people what the Lord has done on behalf of Israel.

Now, later on in the series, we'll talk more about these covenantal lawsuits. We don't have time to get into them this evening. But I just want to tell you this covenants in the Bible always begin this way, always begins with a listing, a prolog, in which the Lord lays out all the things he's done for Israel. And he says, Because I've done these things, you should honor me and obey me in such and such a way, and I will bless you in such and such a way.

Notice this is a covenantal lawsuit, and so for it to be proper covenantal lawsuit has to begin with the accounting of what the Lord has done. And here we get to great benevolence of the Lord, two great benevolent acts.

The first one is this I drove out the Amorites from before you, and using the term Amorites, he's drawing our attention back to Genesis 15, when the land is promised to Abraham. It's there that the word Amorite is used as kind of a representation for the whole of the people in the land.



And what he says, I'm not going to give the land to you. Yet the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full, but it will one day. That's the implication. And when it does, I'm going to give you the land in conquest.

He then later on in chapter 15 goes back and says, okay, here's all the people who really live in the land, the Hittites and the Jebusites. He lists all the people technically like a like a good contract word. And yet Amorites is kind of the stand in for all of the people, depending on the author. Sometimes the stand in will be Canaanites, sometimes you'll hear more about the Philistines. Okay, it's interesting here that Amos is using this older title, the Amorites, and possibly because the Amorites would have been more common up in the northern kingdom. The Amorites were located up in the northeast of the Palestinian of the Israelite Levant.

So notice what he says. I drove out the Amorites before you. And then interestingly, that's in verse nine. In verse ten, he goes back in time before the conquest and says, and I took you out of Egypt. Notice he has a kind of reversal here. He tells them about the conquest first, and then he goes back and tells them about Egypt. Remember when I brought you out of Egypt? Remember when I conquered Pharaoh before you?

Then we come to benevolence, to the second benevolent act that God reminds them of. And again, interesting. This seems to be specific to the Northern Kingdom. Notice it doesn't say priests and a temple. It says Prophets and Nazarite. This is interesting. It's interesting because the temple, of course, is down in the south. It's in Jerusalem. So he's not telling the northern kingdom, I gave you priests because you don't acknowledge the priest down in Jerusalem. But what did I give you? I gave you prophets. I gave you Nazarites. Those are non priestly officials, non people who are not from the tribe of Levi, who nevertheless take an oath and never they take an oath so that they will serve the Lord. says Samson is a Nazarite, one of the one of the ways, you know, a Nazarite is. And he never goes to the barber. Okay. Samuel was a Nazarite, remember? His mother says a razor will not go up upon his heads says Hannah. And they're also supposed to be specially clean. They're supposed to not participate in anything that would render them unclean. Kind of like the high priest shouldn't touch dead bodies, they shouldn't drink wine, they shouldn't go and run with pagan people particularly not have, you know, non marital sex with pagan people. Notice these are all the things that Samson does, by the way. He's constantly despising his Nazarite vow until the very end of his life. But notice what the Lord says now as he moves to the offense. And verse 12, I gave you Nazarite kind of like our passage today in Ephesians. I gave gifts to men, Nazarites and prophets, to hold you together as a people. And yet what did you do? Verse 12, you abuse those who are called by God to serve you. You force drink upon the Nazarites. You told the prophets, stop prophesying.

This is something that we see in the world around us today. This kind of push into light whenever you see ministers fail right? There's kind of a delight in our culture to see ministers

fail, to see them corrupted. There's also a delight to get those who are not corrupted, but those who are speaking boldly to keep them quiet. Isn't there?

Throughout the prophets they say things like this. The prophets hear things like this. Stop prophesying or you are saying sharp things. Speak to us in smooth words, not in sharp words. There's a temptation for teachers of the gospel today too to be quiet, to not to speak about the difficult things of Scripture.

We then come to verse 13 through 16. The verdict, and notice the verdict comes to them. In warfare, judgments against the Lord can occur in a whole kind of many different ways, but the judgments are not judgments against the Lord. Judgments by the Lord against the people can happen in a variety of ways. They can be through warfare. They can be through creation. Sometimes they're there in disease and famine. Some times they're in the defeat of the nation by their enemies. Notice this one, at least at this point in Amos, is mostly in warfare. This is a judgment in warfare that he's bringing to them. The Lord says, I'm going to divinely suppress you. I'm going to push down on you like a wagon that's covered with too many sheaves. And if he rolls over you for your foot, you feel it pushing down on you. The Lord says, I'm going to press down on you until you can't move, until you've become helpless before your enemies. Notice every one of the judgments that comes next in verses 13 through 16 are about taking away the strength of the people. He says the swift will be slow. What does that mean? There's no escape. There's no escape when the judgment comes, it's going to be like, if you ever been in a dream and you're trying to run and you feel like you're in molasses, that's how it's going to be. When you're under the oppression of the Lord. The swift will be slow, the strong will become weak. In other words, the ones you might have trusted in to go out and fight in the battlefield for you. They're going to be weakened. Their arms are going to hang limply by their sides. The skilled will fumble if you're good with the bow or you're good with the horse, you're good with the technology of warfare. It's not going to be any solution for you. It's not going to help you. Technology and skill will not save them. The courageous will waver. Their resolve will melt those who you think will stand up, the ones who have been strong in the past, they're going to waver. And this is part of the judgment of God against you. This is the judgment. And this is why he's preaching it, because he's calling them to repent.

You can't say, Lord, I know we've blown it, but we've got quite an army. And so we don't really need to be afraid. Be careful of that yourself, too. When you find yourself safe and secure and comfortable in life, be careful that you don't start kind of playing loose with the teaching of Scripture about how you ought to live your life. There is something about comfort that lends itself to falling into temptation. The Lord says, I can take away your security and your comfort right away. You got fast men. I'll make them slow. You got strong soldiers. I'll make them weak. You got people who are good with a bow. So you kind of like. We can handle it now. I'll make it

so the arrows go awry every time. You see the Lord's judgment is sure. And it's complete. Why? Because his justice is good. It's a good thing for his justice to be meted out on the face of the earth. It's a good thing it's not the bad news. It's the good news. God is just. And that is good.

But here's the thing every one of the prophets is preaching to a mixed congregation. If you realize this will make so much sense of all of the prophets and everything that they said, because you have to ask yourself, why are you saying this? These are all things that are all going to happen. The why are you telling us this? And it's always for this reason. They know that they are preaching to people who are condemned to die because they will never repent. And they know that they're also preaching to the people who are the righteous remnant, who will hear the words of the Lord, their hearts will be softened, just like the king of Nineveh, and they will see me.

You, dear, have mercy upon us. **Rāḥem-na 'alenu** Who knows, maybe the Lord will relent and save us. You see, the judgment of the Lord is not always unto destruction. Every one of the prophets is dealing with this dynamic. There is judgment unto restoration, and there's judgment unto destruction. Judgment unto restoration is what we call discipline. For the righteous remnant who hear what Amos is saying, they should go. You are absolutely right. Have mercy upon us, oh Lord. But there are those who will hear what he's saying, and we're going to meet some of them in this book. Amaziah, the high priest of the high places, he'll say, get out of here, you visionary. Get out of here! You see your visions. Go back down south again and eat your bread there. There are some who will hear this teaching, and it will just make them angry.

It's true in the church as well. I realize that even in a wonderful church like Briarwood, where did I speak these words? As I teach these words, I realize there are some of you who hear this and it will cause you anger, and there are some of you who will hear this, and it will make you softened, and you'll be. Things in your own life will be brought up, because the spirit's always at work and things will be brought up. You say, Lord, have mercy upon me. Please forgive me. I acted that way that time, and he'll draw you closer to him, because that's what the Word of God does. It hardens the unbeliever. It softens the believer. I pray for each one of you that the Spirit of God would be at work, softening you as you hear these things. Let these be words and occasions by which you might repent and turn to him. That's why they're here. That's why the prophet is saying these things. Remember, that's what Jonah knows when he's sent to Assyria. He says, If the Lord's sending me there, it's because he's about to save a whole lot of people. And I don't want to go because I don't like those people. All right. Amos is the same way. These are not words meant to condemn. Make you mental. Make you will hang your head low and leave in a depressed state. These are words that are meant to say, think about your own life. Think about what the Lord is doing in the world around you. Are you falling into injustice, of exploitation, of disregard, of avoidance? Are you falling into sexual sin, ignoring his beautiful plans for sexuality that he's given to human, and you're ignoring them because you want to

pursue your own unjust ends? Are you falling into false worship because you're mixing the corruption that you've fallen into in your own life with the work of coming before the Lord and worshiping him here in church? Are you mixing those things you get? Are you losing the bead? Are you losing the thread in your life because of sin? And this is inviting us repent, return. The Lord loves to show mercy. Let's close in prayer.

Heavenly father, as we listen to these words, as we consider these things, we recognize that these are difficult. They're even disturbing. Dear Lord, it's one thing of the Christian life that we understand the truths of the gospel and the sin from which we've been saved is another thing. As we grow as Christians and we begin to learn the depths that we fell to in the fall, we start to learn exactly how much the world really is broken. And as a result, Lord, we get to see how great it is, the salvation that you have won for us. I pray, Lord, that you would have mercy upon us. Draw us to you. Give us hearts of repentance, hearts that are circumcised as Moses talks about, that the spirit would be at work, so that when we seek you we would find you, because we would, Lord, seek you with all of our hearts.

In Christ's name we pray. Amen.