

Prayer

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

Prayer Suggestions

Prayer ideas

Think about what you did yesterday, and set this out before God in prayer. Ask Him to show you how to learn from the events of the day

On-going prayers

- **Pray for forgiveness.** *Pray and ask the Lord to help you forgive anyone who has hurt you recently. This can be difficult, but necessary*
- *Pray for the leaders of small nations in the shadow of large superpowers*
- *Give thanks for God's healing power and the many ways this is shown*

Meditation

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

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

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

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

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

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

Oh my soul, stay open for your God.

Bible passage - Amos 7:10-17

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

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

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

¹⁶ 'Now then, listen to the word of the LORD. You say, "Do not prophesy against Israel, and stop preaching against the house of Isaac." ¹⁷ Now, this is what the LORD says: "Your wife will become a prostitute in the city, and your sons and your daughters will fall by the sword. Your land will be measured and parcelled out; you yourself will die in a pagan land, and Israel will be exiled far away from its land.'"

Bible Study

Review

This is an extraordinary piece of Scripture! Amos defends his call to prophesy against the accusations of the priest at Bethel, and lets fly!

For the first time, this passage of Amos contains a report of something other than his written prophecies. Throughout, Amos has given an uncompromising message of judgement on Israel, and this clearly raised something of a storm. He was not going to get away with saying that God had rejected Israel without direct opposition, and the man who dramatically interrupted Amos was the priest Amaziah (7:10f.).

We read that Amaziah had written to the King (in Samaria) to report what Amos was saying at Bethel, and he clearly regarded the prophet as a threat. As the '*the priest of Bethel*' (7:10), he had the authority to act against unruly elements and preserve the dignity of the sanctuary. Amaziah summarised Amos' message as a threat to the king's life as well as a threat against national security (7:10,11), which is interesting because it is not obvious to us that Amos has made a direct threat against the king's life. Perhaps this was part of his preaching that is not included in the Bible! Nevertheless, Amos's words were tantamount to treason, and Amaziah aptly summed it up with these words (7:10); '*the country cannot endure all his words!*'

We do not know the King's response to this, but at some point, Amaziah decided to face Amos personally and a tempestuous head-to-head confrontation took place between the two (7:12-17). Amaziah's approach was to stand on his authority, and tell this upstart prophet to go home (7:12). In those days, a sanctuary such as Bethel employed prophets who had specific duties, and would not have spoken against the king! For this reason, Amaziah did not call Amos a 'prophet', and instead, a 'seer'. This was an old Hebrew term used in the same way we would say 'religious freak'.

Amos' reply is remarkable, and in two parts. Firstly, Amos defends himself and his calling (7:14,15), and secondly, he directly insults Amaziah by turning all his prophecies on him, personally (7:16,17)! He delivers a devastating prophecy saying that the priest's wife would desert him just as the people of Israel had deserted God, and his children would die in war just as God's people Israel would perish! In addition, his land would be passed to pagans, symbolising the loss of the Promised Land (5:5, 5:27, 6:7 etc)!

One interesting feature of this passage is Amos' defence of his own prophecy. There is something powerful about the way Amos declares shamelessly that God has called him and given him a word to speak (7:14,15). He was not a specialist prophet paid by the state (7:14), but a working man called to do something special for God. Such an idea was unheard of in Israel, yet Amos was utterly confident. He knew that God had called him to '*go, prophesy to my people Israel*' (7:15), and he had been faithful to this call. The passage may not stand out to us, but it is a remarkable insight into God's evolving work through the Old Testament prophets.

Throughout the centuries, when the Church has become staid and set in its ways, God has called men and women to take a stand and declare His Word. What God has said through his servants has never been 'new', but He has used people like Luther, Wesley, Edwards and many others to call His people back to the truth of His Word and news of His Gospel. They stand in the tradition of people like Amos, who was courageous enough to do what God required of him and stand against injustice and irreligion. Amos and many others have been obedient to God's call and they are an inspiration to us now. Throughout the centuries, God's church has always had to listen to people like Amos and those who have come after him, who have challenged God's people to reject wrong faith or clear injustice, and turn again to their God to rediscover the joy, love, energy and fruitfulness by which the Kingdom grows.

You can find people like Amos within the world today. Let us pray for them, that they will courageously continue to hear God's call and act on it, and for the church, that it will be willing to hear and receive the sharp challenges they bring.

Discipleship

Questions (for use in groups)

1. How would you summarise the prophesies of Amos you have read up to this point of the book?
2. How can we recognise the calling of a prophet today? Where should we look to find the prophets of God today, and how should we support them?
3. Why does the church of God need to be challenged constantly to return to the truths of the Gospel?

Personal comments by author

Have you ever felt that the Lord is calling you to say something and you have agonised over whether it is right to speak? Of course, other people will quickly tell us that we should say what is on our minds, but we must be careful. We must wait on the Lord to make it clear whether it is His will that we should speak, not just the result of a human passion? In my experience, most Christians have felt something of the call of Amos, which is to leave everything and go to declare God's Word, but few have concluded that it is right to act on the call. It leaves me wondering why it is that some do not follow through on their convictions, and wondering what would happen in my own country if people did!

Ideas for exploring discipleship

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

Final Prayer

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