



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH

SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

Amos: Let Justice Roll

How Could You?

Tim Badal | June 30, 2019

Amos 3:1-15

We are using our time as a church this summer to look at the Old Testament prophet named Amos, who brought God's words to the people of God almost 800 years before the coming of Jesus Christ. Although this is an ancient book given to a particular audience, we can still glean incredible truths that apply to our own walk with Christ in the 21st century. It was an unpopular message back then, but it was also uncompromising, calling out God's people for their lack of faithfulness to Him. God warned them through a series of oracles spoken by Amos that were designed to bring the fear of God back into the people before it was too late.

These warnings can also apply in our day, so it's important to realize that even though we have been saved through the mercy of God, we must never grow lax in our walk with Him. God disciplines us because He desires our character to mature into Christlikeness more than He desires our comfort. Thus, what we read in Amos can serve as reminders to us that we are called to live holy, godly lives—and when we don't, we should expect God to discipline us. At times, this discipline can be painful.

We'll be reading Amos 3 today, which contains another message from God by way of Amos. Again, this was a difficult message for them to hear, but it contained some further explanation of why God was so upset with His people. We'll read the entire chapter this morning, then I have two points I want to draw from it, plus a couple takeaways.

¹ Hear this word that the LORD has spoken against you, O people of Israel, against the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt: ² "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. ³ Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet? ⁴ Does a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey? Does a young lion cry out from his den, if he has taken nothing? ⁵ Does a bird fall in a snare on the earth, when there is no trap for it? Does a snare spring up from the ground, when it has taken nothing? ⁶ Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid? Does disaster come to a city, unless the LORD has done it?"

⁷ "For the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets. ⁸ The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken; who can but prophesy?" ⁹ Proclaim to the strongholds in Ashdod and to the strongholds in the land of Egypt, and say, "Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria, and see the great tumults within her, and the oppressed in her midst." ¹⁰ "They do not know how to do right," declares the LORD, "those who store up violence and robbery in their strongholds."

¹¹ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "An adversary shall surround the land and bring down your defenses from you, and your strongholds shall be plundered." ¹² Thus says the LORD: "As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel who dwell in Samaria be rescued, with the corner of a couch and part of a bed. ¹³ Hear, and testify against the house of Jacob," declares the Lord GOD, the God of hosts, ¹⁴ "that on the day I punish Israel for his transgressions, will punish the altars of Bethel, and the horns of the altar shall be cut off and fall to the ground. ¹⁵ I will strike the winter house along with the summer house, and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall come to an end," declares the LORD.

When I was about 19 years old, I heard, "How could you, Mr. Badal? How could you?" I remember these words as though they were being spoken right now. They echo within the soul of who I am. These were words of disapproval and astonishment. I was standing before a group of people I'd never met before and they were all looking at me. I was very aware that I was in real trouble. "How could you, Mr. Badal?" The staring faces were angry and burned holes deep into my soul.

I was in college at the time and had the great privilege of serving as the student body president. My parents were so excited about that. My mom wrote in our Christmas letter that year, "Tim has finally pulled it together. He has been viewed as a leader among



his peers." As student body president, I was to serve as a model student, as an example to my classmates, and as a representative of our school in the community.

That was true, until I got a certified letter in the mail telling me to arrive at a board of directors meeting at a certain time. Before I got there, it never dawned on me why I needed to attend. My mother had signed for the letter when it arrived, and I told her that from time to time the board would seek the wisdom of the student body president. Her response was, "Well, then, I'm going with you."

Needless to say, we were both about to be shocked; or in Mom's word, chagrined. At the meeting, the president of the school asked me to stand and his first words were, "Mr. Badal, how could you?" It dawned on me at that point that some months earlier I had been involved in a campus infraction. I won't go into details, because it's under the blood of Jesus now, but I had been detained and arrested by campus police—and the board of directors had found out about that.

For the next 15 minutes, the board of directors, along with the president, shared their utter frustration that the leader of the student body would engage in an activity unbecoming of any student, much less the president. "Mr. Badal, how could you? You were given a great opportunity and responsibility. How could you allow yourself to get into such trouble when it was your duty to lead the students in a totally different direction. You should have known better."

Why am I telling you this story? First, you need to know that as a young man, your pastor was an idiotic fool who squandered a great opportunity. I don't know what the next Christmas letter said, but I'm sure it didn't bring up my tenure as the student body president. More importantly, my story of squandered opportunity exactly reflects what God was saying to His people. "Israel, how could you? In all the opportunities I've given you, in the responsibility you have to all the surrounding peoples, you were to be an example, modeling what My followers should live like. But you squandered that opportunity. Israel, how could you?"

Could God be saying the very same thing to us today? We don't live in the same time and culture the Israelites lived in eight centuries before Christ, and maybe we're not guilty of the same sins they committed—yet could God not be saying to us individually today, "In light of all I've done for you, how could you?" How much more forceful even than hearing those words from a college board of directors would it be to hear them from almighty God? The reason God was saying this to the Israelites and to us involves two important truths.

The opportunity we have received

Let's jump in at Amos 3:1, which tells us it was the Lord Who was speaking. It wasn't Amos. God said, "I have a word against you, Israel." Possibly a better translation would be, "I have a word about you." This is what God was saying about Israel, although it included some words against them as well. I wonder if the people of Israel simply expected God to say a few things about them. They might have wanted to hear what He would say.

Here at the church, we do annual staff reviews by giving those who work with a particular staff person the opportunity to speak about that person's performance and what it's like to work with them. Their thoughts are delivered to the person confidentially and anonymously, but that way the staff gets to know what people are saying about them. Even though we expect most of the comments will be positive, sometimes that's not the case. We sometimes find out the things we don't do as well as we thought we did. Perhaps you've had reviews at work where you expected better reports than you actually received.

This was God's review of the Israelites: "There's nothing good about you right now that I can see." In His review, we also see a theme that came up over and over again. He asked them, "How could you do that? How could you live that way? In the face of everything I've done for you, why do you continue going your own way?"

In verse two we see that the review applied to the whole family of God. It applied to the collective kingdoms of both Judah and Israel. Even though the nations had become divided, God was judging both of them. It also meant that it wasn't just certain individuals who were causing the problem. God wasn't just speaking to Junior over in Bethel and not to someone else. It was a collective assessment. God was angry with the whole lot of them and was asking all of them, "How could you?"

In verses one and two we find out why God was so disappointed in the people of Israel. He had done things for them that should have produced a much different outcome.

We have been delivered from slavery.

In verse one God addresses *"the whole family that I brought up out of the land of Egypt."* If you've read the book of Exodus or watched the movie *The Ten Commandments*, you know that after Joseph died, a new pharaoh came to power who was against God's people.

For 400 years they were enslaved and oppressed, driven by masters who had no regard for their welfare. The people cried out daily for God to rescue them. "God, we're dying here. Please won't You come to our aid?"

In Exodus 2:23 we read that *"the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God."* Deuteronomy 26:7 says, *"Then we cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our misery, our toil, and our oppression."* During this time of anguish, what did God do? In Exodus 3:8-10, God spoke this to Moses:

I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey....And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.

The people were in slavery, God heard them and He responded. He promised not only to take them out of slavery, but also to take them to a land of awesome vegetation and opportunity. As we continue to read the story in the Old Testament, all of this came true.

We have been designated as family.

Second, God designated the children of Israel as a family. Verse two says, *"You only have I known of all the families of the earth."* The word "know" is important. It wasn't that God just knew their names or some things about them. Rather, the Hebrew word implies intimate knowledge. It was first used in Eden to say that Adam knew his wife Eve, then as a result a son was born. It speaks of an intimate relationship.

God was telling the Israelites that His relationship with them was intimate. He loved them. As we read the Old Testament, we see God was close to them in a way that was above His relationship with any other nation or people. He didn't choose them because they were the most prestigious or largest or most powerful group. He chose them by His grace and mercy. He called their father Abraham to become the father of their nation and continued this special relationship with Abraham's offspring, who became the other patriarchs. God provided their every need. He gave them priests and prophets and kings. While they were in the wilderness, He gave them shoes that did not wear out. He gave them manna from heaven and water from a rock. He protected them with a pillar of cloud and fire. He caused the walls of Jericho to come tumbling down. He empowered a young man named David to destroy the great giant Goliath. God was with His people over and over and over again.

Through Amos, God now reminded the people of all He had done for them, that He had blessed them, cared for and loved them every day. Yet how had they repaid Him? What had their response been? They murmured and complained. "Moses, you brought us out here to die in the wilderness. Send us back to Egypt. At least we had food and water there." It seemed they had forgotten their slavery.

Not long after they came out of Egypt, God gave His laws to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Then while God was speaking to Moses on their behalf, they were constructing a calf of gold to worship. "Israel, how could you?" Even though God was ruling them, they weren't satisfied. "We want to have a king like everyone else. Give us a human king." So again and again, God gave them over to their sinful ways. They were never satisfied with God alone.

God's response in Amos 3:3 was, "I'm going to punish you." God wasn't being evil or angry or vindictive. He was jealous for His relationship with His people. After they threw His grace, mercy and goodness out the door, God responded like the college president did to me: "How could you? In light of all the opportunities you've had, how could you?"

We need to realize the punishment God gave them wasn't intended to destroy them. He still considered them to be His people. He wasn't looking for another people group to become His family through a new covenant relationship. He didn't divorce them to find a different spouse.

We have been disciplined to maturity.

As the church, we've been grafted into His family, according to Romans 11. Yet God still has specific future promises for the people of Israel. Because they were delivered from slavery and designated as family, God's punishment was designed to discipline them to maturity. Like a good earthly father, God modeled that when you love someone, you discipline them so they will choose to do what is right and good. The Israelites had squandered and trampled on their opportunity. Yet what did God do? His mercies are new every morning and great is the faithfulness of our God (Lamentations 3:22-24).

So while this was written to the specific group of people in Israel many centuries ago, this message still has important implications for us today. While the punishments described in Amos were for Israel in their time, we need to ask if they might be coming our

way as well. You see, we too have been delivered from slavery. It isn't the same slavery as Egypt. Rather, we've been delivered from our slavery to sin. Paul described how we have been enslaved to our worldly appetites, enslaved by the devil through his lies. Jesus was the One Who came to deliver us from this bondage to sin, taking us from death to life.

Now, as children of God, we are no longer under His wrath. Rather, we've been adopted into His family because of the finished work of Jesus Christ. Like Israel, God has given us so much. When someone has received much from God, He will also require much from them, so the question we need to ask this morning is how are we doing with that? Could not God say to us as well, "In light of all I've done for you, Christian—I've saved you and given you everything you need for life and godliness—how have you repaid Me this last week? How did you show your gratitude and love to Me? Did you squander My blessings?"

Could God be saying to you this morning, Christ follower, "How could you? In light of the blood shed on the cross, the sorrow that was brought upon the second Person of the Trinity, you still went and did that? You thought those things? You engaged in that behavior? How could you?"

We imagine God to be the celestial Santa Claus. He's just happy to see us. He might know if we've been naughty or nice. But let's be honest, has Santa Claus ever said, "You're not going to get what you want"? I don't think Santa has ever told someone they're naughty; that's bad advertising. After all, I was plenty naughty when I was a kid and I still got everything I ever wanted. Santa always brought gifts.

Because God is love, we can feel that He will love us no matter what we do. We can think that God is like my little dog Wrigley. At times, I treat Wrigley rudely. I love him, but I'm not always a very good friend to him. I get up and leave for days on end. I don't tell him what I'm going to do. He sees me loading up my bags and he probably wonders if I'll drop him off with my parents and leave. He has no idea if we're going to return or not.

This past week we were gone for a couple days and as soon as I came back into the house, Wrigley was so excited to see me. "I love you, Tim! You're the greatest." "Well, I just abandoned you for 48 hours; you're not mad about that?" We make God out to be like Wrigley, who is just happy to see us when we show up again.

James Montgomery Boice, who wrote a commentary I've been using for these studies, said the following: "God is no patsy. He is not a weak-livered, pathetic figure wringing His hands on the ramparts of heaven as He witnesses our sin, wondering what He's going to do. He is the Lion God. He is the God Who marches at the head of alien armies to judge His unholy people."

We need to recognize that when God says, "How could you?" He doesn't really mean, "How could you do this?" He says, "I am holy and I have been faithful in taking care of all your needs, yet you've responded in the opposite way. Instead of following Me and worshiping Me, you've raised up other things in My place. What have those things done for you that I haven't?"

God looks at my pursuits, dreams, possessions and money, saying to me, "Tim, what has your money done for you that I haven't done? Has your money died for you? I have. Has your house provided for you? No, but I have. Can your car be the great physician? No, but I am."

But all the while I put my trust, hope and desires in those created things instead of in the Creator God Whom Paul says should be forever praised. God said to His people eight centuries before Christ—and He says to us 21 centuries after Christ— "You, with so many opportunities—how could you?"

The accountability God requires

So what happens? God doesn't quit on us. Amidst our unfaithfulness, He is perpetually faithful. But He is faithful to right the ship and get us to the place we need to be. There is an accountability that God requires. In Amos 3:3-6, we see their accountability. God asked the people a series of questions and as we read them, we might wonder what He was getting at. Each of the questions in verses three through six were intended to be answered, "Yes."

Years ago in a Looney Tunes show, Bugs Bunny did this with another character; I think it was Yosemite Sam. Bugs Bunny rattled off a quick series of questions and the answer was "Yes-yes-yes-yes-yes-yes." Then Bugs asked a question that he knew Yosemite Sam would say no to, but because he was saying yes so many times, by the time they got to the zinger question, Yosemite Sam said, "Yes." Bugs then said, "I got you!"

That's what God is doing here through Amos. He has him ask, "*Can two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?*" Yes, this is true. "*Does a lion cry out from his den, if he has taken nothing?*" Yes—yes—yes. Then in verse six, when the trumpet sounds, are not people afraid? It's the tornado siren that goes off. Aren't people concerned? Don't they start looking to the sky, knowing trouble is

coming? The answer is yes. Then here comes the zinger. *"Does disaster come to a city, unless the Lord has done it?"* Well, yes. Wait a minute. No!

Amos was saying that disaster was about to come upon the city and he didn't want the people to think it was a coincidence. It wasn't just bad things happening to good people. "When that day comes," he was saying, "I want you to remember that it was God Who brought disaster to the city."

We need to be careful how we interpret things. Just because that was true in Amos' day, is that now true in our lives? When disaster hits—and we've had lots of them, not only in our country but in our world affecting sometimes tens of thousands, even hundreds of thousands of people—is it because God was judging them?

No matter what happens, some preacher will say it was some group of sinners sinning a particular sin that has brought on this disaster. But that's not completely true. There are times when God just allows things to happen for reasons we can't understand. Rain falls on the godly and ungodly alike (Matthew 5:45). The sun shines on the godly and ungodly alike.

We're the opposite. We don't think God ever judges a city, that He ever judges a people. But we need to know that while God does bring judgment, it doesn't mean every tornado, hurricane, tsunami or earthquake is the result of God's judgment. God is merciful and kind, but He is also warning us. When disaster strikes, we need to ask what are we not doing right? Are there offensive ways in us? Could this have been averted had we shown the love and obedience to God we're called to demonstrate? God gives two indictments to Israel regarding why He has allowed disaster to come upon them.

We have grown comfortable.

We read in Amos 3:11, *"An adversary shall surround the land and bring down your defenses from you, and your strongholds shall be plundered."* Then in verse 15 God speaks of their houses: *"I will strike the winter house along with the summer house, and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall come to an end."*

The word "stronghold" and the references to houses speak of mansions the Israelites had built for themselves. They were in a season of economic prosperity and had responded by building large houses and strongholds where they could feel safe. Because of their comforts, the people had stopped looking to God for their protection and provision. Their great buildings spoke of their riches and sense of security.

We have grown corrupt.

The other thing God pointed out in this text was the corruption of the people. Verse nine mentions that He would bring "great tumults" to Israel. Why? They oppressed others and, verse ten, they didn't know how to do right. They *"stored up violence and robbery in their strongholds."* They were a corrupt group of people. He told them, "You don't even know how to do right. Even if you tried, you're so corrupt you can't even figure out what righteousness and obedience look like."

God's discipline is painful.

What was God's response? "I'm going to punish you and it isn't going to be pleasant." Hebrews 12 tells us no discipline is pleasant at the time. It was going to be painful. Look at the words He used. He spoke of upending and bringing great tumult. He would bring adversaries who would bring down their defenses and plunder them. Then He got more graphic in verse 12: *"As the shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear."* In other words, "By the time My discipline is finished, others will only find parts of you left." It was as though the people would be torn limb from limb. Sometimes the hand of God can be that heavy. Let that sink in, when God, through the Holy Spirit, says, "How could you?"

God's discipline can be pervasive.

There's no area God's discipline doesn't touch. He goes on to say in verse 12 that all they would be left with was *"the corner of a couch and part of a bed."* The discipline would hit their summer homes and their winter homes, even though these might be hundreds of miles apart. One might have been in the hill country and the other on the beach—but God would strike both. His discipline can be pervasive. There's nothing God can't touch. Nothing in our lives is off limits to Him.

God's discipline has a purpose.

However, all of this talk of tribulation and distress had a purpose. These were not idle threats. God was not just talking like a big shot. He meant business. What was His purpose? We see it in Amos 3:7: *"For the Lord does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets."*

Amos was telling the people what would happen, but God was also giving them a chance to repent. God sent Amos to speak to the people so they might turn, follow and obey Him. None of the threats had to become realities, if they would choose to repent of their ways and go in the direction God was calling them. They needed to stop worshipping the gods of the people around them and instead return to worshipping the most high and only God Who deserved their praise.

Again, these are hard words. What are we going to do with this? Amos 3 provides three takeaways for Christ followers in the 21st century.

Takeaway #1: Fear God.

First, we must fear God, either through His warnings or one day face to face. It's our decision. The lion has roared—who will not fear? Do you fear God because you've heard the roar of the lion? Maybe His roar doesn't sound that frightening to you. You think you have nothing to fear. So you go on with your life and God lets you do that.

Some of you, instead of fearing the Word of the Lord through the prophets and other Scriptures, are thinking, "I'll take God on face to face." But remember what God says will happen in Revelation 6:15-17:

Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

We have a choice, my friends. We either fear God today while there is still the option of receiving His mercy, or we will stand before God on the judgment day. The Apostle Paul knew better than anybody that on that day, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:9-11)—but for some, it will be too late. So either fear Him today or you will fear Him one day face to face. That's the most important decision you have to make in this life.

Takeaway #2: Be active in your own accountability.

Second, as Christians, we need to be active in our accountability. In other words, because Christ has come and taken God's wrath in our place, because He has changed us from being children of wrath to children of Almighty God, how should we respond? When we sin, we should be the first to call it out. We shouldn't have to wait for God to come and "clean house." We should be keeping short lists with God, so that when we sin, we should confess it, knowing He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Do we need to wait for God's discipline? The Bible tells us to discipline ourselves.

The Bible also tells believers to confess our sins one to another (James 5:16). That way, He doesn't have to come and judge us, because we've already judged ourselves. When we come to the communion table next week, we are told to examine ourselves so we don't take the bread and cup that symbolize the body and blood of Jesus in an unworthy manner (1 Corinthians 11:27-29). God said that when we do that, we risk the discipline and judgment of God in our lives.

We need to hold ourselves and each other accountable for the choices we make. When we hear God's warnings, either through our own reading of Scripture or from a preacher or teacher, it should cause us to pause and say, "God, I'm not right with You. I'm coming to You, humbly bringing my sins before You. I know that when I humble myself, You will be gracious toward me. But when You come and show me my sin, it's far more difficult." We need to be active in our own accountability.

Takeaway #3: Let your gratitude lead you toward godliness.

Finally, we need to let our gratitude lead us to godliness; and we need to be careful with this. God does not desire to scare us into a relationship with Him. That's not my point today. He starts with, "Look at all I've done for you. Why wouldn't you fall in love with Me? Why wouldn't you worship Me? Why wouldn't you turn from sin and temptation, in light of all I've done for you? How can you not stay true to Me?"

God reminds us of all He's done for us so that we would stop and say, "What a mighty God we serve. What a gracious God we serve. What a loving God we serve." We can go on and on, counting the blessings as the song says, naming them one by one, seeing what God has done. When we begin to do that, our temptations fade away. When we do that, our hearts become filled with joy. "I have a God Who loves me. I have a God Who saves me. I have a God Who cares about me. When I'm concerned or struggling, I have a God I can run to." *"God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16).

Our gratitude should lead us to godliness. Are you so filled with gratitude that "the things of this world grow strangely dim," as the songwriter says, "in light of God's glory and grace"? God wants us to see what He has done and respond in kind. When we do, we

can have confidence that the accountability we need will happen and God's discipline will be light. But never forget, my friends, when we don't, God reserves the right and He reminds us again and again and again that He will come because He loves us, disciplining us to maturity and holiness.

Village Bible Church | 847 North State Route 47, Sugar Grove, IL 60554 | (630) 466-7198 | www.villagebible.org/sugar-grove

All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

Note: This transcription has been provided by Sermon Transcribers (www.sermontranscribers.com).