

AMOS 7:10 - 17 – BUT THE LORD

In this sermon, I will be sharing the message on Amos 7:10-17 based on Amos' background from a southern shepherd and fig tender to a man chosen by God to be a prophet. The central theme of the text is "but the Lord." I chose these three words because Amos was a simple shepherd from the land of Tekoa in Judah who tended fig trees. However, he might not have a degree from a particular school or seminary compared to a person like Amaziah. "But the Lord," according to those three words, called Amos for ministry, which led him to the prosperous and idolatrous Israel where he would speak God's Word of judgment and mercy to Israel. This sermon of Amos should be a message of encouragement of how God can turn a person's ordinary life into a life that God gives as Amos' prophethood.

Purpose for the Listeners

The purpose of this sermon is to show that no matter who you are and no matter what background you may be from, God will use you for His Kingdom the same way He used Amos to preach God's message to the northern kingdom of Israel. How do people think God can use them with a low position or a humble standard such as a janitor, a housekeeper, or a blue-collar worker and take them from their place to become a vessel for God's Kingdom? How can God use these kinds of people without any seminary degree or a specific doctorate of an institution which claims to love the Lord but lives in worldly idolatry?

Hannah, in her prayer, said, "He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord's and on them he has set the world." And then Mary, in her song in Luke 1:52,

says, “He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate.” This passage tells us that God uses the humble and people of low position into His ministry to glorify the Lord in serving His ministry. Here are the three points I would like you all to learn about this passage about the discussion between Amos and Amaziah.

Point One

Amaziah accused Amos of conspiring against the king and Israel, but the Lord was with Amos to deal with persecution and accusation.

Amos was accused by Amaziah, a man of material wealth and success (Amos 7:10-13). Amaziah was probably a well-known high priest doing political movements at Bethel. When Amos was preaching God’s message of judgment, Amaziah was disturbed that he wanted to send a word to King Jeroboam II about the message Amos shared that was bothering the people. Amos 7:10-13 which says, “Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, “Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos has said, ““Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel must go into exile away from his land.”” And Amaziah said to Amos, “O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, and eat bread there, and prophesy there, but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom.”

In this illustration, we see that Amaziah was known as a person who earned a doctorate in a seminary and became a well-known priest or a specific rabbi in his time. For a man like Amaziah, he thought his words would be authoritative enough for the king to listen and arrest Amos. He thought he had the power to command Amos, the southerner who did not have the same experience level as Amaziah, to leave Israel and return to Judah to earn his business in his area, since his only concern was his fame and wealth, and position as a priest. Amaziah used

authority figures to silence Amos showing that he and king Jeroboam II had the power and not Amos. But the Lord was with Amos just as He was with Paul while in trial.

In 2 Timothy 4:17, Paul writes to Timothy, “At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.” Similar to Paul, God was with Amos when Amaziah confronted him. For Amos to face persecution by people like Amaziah, we should remember to be bold because God is with us just like He was with Amos. For that reason, when we are in ministry sharing the gospel and living in holiness, we will be persecuted, but the Lord will be with us and never forsake us (Heb 13:5).

Point Two

Amos was a common-folk southerner in Tekoa in Judah and was a herder of sycamore figs, but the Lord brought Amos out of the field into ministry in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

We read a brief response of Amos' background. After listening to Amaziah's accusation, Amos gave Amaziah his response in Amos 7:14-15. We read in Amos 7:14-15, which says, “Then Amos answered and said to Amaziah, “I was no prophet, nor a prophet's son, but I was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore figs. But the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’” Based on Amos' background, we can learn important facts about Amos. We can illustrate Amos's response as a response of humility and defense, but the answer had a deeper meaning than people like Amaziah expected. Amaziah was probably a man of great status and reputation that, in his mind, someone like him would have the more extraordinary privilege. Like a theologian who graduated his Ph.D. in theology at a well-known seminary such as Southern Seminary, his theology does

not teach biblical orthodoxy. Amaziah thought he could tell Amos he is the boss of the work by telling him to leave and earn a living back to Judah.

Amos was probably a person who did not attend a theological school nor had a Ph.D. in the Torah, but in his response, he was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamore figs and not a prophet, a son of a prophet, nor a prophet's disciple. For those who want to know Amos modern-day, Amos could be described as a country person from the South. Probable Amos would have been like a hillbilly in Alabama with a fifth-grade education that did not go to seminary and was only good at his agricultural work and plays his banjo as a hobby. However, the vital thing about Amos is those three words in the conversation that changes the conversation. These three words are, "but the Lord." Amos said that he was once a nobody tending sheep and a dresser of sycamore figs, but the Lord called him to ministry in Israel to call for the Israelites to return to God from their idolatrous lifestyle and became a somebody. God brought Amos to become a prophet, reminding Amaziah that God can use commoners like him to serve the Lord and no one could prevent him from preaching God's message. Amos was a nobody who became a somebody because of the Lord. There are people I have met that lived similar lives like Amos that they were common-folks but became people of God when God brought them for ministry.

That person reminds me of a Uruguayan pastor named Thomas Moreno, who passed away in 2014, who pastored a Baptist church. However, he did not graduate from seminary or have a higher education like a seminary missionary with a character like Amaziah, a teacher at Princeton or Yale University teaching unorthodox theology. Pr. Moreno preached the message faithfully on his farm and traveled from his area to the big city in Montevideo to preach the gospel message, just as Amos did in the prosperous kingdom of Israel. Despite having a humble beginning, the Lord brought Moreno out of the land as a nobody and became a somebody.

Thomas Moreno was a modern-day Amos.

Another person I could remember, like Amos, was a southerner from Alabama. His name is Brian Payne, and he is a pastor who also was from the South like Amos. He, like Amos, served as a preaching teacher at Boyce College, faithfully equipping people and preached to people, especially to me, in the north to repent and trust in Jesus. His message and witness continued to provide us to faithfully serve the Lord as future ministers in Boyce College in preaching and theology. He served as the leading pastor at First Baptist Church at Fisherville, Kentucky. Brian Payne continues to preach faithfully back in his home in Alabama at Lakeview Baptist Church as a modern-day Amos.

I want to share one more person who is a missionary coworker in Japan and similar to Brian Payne. His name is Mark Busby, and he is from Alabama and serves on the International Mission Board as a former team leader who is now a training coworker of our Osaka team. He would connect with pastors in Japanese, and every time he went to preach, he would take his banjo with him and use his banjo while singing gospel music mixed with Christian bluegrass. Mark Busby has been faithfully serving the Lord as a southerner that God has called him to serve in Japan and continues to be a modern-day Amos for us to learn.

To conclude, understanding the background of those three faithful, godly men, God can transform the lives of a commoner and transform them to become a minister for the gospel. Therefore, God can use us for the gospel because we are all called to prophesy God's message to the nations for God's glory.

Point Three

Amaziah thought he had authority over Amos and the people in Israel, but the Lord proved Himself to Amaziah through Amos that he is the Ultimate Authority over all of Israel.

Reading the two last verses, we read in Amos 7:16-17 – Now therefore hear the word of the Lord. “You say, ‘Do not prophesy against Israel, and do not preach against the house of Isaac. Therefore thus says the Lord: “Your wife shall be a prostitute in the city, and your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword, and your land shall be divided up with a measuring line; you yourself shall die in an unclean land, and Israel shall surely go into exile away from its land.”” Reading these final responses from Amos, we can see who the authority of Israel is and that Authority is God. We can view how we should never judge a person whom God chose to serve based on the person’s background, which brought Amos to give Amaziah this terrifying response. Amos’ response should be a warning for us because what we do not know is that our pride could consume us based on our status, just as Amaziah has met with his fate.

We see that Amaziah’s wife would be a prostitute in the city because of Amaziah and Israel’s disobedience. We then see that his children would fall by the sword of the Assyrians and that his land would be divided once Israel, including Bethel, is conquered. Finally, Amaziah himself will die in an unclean land once taken in exile. These words of judgment were made true later from the last terms of the sentence, and the Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed in 722 BC when Sargon II took over the region for the Neo-Assyrian Empire, making God’s Word of prophecy come to pass. These words conclude that Amos was a man God sent to warn Israel’s fate as Israel’s Authority.

In Amos’ message from Amos 7:16-17, we see that only God, not the king, not the priests, not the prophets, nor the community have the authority over Israel except God. God sent prophets like Amos to send His message of warning but also of repentance and mercy. Amos 3:7 says, “For the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets,” and Amos, unlike Amaziah and other false prophets in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, was a

true prophet. God as Amos' authority showed him three visions in the previous verses of this chapter where one consists of fire, locusts, and a plumb line which God wanted Amos to know about Israel's fate unless Israel repents. Amos desired to see Israel repent when he pleaded in the Lord two times on the two visions, and then God said He would not make them happen. One of his pleas was in Amos 7:2, "O Lord God, please forgive! How can Jacob stand? He is so small! The Lord relented concerning this: 'It shall not be,' said the Lord." These verses describe that only God is the Ultimate Authority to the kingdom of Israel, and God had the right to take the earthly glory of Israel away through the Assyrians.

God had a message for Israel that her time was running out, and the people will fall by the sword. But the Lord sent prophets like Amos to send a message of repentance and a return of worship of God so that God's judgment does not come into Israel. Joel 2:13b says, "for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster." Amos knew that God could have destroyed all of the Israelites but trusted in God's mercy and faithfulness to save Israel. Despite the Israelites rebelled God countless times, God promised to them that they would have a Messiah and will have a New Covenant that God would be their God and the Israelites would be God's people as Amos understood in Amos 9:11-15. Jesus came and fulfilled that Covenant because of God's mercy among the Israelites as Israel's Ultimate Authority. Therefore, God's Word through Amos' response comes true, and God proved Himself to be the Authority over all things as Jesus said, "all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt 28:18).

Conclusion

Reflecting on the central theme, the main points, and the purpose of the message, I would like to ask you, did you ever feel that you are a nobody or that God cannot use you for

ministry? Remember that God loves you that He sent Jesus to die for your and my sins. Through Jesus, you can know Jesus as your Savior if you repent of your sins and put your faith in Jesus as your Savior through His death on the cross and resurrection. Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say unto you, whoever hears my voice and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" (John 5:24). We were sinners lost and without hope, but the Lord brought us out of darkness and into the light of Christ.

If anyone comes to Jesus, that person not only is saved from their sins, but that person is transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit and becomes someone for the Lord just like Amos, who God called out of his land and into the field to become God's prophet. Just as God used Amos for His glory, God can use you for His glory because of Jesus' love for humanity. No matter what background you are, what color you are, what kind of house you live in, nor experience in education you have, nor what country you came from. If you are in Jesus, you are not only transformed, you are called as an ambassador for Christ, and you are special in God's eyes which is why it is written in 2 Corinthians 5:20, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." Just as Amos was an ambassador of God, we are chosen to become God's ambassadors for His glory. Therefore, let us "press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14).