

Kings and Prophets 15-03-06a

I'll just have to cut that much out of the message, it would be that much less rebuke. This is Friday, the 6th of March, 2015. We resume and continue our study of kings and prophets.

We're surveying the book of Amos, the third of the writing prophets that fit into this section of history of the Northern Kingdom and the times of Jeroboam II. We'll take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer, dedicate our time and our fellowship and our concentration to the Lord Jesus, and then we'll begin. Father, we're grateful for another opportunity to review and thank you for your grace and your faithfulness to us, the many compassionate mercies that you have expressed, those that we see and many of those that we do not see.

We thank you that we have the privilege of spending this time together, looking at the truth of your Word, hoping to gain a better understanding of it, refreshing it and renewing it in our souls so that God the Holy Spirit can minister it to our hearts as we endeavor to live our lives in a way that pleases you. We thank you for this particular passage and the illumination that it sheds on our path. We pray that your Holy Spirit will be our teacher and will impress it on each heart in a way that is meaningful to us individually, in a way that is helpful to us as a group, that we will pursue our goals and priorities and values in a way that shines the light of the Lord Jesus in our generation and in our immediate periphery.

We pray that in all things the Lord Jesus will be glorified by our assembly and our study this evening. We pray it in His name, Amen. We've already seen the historical context.

I think we've reviewed that enough times. You know the situation in the Northern Kingdom. After many judgments, after God essentially beating His people black and blue with a stick, He has backed off and given them a time of respite, a time of relative prosperity.

The surrounding nations, especially those to the north, are preoccupied with internal conflicts and succession of power in the ruling realms. And this has created a calm and a time of seeming prosperity. And the rich have become very rich.

The rising tide has sort of floated all boats, although it is a false prosperity. It is a temporary prosperity. It is a bubble that is about to burst.

And God has intentionally relieved the pressure of judgment. He has intentionally stopped the judgments to try a different tack, to make an appeal, to issue a call to renewal and renaissance and repentance among His people. The times of judgment, of allowing the nations across the border to raid and to take away their prosperity, to take away their security, to defeat them militarily, to cause instability, has not worked.

People have not responded. They have not turned to God in a time of trouble, as we so often want to do. It hasn't worked.

And before the final judgment, which is just a few decades away, God says, I'll try a different approach. I'll try anything that will work. If discipline and judgment and the promised negative consequences of disobedience, apathy, outright rebellion and idolatry, if that isn't working, I'll take a different tack.

And so He is sending these prophets with messages that apply to other nations. Jonah goes to Nineveh, and there is the example of the Gentiles, the hated enemies, turning to God in the light of promised judgment. The entire message that Jonah delivers is, in 40 days, you're gone.

And the Ninevites, from the king down to the animals, are draped in sackcloth and ashes, saying, we know about this God of the Israelites, and if He's declared judgment on us, we had better make a change. And what a rebuke, what a stinging example they set compared to God's own people, who have a covenant relationship with Him, who know Him from of old, who is the God of their fathers. The godless, pagan Ninevites turn at God's reproof, and of course they have none of it.

And Jonah himself embodies this in the same way that the king so often reflects the heart of the people. We saw then Hosea, and the graphic demonstration and picturing of God's relationship with this wife who prostitutes herself, who is unfaithful, who is grossly immoral, and yet God honors His covenant relationship when she does not. And Hosea personifies that in his dealings at God's instruction with Gomer, take a wife of whoredom, take a wife of prostitution, because this is a picture before the people.

You don't think that Hosea as a prophet and his marital relations didn't electrify the nation, that that gossip didn't spread far and wide, and yet this is a way to get the message into the hearts and minds of people who are no longer sensible, no longer listening, no longer responsive to the standard forms of communication. Now in this third instance we have Amos. He's not a prophet and he's not the son of the prophet.

You remember the week before last when we went through this, that by condemning the surrounding nations, these prophecies weren't communicated or delivered to those nations. They are pronounced in the hearing of God's people Israel in the northern and southern kingdoms to get them on board and have them saying amen and right on and we can hardly wait and let's get a ringside seat, much as Jonah wants to do for the destruction of Nineveh. And in a Romans 2 sort of turnaround, here come the judgments pronounced on Judah.

Here come the pronouncements of judgment on the northern kingdom of Samaria. And it is going to now continue in this vein because they're willing to listen to a man who's not a professional prophet, who they think is more of a, he appeals to some of the lower ranks because he works with animals and he works with trees. He appears to connect with the upper nobility because he's not just any old shepherd and he's not just any old farmer or any old fig picker.

He prepares the flocks and herds for sacrifice in the temple. And so people say, well, you know,

he's in the little bit more of the noblesse oblige category. He's a bit more of a, and so people find ways to listen to him and especially when he's pronouncing judgment on those with whom they are at odds and who have taken advantage of them, they are more than ready to listen.

And while they're listening and while they're amening and right awning, he turns the message back on them, just as Paul does in Romans. And we saw that. What is this message? What is the message that they will no longer tolerate? What is the message, what is the promise that God delivered in days of old that they have blocked out, that they are immune to, that they are deaf to, that they are blind to? Now take just a moment before we continue.

Let's just remind ourselves of what the covenant with God is. Turn back to Deuteronomy chapter 28. Deuteronomy.

What does that mean from its Latin roots? Deutero is what? You get deuce from this. It means number two or second. And namos is the law.

Deuteronomos is the second rehearsal of the law. You have the law given in Exodus and in Leviticus. And deuteronomos is Moses' rehearsal.

This is sort of like reading the second set of tablets of the law after the first ones get smashed. Deuteronomy chapter 28 gives the terms, the formal terms of God's covenant with Israel. And you can see just from your chapter headings, which I'm sure your New King James Bible has, the beginning, blessings on obedience.

Let's just skim through this real quickly. It shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, everything that follows is contingent upon. This is a conditional set of promises.

These aren't automatic. They are not graven in stone as certain to come to pass. They're conditioned on obeying the voice of the Lord your God.

If you obey, if you observe carefully all his commandments, which I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. All these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you because you obey the voice of the Lord your God. This is like a contract.

All of the following blessings will pertain. And now we're going to have Aleph, Bet, Gimel, Dalet, He, Vav, Zayin, Chet, Tet, Yod, Chaf, Lamed, Mem, Nun, Samech, all the way down to Wow, all the way down to the end. All the way down to the Omega, if you will.

Wow is in the middle of the alphabet. All the way down to the final letter of the alphabet. It will all pertain.

And so these are paragraphs. These are points in the contract. You will be blessed in the city and you'll be blessed in the country.

Blessed will be the fruit of your body. Now, in the city and in the country, this is all of your in-town commerce and business. In the country, this is your flocks and herds, your agricultural endeavors and activities.

Blessed is the fruit of your body. This is your family blessing, your children, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. This is multiplied reproduction.

This is fecundity. This is prosperity of the numerical type. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

This is where you gather and where you process. It's not just that you will have abundant harvest. You don't bring it all in and then it rots or it's eaten by mice or stolen by raiders.

It gets all the way into your basket, into your kneading bowl. You keep it. You process it.

You use it. You benefit from it. Blessed shall you be when you come in and blessed shall you be when you go out.

This is coming in in times of peace. Going out typically speaks of having to do defense, having to go out and wage war. But this also means going out to the fields and coming in from the fields.

You have security with egress and ingress. You're not troubled. You are not threatened.

You are not worried. This includes security from thieves, bandits, those who are in the highways and byways lurking in the shadows. You can go out and come in with security.

This reminds me of the days when I was a child and people typically didn't lock their doors. They would let their children roam the neighborhoods. There was no fear of predators.

There was no fear of abuse. Everybody's parents looked out for everybody's children. Everybody's children obeyed everybody's parents.

It was a time of peace. It was a time of safety. It was a time of neighborhood integrity.

That's what it means. You can go out and come in with no worries. The Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face.

They shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. They march out in force and then they scatter in all directions. The Lord will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand.

He will bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you. The Lord will establish you as a holy people to Himself just as He has sworn to you if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in His ways. Condition at the beginning, condition at the end.

Remember now, we're not just talking about an ancient dusty old people that lived 3,000 years ago in the land of Israel. What God says to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, He says to the soul of the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ in this age. These are blessings that will pertain.

Now, does it mean that you are nine feet tall and bulletproof? Nothing bad will ever happen to you. You will have prosperity in five different categories. You will have super grace.

No harm will come to you. Everything you touch will just flower and blossom and you will be like Midas. Everything you touch turns to gold.

Remember, there is a literal nation with a literal covenant experiencing literal blessings in the Old Testament. Our soul is an immaterial kingdom and the blessings are immaterial. You may be a prisoner of war.

You may be in very humble circumstances, but in your soul, in the kingdom of your soul, you are blessed, you are secure, you are happy, you are prosperous. I find whatever state I find myself there with to be content. I am blessed.

I come back from the war missing one, two, or three limbs. I come back maimed. You see the wounded warriors and people coming back.

Those guys who are believers, even though they may have suffered great suffering, even though they may, like the rest of us, suffer a lot of insults in the physical world, we have a transcendent prosperity. And it's not pie in the sky. It is real.

It is effective. We have genuine peace. We have genuine joy.

We have genuine comfort. Our souls, in our souls, we rest by the rivers of living water. God makes us lie down in green pastures and restores our souls.

He sets a table in the presence of our enemies, regardless of physical circumstances. Paul and his associates were beaten and imprisoned and were singing hymns to God in the nighttime when the earthquake came and shook the jail. And they didn't hustle out of there and say, I couldn't wait to get out of that roach-infested rat trap.

They stayed there. Why? Physical circumstances weren't their primary concern. They had a spiritual perspective.

And because of that, not only the Philippian jailer and his family, but generations and generations and generations of people have been blessed from that story in the latter part of Acts 16. Transcendent. It is the kingdom of the soul.

It is the prosperity of the intangible and irreplaceable kind. That's what he's talking about here. Keep in mind, all of these blessings have a corollary, have an application, have a reflection for you and for me now, regardless of prosperity or adversity, regardless of physical circumstances.

These are our heritage. These are promises of God. They are covenant blessings, just as certain, just as sure as what Israel could lay claim to when they were originally delivered.

They are just as real. They are in the soul. And it's not like, oh, well, that's a dodge.

I just have to try to be happy in my soul. They are real. This is, in some ways, better than mere physical prosperity.

Trust me when I tell you, from personal, ongoing, daily observation, physical prosperity in this life does not confer happiness. It does not confer peace. It does not confer security.

It does not confer blessing just because you have a lot. You can look around and see examples of people who have a lot and are miserable, are tortured in soul, are conflicted, are not happy. There is a greater, higher, better, more certain set of promises for us than these.

Many of these people might have had all of these wonderful physical blessings and not been happy. Why? No relationship with God? You have no capacity. You have no genuine peace.

Peace is a gift of God, and you don't get it out of circumstances. You don't get it out of people relationships. You don't get it out of a bottle of pills.

You don't get it out of substances or substance abuse. It comes in a more certain, higher, grander fashion. But this is the description.

This is the physical, metaphoric picture. The Lord will command blessing on you, verse 8 of Deuteronomy 28. Storehouses, all to which you set your hand, He will bless you in the land which the Lord your God has given you.

This is blessing in our souls. The land that nobody can take from you, you have to give it away. The Lord will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in His ways.

Then all peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they shall fear you. They will respect you. They will leave you alone.

The Lord will grant you plenty of goods in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, in the produce of your ground. Think about this in the spiritual realm. Treasure laid up in heaven.

Isn't that where you would prefer to have it anyway? Do you want to be hanging upside down at the rapture with your checkbook in your hand, trying to bring your bank account and your IRA? Oh, but Lord, I invested in it for 35 years. I can't leave this now. And here you are with your hand gripping your gold coins or whatever it is you've invested in, and you're upside down.

The Lord's calling us home. Oh, but can't I bring this? I think of how long I worked for it. It's ridiculous.

Invest in the future kingdom where these things that are spiritual and enjoyed in the soul now become tangible again in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus, in the kingdom of the Father in the ages that are to come. Why struggle for stuff you can't keep instead of gaining things you can never lose? This is the picture. The Lord will grant you plenty of goods.

The Lord will open to you, verse 12, His good treasure, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season, to bless all the work of your hand. You will lend to many nations, and you won't borrow. You will be the banker.

You will be the one to whom people resort in time of need because you have an abundance and a super abundance. And what a pleasure it is to be able to provide and be able to give and be able to bless others because you have more than your minimum requirements. The Lord will make you the head and not the tail.

You shall be above only and not beneath. Remember that particular phrase, above and not beneath, because we're going to see it coming up in Amos shortly, that concept. If you heed, notice, how many times does He return? This is conditional.

There is an if here. If. We will inherit if we patiently continue in well-doing and seek for glory, honor, and immortality.

That's the path to the abundant eternal life. It's a big if. If you heed the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today and are careful, are diligent, are faithful to observe them.

So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day to the right or to the left to go after other gods to serve them. Now what is rife in Samaria in the days of Jeroboam II? It is the exact diametric polar opposite of what God called them to back when the covenant was established and rehearsed and reiterated by Moses. So, verse 15, it shall come to pass if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, all of the following curses, all the way down, here is the list of covenant facts.

Here is what will happen. This is what the contract calls for if you do not obey. If you ignore, if you take lightly, if you blow off and do your own thing, here's what's coming.

As goes the nation in the Old Testament, so goes the soul of the believer in the New Testament. This is what will happen in your soul. This is what will happen in your life.

This is what will happen in your relationships, in your endeavors. Talk about wonderful luscious fruit turning to ashes in the mouth and to dirt in the hand. Here's what's coming.

Cursed you will be in the city. Cursed you will be in the country. Cursed will be your basket.

Cursed will be your kneading bowl. Cursed will be the fruit of your body and the produce of

your land. Do you wonder why children are suffering in this country despite our alleged prosperity, despite our scientific advances and our allegedly wonderful healthcare system? Why are children bearing the brunt of violence in our cities, of disease throughout our land? Measles is coming back up.

Super bugs are coming to prominence and antibiotics won't fix it. And when we throw every other antibiotic we have at these things, now we're destroying the beneficial flora in the digestive tract because it's kind of like chemotherapy. Chemotherapy, trying to kill the aggressive growing cancer cells, we kill other growing cells.

Everything gets hit with the same treatment, thus your hair falls out, thus you can't heal up when you've got a wound because anything that grows gets attacked. It's a broad spectrum solution. It's a sledgehammer trying to kill ants.

And how much other do you smash in the process of trying to kill this scattered enemy? This is what happens with antibiotics. You take antibiotics for very long, the good bugs die. Bugs that you were born with in your digestive tract that you can't get back from a probiotic, that you can't get back from the foods that you eat.

Your mama gave them to you when you were in the womb and you killed them. It is extremely difficult to repopulate. There are over 250 different varieties of bacteria that grow in our gut and enable us to digest the variety of foods that we eat.

And you start slaughtering those and others take their place that feed on sugars. In fact, and on bad kinds of foods, they're beginning to suspect that appetite and cravings, that there is a connection and that these colonies of bacteria actually send signals back through the feedback mechanism to the brain. And when people crave cupcakes and crave Twinkies and crave food that is bad for them, that this is incited by the bacteria who have found a way, just like viruses, exploit the mechanics of the body.

These colonies of bad bacteria, fat-producing bacteria, make you fat bacteria, have found a way to send messages back up to the brain, eat more junk food, eat more chips, eat more ice cream, eat more Twinkies, eat more of the stuff that feeds them. And it's a circular situation where they displace and out-reproduce those that are necessary. There is a mounting body of evidence that, like so many other things, these microbes have found a way to subvert the body's otherwise healthy systems.

Well, we bring it on ourselves. We excessively enjoy prosperity, physical prosperity, at the expense of spiritual life and discipline, and this is what happens. Cursed you shall be in the fruit of your body and the produce of your land, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks.

The very prosperity curses you. It turns into a curse. The multiplication winds up being a curse.

Well, now we've got too much of this. We have too much of that. It is displacing other things

that we need.

Boy, if you want an idea of what can happen, if you get a chance to read or listen to, as I am doing now for the second time, the book 1493, everything that came from the Columbian Exchange, you want to know how prosperity can blight and curse you, how the appearance of earthworms in a land that has existed by terraced farming and solid terraces that hold the water and hold the crops on these steep mountainsides, and earthworms ride in and the root balls of imported deals and take over and perforate and do their little earthworm thing to all the terraces, and now the next big rain comes and it all goes downhill because the earthworms perforated it all. They turned what was solid into a sponge, and it soaks up the water and slides down the hill, and now you've got nothing except silt down in the lands where now you can't even grow rice in the flats because it's all silted up and you can't control the water anymore. Prosperity seeming, isn't this great that we can grow rubber trees in China? Not so much.

Anyway, that's a whole different subject. But the curse on those who reject and disrespect the glory of God is intense, and this is what happens in our souls. We can't enjoy our prosperity.

Our prosperity turns into cursing. Cursed when you come in. Cursed when you go out.

The Lord will send on you, verse 20, cursing, confusion, and rebuke in all that you set your hand to do until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly because of the wickedness of your doings in which you have forsaken me. This isn't unbelievers. These are people who had covenant relationship with God.

You can't forsake a thing unless you started out with it, right? You forsake someone that you used to be related to. You forsake something that you used to be connected with. You have forsaken me.

The Lord will make the plague cling to you until He has consumed you from the land which you are going to possess. The Lord will strike you. This seems kind of mean, doesn't it? The Lord will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation, with severe burning fever, with the sword and scorching and mildew.

You notice this is from the micro to the macro. You're going to be attacked by the tiniest little bugs and you're going to be attacked by big guys with swords. Mildew, pursue you until you perish.

The microscopic world is going to be your enemy. And in your soul, what is the equivalent? What's the metaphorical value of this for us? What are seemingly small problems that shouldn't even be visible are going to grow and appear out of nowhere and blight life. Why? It is a promise of God.

Is God just being mean? Why can't you just let me do my idolatry? Why can't you just let me do my taking advantage of others and my disregard of your commands and your precepts and your statutes? Why can't I just love the things of the world instead of loving the things that

pertain to you? Because we are related to God. If some other child wants to go and desecrate and defile and vandalize, that's on him. But my child isn't going to do that.

I'm responsible for that child. I claim responsibility for that child. And when that child malfunctions, I will deal with that child because I am that child's father.

This is God's relationship to them and to us. He claims us. We represent him.

We bear his name. And if God's Israelite covenant people begin to commit these whoredoms and idolatries and perversions and defilements, that's God's name they're bearing and carrying. And God says, I will not let my name be dragged through the mud in this fashion.

You agreed. You entered into this voluntarily. You adopted the covenant relationship.

And there are clauses in the contract. It's a contract. You signed it.

This is like a lease. This is like a mortgage. This is like a loan with the bank.

You agreed to pay. What's going to happen if you don't pay? You sign that 22% credit card, and you don't pay off the balance each month. You agreed that you would pay 22% interest on the outstanding balance.

Well, but that's rapacious. That's too much. I don't like that consequence.

What did you sign the contract for? Because you knew that it conferred privileges and blessings that you wanted at the time. And by the same token, we know that relationship with God is the only means to eternal life, but you don't just claim the benefits and ignore the downside if you decide that you're going to go your own way. This is what Israel did.

This is what they are doing in the days of Jeroboam II. This is why Jonah prophesied. This is why Hosea prophesied.

This is why Amos prophesied. The Lord will strike you, your heavens over your head. Look in verse 23.

The heavens which are over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you iron. Sky of bronze, dirt that is unyielding, unprofitable. You can't grow crops out of iron.

The Lord will change the rain of your land to powder and dust. Think about your soul. The refreshing, the renewal, the restorative benefits of living water don't come.

Ground that has the rain. Remember Hebrews 6? The ground that has the rain coming upon it many times and produces only thorns. You're not going to get rain anymore.

You're going to get fire. Fit for burning and near to a curse. Not more rain.

Well, if I just watered this some more, maybe the thorns will go away. We're going to see

something about thorns later as well. Change the rain of your land to powder and dust.

From the heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed. This is the people of God, destroyed. You know what the word for destroy is in Greek, in the New Testament? Apollumi.

Destruction is Apollia. You know what Judas' name is throughout the New Testament? The son of Apollia, the son of destruction. Don't think because you're a believer you will not be destroyed, that you will not bring it down on your own head by disregard, disrespect and disobedience.

The Old Testament is bigger than the New Testament. Did you ever notice that? How many books in the Old Testament? Pop quiz. How many books? 39.

How many books in the New Testament? How many big Isaiah-type books? How many Psalm-type books do you have in the New Testament? Just take your Bible and split it at the interface between Malachi and Matthew and what do you get? Now mine's full of helps. It's probably a little bit deceptive. All of this back here is Thompson stuff.

This is the Bible proper. And you get to Matthew. There's the proportion, Old Testament, New Testament, and God gave it to us.

Why? All these things, all of these pages, all of these 1,300-odd pages in the Old Testament are written for our instruction in the same way that Amos' prophecy that we looked at last time in chapter 2, all of these pronouncements of judgment on the nations were written for Israel's instruction, for Judah's instruction. That's what we're reading in Deuteronomy chapter 28. Well, if we pay attention and learn from the mistakes of others, we will not find ourselves ruling the day of the Lord's return.

Do you really want to be regretful on the day when the Lord Jesus returns? Notice, by the way, the proportion of blessings to curses in Deuteronomy 28. The blessings extend from, really, verse 2 through verse 14. The curses begin at verse 15 and go all the way to verse 68.

Warning, danger, Will Robinson, danger, danger. Rebuke, correction, instruction in righteousness. That's what this Old Testament Scripture is.

That's the value of our Kings and Prophets study. I was looking back. You realize we've been doing this study now for over two years, about two and a half years.

We started back, actually, in the late fall of 2012, 2013, 2014, and we're in the spring now, close, of 2015. Why? Why is there so much material in the Bible on this? Why so much detailed rehearsal of the history of Israel? Go thou and don't do likewise. Be admonished, be warned.

These things are written for our instruction. Well, just quickly survey the rest of this. The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies, verse 25.

You'll go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them. It is the reverse. It is the

polar opposite of all of the blessings.

Conferred upon the obedient. Your carcasses shall be food for the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and no one shall frighten them away. Isn't that awful? Not only are you a carcass, not only are your eyes being picked out by the vultures and the buzzards and the carrion birds, but nobody even comes and shoos them away.

You don't even get that consideration. They just make a meal of your rotting flesh. This is insult added to injury.

You're already dead, but even your memory is polluted. When people come by you, they don't see a memorial saying, What a wonderful person. There are still carrion birds picking what's left of your flesh off the bones anytime someone revisits your former existence.

You're a blight and a bad memory to anybody who knew you, is the idea. The Lord will strike you with the boils of Egypt, with tumors, with the scab and with the itch from which you cannot be healed. Seriously? The Lord will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of heart.

When I was a teenager, looking at the unknown landscape over the horizon from where I stood at the age of 15 and 16, trying to figure out what am I going to do. I'm going to be leaving my home. I won't have the known requirements of high school and my job and the things my parents require.

I won't live here. I won't be here. What will I do? Where will I go? What will I become? How do I know the right decisions to make? How do I know the people to have relationships with and find a girl to marry and so on? It's just all beyond.

It's outside my field of vision. Well, the last thing I want to anticipate is it's all going to be tragically, catastrophically bad. I will have the wrong job.

I will choose the wrong education. I will go in the wrong direction. I will be with the wrong people.

It's going to just go horribly, irreversibly wrong. What a blessing it was to me as a young person to place my life and my fate in the hands of my Heavenly Father who loved me, who cared for me, and who orchestrated for me the most wonderful life. My pastor at the time told me, as I am telling you, if you commit your way to the Lord, He will bless it in ways you could have never anticipated, could have never figured out.

My pastor told me, from the Word of God, he said, you will have friends that will be friends for life. You will have relationships that will last in this life and beyond. God will bless you in your profession.

He will bless you in your basket and your kneading bowl and all of these uncountable ways. And

by way of personal testimony, he has absolutely done so beyond what I could ask or think. And I was told before it all began, this is what God will do if you will just seek, if you will just pursue, if you will heed His commands and try to live in the light of His Word.

And He absolutely does so. You see it in the record of the Bible. You see it in the record of the lives of people who have taken God up on His promise and have trusted His Word.

It is absolutely true. Regardless of how the actual circumstances in the soul, it is immeasurably great. If you don't, if you decide you've got a better plan, you're smarter than the Lord God in heaven.

You've got a superior set of goals. Your values and your moral standards are better than His. You've got it figured out.

The fruit is dangling from the tree, and it is desirable to make one wise. I will be like the Most High. I can figure out things for myself.

Eat the fruit, the serpent says. And you do it. You bite long and deep.

Here you go. Just stand by, because this is what it will be. Boils of Egypt.

Madness, blindness, and confusion of heart in verse 28. Confusion of heart. There is nothing worse in this life than not knowing what to do.

No option. If you grope, you will grope at noonday as a blind man gropes in darkness. You will not prosper in your ways.

You will be only oppressed and plundered continually, and no one will deliver you. You'll betroth a wife, but another man will lie with her. You'll build a house, but you will not dwell in it.

You'll plant a vineyard, but you'll not gather its grapes. Why? You have voluntarily, with malice of forethought and pure intent, cut yourself off from the source of life and light. You did it yourself.

What do you expect? There will only be darkness if you cut yourself off from light. There will only be death and decay if you cut yourself off from light. God is the one, sole, creative source of those things.

So you build and it falls apart. You plant, you don't gather. Your ox will be slaughtered before your eyes.

You will not eat of it. Your donkey will be violently taken away from before you and shall not be restored to you. Your sheep will be given to your enemies.

You shall have no one to rescue. Verse 32. Your sons and your daughters will be given to another people, cursing on children, cursing by association.

You remove God from your household. Your children will suffer for your sake. Your eyes will look and fail with longing for them all the day long.

There shall be no strength in your hand. A nation whom you have not known shall eat the fruit of your land and the produce of your labor, and you shall be only oppressed and crushed continually. By the way, when you look through history and you see children that have been enslaved, been carried off from their continent and their land and oppressed and under the foot of others, and we say, oh, isn't that awful? Go look at the civilization from which they came and the choices that the parents and those societies and those cultures made.

Why do you think all of the South American natives were slaughtered by disease and by invasion? Why do you think African cultures were slaughtered by disease and invasion and enslaved? Africa had contact with the Middle East. The word of God was known down there. What happened? Oh, we've got a better way.

And what happened? The same curses came upon those societies and those cultures and those civilizations. You don't see these things happening to vibrant, God-fearing, Bible-thumping cultures and civilizations ever. Ever.

It is when an entire nation and an entire culture and an entire civilization goes completely down the road to immorality, extols that which God condemns, that these things happen. And it is consistent throughout history. The Lord will strike you in the knees and on the legs with boils which cannot be healed.

Verse 35. Well, read all the way. That's only half of the chapter.

Read down to the end. It only gets worse. This is what Amos is talking about.

This is what God is reminding the people of Israel and the people of Judah about. Did I not tell you? Are you not taking this seriously? Do you think I was just fooling? I was just making empty promises when I gave you that there's just as much divine force and power behind the positive blessing clauses as there is behind the negative cursing clauses. It's the same God with the same power and the same standards and the same righteousness.

He's not just going to do the first part and blow off the second part. He is just as dedicated to fulfilling every clause in the covenant. Well, this should give us pause for thought because what was true in Israel in the Old Testament is true in our human soul today.

It's the same God with the same standards and the same dedication to fulfilling His promises. Do you want to claim the positive promises of God? Just remember He is every bit as dedicated to fulfilling the negative promises. Every bit.

He's not any less energetic. In fact, He may be more so when the wrath of God comes upon sons of disobedience. He's not fooling around.

He's not kidding. Why do you think the Old Testament is so big? Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll get back to the book of Amos and see what turn does God take having given chapter 1, having given chapter 2 and those curses on the nations and then turning it to Judah and Israel.

What's the rest of the book going to look like in terms of message? We'll see that when we come back.