

Kings and Prophets 15-03-06b

We're in Amos chapter 4, and we're looking at the Results of apathy, indifference, outright disobedience, and idolatry in the northern kingdom of Israel in the days of Jeroboam the second and God's final appeal to his people. There is a structure, loose structure, if you will, to this book. We've already seen the introduction in chapter 1 and the woes to the nations, if you will, in chapter 2, culminating in the hook, the surprise at the end that Judah and Israel come under the greatest condemnation of any of these nations that they thought were so evil.

But hang on and strap in. I went a little bit long in the first session, so we're going to move quickly here in the second, and I'll try to make up for lost time. In chapter 3, you see it begins with, Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O children of Israel.

Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you. You have in verse 11 of that chapter, Therefore thus says the Lord God. In verse 12, Thus says the Lord.

In chapter 4, Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, you heifers of Bashan. He is going to say in chapter 5, Hear this word which I take up against you, a lamentation, O house of Israel. In verse 16 of that chapter, Therefore the Lord God of hosts, the Lord says this.

You have these markers that denote sections of the message, fresh introductions, fresh approaches, fresh perspectives, and they are meaningful. People in the ancient world who didn't read the way we read, they didn't text, they didn't have printing presses and books and movable type, they were accustomed from very early age to organizing and retaining information that they heard proclaimed and spoken, and these markers would have been meaningful. It would have resonated in the same way that you see a chapter marker in your Bible when they say, Hear the word of the Lord, they know that's a fresh start, and they organize and store and process the sections in that way.

It's just it's something we can't even enter into anymore. We're so far from the days of oral communication. In fact, we're getting away from the days of any kind of meaningful communication.

It's pretty dismal for those of us who are amateur philologists. It's just becoming increasingly painful to even exist in a world where the language is so effectively slaughtered on a daily basis. Anyway, so we pick up in chapter 3 here.

Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O children of Israel. What word? Well, we just we heard the end of it in chapter 2. Remember that? The very fulsome description of what they are guilty of under the Covenant, part of which we reviewed in Deuteronomy chapter 28. I wish we had time to review the whole thing, but it's it's pretty depressing and dismal, so half of it in the cursing section is enough.

But remember all of those thus says the Lord's in chapter 2 culminating with verse 13, I am

weighed down by you as a cart full of sheaves is weighed down. This is in the vernacular today. We'd say, you know, you've this is the straw that breaks the camel's back.

This is one brick too many. This is you've you're and imagine the omnipotent God of the universe saying I am crushed under the weight of your iniquities. There's a bit of a hint of the foreshadowing of what's going to happen to the Lord Jesus.

When prophetically speaking, it says I am a worm and no man. I am crushed. I am crushed under the weight of the transgressions and iniquities of the people.

I am weighed down by you as a cart full of sheaves is weighed down. Therefore, flight shall perish from the swift. The strong shall not strengthen his power.

The things on which you rely will fail. You are so sure that you had a plan, you had a provision, you had a go-to in the time of adversity. People think well when the chips are down, I've got this, I've got that.

God says you're relying on your speed. Your speed is going to fail. You're relying on your strength.

Your strength won't be there. The mighty will not deliver himself. Verse 15, He shall not stand who handles the bow.

The swift of foot shall not escape, nor shall he who rides a horse deliver himself. All of the different varieties of self-sufficiency. Well, I'm smart enough.

I'm clever enough. I'm personable enough. I'm charismatic enough.

I'm accomplished enough. I'm educated enough. I'm flexible enough.

I'll land on my feet. No, you won't. Because the Lord God of creation in heaven is against you.

Who do you think created flight and swiftness and strength and horses and all of these other forms of deliverance. God gave them and God can take them away and he will. It's a promise and it's not just that they leave.

It is the confidence that you place in them is crushed, is disappointed. It is the shock of loss. You rely on a spouse and the spouse is gone.

You rely on children and the children are gone. You rely on provision financially and it's evaporated. It's eviscerated.

It goes away through forces beyond your control. You rely on the culture. You rely on the government.

You rely on your pension. You rely on whatever it might be. It's gone.

It's a promise that in the time of judgment these things will fail. Now, I'll tell you the grandest, greatest, most awesome and tragic fulfillment of this is all of us as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, our Christian community, our Christian fellowship, our Christian culture that is expecting everything to be great and wonderful when the Lord Jesus returns and because of idolatry, because of misdirection and a self-centered pseudo-christianity, all of that that they are relying on at the return of the Lord is going to be gone. And at the judgment seat of Christ it is there's going to be a giant flash fire and people are going to be standing there naked and ashamed with nothing.

Don't let that be us. We know better. We are hearing the warning.

Let's listen to the words of the prophet and not find some way to construe them or apply them to somebody else. We want to look and make sure there is no place in our lives. Don't just look at one thing that's going right.

How about the 11 other areas of life? Let's examine each area, each responsibility for stewardship, each responsibility for accountability, each of the commands of God that pertain to us to love Him and to love one another, to pursue those things to which we are enjoined and exhorted and not fail, not fall short, not become complacent, much less apathetic, indifferent, and disobedient because expectations and confidence will be disappointed and in a tragic, catastrophic, and irreversible way. There's no coming back from this. There's no coming back from it.

It is when it leaves it's gone. The most courageous, verse 16, Amos chapter 2, The most courageous men of might shall flee naked in that day, says the Lord. It's not just them.

It's us. Chapter 3, Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O children of Israel. That ought to strike a chill into their hearts.

The Lord God of Israel is speaking a word against you. What are you? What's the remedy for that? What's the comeback for that? Other than repentance and throwing yourself on the mercy of God. What other? What plan have you got that's going to counter that? Well, the Lord God in heaven is against me, but I have a cunning plan.

I've got resources. I've got strategies. I've got some stuff he doesn't know about.

You know, he and I, when I contend with the Lord, I'll come out on top. I mean, who are you kidding? It's just crazy. It's nuts.

Hear the word that the Lord has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family, which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, Notice the shift there from the third person to the first person. This is the identity of the messenger with the message. The angel of the Lord speaks in the first person for God.

The prophet of the Lord speaks in the first person for God. He says, hear the word of the Lord,

and then he's the telephone, and God speaks through him in the first person. So he says, hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, the whole family, which I, the Lord God, brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, you only have I known of all the families of the earth.

Therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities. They're saying, well, I like that when he was condemning and judging Egypt. I liked it when he was pronouncing curses and judgment on Moab and Edom and Ammon and the Philistines and all the rest of those.

Why is he coming down so hard on me? You only have I known. They're not signatories on the contract. They are not my children, and I am not their father.

We are not in relationship like I am with you, God says. Now look at this. This is interesting.

We're going to slow down and take a quick look at this because this is representative of everything that follows. Can two walk together unless they are agreed? Who are the two? God and Israel. How can you be accompanied by God if you're wanting to go some other way? You think God's going to change his path and accommodate us? Two can't walk together unless they agree.

Will a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey? Will a young lion cry out of his den if he has caught nothing? There is a reason why this is arguing from effect back to cause. If you see two people walking together, it's because there is a prior agreement that they have the same destination. That is something you can deduce by looking at the two of them.

The two men on the road to Emmaus had decided they got together and said, hey, I think I'll go to Emmaus. Well, you know, I need to go down there. I'll go with you.

I want to get out of Jerusalem anyway. Crucifixion of the Lord. I'm all torn up.

Let's get out of town. Let's get away from this. They agreed.

And when you see the two walking on the road, you can deduce from that effect that there was a cause. There was a prior agreement made to travel together on the road. When you hear a lion roaring, guess what? He's not stalking the prey.

He has the prey. You can deduce when you hear the lion roar and the young lion in his den warning all comers, get away. I've got this dead gazelle and I'm going to feast on it to my heart's content.

Get lost. Get away. When you hear the young lion roaring in his den, what can you deduce? He has captured his prey and he is now defending it and feasting on it.

From the effect, you argue back to the cause. This is what this section means. Will a bird fall into a snare on the earth where there is no trap for it? Birds flying along, all of a sudden, he just, pow, smacks to the earth.

Help, help. I've fallen and I can't get up. Why would a bird not be able to fly away from the ground? Because somebody set a snare.

If you see a bird that is ensnared in a snare, somebody set the trap. This is arguing from design to a designer. I see a trap and I see a bird caught.

There's obviously purpose in this design. Somebody made this trap. Effect, there must be a cause.

See the logic? God is going to such lengths to appeal to his people and he says, look, it's like Jesus saying, you know, have you ever seen the sky in the morning and say, you know, there's going to be red sky in the morning, sailor take warning. When you see, you know, you make deductions based on things that you see. That's what he's doing here.

Will a bird fall in the snare where there is no trap for it? Will a snare spring up from the earth if it has caught nothing at all? Do traps spring for no reason? No, they're there. They've got to trigger. You know, you set a claymore, it doesn't just go off of its own accord.

It goes off when somebody hits the trip wire. Grenades go off when somebody pulls the pin. If you've made a, you know, your improvised explosive devices have a trigger.

Well, they don't just randomly go off. They go off when somebody hits the trigger. This is the idea.

If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid? Why? Well, that's odd. Somebody's blowing a trumpet. By the way, I was at the convention in Nashville for the national religious broadcasters last week and at the end of I think the second day, I think at the end of Wednesday, all of a sudden there was this enormous trumpet sound.

I half expected to go sailing through the ceiling. It was a really, a really stirring sound when it is reverberating the shirt on your chest. You know, it's like being at a vocal majority concert when they hit that last note.

All of those guys are aiming their entire being at you and singing from their toes up through their diaphragm and and projecting those vibrations. And they've got this major chord that they're hitting and it just gets louder and louder and louder. Pretty soon your clothing vibrates.

You know, your glasses start moving on your nose. Well, this is what I heard at the end of the day on Wednesday. And I looked over and cat a corner from our booth are these two guys blowing shofars.

I want to tell you in person up close the blast of a shofar is like nothing you've ever heard. It's like nothing I've ever heard. I hope to hear it one of these days soon, but I'm telling you that is not to be missed.

If you find somebody that knows how to blow a shofar and they're blowing it, you want to be

there. And you want to be sure you've got your accounts in order with the Lord because you might just go right on up. Trumpet blast.

What's it talking about here? Trumpet blast. If there's a trumpet, you know, if an alarm goes off, if you hear a siren, did the driver just say, hey, let's run the siren. That'll be fun.

Effect means there's a cause. If somebody's blowing the trumpet of alarm in a city, it means there's danger. It's an alarm.

You need to take action. You need to protect yourself. Find your kids.

Go to a safe place. Right? That's what this whole section is arguing here. If a trumpet is blown in the city, will not the people be afraid? If there is a calamity in a city, will not the Lord have done it? If there is a calamity and you're the people of God, is God not in it in some way? Is there not a reason for it? Think, people, think.

That's what the prophet is saying here. Surely the Lord God does nothing unless he reveals his secret to his servants, the prophets. A lion has roared.

Who will not fear? This prophecy being delivered by Amos is a wake-up call. And he is essentially saying, you know, the Lord has taken this guy that's not a prophet or the son of a prophet. He has sent him to you with this message.

Think. This is an effect. Would there be a cause? Is there something going on here that maybe we should be alerted and alarmed about? Hello, knock, knock, knock.

Anybody home? Lights are on, but, you know, no movement. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. I don't hear a chair scraping.

I don't hear any footsteps coming to the front. Hello, right? That's, I mean, it's down at the most basic, simple level. Look, people, there's no effect without a cause.

There's no design without a designer. Who is talking here? Amos just decide that he liked an audience and he's going to go out and just make something up so they'll listen. Proclaim in the palaces at Ashdod and in the palaces in the land of Egypt and say, assemble on the mountains of Samaria.

See great tumults in her midst and the oppressed within her. Remember now, whether this is Ashdod or Assyria, there's a little bit of a text issue. It doesn't really matter.

He's calling to two of the people that got condemned in chapter two. They got a woe song sung to him. And he's saying assemble because the guys that are last in the sequence are going to be first in the judgment.

He says, you know, he said bad that, you know, for three offenses and for four, these guys are going to be judged. But he's calling them to come witness the judgment on Samaria because

they're going to get judged first. Egypt and Ashdod slash Assyria are still going to be standing there when Assyria is, when Samaria is a smoking ruin.

They're thinking, oh, well, let me just wait till God runs through the list of six before he comes to us. He says, no, I'm calling them as witness. They're going to watch you go up in flames.

They're going to watch you get your judgment first. The last shall be first. Congratulations.

Why? Tumults are amidst and oppressed within her for they do not know to do right. Says the Lord. These who store up violence and robbery in their palaces.

They're enjoying luxuries. But it's built on a foundation of violence and theft. It is illegitimate.

It is illicit. It is ungodly. It is immoral.

It is built on oppression of others. Therefore, verse 11, thus says the Lord God, An adversary shall be all around the land. He shall sap your strength from you and your palaces shall be plundered.

Remember Deuteronomy 28? This is just a, this is just like a little footnote, a little superscript. Hey, ding, ding, ding. Remember, remember the covenant? Remember the curses on disobedience? This is just a footnote here.

Refer back to the whole chapter. Thus says the Lord. Why does he keep repeating thus says the Lord? Thus says the Lord.

This is the authority of the message. This is the power for execution of these judgments. It isn't thus says Amos.

Thus says a social critic. Thus says a moral arbiter. This is the Lord God.

He's got the power to make all of this happen and he will. As a shepherd takes from the mouth of a lion two legs or a piece of an ear. You know why they did this.

You remember back in the story of Jacob when he was working for Laban and he tells Laban, I want to say Genesis 19. I didn't actually go back and look this up. I think it's later than that though.

It's in the 20s. But he's working for Laban and he says, I never brought you a sheep. I bore the loss of it myself.

Shepherds when they were working as under shepherds for someone else had to prove that they weren't selling the master's sheep on the black market and saying, oh, you know lions got five of them when they actually sold them, you know to a passing caravan or something. So if a lion got it, he had to get the pieces and show him, look, here's what's left of your lamb. Kind of like when the brothers brought the bloody coat to Jacob.

Well, Jacob earlier had talked to Laban and said, look, when something got torn and there was a loss in the flocks, I didn't come to you and try to prove it and have you take it off the bill. I bore that loss myself. I've never charged you for the happenstances of loss to disease and predation.

And so what does the shepherd do? Well from what the lion leaves, he picks up a piece of an ear or a couple of bones. That's all that's left to prove that there ever was a lamb to begin with. As a shepherd takes from the mouth of the lion two legs or a piece of an ear, so shall the children of Israel be taken out who dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed and on the edge of a couch.

Right now, beds and couches, this is luxury. They're going to be a gnawed on bone that the lion didn't eat. That's all that's going to be left of them.

It's just, it is the complete polar opposite of their alleged prosperity. It's a false prosperity and instead of you know, finding a drumstick bone on the corner of their couch or on the corner of the bed, I'll never forget when I was a little kid, my dad got a new station wagon. We got a Chevy 2 Nova station wagon.

It's the greatest thing because it had an extra speaker for the AM radio in the back. It had a fader. It had power brakes, power steering.

It had been a demo car and it was a really wonderful car. It was nice. I mean, we had had kind of an old car before that.

The rest of the kids are too little to remember. When he brought that Chevy 2 home, that was the greatest thing. Well, first thing I want to do is hop over in the back because that's, you know, that's where the kids ride before the days of car seats and belts and you know, you go over in the back and had him turn the radio back there and I could hear, you know, Vic Damone, these are the guys singing out that, out the speaker in the back.

And I thought, boy, this is the nicest. It was so clean. It had that new smell and everything.

And it had a, it had a plastic mat in the back, you know, to keep everything nice. And I was back there just soaking up the newness of the car. And, uh, I was kind of crawling around in there and I felt something kind of icky and I hate it.

I always have on my, on my, on my hands. I mean, it just, I mean, it's, it's a, it's a real, it's, it's beyond, hey, I need to go wash my hands in a minute. It's like, oh my gosh, I'm, I got to do this right now.

Jelly between my fingers. I can't even concentrate. Anyway, I, I, all of a sudden I had this ick.

I thought, what is, where did this come from? This is a brand new car. Well, I peeled back the, uh, I peeled back the plastic and there was a, a gnawed up drumstick in this brand new car. It was a chicken bone.

I don't know how long it had been there, but it was just nasty, greasy, just this half eaten in this, but it was a demo car. And I guess somebody taking a ride and let their kids back there. And it must've had some Kentucky fried chicken or something and left them.

And, and the detailing crew that did the car missed it. And so here's this chicken bone. And it's, I never could think about that car afterward.

Even I inherited, that was my first car when I was driving to work and so on. And the, the transmission of the engine did this and it all leaked out. It would shift into first gear.

You're going on the road 55 miles an hour. All of a sudden it shifts into first gear and I'm prying my face off the windshield and you know, getting a, I used to carry cases of transmission fluid to pour into that car. Anyway, I say all of that to say this, that the bones and the piece of an ear that you find, this is a tattered remnant of what used to be prosperity.

You know, the sheep who, what's Amos's job. What kind of guy is he? He is a herder of the sacrificial sheep. He's, this is the upper class.

This is the best. He knows what happens when you lose a sheep. He has seen this at firsthand.

And he says like a shepherd, uh, that rescues from the mouth of the lion, two legs are a piece of an ear. That's all that's going to be left of your nation. You who have been munching on mutton and feasting on sheep on your couch and on the corner of your bed, you know, you have breakfast in bed, supper in bed.

You're gnawing on these things. You're going to be the bone out in the field that the lion has been gnawing on right now. You're in luxury.

You're gnawing on it. You're going to be the nod upon. You're going to be the old, cold, nasty chicken bone, sheep bone.

So shall the children of Israel be taken out who dwell in Samaria in the corner of the bed and on the edge of a couch. That's where you're dwelling now. But the few of you that are left, you're going to be the little tattered piece of an ear that the shepherd is going to say, well, you know, there is still a little bit of Israel left.

This is what didn't get consumed and destroyed by God's judgment. This leg bone here and testify against the house of Jacob says the Lord God, the God of hosts that in the day I punish Israel for their transgressions. I will also visit destruction on the altars of Bethel, the altars of Bethel.

What was the first altar at Bethel? How did it get its name? Who named it here and testify against the house of Jacob? This is like a chiasm here. Jacob sees angels ascending and descending and sets up a stone at Bethel, right? And that's the altar. That's the covenant with God inception, the house of Jacob.

Now, what is it? What kind of altar is at Bethel now? It's Jeroboam's golden calf idolatry. It's just a perversion and a distortion and a horrible, uh, flaunting, uh, sin in the face of God. He says, I will destroy that altar and the horns of the altar shall be cut off.

Remember how many, how many different times Joab and others would go and lay hold of the horns of the altar? This was a place of deliverance. You go and lay hold of the horns. Well, people would go and lay hold of the horns of the altar at Bethel and pray to the golden calf.

And God says, there's not even going to be a handhold there. I'm going to cut the horns off. You'll, you'll grab for something and it won't be there.

It just summarizes everything that he has said earlier in the chapter. Um, the horns will be cut off and fall to the ground. I will destroy the winter house along with the summer house.

What's the difference in a summer house and a winter house? When is the weather good? Summer house, weather's not so good. Where do you go? I will resort. I will, I will retreat.

I will find comfort and protection in the winter at my winter house. Well, you're not going to have a house in the summer in times of prosperity, and you're not going to have a house in the winter when things are bad. There will be no place to go.

The house of ivory shall perish and the great houses shall have an end, says the Lord. Hear the word of the Lord. Chapter four, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountains of Samaria, who oppressed the poor, who crushed the needy, who say to your husbands, bring wine, let us drink.

This is how much I'm going to say about this because it's time for us to close for tonight. Cows is a feminine, common feminine, plural. These are heifers.

That's why it says husbands later on. Who's kind of running the show now? The women. This is sort of a Jezebel model.

And God says, hear the word, you women, you fatted cows of Bashan, you prosperous, well-to-do chicks on the mountains of Samaria, you're up on high, you're prominent, you are dominant, you are lording it over, who are oppressing the poor. This word oppress actually means to deceive and cheat, to take advantage of the poor. And you can do this even in the act of doing charity.

You build your reputation, you, oh, I've got my foundation and I help the poor, and you build yourself up with your treatment of the poor. They're a means to an end for you. You don't have a genuine concern for them.

Your agent said you needed a cause, it'll make you look good, you'll be more popular, be more likely to win your next award. So, oh yeah, well, save the orphans, whatever it might be. You cheat and take advantage of and mistreat the poor, who crush the needy.

And this means to crush. Who say to your husbands, notice wine is in italics there, but the word for drink is the word in the passive that means to be drunk. When you put this in the nifal, which is the passive, it always means to be drunk.

So what they are saying to their husbands is, come on, let's get plastered. That's what it literally means in Hebrew. Husband, let's get slockered.

Let's get hammered. Their husbands are a means of providing them excess of self-involved pleasure. The Lord God has sworn by His holiness.

Do you think God is put out with this? He has sworn by His holiness, behold, the day shall come upon you when He will take you away. And it says with fishhooks and your posterity with fishhooks. This is not fishhooks.

There's a perfectly good Hebrew word for fishhooks. It's used over in Habakkuk 1.15 or something like that. This is not that word.

This is tzin. This is the word that gives Mount Sinai its name. Remember what Sinai's name comes from? Thorns? Thorns.

Let me close with this. The Assyrians would take their prisoners and do all manner of heinous things to them. They have got inscriptions in the British Museum.

Let me just read you a couple of these. The name of this file is grizzlyassyrian.pdf and it's got pictures and descriptions of these various bas-reliefs that they have found, these monumental pictures, you know, graven in stone. Here's a picture of a bunch of guys hanging from the overhead.

Impaled on stakes, two Assyrian soldiers erect a stake with an impaled naked man beside two others. The heads of these captured men of Lachish sag forward, suggesting they're already dead. This detail comes from a series of reliefs found at Nineveh in which Sennacherib 704 to 68 BC recorded the exploits of his invasion of Judah in 701 BC.

Lachish was among the 46 cities he conquered. These guys are impaled. It's grizzly.

There's a picture below that. Assyrian headhunters gather their trophies in a relief from Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh. Two scribes standing side by side record the number of the enemy slain in a campaign in southern Mesopotamia.

Heads lie in a heap at their feet. The foreground scribe uses pen and ink on a leather scroll. The other scribe writes with a stylus on a hinged writing board coated with wax.

There's a pile of heads down here and these guys are counting coups, so to speak. There's relief after relief after relief in here of these guys. Ancient looters, the Assyrian soldiers carry away their booty after conquering Lachish in 701 BC, depicted in this detail from a relief.

And these guys are carrying off all of the booty. They would take... Let me just read you one thing. The inscriptions and pictorial evidence provide detailed information regarding Assyrian treatment of conquered peoples, their armies, and their rulers.

In his official royal inscriptions, Ashurbanipal calls himself the trampler of all enemies, who defeated his enemies and hung the corpses of his enemies on posts. Nobles and elders of the city came out to me to save their lives. They seized my feet and said, if it pleases you, kill.

If it pleases you, spare. If it pleases you, do what you will. In one case where a city resisted as long as possible instead of immediately submitting, Ashurbanipal proudly records his punishment.

I flayed as many nobles as had rebelled against me and draped their skins over the pile of corpses. Some I spread out within the pile, some I erected on stakes upon the pile. I flayed many right through my land and draped their skins over the walls.

I felled fifty of their fighting men with the sword, burned two hundred captives, defeated in battle on the plain three hundred thirty-two troops on the plain. With their blood I dyed the mountain red like red wool, and the rest of them the ravines and torrents of the mountain swallowed. I carried off captives and possessions.

I cut off the heads of their fighters and built a tower in front of their city. I burned their adolescent boys and girls. In another conflict he felled three thousand of their fighting men, three elephants with the sword, captured many troops alive.

I cut off of some their arms and hands. I cut off of others their noses, ears, and extremities. I gouged out the eyes of many troops.

I made one pile of the living and one of heads. I hung their heads on trees all around the city." And this just goes on and on and on. This is the way the Assyrians treated.

One of their common practices was to lead their captives back. We always say, well, they took the northern Israelites and carried them captive back to Assyria. They would pierce their lips and their noses and their cheeks with thorns, and that is how they led them back.

They didn't put a chain around their neck or manacles on their feet. They would pierce some part of their face with a thorn and have a thong tied to it, and they dragged them back in these caravans with these thorns through their faces. That's the word in this passage.

And it says, you cows of Bashan that are so fat and sassy, you're going to be led like cows through the breach in your walls, through the breach in your defenses, through the slain of your husbands, the piled up heads, the piled up bodies. He will take you away with thorns and your posterity with thorns. Your children, you and your children are going to be led away with these pierced face thorns through the piles of dead bodies and cut off heads that the Assyrians are renowned for.

You will go out through the breach, each one straight ahead of her. This is a line of women and children headed back to Assyria, and you will be cast into Harmon, says the Lord. Harmon isn't a place.

This is the plural word for towers. You've been living on the mountains. You are going to be cast as slaves into the palaces, the strongholds, the fortresses of your enemy.

You've been sitting on your couches and your beds. You're going to be thrown into the palaces and towers and strongholds of your enemy with these hooks in your face, you and your children. It is a graphic reversal.

Why does God use such shocking language? He is trying to penetrate the thick skulls of his. Dullard people. Don't let that be us.

Do we really need God to fulfill these clauses in our souls to recognize that he has a claim on our lives? We owe him everything. And how nuts is it to not go the route of blessing? Do you wonder at the proportion of blessing versus cursing in Deuteronomy 28? Why is that? Well, that's about the proportion of the remnant that's going to be faithful and claim the blessings to the proportion of Israel, generation by generation, that needs the detail of the curses because that's what's coming for them. Don't be the failed majority.

Narrow is the road. Straight is the gate. Few there are that find it.

Be the remnant. Be those who by faith and patience inherit the promises, the positive promises. What sense does it make to have God speak his word against us? It's just crazy.

Remember in the New Testament where it says it would be better for them if they had never heard the word than having heard and responded to fall back into error. You know why that is? Because now God has a claim on your life. We have an obligation, a contractual obligation.

But how much better to be serving out of love than out of obligation to recognize and appreciate the infinitude of blessings that God can grant, that God does grant. And many of us are well aware and well experienced in those realms of blessing. And we've also had our share of discipline.

And how much better to respond at the first rebuke than to go this far down the road? These things are written for us. Amos is speaking the word of the Lord to us. And no matter how far we think we are standing, that he who stands take heed lest he fall.

These branches that were broken out of the tree in Romans so that Gentiles could be grafted in, we can be broken off for the same faithlessness. But if we respond, if we turn, if we listen, we are grafted in again into that tree of life and production and opportunity and blessing. Well, this is the message of Amos.

And it's the last chance they have. This is the final offer. It's this or nothing.

And for so many of these people, it ends up being nothing. How tragic, how needless, how pointless, and how really unwise. Do you seriously think you're going to tilt against the judgment of God and come out on top? It seems so silly to us, but it made great sense to them at the time.

And they sleep in the dust of the ground with no inheritance and no future as a result. That doesn't have to be us. Well, we'll pick up and try to finish up Amos and move to our final prophet from this period next time.

But let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the loving way that you not only teach us and nurture us and instruct us, but you also warn us and rebuke and correct us. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will cause these truths to penetrate in the depths of our soul, give us insight, clarity, a vision to see where we are doing well and also where we are falling short.

Help us to grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus so that we can be suitable representatives as his body on this earth, that we can fulfill your purpose for our lives now and in the ages to come. We know that this will reflect your glory and bring credit to our Savior, the Lord Jesus. And we pray these things in his name.

Amen.