

## A DEADLY TRIO: SELFISHNESS, GREED, AND PRIDE / Sunday, June 21, 2015

### Unifying Topic: **REBUKED FOR SELFISHNESS**

#### Lesson Text

**I. Prosperity As A Test** (Amos 6:4-8)

**II. How To Flunk The Test** (Amos 6:11-13)

**III. How To Pass The Test** (Amos 6:14)

**The Main Thought:** Shall horses run upon the rock? Will one plow there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock: (Amos 6:12, KJV).

**Unifying Principle:** Some people care only about accumulating lavish possessions for themselves and care nothing for those who possess little. What happens to greedy and selfish people? God will dispossess the greedy and selfish and thus demonstrate His justice.

**Lesson Aim:** To explore God's response to injustice as recorded by Amos, so as to teach Christians that God still punishes the unjust people of this world.

**Life Aim:** To teach the people of God that they must commit to generosity and know that God punishes those who are greedy and selfish.

#### HISTORY:

**6:1 Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!**—Here is another Woe, and it's leveled at those living in luxury. The mention of both Zion and Samaria lets us know that this fourth message of condemnation is addressed both Judah and Israel (*primarily to the latter*); for both suffer from the same ailment, i.e. spiritual insensitivity. Zion (Jerusalem), the capital of Judah, and Samaria, the capital of Israel were strong fortresses, easily defended. But pride and self-confidence are never fitting for God's cherished people. The people of Zion mistook God's favor for favoritism, feeling that God certainly would never punish them because they were His chosen. And the people of Samaria felt that even if judgment were to come, they would be delivered because of the mountains that surrounded them like a natural fortress. One trusted in the ease of their comfortable lifestyles and the other in the security of their mountains where the upper class (rulers) resided. It is only the chief place of the nation where justice is administered, depicting pride and a false peace. Great wealth and comfortable lifestyles may make people think they are secure, but God is not pleased if we isolate ourselves from other's needs.

**6:2 Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border?**— All these are great cities; stronger cities than Jerusalem or Samaria that had already been destroyed because of their pride. Calneh—south-central Mesopotamia; Hamath—Syria to the north of Israel; Gath of the Philistines—city southeast of Israel. The question to Israel and Judah is: "*are you any better than these kingdoms, or their border greater than your border?*" Amos calls on the complacent (those who believe they have no cause for concern) to consider the other kingdoms (stronger than they) that had already fallen to Assyria. What happened to them would surely happen to Judah and Israel because their sin was just as great.

**6:3 Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near;**— This is saying, they pushed away all thought of punishment awaiting them, however, by their deed, they brought the Day of Judgment near.

#### LESSON:

#### **Amos 6:4-8 Prosperity As A Test**

**6:4 That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall;**— Ivory was an important luxury, rare and extremely expensive. Instead of mourning and grieving over their sins and those of their nation, the Israelites were treating themselves to the very best of life's pleasures. The "*cream of Israelite society*" laid upon beds of ivory; stretched out on their exquisite couches; and indulged in tender and costly lamb and veal, and mutton and beef.

**6:5 That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David;**— They had the pleasant sounds of music emulating David with instruments of music with chanting sounds of the small harp—inventing their music and instruments that soothed them. In doing so, they displayed a genius and creativity similar to that of King David, but with one great difference, David's music was inspired by God and directed man's heart to praise Him; making man's heart sensitive to God. Their chanting sounds turned man's hearts away from God into their own lusts, making man's heart insensitive to God.

**6:6 That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.** We're still talking about those living in luxury. Their addiction to wine became so great that instead of using glasses, they drink from bowls that were the same type as those used to catch the blood from a sacrificial victim and sprinkle it in worship services. They lavishly anointed themselves with perfume; the chief ointments, but they grieved not for the affliction of Joseph. All of this self-interest and self-indulgence make them spiritually insensitive to the needs of the nation.

These verses (4-6) remind me of people who say we're not going to have an earthquake here or a flood here; people that say it's not coming here or it's not going to be that bad. God wants us to pay attention and care. Can you imagine in your prosperity you're tested? God wants to see what you're doing for others? How we're assisting others or how we're squandering our prosperity for ourselves?

**6:7 Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.** The only cure for the cancer that had eaten away at Israel's heart is radical surgery. Those who have had prominence in ease will have prominence in punishment. They led the way to debauchery; now they lead the way into captivity. The banqueters will pass off the scene.

**6:8 The Lord God hath sworn by himself, saith the Lord the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.** The Lord God who has all power could swear by nobody greater, so He swore by Himself. God not only loathes Jacob's arrogance; but He also hates the palaces in which the people are living, a tangible testimony of their ill-gotten gains. God says "*I will turn over this city and everything in it to her enemies.*"

#### NOT APART OF THE LESSON VERSES 9-10

**6:9 And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die.** The word "if" - "*if there remain ten men in one house*"; meaning, whoever is living in the house will die by the pestilence that comes with war. If there is as few as ten of them left, and even one house, they too will perish for pestilence would catch up with them.

**6:10 And a man's uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is by the sides of the house, Is there yet any with thee? and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the Lord.** The NIV translation may be better understood: *And if the relative who comes to carry the bodies out of the house to burn them asks anyone who might be hiding there, "Is anyone else with you?" and he says, "No," then he will go on to say, "Hush! We must not mention the name of the LORD."* The nearest relative, a man's uncle to whom the right of inheritance belonged cared for the funeral. He took up the dead man, burned him (*because of pestilence*), and brought his bones out of the house. He calls out to the sides (corner) of the house to see if anyone else is hiding in the house (maybe the only one left of the ten), and they will answer "no", he will say "*hush*" for even during a time of grief the people hesitated to speak God's name, for they were not to mention God's name. They feared that they would attract His attention and He would become angrier and send more judgment, since they had broken the covenant and violated their relationship.

## Amos 6:11-13 How To Flunk The Test

**6:11 For, behold, the Lord commandeth, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts.** Remember that everything that's keeping us from God will one day be destroyed. Whatever God commands, He does. The great house with breaches and the little house with clefts will be destroyed. The point of this verse is to show that the judgment of God will fall upon rich and poor alike. Their problem was not necessarily their economic status as they thought, but it was their spirituality.

**6:12 Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock:**– The two questions are rhetorical and demand a negative answer. Horses don't run on rocks, else they will become lame, nor does one plow rocks with oxen, else the plow would be broken. Israel's exercise of justice was absurd as running horses on rocks or plowing rocks with oxen, and to violate the natural law is to reap the consequences of it. This is what Israel has done. They had turned judgment into gall and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock, which refers to Israel turning the Word of God, and all that it promised against themselves instead of for themselves, thereby violating God's justice and righteousness.

**6:13 Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?**– They make their boast; being jubilant in horns; trusting in idols which in reality are non-existent; a thing of nought; a non-thing, or a thing of non-existence. Their confidence and self-perceived strength (referring to military strength) is bound to be shattered because it is groundless.

## Amos 6:14 How To Pass The Test

**6:14 But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the Lord the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hemath unto the river of the wilderness.** God will bring up a nation (which from history we know to be Assyria) against them that will ravish the land from the extreme north of Israel (Hemath) to the extreme south (the river of Arabah).

### SUMMARY:

God's response to those that laid upon beds of ivory, stretched out on couches eating the sumptuous foods, drinking wine out of bowls, anointing themselves with chief ointments, chanting sounds and inventing musical instruments like David, and thinking life is a party held just for them, they will be the first to be taken captive and be removed from their banquets. They will lead the way first. God hates the palaces and abhor the excellence of Jacob. God swore by none other greater than Himself, that He will turn over the city and everything in it to their enemies (**vv.4-8**).

The judgment of God will fall upon the rich and poor alike as the Lord commands. Israel had turned judgment into gall and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock, which refers to Israel turning the Word of God, and all that it promised against themselves instead of for themselves, thereby violating God's justice and righteousness. <sup>1</sup>They had rejoiced in the unimportant things of this world. They were not depending on God's strength, but upon their own strength (**vv.11-13**).

God raises a nation against the house of Israel and they will bitterly afflict and oppress them from their northern boundary to their southern tip; all the way from Hamath to the Brook of Arabah. The Assyrian conquest and oppression would cover the whole land, not just a few isolated cities (**v.14**).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/amos/06.html>  
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>