

- Amos Series, #2

Introduction

- How many of you ever did any Physics at school?
 - maybe brings back bad memories?
- One thing I remember is this law: "Every action has an equal and opposite reaction".
- Reason I remember this from the dim and distant past of my school days is a particular Physics teacher, Mr Bates.
- To demonstrate this fundamental principle he had a pretty memorable experiment: would get on roller skates, take a large brick, and chuck it out the window:
 - as the brick flew out the window, he would move backwards - every action has an equal and opposite reaction...
- One year he got everything set up as normal - opened the window, got on his skates, picked up the brick:
 - only problem was that he threw the brick through the wrong half of the window (where there was now a double thickness of glass)!!!
- Worse - he made the same mistake the next year!!!
- It has meant, however, that I remember the principle!

Actions and Consequences

- Actions have consequences; effects have causes; things don't happen in isolation, but there are connections between events.
- That's essentially what Amos is talking about in the first half of the section we read, mostly from early in chapter 3.
- In all his "does this happen..." or "does that happen..." he is essentially making one point:
 - if something happens, there's a reason for it, something has caused it.
- **Work through vs. 3:3-6, exploring effects and causes.**
- What he's working towards is making it clear that his own prophesying works in the same way:
 - that the prophecy and the judgement go together, and that seeing one allows us to see the other.
- **(3:7,8) "The Sovereign Lord never does anything without revealing his plan to his servants, the prophets. When a lion roars, who can avoid being afraid? When the Sovereign Lord speaks, who can avoid proclaiming his message?"**
- Consequences:
 - sin -> judgement (under-current to whole book);
 - calamity & judgement -> can expect to have revelation of meaning through the prophets (sometimes in particular; most often Scripture opens up general principles of way God works, and leaves us to work out details);
 - prophecy -> God is acting (he is Sovereign - note use of word here - in charge;);
 - hear God's voice -> must speak! (applies to us as much as Amos!)
- That last point is one of our acute needs:
 - we must learn to speak when we hear God's voice, and not fudge, keep people happy, don't upset people; need courage from God...;
 - equally, we can't presume to speak if we are NOT hearing God's voice - must spend time with him, must listen to him, not become lazy in our relationship with him (and that comes close to home for me, and others whose service often involves them speaking for God - SS teachers, elders, and others).

A Worked Example: The Doom of Samaria

- In book of Amos next section builds on the judgement already proclaimed against Israel/Samaria; goes into more specifics; will be further built upon later in the book.

- As such, we'll be looking at the particular areas God needed to confront his people about later in the series.
- Rather than repeating all of that, I would like us to stop for a moment, and think how it must have been for Amos to speak this word of judgement to the people of Samaria!
- First, lets briefly see what he had to say, and then come back to what it would have been like to speak in this way!
- **What does Amos say?**
- Picture 1: enemies to look on to shame of Israel, and watch what God will do to her; like a public hanging...
- Picture 2: bits of a sheep "rescued" from a lion (remember he's a shepherd!) - that's how much will be saved from Samaria; particularly aimed at the folk living in opulence & large houses...
- Picture 3: cows of Bashan (cf Aberdeen Angus!) - cutting language!
 - cows = derogatory word, like today / Bashan = well-bred: sounds good, but really an insult to these rich women!
 - wives are commanding their husbands, but word for husband here is from same root as "lord", so saying "lord" but not acting that way - exposes hypocrisy even in the language Amos uses to describe them!
 - rather than the power and influence and life of luxury, picture ends with them being led away, as cattle are on their way to slaughter.
- Amos exposes their wrong-doing (crushing poor; hoarding plunder; lavish lifestyles when surrounded by poverty) and bluntly states consequences.
- **How does Amos feel?**
- He sure doesn't mince his words, does he?
- Couldn't have beamed message in by video link, faxed it, e-mailed, phone...
- Even letters were reserved for the very rich (cost of paper; lack of literacy), and he was only a shepherd.
- He'd have had to go, stand on street corner or in the market square, and preach...
- He has courage, boldness, and a trust in what God has revealed that is awesome!
 - I'm sure he felt scared, felt nervous, but realised that what God has revealed to him was bigger than his own feelings!

Plain Speaking

• The Visiting Preacher

A visiting preacher stood at the door of the church after the service, shaking hands with one person after another who thanked him for his sermon. "A wonderful message", "Marvelous", "A powerful word", "Tremendously helpful".

The speaker was deeply flattered. Then a rather strange looking man came up to him, muttering, "Talked too long!" He decided to ignore this and continued shaking hands with members of the congregation who thanked him warmly. Then the strange little man reappeared. "Load of nonsense!"

The speaker tried to take no notice, but the man kept rejoining the queue and each time he came up to the speaker he would complain about something different: "Didn't understand a word!", "Irrelevant", "Bored to tears!"

Finally, the visiting preacher could stand it no longer. "Who is that man?" he asked the minister. "Oh, don't worry about him," came the reassuring reply. "He's a little simple in the head. He just spends his time repeating what everyone else says."

• Learning from Amos

- We are awfully good at being nice, and sometimes not very good at speaking truthfully to one another.
- God sometimes needs to say hard things - to us about things in our lives that need sorting out; to others through us for the same reasons.
- Need to learn from Amos' courage and trust in God:
 - and from his ability and determination to hear from God before he spoke!
- Pray for God's help to do the same!