



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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### The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Amos 7: 1-17

Amos

“Mercy Mercy and No Mercy”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Amos chapter 7. I must begin with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank you for this evening and this opportunity we have to be together and continue our studies in the Book of Amos. And what a joy it is to be able to do that, to study any book of the bible. It is your word, it is inspired and it's profitable for us in every way. And certainly this book is for us as well. It's an ancient book and yet relevant for modern times.

And so, Lord, as we go through this together this evening I would pray that you would guide us in our thinking. May the spirit of God illuminate our minds that we might understand these things and not just the meaning of the text but how it applies to us, and apply it to our hearts and give us a desire to confirm to your righteousness and live a life that honors you.

We look to you to bless now and then bless us at the end of the hour as we continue before the throne of grace. Thank you for this time, the privilege of fellowshiping with your people and bless our fellowship together. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] Prophets in the Old Testament were God's representatives to the people. They gave revelation. They made known the secret things of God, things that you and I or the people of Israel would not have known apart from God making them known through the prophet. And much of those things that are revealed are things about the future. And that's what we think about I think generally when we think of prophecy or we think of a prophet, but prophets were also men who prayed for the people.

In Genesis 20:7 God called Abraham a prophet and told Abimelech that Abraham would pray for him. The prophet Elijah was such a man. James wrote in his epistle that he prayed that it would not rain and it did not rain in Israel for three and a half years. And then he prayed for rain and the sky poured. James tells us the effect of prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

Now we see Amos in prayer in chapter 7. And his prayers turned away God’s judgment. The immutable, unchangeable God changed His mind. That’s how powerful Amos’ prayers were. That’s one of the lessons that I think we gain from this chapter. Prayer is powerful. It is effective. We need to pray. But that’s not the only lesson. Another is the compassion of God. That is His nature. He’s long suffering. That’s the reason our prayers are answered. He is a compassionate, caring God. He responds to our appeals.

Chapter 7 is a new portion of the Book of Amos. Chapters 1 through 6 are made up of oracles or prophecies, the verbal word of God coming through the prophet. We have that in the rest of the book as well, but chapter 7 through 9 are made up primarily of visions which are prophecies in picture. The chapter begins with two visions that are very disturbing or at least they were very disturbing to Amos because they foretold destruction for Israel. They were visions of locusts and fire.

The chapter begins, “Thus the Lord God showed me, and behold, He was forming a locust-swarm when the spring crop began to sprout. And behold, the spring crop was after the king’s mowing.” The king had his share of the harvest, but the people’s harvest wasn’t gathered before the locusts came in this vision at least, and the locusts devoured everything. And that was a vision of what God was planning to do to the nation Israel.

The spring crop was the last crop so the farmers would have nothing and there would be no grass for the cattle. It would devastate the nation. And so being a farmer himself, Amos had some empathy for the nation and this was alarming to him as he watched this vision. And so his response was to intercede for the people in verse 2. “‘Lord,’ he said, ‘please pardon!’” I think you get a sense of the urgency of his prayer and the depth of his feeling from that prayer. He didn’t say, “Please pardon the people.” He didn’t really elaborate. It’s about as brief a prayer as he could pray. Please pardon.

He just senses the urgency of it and can barely get the prayer out. And his concern was Jacob is small, Jacob cannot withstand such a blow. So with great empathy and concern for the people he pray for Israel and in verse 3 God responded to his concern, “The Lord changed His mind about this. ‘It shall not be,’ said the Lord.” All of this shows the sovereignty of God, that He plans the future, that He’s in control, He’s in control of the natural realm. He can create a swarm of locust, He can bring them upon the land, He’s in complete control.

As one of the commentators put it, the Lord’s sovereignty is seasoned by compassion. So He is a God who’s in control of everything from creatures as small and insignificant as locusts to the heart of an individual. He directs the course of nations, as we see throughout this book. But He’s not some hardened or maybe that’s not the right word, but some insensitive being that cannot have concern for His creation.

And so that’s the sense we get here. That’s what’s revealed here. He is a sovereign Lord. He’s the Lord of all things, but His sovereignty is seasoned by compassion. Now I think that’s the principle lesson that we should get out of this statement, that the Lord changed His mind about this. But that statement itself does raise the theological question, a problem in the mind of us who want to put things together properly.

And I think it’s a proper problem that’s raised in our mind because in Numbers 23:19 we read, “God is not a man, that He should lie, now a son of man, that He should repent or change His mind.” So God doesn’t change His mind and yet we read here that He does. So how do we explain that? How do we put that together? And some would explain it quite simply and quite easily as well. It’s clearly a contradiction in the bible. This contradicts things that are said elsewhere.

And that’s a simple way to give an explanation, and I would say probably a pretty common explanation for a lot of people who don’t believe in the integrity of scripture. But for those of us who do, there’s a better explanation. In fact, a correct explanation and it’s a rather involved one. I’m going to spend a little bit of time on it, but first of all, we’d say that fits within the category of being an anthropomorphism. And most of you I’m sure know that term and some of the terms that I’m going to use here.

But it's really a composite words composed of two Greek words anthropos and morphe. Anthropos, man, morphe, form. So God is described in the form of a man. You had that all through scripture. And we know God is a spirit. We're told that in John 4:24. God doesn't have a body, but all through scripture He's described that way. See that a lot in the Old Testament.

We read about the finger of God, we read about the hand of God. He measures out things in the palm of His hand. The bible describes His eyes or His feet. Isaiah 66:1, God says, “The earth is my footstool.” So God's described as having feet. That's not to be taken literally. The prophets didn't mean it to be taken literally, but God is described with those forms in order to express some aspect of His character or His attributes. His arm or His hand speaks of His power, His feet, His sovereignty. He's over – everything is in subjection to Him.

His eye, He sees things, He guides us with His eye we're told. That means His knowledge is perfect. He knows everything. Well, this statement fits within that, but to be more precise, He's probably an anthropopathism, to use the technical term. And then again you have anthropos man and the Greek word pathos which speaks of feeling or emotion.

And so this more specifically is describing God in terms of human feelings to express the fact that He is a God of compassion. He's not indifferent. And I think that's the meaning here. He is immutable. God doesn't change, doesn't change His mind that is. His eternal decree cannot be frustrated and the bible's filled with statements of that. “No one can turn back my hand,” He says.

We can read this in Isaiah 14:24 and 27 or Isaiah 43:13. In fact, I'll just read that verse to you. “Even from eternity I am He, and there is none who can deliver out of my hand; I act and who can reverse it?” No one can deliver me out of my hand yet here Amos seems to do that. But that's the immutability of God. He doesn't change, at least in His decree. That's required not only from the statements of scripture, but that's required just from theology. That's required from a knowledge of His sovereignty. It's required from the knowledge of His omnipotence and His omniscience. He knows everything.

That means He has always known everything. God doesn't learn. There's nothing God can learn. He knows everything from beginning to end. He's always known everything. He's eternal. He's never learned anything. He's always known

everything. And so this prayer that Amos prayed was something He knew about long before Amos was born. He knew about it from all eternity. It didn't take Him by surprise, He didn't learn something when Amos began to pray. This didn't elicit or draw out of God some response that surprised God that He would have. This is actually an example of God's unchangeableness.

This really is an example of His immutability. He always responds to His people's prayers when they are best and when they fit His eternal plan. A.H. Strong is a theologian who dealt with the subject as most or all theologians do and gave a helpful analogy in explaining God's immutability in this and how God could change and seem to contradict what is said about Him.

And He illustrated it from mercury in a thermometer. And that's - as I thought about this, this is an old illustration. I'm not sure you can even get a thermometer with mercury in it anymore. May you can, but they're usually these digital things which are really much better probably. But if you remember those thermometers with mercury, they go up and down with the temperature. And so Strong writes on God's immutability that it is not that of the stone that has no internal experience, but rather that of a column of mercury that rises and falls with every change in the temperature of the surrounding atmosphere.

Now that's a constant in mercury or in the thermometer. That's its immutable nature. It always does that. And so we had the same with God. He always responds in the right way to our prayer or our needs. So for example, He told Jonah that He would destroy Nineveh but then He repented of doing that. He spared the Ninevites, why? Because He simply changed His mind? No, because they responded to the mission and the preaching of Jonah in repentance.

And so God always responds to that. He's constant in His response to faith and to repentance. Punishing the repentant would have violated His nature, would have violated His character and that really would have made God an arbitrary God of fate and completely unreliable. We couldn't trust such a God.

What would we think if we read and we believe the statement of our Lord in Matthew 11:28 where he says, “Come to me, all who ye who are weak and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” And people come to Him and He says, “I'm not going to give you rest. I'm not going to receive you.” He receives those who respond

to Him. And here in Amos He shows Himself faithful and reliable to us in prayer. We can rely upon Him.

We're to pray for our brothers and sisters, we're to pray for unbelievers and we have the confidence of knowing that when we do that He responds. That's His nature. He responds according to His grace and His wisdom and His love. Now He didn't actually change His mind in the sense that His eternal decree was shaken and changed and everything is reversed, but He speaks that way to indicate His compassion and His responsiveness to His people.

And Amos was responsive. This is another lesson that I think we learn from this. Unlike Jonah, who wanted God's judgment on Nineveh and sulked because God wasn't going to pour out His wrath on that city, Amos, on the other hand, did not want the warnings that He had been given fulfilled. He wanted God's care for them. That's what He's praying for. He cared for the lost.

That, too, as I say, is one of the lessons that we have here. This is how we ought to be. We ought to be praying for the lost. We ought to be praying for our friends and those around us. But that wasn't the end of it. In verse 4 the Lord showed Amos another vision, this one of fire. Amos said it consumed the great deep and began to consume the farmland.

Fire in Amos is a word we've seen throughout the earlier chapters and it usually refers to warfare and probably refers to burning cities. Here it may be a reference to fire falling from heaven as in Elijah's day or it may be something more like a severe drought and this may be a more metaphorical, figurative way of describing that.

So it is so intense, though, that the subterranean waters that fed the springs dry up and there's a great famine in the land. And again, Amos understood the implications for the nation and how it would devastate the people, devastate the whole agricultural system and the people and so he interceded again. And again we read in verses 5 and 6 that God responded. "Then I said, 'Lord, please stop! How can Jacob stand, for he is small?' The Lord changed His mind about this. 'This too shall not be,' said the Lord God."

Well, some time must have passed between these first two visions and the third vision that's recorded in verse 7. Enough time must have passed at least to show that God's patience with the nation repenting, changing His mind, not bringing the

judgment upon them that they deserved. And remember, these plagues or these judgments are deserved. People deserved these. They're sinful people. They've turned from Him. They're worshipping false Gods. But enough time must have elapsed between these first two visions and the third one to show that the nation had not responded to God's patience and God's goodness.

So the third vision is a vision that God shows to Amos and it's a very different one from the previous ones and demonstrated clearly how deserving of judgment the nation was. Amos sees a plumb line, which is a cord with a weight on it, hangs from maybe the ceiling and it establishes a vertical straightness for erecting or measuring things. Carpenters would use it, builders would use it. If they want to know if a wall is straight they'll measure it with a plumb line. And in this vision, the plumb line is hanging from God's hand before a wall and it represents God's righteous standard and as the measure for Israel's righteousness and how Israel's righteousness was found wanting.

So the Lord tells Amos, “Behold, I am about to put a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel, I will spare them no longer.” But the plumb line is a picture of God's law. It represents His righteousness and it measures us and it shows us how far off we are. You can't make us right. It can't change us any more than a literal plumb line could straighten out a crooked wall or a leaning wall. But it certainly shows – as the plumb line shows the condition of the wall and how far it's leaning and how far from being straight it really is, that's what the law does for us. It shows how far we are from God's righteousness.

And that's what all of this is demonstrating about Israel. How Israel's spiritual condition was far from being straight and vertical. So the Lord announces an end to grace. Says, “I will spare them no longer.” And this obviously wasn't an arbitrary decision by our Lord. It wasn't an impulsive decision. God doesn't act impulsively and nothing that He does is arbitrary. His grace may seem to be arbitrary to us because we can't explain why He chooses some and not others. We're all equally undeserving.

None of us deserves to be in God's favor. And yet we read that from the foundation of the world He chose us who have believed. Why? Well, it seems arbitrary to me and I can't explain why. I know what Moses said in Deuteronomy 7 which I think we've probably gone over more than once. But there he explains why

God chose Israel. It wasn't because you were the greatest. You aren't, you're the smallest, the most insignificant of the nations. He chose you because He loved you. It doesn't go beyond that and it can't go beyond that.

So there are things about God's grace that may seem arbitrary to us, but there's nothing arbitrary about God's justice. I would say there's nothing arbitrary about His grace. I may not be able to explain that, but I know God enough to know that He's not arbitrary, capricious God. He knows what He's doing, He does things wisely and correctly. But certainly in terms of God's judgment there is nothing arbitrary about it. It is deserved. We all deserve judgment.

But justice is always according to His righteous standard. And clearly, and this is the point, Israel fell short of that standard. The plumb line, as it were, proved that. And so this time Amos doesn't pray for mercy. And none would be shown. The reason is God had repeatedly shown mercy to this sinful nation and they had continued in their sin in spite of all of that.

So God's judgment was made inevitable. That really is another aspect I would say of God's immutability. He must judge sin. He's holy, He's righteous and He must – it's not His great work, it's not what God loves to do, He loves to show grace and mercy. But His character demands that judgment must come and justice must prevail, and you see that here.

The nation had continued in sin and so God's justice was made inevitable, Amos recognizes that and he yielded to God's will. The Lord then pronounced judgment in verse 9. “The high places of Isaac will be desolated and the sanctuaries of Israel laid waste. Then I will rise up against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.”

The high place is where the shrines on hills out on the countryside where on these hills they have little shrines and alters to the different Gods, most of them were nature deities and often immorality was conducted there in these cultic ceremonies. The sanctuaries were the temples and the towns and the cities, but all of them were pagan. Pagan shrines, pagan temples, they're all over the country. So God would destroy them along with the corrupt government of Jeroboam.

And again, Amos didn't intercede. He didn't pray. God said, “I will spare them no longer,” and the prophet recognized that that was God's will and it was right, it was righteous, it was just and he did not seek to turn God's hand back. A century

and a half later God told Jeremiah, the prophet in the south, He said, “Do not pray for this people nor offer any plea or petition for them because I will not listen when they call to me in the time of their distress.”

There comes a time when God’s patience runs out and the day of grace and opportunity ends. Now I don't know when that day is. I don't know when that is for anybody. And so on the one hand I want to say as long as a person’s alive and breathing, there’s hope and you should pray for them and you should urge them to come to Him and there’s hope as long as there’s life. And yet I think the reality is that’s not always the case.

There comes a point when God’s finished, when He’s been patient and patient and patient and then there’s no hope. That’s a terrifying thing if you think about it. The author of Hebrews understood that and he quote Psalm 95:11, “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.” Because today is the day of repentance or faith and tomorrow may not be that day.

Well, the nation had done that. They had hardened their hearts. They had been spared and yet they continued to sin and now their hearts are hardened and judgment would come. It must come. Amos understood that. In verse 10, a rival to Amos appears, he was Amaziah, the priest at Bethel and he didn’t like what Amos said about the destruction of the shrines and of Jeroboam’s government. He was probably a priest appointed by Jeroboam.

So he sent word to the king of the prophet’s message and he charged Amos with treason. “Amos has conspired against you,” this is what he wrote in his letter to the king, “the land is unable to endure his words.” There’s no proof in anything that Amos said of a conspiracy against the king or his government or the land, but this was Amaziah’s way of rejecting the prophet’s message as being from God. He treated it as purely a human opinion. It’s what we call an ad hominem argument, literally an argument to the man, against the person. It’s a tactic which is used to reject an argument by rejecting the person who makes the argument on the basis of an irrelevant fact or a falsehood about the person.

And then if you can discredit the person, you just discredit the message. You don’t deal with the message, you just reject the person and the implication is the message can’t be believed because the person’s a bad character. And here, the argument is Amos is a traitor so you can’t believe anything he says. Everything he

says is tainted. And as I say, that’s a common way that people argue when they don’t have a good argument themselves or how, know how to overcome another person’s argument.

And it’s a common argument used against people who oppose the ways of the world, the person, not the argument so much, the person is attacked, the person is dismissed as an unlawful person or an intolerant person. How could you say such a thing? That’s so intolerant, that’s so unloving. Yeah, that’s a way of avoiding the truth. It’s a way of facing what the argument that’s made or the message that’s being given.

The kindest thing a person can do for someone who is in error, a person who is in sin is to expose the sin, to expose the condition so that the person will see it, face it and change. That’s not unloving and that’s not intolerant. But people, they don’t want to change and so they attack the messenger rather than heed the message. It’s foolish. It doesn’t change reality, it doesn’t make the sin that’s the problems and that’s going to lead to the destruction of the individual go away and deliver the individual by dismissing the accusation or the charge or the argument. It really only hastens the day of reckoning.

And Amaziah was really doing that. He evidently had a vested interest in the shrine at Bethel. It was his living. This is how he made his money. This was his livelihood and so he wants to protect it and to do that he sent this message to the king. And we read in verse 11, “For thus Amos says, ‘Jeroboam will die by the sword and Israel will certainly go from its land into exile.’”

Well, Amos didn’t actually say that the king would die violently, but this made Amos’ prophecy a personal attack on the king and Amaziah’s case was made a little stronger by putting it in that way, and that’s the purpose of all of this. That’s why he’s sending this letter to the king. And so he said it this way.

He then told Amos in verses 12 and 13 to leave. “Go, you seer, flee away from the land of Judah.” In other words, don’t prophesy here any longer. And it may be that he addresses Amos in a kind of pejorative, negative way when he calls him you seer. Now the prophets like Samuel were called seers and that was a term that was used early in Israel’s history.

And so this may just be another way of speaking of Amos as a prophet. But a lot of commentators suggest that what he’s really doing here is he’s demeaning Amos.

He’s not going to elevate him by calling him a prophet, he’s just a seer and the idea is he doesn’t fit within, as someone has put it, the royal guild of prophets. He wasn’t trained in the school of the prophets. He’s not one of us. He really didn’t have a proper education. He’s not a real prophet.

And that may be what is stated here. Either way, he’s saying to Amos, “You can’t prophesy here anymore.” And Amos makes his reply in the remaining verses of the chapter. The first part of it is a little puzzling depending on how it’s translated and it’s translated differently in different versions. The Hebrew text doesn’t have a verb in the sentence and so it’s supplied. The New American Standard Bible which I’m using has, “I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet.”

And the New International Version has, “I was neither a prophet nor a prophet’s son.” Since Amos is obviously a prophet, the New International Version seems to make better sense with the idea I didn’t used to be a prophet would be the idea, but now I am. I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, now I am a prophet. So that may be the meaning.

But taking the New American Standard Bible’s translation, what Amos was doing was stating that he didn’t have the professional status as a prophet. He was not trained in the school of the prophets. He was a simple farmer. It might be like someone saying, “I didn’t go to seminary, I’m a businessman. I’m not a professional preacher. I’m a layman, but God called me and I went.” And I think that is his point.

His authority for what he said when he came to Bethel, when he began to preach against all of this corruption, moral corruption, spiritual corruption, all of this, his authority was not in himself, it was in the Lord. His authority was the Lord. His authority was the word of God. He makes that clear in verse 15. “But the Lord took me from following the flock and the Lord said to me, ‘Go prophesy to my people Israel.’” And he did.

He went. He spoke God’s word to Israel. That’s where his authority lay, not in himself, not in his education, but in God’s word. And so he spoke truth and wisdom. God’s word is authoritative. That’s really the only thing that is authoritative. I’m not authoritative. Standing behind a lectern and on a pulpit doesn’t make me authoritative. God’s word is authoritative. And when I speak God’s word incorrectly, there’s no authority in that statement. No, God’s word is what’s

authoritative and that’s what gave Amos his authority. And God called him to speak His word and so he did.

Now having said that, I’ll preface things by saying I think it is good to have a seminary education. Education is good in every area of life. You wouldn’t want a doctor who didn’t go to medical school. You wouldn’t want to a lawyer who didn’t go to law school. You don’t want a businessman who didn’t get a education in business. Education’s good and that applies to the ministry. It’s good if a person believes that he has been called in the ministry, it’s good to get training. It’s good to learn the languages and study theology. It’s just the beginning, never ends. You never stop studying. You never get to that point you get your degree and, okay, now I’ve got it all. You’re just beginning.

A lot of it is you learn – you’ve been through four years of seminary, at least in my case, and come out realizing how much you don’t know. So it never stops. I think a young man, if he wants to go into the ministry should go to seminary. But I’ve known businessmen, probably looking at some of them here who didn’t have a seminary education but they understand the bible better than some of the men I went to seminary with. They have more wisdom than some of those men. They have put it together better than the others because they’ve studied the word of God and they’ve been under teaching.

In Psalm 119, the Psalmist praises the word of God. It’s a great psalm, a long psalm, the longest of the psalms. It’s like a book. It’s about the word of God, it’s about the bible. And in it the Psalmist says in verse 105 that scriptures, the word of God, is a lamp to his feet. He knows where he’s going in life because of the word of God. It gives him wisdom and understanding. In verses 98 and 99, he says, “It makes me wiser than my enemies. I had more insight than all my teachers.”

Man, the woman who studies the word of God, really applies himself or herself to it will know more than their enemies, whoever they may be, and know more than their teachers. Can eclipse a teacher. In verse 130, he says that it gives understanding to the simple. It is indispensable to life, the word of God is. It’s essential that we know the word of God. It transforms. It can take a simple person, a person who lacks wisdom and give them wisdom and character and understanding of things that scientists and philosophers just don’t figure out.

If you believe the bible and you begin in chapter 1, verse 1 of Genesis and work through it and you believe that, then you'll know more than the great minds of every age in the world. You'll have a better understanding of the universe than Albert Einstein did because you know it's created by God and who God is. You don't have to go to seminary for that. And the bible is in your hands, read it. Go to church and learn from the teachers in the church. Apply yourself.

And as you do that, you will grow and over time you will become an increasingly useful person. God took a man from the fields, a shepherd and a man who picked figs, that's Amos, and gave him His word and made him very useful. So another lesson we have from chapter 7. That is know God's word. Be faithful and God will use you.

Regardless of his training and background, Amos was God's man and would not go, would not back down. He then gives Amaziah and all in Bethel God's message in verses 16 and 17. “Now hear the word of the Lord: you are saying, ‘You shall not prophesy against Israel nor shall you speak against the house of Isaac.’” In other words, you're telling me in all your authority you cannot prophesy or speak against this place or these people.

He says, “Therefore, thus says the Lord, ‘Your wife,’” speaking to Amaziah, “‘will become a harlot in the city, your sons and your daughters will fall by the sword, your land will be parceled up by a measuring line and you yourself will die upon unclean soil. Moreover, Israel will certainly go from this land into exile.’” So in spite of what Amaziah said, he prophesied. He's a bold man and he stayed true to his ministry.

What a frightening prophesy he gave to this priest. The proud have a hard fall. The fact that Amaziah was a priest, he was an apostate priest, he wasn't a genuine priest, but he had this mantle at least in the north. He was a priest. He represented God supposedly. Because of that, his punishment would be more hard. It would be more humiliating. And by application I think you can say it's dangerous to take a position like that. It's dangerous to take a position as a preacher of God's word and deny God's word. That punishment is going to be more difficult, more demanding. It'll be harder on such a person.

And that's the prophesy that's given here to Amaziah. It's a terrible end that would come upon that man and a terrible end that would come upon the nation. But it

was the nation's fault. Twice God had relented. He had repented. He had shown mercy without repentance from Israel, without any response from them. And now He would have no mercy. So as we look at that and consider it, apply it to ourselves, I think we should say may God give all of us repentance when we need it. We all need to repent or daily repenting because we're daily sinning. We need to do that.

And may God give us a hunger for His word and the obedience that we should have to it and the courage to proclaim it and live it. Not always easy, proclaiming the word of God. Amos stood against a whole nation there at Bethel, but he stood firm and he proclaimed it because that is what God called him to do and he's called each one of us to do that too, to read the word of God, to understand it, to know it, to live it and tell it to people wisely at the right time and not just run roughshod over them.

But you need to have the courage to do that. I do too. And it's not always easy to do that because some things aren't well-received by people because they go against their nature or their beliefs. But it's as we speak the word of God, speak it in love and speak it clearly that He blesses. May God give us the courage and the knowledge to be able to do that. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we thank you for Amos and the example that we are given by him of a man who followed your command, your calling and went to a difficult place and stood firm in the truth and stood firm in the mission you'd given him. And he did back down, he proclaimed your truth and did so boldly. Help us to be like that. Give us an increasing expansive knowledge of your word. May we be responsive to it and wise and useful as a result.

And now, Lord, we pray you'd bless us as we continue before your throne and bless our prayers, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.