

# You are Accountable

Amos 3

Last time we learned about how we often put a target on our backs when it comes to the judgement of God. We may do things that we know are wrong and yet somehow think we are special because we are His chosen people. We begin to lose humility and become quite arrogant in the fact that we belong to Him.

But did you know that God repeatedly challenges the fact of us thinking that we are special. Israel believed that because they were the chosen people of God that they were special because of their obedience to God and therefore would avoid judgment. They thought judgment would happen to the world, but the chosen people of God would be spared. However, God tried from the beginning to warn the people against this kind of foolish thinking.

Before we get into today's scriptures let's look at Deuteronomy 8:17–18 where it says, <sup>17</sup> *You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me."* <sup>18</sup> *But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.*

Let's also look at Deuteronomy 9:4–6, <sup>4</sup> *After the LORD your God has driven them out before you, do not say to yourself, "The LORD has brought me here to take possession of this land because of my righteousness." No, it is on account of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is going to drive them out before you.* <sup>5</sup> *It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations, the LORD your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.* <sup>6</sup> *Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people.*

With that in mind let me say this. The events of the Exodus from Egypt was not for Israel. The people were not to witness the ten plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, the destruction of the Egyptians, and the miraculous provisions of the wilderness and think that they were something special. These things were to draw the people to God in awe and proclaim his glory and goodness. Unfortunately, the people thought their chosen status would protect them from harm.

Now let's read verses 1 & 2 from today. *Hear this word, people of Israel, the word the LORD has spoken against you—against the whole family I brought up out of Egypt: <sup>2</sup>“You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins.”*

Notice the privileges that God expresses to the people. He tells them, “I brought you up out of the land of Egypt”, I made you my chosen people. You saw God's hand at work to redeem you and deliver you. You were the only people to have this covenant relationship with God. “Therefore, I will punish you for all your sins.” The result is not that God is going to overlook their sins. Rather, God will punish them for every sins.

Their chosen status did not mean they were protected from judgment and neither does ours. Their chosen status meant they had a greater accountability to God and so do we. They knew what God required. They were to be to the Lord a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6). With the privilege of knowing God came the responsibility of acting like the people of God.

That very same accountability applies to us today. Consider for a moment the message found in the parable of the talents. Everyone was given a degree of wealth from the master and each were accountable for what they were given. Israel was the one talent who had taken the blessings and privileges of God and did nothing with them. Listen to the words of the apostle Peter: found in 1 Peter 2:9.

*<sup>9</sup>But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

We are the chosen people of God, a holy nation. The purpose is not to think that we are somehow special because of ourselves. Our status before God is not because of anything we have done or that we can boast about because of our works. Seeing what God has done for us is to cause us to proclaim the excellence of Christ. He called us out of darkness. Christ is the light who is shining in the darkness. We must proclaim Him because we were blind and without the light of Christ we would continue to be blind.

*<sup>3</sup>Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so? <sup>4</sup>Does a lion roar in the thicket when it has no prey? Does it growl in its den when it has caught nothing? <sup>5</sup>Does a bird swoop down to a trap on the ground when no bait is there? Does a trap spring up from the ground if it has not caught anything? <sup>6</sup>When a trumpet sounds in a city, do not the people tremble? When disaster comes to a city, has not the LORD caused it? <sup>7</sup>Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets. <sup>8</sup>The lion has roared—who will not fear? The Sovereign LORD has spoken—who can but prophesy?*

Amos starts off here with a series of rhetorical questions to lead the people to grasp two important conclusions. The first message is that the judgment of God is coming because you deserve it. But pay close attention to the rhetorical questions in verses 4-6 to see God making this point. Does a lion roar when he has no prey? Does a young lion cry if he has taken nothing? Does a bird fall in a snare if there is no trap? Does a trap snap shut if there is nothing to spring the trap? The answer to all of these questions is obviously no.

These things only happen with a purpose. The victim has been trapped. Look at the questions in verse 6. Are people to be afraid when the trumpet sounds in the city? Yes, they are because that is the alarm to the people warning of invasion. Does disaster come to a city unless the Lord does it? The cities of Israel only fell when the people were in rebellion. God would cause their defeat because of their sins. Think about the success of the conquest of Jericho and the failure of the attack at Ai. Disaster comes when you are not faithful to him.

What is the point? The beginning of verse 8 is the answer. “The lion has roared; who will not fear?” In other words The Lord has spoken. Judgment is coming. Amos is calling for the people to make a decision to respond appropriately to the revealing of God’s plan. God’s plan will be revealed in verses 11-15. But before

revealing God's plan, Amos is preparing the hearts of the people to listen to the message of God. He is telling them the trumpet has sounded, the trap has shut, and The Lion has roared. We need to listen to the alarm and hear the message of the Lord.

The second point is that Amos is carrying the message of the Lord. Amos needs to validate that he indeed is God's messenger. Look at verse 3. "Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?" Amos' message is not a coincidence or an accident. Amos has been called by God to make this declaration. Verse 7 continues this point. "For the Lord God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets." Amos declares that his message is from God and proves his relationship with God because God has revealed his plan for the nation of Israel to him.

Notice the end of verse 8 for the second conclusion to be drawn from these questions. "The Lord God has spoken, who can but prophesy?" The Lord has spoken. Who can refuse to proclaim God's message? God has called me to walk with him and revealed his plan to me. I must speak God's plan to you. God is the Lion, and his prophecy is the roar.

God calls for us to pay attention to the declarations found in His word. When God speaks, His voice roars through the earth and should roar throughout our lives. It is so easy for people to lack intensity when listening to God's word. We so often pay attention to everything else and get distracted when trying to read God's word or listen to what it has to say. That is the Devil wanting to draw us away from the truth.

The voice of the Lord must grab our attention. The voice of the Lord must cause us to respond in attention, like the blowing of the trumpet sounding the alarm. God has spoken. Pay attention and focus on what God has to say.

*Proclaim to the fortresses of Ashdod and to the fortresses of Egypt: "Assemble yourselves on the mountains of Samaria; see the great unrest within her and the oppression among her people." <sup>10</sup> "They do not know how to do right," declares the LORD, "who store up in their fortresses what they have plundered and looted."*

*<sup>11</sup> Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "An enemy will overrun your land, pull down your strongholds and plunder your fortresses." <sup>12</sup> This is what the LORD says: "As a shepherd rescues from the lion's mouth only two leg bones or a piece of an ear, so will the Israelites living in Samaria be rescued, with only the head of a bed and a piece of fabric<sup>[a]</sup> from a couch.<sup>[b]</sup>" <sup>13</sup> "Hear this and testify against the descendants of Jacob," declares the Lord, the LORD God Almighty. <sup>14</sup> "On the day I punish Israel for her sins, I will destroy the altars of Bethel; the horns of the altar will be cut off and fall to the ground. <sup>15</sup> I will tear down the winter house along with the summer house; the houses adorned with ivory will be destroyed and the mansions will be demolished," declares the LORD.*

In verse 9 God through his prophet Amos calls Egypt and Philistine to be witnesses to the wickedness in Israel. These two nations were past oppressors of Israel. Yet these immoral heathens are called to judge the morality of Samaria. See how wicked God's people are! The nations are called to be a witness against the people of God. Verse 10 defines the problem. They are morally warped. They do not even know how to do what is right. Sound familiar?

Their storehouse is not full of mercy and grace, but violence, robbery, and oppression. This is an accurate description about the very nature of sin. We live in a world where we tend to look at sin is a harmless act. The problem is that sin warps our thinking, our hearts, and our consciences. We lose our innocence and develop depraved hearts and minds. Sinful act after sinful act leads us to a point that we can no longer even do what is right because we have lost all sensitivity to the will of God.

We look at people and perhaps ourselves and wonder how people can get so steep in sexual sin. The path is very simple: dabble in it a little and lose sensitivity to the sinfulness of what you are doing. Soon you need a little more to satisfy the desire you have awakened. Before long you will get so far down the path that you will be consumed by these sins. What began as a hobby or an occasional act now has become a vice.

You have become imprisoned to the sin and it feels like you cannot stop. You engage in it even when you do not want to and even if you know better. Finally you will be at the point where it can be said that you do not even know what is right. This is why it is so important to guard our hearts. The danger of allowing our

hearts to stray from the right paths of the Lord are very serious. This holds true for all sin.

The final verses of this chapter describe the coming doom against the nation. All of their defenses will not help and their strongholds will be plundered. Verse 12 pictures the ferocity of their doom. Like a shepherd rescuing a sheep from the mouth of a lion with only two legs or a piece of an ear, so will be the people of Israel. There will be nothing left of their former lifestyle. There will only be fragments left, just enough to prove who the victim was.

Their lavish living will suddenly perish. All that will be left is part of a bed. Your comforts and conveniences will all be taken away. Your wealth will be gone. You will have nothing left but a fragment. Life apart from God may yield temporary material gain, but will surely result in eternal loss. Their houses of ivory and summer and winter homes will be taken away (3:15). Your pleasures in comfort and wealth will come to an end.

Just how foolish it is for us to plunge ourselves into what makes us comfortable or gives us some sort of instant gratification when God will destroy all these things?

We can no longer set back and do nothing or say nothing when we know the truth.

We must always remember just how accountable we are if we call ourselves His children.