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**C0920 – May 20, 2009 – Amos 5:16-27 – External Rituals, Empty
Hearts**

We're studying the prophet Amos whose name means "burden" and the prophecy he carries to the northern kingdom is precisely that, a burden. It is a heavy weight to carry a message of such pending doom. And Amos would be hated by those at whom he aimed his message. Last time we were in chapter 5 and we reviewed the principles of discipline that we've gleaned from the pages of Amos. It's a very good book for drawing the principles which God the Father used to discipline His Son Israel and so it's a model for parents to discipline their children and I encourage you parents to take seriously the model God has given you in Scripture and to draw forth that wisdom and apply it in the home. It also in many respects has parallels for the NT believer in Christ. So there's loads of application here for you to think about.

Alright, last week in chapter 5 we entered into the third covenant lawsuit. These are lawsuits God is bringing against the nation Israel for violating the Mosaic Covenant. So they're judgments within the household of God and we want to remember that because that defines their nature as disciplinary wrath and not judgmental wrath. It's a very different thing when God judges a non-covenantal nation like America. So disciplinary wrath and judgmental wrath are just two categories I use to distinguish between God's judgment on those who are His chosen people and those who are not. There's no question there's a difference and Israel alone is God's chosen nation. God chose them in the Abrahamic Covenant repeated to Isaac and Jacob, so they alone share that elect status nationally. America doesn't have that, France doesn't have that, and Jordan doesn't have that. Israel does solely by the grace of God. And after the Exodus, God brought them to Mt Sinai and gave them His law in the Mosaic Covenant, which stipulated their obligations to Him, what they were supposed to do, how they were supposed to live. And God made very

clear that if they obeyed He would bless them in every area of life but if they disobeyed He would curse them in every area of life. So these covenant lawsuits are the legal proceedings that enact the curses and by this time in Israel's history they had already been through the first four degrees of cursing and this lawsuit is enacting the fifth degree of cursing which was exile, the final verse of this chapter closes with the exile. So that gives you an idea where we're headed tonight.

Backing up to vv 1-3 in chapter 5 we have the funeral dirge as good as done. They're getting to view their funeral before they die, a very interesting situation that should have sobered them up from their spiritual slumber. In vv 4-7 the call to seek the Lord, which doesn't mean go to all the prized geographical locations. Going to an ancient site where God once showed up is not the same thing as seeking the Lord, going to church is not the same thing as seeking God, going to prayer meeting is not the same thing as seeking the Lord. Those things were just all religious motion for these people. They had services three times a week, they sacrificed, they had music, they had choirs, they prayed, a whole lot of religious devotion but without obedience, without a heart orientation to Him. It was all just a religious show. In vv 8-9, a nature hymn that describes their enemy, the Lord God who controls everything from the deep reaches of space down to the earthly affairs of men. He's in total control, He's sovereign. Vv 10-13 more infractions of the Mosaic Covenant, primarily the injustice and unrighteousness in the courts as they oppressed the poor and the failure in v 13 for anyone with wisdom to stand up and say something. Finally we saw vv 14-15 a call to seek the good which is to seek God because God is good, but these calls here, if obeyed, could get Israel back on track and perhaps the Lord would be gracious to them as He had been to Joseph.ⁱ

So tonight we want to finish chapter 5, finish this covenant lawsuit. Let's just read vv 16-27 to get started then we'll detail it out.

¹⁶Therefore thus says the LORD God of hosts, the Lord, "There is wailing in all the plazas, And in all the streets they say, 'Alas! Alas!' [Woe! Woe!] They also call the farmer to mourning And professional mourners to lamentation. ¹⁷"And in all the vineyards *there is* wailing, Because I will pass through the midst of you," says the LORD.

¹⁸Alas, you who are longing for the day of the LORD, For what purpose *will* the day of the LORD *be* to you? It *will be* darkness and not light; ¹⁹As when a man flees from a lion And a bear meets him, Or goes home, leans his hand against the wall And a snake bites him. ²⁰*Will* not the day of the LORD *be* darkness instead of light, Even gloom with no brightness in it?

²¹“I hate, I reject your festivals, Nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. ²²“Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept *them*; And I will not *even* look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. ²³“Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. ²⁴“But let justice roll down like waters And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

²⁵“Did you present Me with sacrifices and grain offerings in the wilderness for forty years, O house of Israel? ²⁶“You also carried along Sikkuth your king and Kiyyun, your images, the star of your gods which you made for yourselves. ²⁷“Therefore, I will make you go into exile beyond Damascus,” says the LORD, whose name is the God of hosts.

Alright, verse 16, **Therefore** signals a conclusion to last week and it's a return to the funeral dirge of vv 1-3. There's a dirge meter in the Hebrew language here that is returned to. **thus says the LORD God of hosts, the Lord, “There is wailing in all the plazas, And in all the streets they say, ‘Alas! Alas!’ They also call the farmer to mourning And professional mourners to lamentation. ¹⁷“And in all the vineyards *there is* wailing, Because I will pass through the midst of you,” says the LORD.** So again Israel is getting to see in advance the death and destruction that will come in that day. So in v 16 the destruction is previewed, its minutes after the Lord in His armies has passed through their midst. And **there is wailing in all the plazas.** Each town would have a plaza, a large open area where people gathered, usually near the city gate and here the people have started to gather and they're **wailing. And in all the streets they say, ‘Alas! Alas! Just translate that Woe! Woe!** which was an ancient response to devastating judgment. So the 10% of people who are

left alive are out in the plaza, out in the streets saying Woe, Woe accompanied by all this **wailing**. 90% of the population has been decimated. Family, friends, countrymen, boys, girls, children, infants, the next few weeks there are going to be mass burials, cleaning up the dead bodies off the streets, and funeral after funeral.

They also call the farmer to mourning. The **farmer** is the guy who lived outside of town and they were oppressed and ripped off by the upper class who took his land and now the oppressed are called to mourn for his oppressors.

And professional mourners to lamentation. Now, what they had in many oriental cultures was the professional mourners, and they still have these today and they were skilled in mourning songs and weeping. They were experts in the dirge meter. Sometimes you read in the NT, weeping and gnashing of teeth, that's extreme mourning. The professional mourners back of that expression. This was the kind of group that Herod the Great hired before he died to mourn at his funeral. He knew nobody liked him and nobody would attend his funeral so before he died he hired professional Jewish mourners to attend his funeral procession. I don't think they went but he did hire them.

And notice also in the places of joy, **in all the vineyards there is wailing**, that's where you go to celebrate, to express joy, go out and have a glass of wine and laugh but even there no one's laughing, they're **wailing in all the vineyards**, throughout the whole land. It could also be translated "Wail now in all the vineyards." And if that's the case then it's saying, you did not wail when you should have, you were laughing, so wail now that the devastation has come. Too often we sit by and watch people fall apart spiritually and we don't do anything about it, we just let them go their merry way and then the discipline comes and it's too late. And the point is that we should be wailing for them before the discipline comes, we should warn people and try to restore them to the Lord before it's too late and the discipline comes.

- **Because I, who, v 16, the Lord God of armies, the Lord...will pass through the midst of you.** If you're a keen Bible student then you might recognize this phrase has been used before in the OT. When was it that the Lord said "I will pass through."? It was in Egypt on the night of the 10th

plague. The night the Lord said if you put blood of a lamb on the lintel of the door then when the death angel sees it He will be satisfied and will passover sparing the firstborn inside the house. And when He saw it on the Hebrew homes He passed over. But when He did not see it on the Egyptian homes He entered in and took the lives of the firstborn. So as the Lord had passed through Egypt causing death now He would pass through Israel with the same mission. This must have had a chilling effect on anyone who remembered these words from Exod 12:12.

Who has done it all, v 16, **the Lord God of hosts, the Lord**, look at the triple name of God there, very rare, very powerful, the **Lord God of armies**, and just in case you forgot, He's **the Lord**. This kind of an emphasis doesn't bode well for the northern kingdom. I wouldn't want to be on the other side of the **Lord God of armies, the Lord** who commands legions of angels, every human army and all nature forces.

Alright, vv 18-20 give the warning, **Alas, or Woe, you who are longing for the day of the LORD, For what purpose *will* the day of the LORD *be* to you? It *will be* darkness and not light;** ¹⁹**As when a man flees from a lion And a bear meets him, Or goes home, leans his hand against the wall And a snake bites him. ²⁰*Will not the day of the LORD be darkness instead of light, Even gloom with no brightness in it?***

There were certain Israeli's of the northern kingdom who were **longing for the day of the Lord**. The **day of the Lord** up to this point in Jewish history had only been revealed in Obadiah and Joel. In Obadiah it refers to judgment on all the nations and in Joel it really gets developed. So we've already worked with the day of the Lord in those contexts and we said two basic things. First we said it was a phrase that arose in the ancient near east to refer to a great warrior king who could consummate an entire military campaign in a single day. So it's a military term for a great warrior king in battle. But we said it doesn't have to refer to a 24 hour campaign. In some contexts it does, in others it does not, so that has to be decided by the context. The second thing we said was let's get a working definition and here's how we defined it, "a special catastrophic intervention by God into history."

Every usage contains the fundamental idea of God intervening in human affairs with a special catastrophe that alters significantly the course of

history. In Obadiah it refers to the future Tribulation; day of the Lord is often used of the Tribulation. And there's no question that's a massive intervention by God into history. In Joel some references describe a past day of the Lord: the locust plague that came and gave a small-scale preview of the future day of the Lord which the other references refer to. So there are past days of the Lord and these give a historical preview of the future day of the Lord, the Tribulation. So the northern kingdom is drawing their theology from this information and they're interpreting it as a day when the nations will be judged and Israel will be saved. Amos is correcting that theology in v 18, **Woe, you who are longing for the day of the LORD, For what purpose will the day of the LORD be to you? It will be darkness and not light;** They longed for it because they thought it was used to describe a day of **darkness** for her foes and **light** for her in her glorious kingdom. But there was a day of the Lord coming before that for Israel that would be **darkness** for her **and not light**. If you walk in the darkness and not in the light then you should expect God's discipline and not blessing.

Where are you walking? In the day to day existential dimension of sanctification are you walking in fellowship or out of fellowship, in the light of God's holiness or in the darkness? We know that judgment is coming upon the unbeliever but we often think because we have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ that we are immune from God's judgment. That's what Israel was thinking. It was thought, "We have the Abrahamic Covenant and therefore we have security and protection by God." And therefore no bad could befall us. In other words, many of them failed to understand what we've been going over and over and over about the relationship between the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants. Those are two different kinds of contracts. The Abrahamic does give them a secure position in the plan of God but it's because of their unique position in the plan of God that they have certain obligations under the Mosaic. And when they failed to meet those obligations, when they failed to obey there was discipline. So the **day of the Lord** here is a description of the pending disciplinary wrath of God coming upon the northern kingdom.

Look at the descriptive language of v 19, **As when a man flees from a lion And a bear meets him, Or** and that is a mistranslation, it should be translated **And** or **Then**, the difference being that it makes it one illustration and not two. It's a series of events that all happen in quick succession, one

occasion. There's no escape, you escaped a lion, you escaped a bear but you did not escape the snake. You thought you had escaped the disciplinary wrath of God but no one can escape. He says it's like **when a man** is walking in the forest and he comes around a tree and there's **a lion** and he's immediately afraid and his legs won't work because his mind is full of fear and then his feet start to take him away and he runs and runs and when the **lion** has stopped pursuit and he's distanced himself from the **lion** then **a bear meets him** and he's already tired, he's sweating but he picks up his feet again and as he runs he sees his front door and he runs to the door and he comes blasting through the door and immediately turns and slams it behind him and is safe from the bear. And as the adrenaline begins to dissipate and the sweat is pouring and he leans over on the wall to support himself and out of a crack in the wall comes a poisonous **snake** and it **bites** him. His hand begins to swell, he turns gray, and he falls to the floor and dies a miserable death. You cannot escape the disciplinary wrath of God. He's going to get you one way or another and probably when you least expect it and it's going to be a miserable way to go. The day of the Lord is like that, even in the future you read strange passages about people who will seek to die but cannot, they can't even commit suicide, and these are unnatural times in human history when God intervenes to bring about such cataclysmic death and destruction.

Verse 20, he repeats, **Will not the day of the LORD be darkness instead of light, Even gloom with no brightness in it?** The day of Israel's distress will not be light at all; it will be a day that is total **darkness**, a day of gloom not an ounce of **brightness in it**. There is not a one of us who has ever faced a day like this. These are supernaturally induced sufferings on a scale that is beyond human conception. And these are God's own children. I wonder how many of us as His children in the NT take this seriously? We have a day when we have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Granted it's not the Great White Throne Judgment for the unbeliever, but a judgment for believers only. It's not to see whether you have eternal life or not but to do an evaluation of your works, whether Paul says, they are good or bad and to be recompensed for them. "Therefore knowing the terror of the Lord," Paul says, we better get our heart in the right orientation. I think many Christians think they're going to show up and the Lord is going to pat them on the back and hand them a big golden trophy because they went to Sunday School every week for 25 years. I don't think the Lord is going to do that at all. Paul

says it's a moment of terror. You ought to project yourself there every once in awhile just for the sake of getting perspective while you're here. Just put yourself right up in front of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ sitting on His judgment seat. I can tell you I'm terrified. Many of you say, oh you haven't got anything to worry about, you teach the word of God, surely you'll be rewarded. You don't know all my life and if you knew the dark crevices where I hide my sin you probably wouldn't even listen to me. But the other side is if I knew all of yours I probably wouldn't talk to you. So we all have sin, I think that you just have to keep on like David, confessing the sin and learning loyalty to Him over greater and greater spheres of life. You haven't reached it yet, I guarantee you that, if you'd already arrived you wouldn't still be here. So the Lord has work to do on all of us. And I hope you're not walking the path that Israel was walking because it's a path that leads to destruction and the terror of the Lord.

So let's see what their life looked like that led to it. Vv 21-23 is what the northern kingdom had and verse 24, what they didn't have but needed. They had festivals v 21, they had sacrifices v 22, they had music v 23, but that is not what God wanted them to have. He wanted them to have v 24, justice and righteousness.

So verse 21, **I hate, I reject your festivals.** These people had festivals like you wouldn't believe. Certain denominations have festivals, some more than others but none of them could compare when put next to Israel. Not even the festivals of the Roman Catholic Church, as developed as they are, could compare to Israel's. They were the professionals. The Feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Firstfruits, the Feast of Trumpets and the Feast of Tabernacles. Those were the authorized festivals but of course they practiced them in different months, in months that Jeroboam devised in his own heart, and so the Lord says **I hate, I reject your festivals** (Isa 1:13-14).

Nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. The **solemn assemblies** were gatherings for worship at the annual festivals. And the Lord says **I do not delight in them**, literally the word **delight** means to smell, **I do not like the smell of your solemn assemblies.** When they would gather to worship at these festivals there would be much sacrifice which is described in verse 22 and these sacrifices were to be a pleasing aroma as they went up

before the Lord, Yet the Lord says, **Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them;** To put it bluntly “they stink!” My nose is sick of smelling the stench of **your solemn assemblies. And I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings.** I will close My eyes. I can’t even watch you give offerings. All three of these offerings were supposed to be sweet-smelling to the Lord, they were worship offerings.ⁱⁱ The burnt offering was an animal sacrifice that was totally burned up. It was for God alone. The grain offering, half was burned and the other half was eaten by the offerer. The **peace offering** was shared by God, the priest and the offerer. But the Lord didn’t accept any of them. One of the sacrifices that’s strikingly missing is the sin offering? It was also missing in chapter 4. Did they think they had no sin? It was fundamental to approaching God in the OT that you come admitting your sin. They act as if they have none. They act as if they are in perfect fellowship with God.

Finally, verse 23, **Take away from Me the noise of your songs;** take away the tumult, your songs aren’t pleasing to me, they’re noise,ⁱⁱⁱ heavy on discord, chaos, stimulating fleshly responses, fleshly dress and all its fleshly accoutrements. And then He adds, **I will not even listen to the sound of your harps.** In other words, though the harp was not being played in a tumultuous way, still He would **not even listen** to it. He plugs His ears to their music, He plugs His nose to their burnt and grain offerings and He closes His eyes to their peace offerings. The Lord God is not pleased by all this.

You know why not? It is strange that He is not pleased since these are all things He commanded. Why, if the Lord God commanded them to keep festivals and if He commanded them to sacrifice and He commanded them to praise Him, why did He hate the festivals, call the sacrifices stench and plug His ears to their song? What God’s responding to here is a very serious thing. They are going through all the religious motions. They have the outward religious form but they are void of the inward religious heart. That’s why I called this sermon “External Ritual, Empty Hearts.” Actually their hearts are full of something down in v 26 but it’s not the Lord God. This is pure religious ritual for the sake of ritual, it’s not true worship. Their hearts are not oriented to Him. So the Lord hates it. That may sound a little stiff to you, but that’s the word of God. That’s what God says, I hate it, I reject it, I do not

delight in it, I will not accept it, I cannot even look at it, take it away, I will not listen!

What's the application for us? We can attend all the solemn assemblies we want to but that's very different from attending to God. We can go to church every Sunday but that's very different from going to God. We can meet for prayer but that's very different from meeting with God. We can even go to seminary and get a degree but that's not necessarily seeking God. Seek Him and you will live. None of these things are wrong in and of themselves.

What's wrong is when they are done merely for ritual sake, merely to impress others, merely to accrue favors from God, merely to get your name known; in that case it's nothing more than an empty shell of religion. God hates it. God will not accept it, God doesn't even want to look at it. That's what man looks at, that's what impresses man, and God is not impressed. Man looks at the outside, what does God look at? The heart. He's interested in heart obedience to Him. You can fool men but you can't fool God. These people hadn't fooled God one bit. He's the heart-reader. Are you putting on a show? Are you trying to impress me or someone else, because if you are you aren't pleasing God.

And the stench of your life and mine just rises up before God and makes Him sick. I think of those seven letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3 where Jesus Christ gives His personal evaluation of those churches. What did the Lord say about those at Laodicea? What was the Lord's evaluation of that church? You are neither hot nor cold, you are like a milky warm stew, I wish that you were either hot or cold, but as it is you make Me want to barf. You make me sick I will vomit you out of My mouth. That's what religious show does to the stomach of God. It makes His stomach churn with acidic bile till He finally vomits you out of His mouth. God hates the external ritual with an empty heart.

Now we come to verse 24 and what has been called the golden verse of Amos. It can be taken a couple of ways so let's read it. **"But let justice roll down like waters And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.** One idea is that the Lord is saying to prepare because My justice and My righteousness are going to flow down upon your land in divined discipline. I'm going to clean house. Another view, one I think is better, is that this is what God wanted from them. What the Lord wanted first and foremost was heart obedience to His law. He wanted them to rule with justice in the courts, according to the Mosaic Law. He wanted them to send down righteousness from the bench, in

accordance with the Mosaic Covenant. That's what He wanted. The external shell of religion wasn't what God wanted. It was to be there, yes, but it was to flow out of true heart obedience to Him; ruling according to the Law of Moses which I gave you. Ruling according to My word. But you have corrupted His/My courts, you've rebelled against My word; the way it is put here in this tremendously vivid picture. How the Lord portrays justice as an abundant, never ending stream of water that does not cease to supply water to the parched land. As one author said, "He does not desire religious assemblies or rituals; he does not desire sacrifices or skilled musicianship. He wants worship in spirit and in truth. True worshipers of the Lord...will bear the true fruit of the Spirit in their private lives and in their public conduct. In their society justice will flow like healing waters (Ezek 47.1-12), and righteousness like a perennial wadi." (McComiskey, 432). What a beautiful outward expression of an inward reality. It's true that if we are not changed on the inside then everything we do to clean up the outside is worthless before God.

And now in v 25 the Lord gives some historical analysis showing that this has been a problem for God's people from the very origin of the nation. What they were doing was nothing new; this had begun 700 years before in the Wilderness Wanderings. It was the same old story repeated. Verse 25, **Did you present Me with sacrifices and grain offerings in the wilderness for forty years, O house of Israel?** Oh yes, Lord we did? But how were they done? Were they done with true heart obedience or simply as ritual? They had formed the golden calf and worshipped YHWH through the image of the calf, a blunder of such proportions that the calf's nature is projected onto the calf. This is why I'm very leery of any book whether fiction or historical that portrays God in any way other than how He is portrayed in the pages of Scripture. God is not a woman. I'm sorry if that hurts your feelings but that's not who He is. He is not a she. He is a He. Many people are having a hard time with that in our Christian culture right now. But it can't be accepted because God doesn't portray Himself as feminine but as masculine and the minute you visualize God as a woman you inevitably project femininity upon God and distort Him. That's how it all starts. It starts in the imagination of our hearts and when we've completed it we have made Him in our image, we have fashioned a god in our likeness and our image. That's what Israel had done, that's what human nature does, that's what many in the Church have done, fashioned a god in our image. So they

started out on the wrong path, v 25, and in v 26 here's where the path leads, **You also carried along**, my version translates in the past tense there, I don't know how your version translates but that is probably a future tense, **You will carry along Sikkuth your king and Kiyyun, your images, the star of your gods which you made for yourselves. Sikkuth** probably refers to the Assyrian war god, **Kiyyun** to an Assyrian astral deity. They are both Assyrian gods and evidently they had already fashioned these Assyrian gods into **images**. But the names used here are slightly altered from their original spellings. Amos has substituted the vowels of the Hebrew word "abomination," (*shiqqus*) into their names.^{iv} So he's ridiculing them, he's saying they are abominations to the Lord. And of course they were, they were violations of the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." They had placed Sikkuth and Kiyyun before Him. And the Lord projects that they would **carry** the images of these two gods upon pedestals into Assyria, the very place these false gods were worshipped with great fervor. So from beginning to end Israel struggled with idolatry despite their continued external ritual. God says I hate it, I reject it.

Therefore, verse 27, I will make you go into exile beyond Damascus," says the LORD, whose name is the God of armies. Now I don't think this should be any surprise. They were deep into idolatry. The Lord had sent prophets to warn them, they'd responded by outlawing the prophets. He'd sent four degrees of discipline, they'd responded by continued rebellion. And so finally Amos says you've reached the fifth degree of discipline; **exile**. In perfect accordance with her national anthem of Deut 32 which mapped her future, and in perfect accordance with the terms of the covenant in Lev 26 and Deut 28. The Lord has been faithful to His word, Israel had not. They had failed to reach the aim of sanctification as a nation which is to learn loyalty to God through His word.

Therefore I will make you go into exile beyond Damascus," Which to an Israelite referred to Assyria, to the NE. Their discipline would reach its highest degree; their funeral had already taken place. **Thus says the Lord, whose name is the God of armies.**

Now, it is my prayer that the churches that name the name of Jesus Christ on earth today would take very seriously this kind of a report. We know the Lord Jesus Christ gives reports on local churches; we have Rev 2-3 as

abundant evidence. And we have to ask “If the Lord Jesus Christ were to walk in these doors would He find external ritual and emptiness of heart? Are we full of idolatrous infestations that steer people away from the one true God?” I don’t know, I can’t read your heart, but I can say we have tried to hold the line. I can say we have been faithful to teach the word of God. I can say most of you have consistently attended to the word of God. But I cannot say what is in your heart. I can also tell you that the word indicates there is always a remnant within the people of God and that the size of the remnant in church history gets smaller and smaller. The Lord has sketched our future just as He sketched Israel’s and as they ended in apostasy so the church ends in apostasy. So therefore, since apostasy means to depart, to depart from the word of God then what that looks like as you move through church history is that the remnant will get smaller and smaller and smaller. I call those truth circles getting smaller and smaller until the day of the pre-trib Rapture at which point the church is removed from earth and at that point the fullness of the apostasy will have been reached and God’s program for Israel picks up and is brought to consummation. Now, that’s the local church application.

But it is also my prayer that the individuals in the church that name the name of Jesus Christ today would realize the severity of this kind of an evaluation. We will all be evaluated at the Judgment Seat of Christ and the NT picture is not necessarily a very friendly one where everybody gets a pat on the back and a well done good and faithful servant. Many when their works are put in the fire they’re going to be burned into nothing, yet so they will be saved, but when they walk in they might smell like burnt toast. So it’s not a day everyone gets a flower, it’s a day of terror Paul says because the issues are not going to be how many years you went to church, how many prayer meetings you attended, how many mission trips you went on, how much money you gave, not the shell of religion, but the heart of it. Did you maintain fellowship with Him, did you seek Him and did you meet the aim of loyalty to Him in sanctification, did you mature to deep, deep sanctification and all that entails?

ⁱ One of the things I want to comment on in the prior verses before we move on is the word in v 12 You who distress the righteous and take bribes, that word for bribes there is referring to taking atonement money or blood money. In other words what was going on was they were accepting ransom for the crime of murder, you could get off by paying a simple fine. That was condemned in Numb 35:31. For other crimes yes, you could pay a ransom, but for the taking of life you could not,

the only punishment for murder was execution because there is no amount of money that can pay for the life. The life is too valuable for money, no monetary value can be placed on the image of God. So they were distorting just in this way.

ii Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003; 2003), Am 5:22.

iii The Hebrew word can be used of lyrics accompanied by instrumentation and it is possible that the songs were noisy tumultuous songs that communicated discord and chaos and the Lord is saying it's not appropriate for worship. It's what I was talking about a few weeks ago. There is music that is appropriate and inappropriate in worshipping the God of the Bible. Music is not neutral, it's not amoral. And everyone seems to know this except the CCM and P&W people. Even the world system, the people in our pagan culture know very well its not neutral or amoral. And it's simply inconceivable that a tumultuous song can be used to worship God.

iv Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003; 2003), Am 5:26.

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