

The Lord Roars at Judah

By Jeff Noblit



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Well, grab your Bibles and go to the book of Amos. We are in Amos 2 as we go through this Old Testament book. I honestly had not much of an understanding of the book of Amos when I chose it. I had been reading through it some and I did not know it would unfold as it is unfolding but Amos was a country preacher. He was a shepherd in the region of Tekoa and I can just envision Amos sitting on the mountainside in the evenings as the sheep were settling down for the night and just meditating before God about truth and about righteousness and about how his people, including the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel, had long since forsaken any true fidelity to God and to become a wicked and corrupt and Amos was likely a part of a fellowship of reformers, a remnant that longed for truth and God's word to be reestablished in the country. And be careful if that's burning in your heart because God may do what he did to Amos and he'll say, "Okay, you go and preach to them." And I'm sure Amos felt like Jeff Noblit has felt and any other person called to preach and said, "Lord, are you sure? They're not going to like the message you're sending me out to preach."

But Amos was powerfully faithful to the calling because, really verse 2 of chapter 1, look at that again, is the foundation stone everything else grows out of. Chapter 2, verse 1, he said, "The LORD roars from Zion And from Jerusalem He utters His voice." So he uses this metaphor of the roaring lion. And again, this is the lion that has jumped to his feet. This is the dominant male of the pride. He's on his feet, his eyes are set, he finds his prey and he's about to leap and pounce upon it. Amos is not calling the nation to repentance or else. That day is gone. The lion has already roared here. The next event will be the devouring of the chosen prey. So it begins to unfold things here. He begins to unfold why and to whom the Lord is roaring and about to destroy.

So now we come to chapter 2, verses 4 and 5, and we shift from God's roaring judgment against the nations that surrounded Israel to now God's roaring judgment against Judah and then Israel. Today will be Judah. Verse 4 of Amos chapter 2,

4 Thus says the LORD, "For three transgressions of Judah and for four I will not revoke its punishment, Because they rejected the law of the LORD And have not kept His statutes; Their lies also have led them astray, Those after which their fathers walked."

Now, he says there beginning in verse 4, that same phrase he said to all the other nations and that is, "For three transgressions of Judah and for four." What he means is, "You've just built sin upon sin upon sin and now you have cast the straw that has broken the camel's back. But even more than that, there is a specific type of sin that you are now committing that is beyond God's ability to withhold judgment."

He says in verse 4, the next phrase there, just reading it off, "For three transgressions of Judah and for four I will not revoke its punishment." Now, lest anyone say that God's justice is selective or that he is inequitable in application of his judgment, God says here to his favored people, Israel, and here particularly the southern kingdom, Judah, that he is going to bring his divine authoritative rulership to bear on them as he had the surrounding nations.

You know, there are so many people that would say, "Well, that's not the way my God is." It reminds me a little bit, I couldn't help but think about this, the present political environment you and I see in our country and you say, "Well, why do you bring politics in?" Because truth bears on everything. Truth bears on everything. Period. Some have said today when Donald Trump won the election, "He's not my President," and that's become a slogan, "Not my President," but they are wrong. He won the electoral college by a wide majority and is the duly elected President of the United States. You may not like it, there are some things about him I don't like, for sure, you may not like him, he may make you sick but it doesn't change a thing. He's the President. You can say, "He's not my President," all you want. And I'm sure as Amos walked into the environs of Bethel and began thundering these messages, there were people saying, "That's not my God you're talking about." It doesn't matter what you think. His rulership is over all, even the Gentile nations around Israel and over Israel.

But the great majority of people today, back into our context, if you will, including many who claim Christianity, when confronted with God – now listen – with God as he reveals himself in Scripture, find God unacceptable. This God as he reveals himself in Scripture makes them uncomfortable. They, in effect, sneer at the faithful proclamation of this God and say, "Well, that's not my God. He's not like that." But you're wrong. He is. God is who he is and God is God of all. He's God of the Gentile nations around Israel. He's God of Judah, the southern kingdom. He's God of Israel, the northern kingdom. His rulership extends over all.

Now, first he judged the Gentile nations around Judah and Israel. Dr. Ironside notes in his commentary that as Amos prophesied against these nations around Israel and how they were going to be destroyed, that they were probably, at least Judah and Israel were probably thinking, "Well, good for them. Those pagan Gentiles ought to be destroyed." I mean, he prophesied about Gaza and Tyre and Edom and Ammon and Moab. And by the way, history records that they disappeared from the face of the earth, only Damascus is still there but their people went into exile and now Islam rules there. So the predictions of Amos, the herdsman prophet from Tekoa, have proven to be the word of Jehovah.

But now as he prophesied about all of those Gentile nations, he turns, he turns to his own people. Now, the basis of his judgment toward Judah and Israel is different and more severe. You see, in a structured and systematic sequence, Amos prophesied that God is coming against the nations surrounding Judah and Israel, judging them primarily for their sins against conscience and against the law that God has written in every man's heart. Through Amos, God outlines the callused sins of the nations and that is their sins as they pertain mostly to their human relationships. Now, we organized these in three sub settings: the sanctity of human life, the violation of a brotherly covenant, and cruelty toward the helpless. Over and over as God judged those Gentile nations, that's what he kept bringing out. "You are violating the standard of God because you're made in the image of God. You should have higher dignity and character about you than to do what you're doing one to another." So God promises, it says he is bringing judgment against them.

So, again, likely the citizens of Israel and Judah as they heard these denunciations against the Gentile nations around them thought that, "This is good. We kind of like this." But what they didn't realize was that the pronouncements against the nations around them was but a noose tightening around their own necks. Amos began prophesying against the Gentile countries of Assyria, Philistia, Tyre and Assyria, Philistia and Tyre had commerce with Israel but not much more. Then Amos began to prophesy against Edom and Ammon and Moab, but these nations are more directly linked to Israel. They are kind of like cousins, if you will. So the further Amos went along in his prophecies, the closer it was getting to home. I mean, he's getting into the family now. Then after he just pulls that noose around tighter and tighter, finally Amos trains the fiber optic sights of the cannon of divine judgment squarely on the forehead of the chosen nation of Israel and they are shocked and dismayed. We'll see that as we go through here, how repulsed they were at Amos's preaching.

Now, a key point here in understanding the sin of Israel and the sin of Judah was that they had perverted the doctrine of divine election. They thought that somehow, "Since we're God's chosen people, he will judge those Gentile nations but we'll get a free pass." They perverted the doctrine of election. They had, in effect, thought that since they were God's elect, they could turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, which means into a wanton sensuality. This fact that we are God's chosen nation means we can sin and get by with it.

Jude warns about this. Jude warns us that in our day false teachers will teach this very concept. Jude 1:4, "For certain persons have crept in unnoticed," you notice we always call them creeps because they crept in unnoticed, "those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness," did you hear that? Turning the grace of God into licentiousness, "and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ." That's what Judah was doing. That's what Israel was doing. They viewed that being God's elect meant they had a license to indulge in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life. So we note again the strong parallels between this day and our day. 2,800 years ago in Bethel, that's what they were doing. "We are God's chosen people. We have kept parts of the ceremonial

law. We are faithful to check off our hoop jumps, but then we've also embraced Baal worship and we've brought Baal worship into Jehovah worship because it's full of excitements and carnal pleasures and we like that."

You come down to the early church 2,000 years ago and you have Jude warning about those who will hold it to some sound doctrines but want to bring lasciviousness, wanton indulgence and sensuality into church life and into Christian life in general. Then you come to today's church. You don't have to look very far to see this move, this strong move toward everything under the sun being brought into the church. "Oh, we keep our orthodoxy but we also do these things." Nothing has really changed. You see, here's the point, folks: man's nature hasn't changed. So it has different colorings to it, different cosmetics, but it's the same stuff no matter what generation you're looking at.

But God who is God in his holiness and righteousness, does not and cannot change. Now, Israel was distinct among the nations because God had showed Israel so many great and wondrous favors but the moral law that governed the judgment against the Gentiles, governed the judgment against Israel, but Israel sinned against far more light than any of them. Israel had the prophets. Israel had the law. Israel had the temple. Israel had the ceremonies that all pointed to truth, divine truth, that revealed God, revealed God's grace, revealed the promise of a Savior, revealed the promise of grace. They had all of these truths that the Gentile nations did not have so their sin is much more serious. The more light you sin against, the more accountable you are.

Now to our outline. I. as we focus in on "The Lord Roars Against Judah." The Lord roars against Judah. I. Hearts that did not treasure the instruction of the word. Hearts that did not treasure the instruction of the word. What I mean by that is, as we are going to see, they held to things in the law but from their hearts they did not treasure God's truth and God's instruction for their faith and for their lives.

Here's the way he words it in verse 4 of chapter 2, "Because they rejected the law of the LORD And have not kept His statutes." Now, when he says they rejected the law of the Lord and have not kept his statutes, he's not referring to this legislative legalistic view. He's not referring to, "I gave you eight Commandments. You kept three pretty good, a couple others you didn't keep at all, and the ones that are left you kept part of the time. So I averaged up your score and you didn't score high enough so I'm going to judge you." That's not what he's talking about at all. What he means is they come to the place where they did not esteem and treasure God's instruction for their hearts and their lives, they treasured their own concepts and their own wisdom and their own ideas about serving God and knowing God above the word of God. It's sort of a categorical setting aside of God's instruction from the word. "Oh, we believe that but, really, our hearts are over here with this stuff." That's where they are.

Look over at verse 12 of chapter 2, "But you made the Nazirites drink wine," we'll deal with that maybe next time, but the last part of that verse, "And you commanded the prophets saying, 'You shall not prophesy!'" And basically they are saying, "We don't want you preaching like that. Don't preach to us the unadulterated word of God. You ought to

be more clever and creative. Use the Bible but don't just preach it as it was meant to be preached and taught."

Look over at chapter 7, verses 12 and 13, "Then Amaziah," this is the priest, the high priest of the northern kingdom, "said to Amos, 'Go, you seer, flee away to the land of Judah and there eat bread and there do your prophesying!'" We don't want to hear your preaching. "But no longer prophesy at Bethel, for it is a sanctuary of the king and a royal residence." Don't you understand, Amos, if you keep preaching like that the authorities are going to get upset. You could end up in jail if you keep preaching like that. These are just some of the ways it is expressed that they had stopped treasuring the instruction of the word of God from their hearts. They had as the Gentile nations, truly sinned against the light of conscience. They had as the Gentile nations, truly sinned against the law written in every man's heart. But additionally, they had brazenly and coldly in their hearts set aside God's word and turned aside the faithful prophets that God had sent to them.

Now, once again, consistent parallels with our day. Paul instructing Timothy as to what the general tenor of faithful preaching of the word was going to mean. So here's what Paul says to Timothy, "Timothy, as you faithfully preach the word throughout your entire ministry, this is what you're going to run into." 2 Timothy 4:3, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine," that means faithful preaching of the word. They just won't endure it, "but wanting to have their ears tickled," that means with the latest trends or fads, let's do those things, pastor, "they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires." The phrase "they will not endure sound doctrine" means they will not discipline themselves to stand up under it. It means that a true child of God may even often find themselves saying, "I don't think I want to go and hear that preaching again," but something down in their souls has changed since their new birth and they say, "I may not want to but I need to and, God, teach me to treasure it." Are you with me, church? "It may not be the thing that excites me right now but I know I need to get back to it."

Well, they had passed that. They weren't there at all. They had just set that aside. "Pastor, give us some hoop jumps. We'll bring the sacrificial offering just like the law of Moses says, we'll bring the tithes just like the law of God says, we'll bring those offerings just like the law says, we'll keep the feast day just like the law says but give us some things to check off and then leave us alone and let us accommodate Baal worship because it has all the sensual amusements and pleasures our heart really wants." You see, there is one thing – now listen to me, church, listen to me – it's one thing for your flesh to enjoy sensual amusements and treasures, it's another thing for your heart of hearts to be based on it. We fight the old flesh but our heart of hearts as Christians wants God's truth.

But they had passed that. They had set that aside. You see, they did not want to be interrupted in their lust by the true preaching of the word of God. You know, corrupt and immoral people crave corrupt and immoral preachers. I've always said, generally speaking, that God gives a church the pastor they deserve. When a church is run by fleshly, corrupt and immoral people, they basically want a pastor who is kind of leaning that way.

Israel gloried in their favored position as God's elect and they would call the other nations the lesser nations. They, not the lesser nations as they would call them, knew God's law and knew God's truth but they set it aside. They multiplied their sin, they multiplied their guilt far above the other nations for they took this treasure that was given them and they neglected, yea, even more, they cast it behind them as an impediment to their idolatries of self-love and self-pleasures. This casting aside of God's law as if it was an outmoded ethic from an ignorant and dark bygone era is the central issue that brings God's judgment and they have not repented and they have passed the point of return. The lion has already roared. He's not saying, "Repent or else," he's saying, "No, it's over."

I may say this again, I will say this again: you've got to realize that by now we're into about 150 years of them functioning with this Jehovah worship, check off the boxes, and Baal worship being combined together. They had been doing it for 150 years so they thought it was all good and they are prosperous. Their economy is doing great. The people are happier than they've ever been. And then Amos walks in the door and they thought, "We had this thing going good but that guy showed up from Tekoa pronouncing all these judgments. Can he not see how good our king has done? Can he not see how our economy has turned around? How Israel is prosperous? How we've got better homes, better cars, better clothes, better everything we've ever had and we've got all of the sensual pleasures all the Gentile world has because we learned how to take true Jehovah worship and combine it with their sensual Baal worship. We're smart. We're clever. We're creative. And the people love it. It's going great." It is? You're going to be sitting in your den one afternoon watching your ball game, the economy is going to keep busting ahead, and off in the distance, United States of America, you're going to hear a lion roar. There ain't gonna be nothing you can do about it. Nothing. That's where they are. That's where they are.

"Pastor, I could use a little dose of that happy church right now stuff." I bet you could. Your flesh would love it, wouldn't it? You need to be uncomfortable from time to time. You need to be shaken a little bit from time to time. It may help you save your children and your grandchildren with the truth. It may keep you from drifting in your own heart and mind away from what really matters. Can I get an amen, church? I need it. I meant to say this earlier: Amos is going to be the death of me. You'd have to be called to preach and try to preach faithfully, I guess, to know what I'm saying. And I'm not saying woe is me, grace is sufficient, but Amos gets me in a headlock on Monday and he does not let me up. It's just weighty. It's just weighty.

So the lion has sprung to his feet. He's on full alert. His omniscient eyes quickly lock onto the prey. His muscles are taut and trembling. At any moment he will explode with ferocity, run down his prey and quickly devour it. That's the picture Amos gives us. How powerful and clearly this text parallels our situation today. Does the professing church today, and that's the parallel, I want you to notice something here: this is not a prophecy to individuals, this is a prophecy to groups. As a matter of fact, overwhelmingly the Bible is a message to groups, primarily the church, the local churches. And this is a prophecy to nations, a group, a collectivity, and he's giving this prophecy and so the parallel for us is

not the nation as much, though that is true, but the local church, those who profess to be God's people.

So let me just quickly run through some things. Let me preface it by saying: does the professing church today "reject the law of God and set aside his statutes"? Does the professing church today reject the law of God and set aside his statutes because these people, now remember, these people could have argued, "We are crossing the t's and dotting the i's on the ceremonial law. We're doing the right stuff." No, but you may have done that outwardly but from your hearts you don't treasure the instruction of God's word. Can I say that again to you? Do you from your heart treasure the instruction of God's word? Do you say, "You know, I might can take a vacation, I might can miss a Sunday school but I got to get back under the faithful preaching of the word. There is something in me that needs that." Then you're in a healthy place. They had passed that place and so have so many congregations today.

Pastors and churches reject the law of God and set aside his statutes when, 1: they institutionalize ritual and tradition in the place of the ministry of the word. Did you get that? They institutionalize tradition and ritual in the place of the ministry of the word and this happens really subtly and it happens over time. Slowly churches begin to exist for going through the motions of what they've always done and not, "Pastor, preach the text and give us the word."

2. Pastors and churches reject the law of God and set aside his statutes when they use the Bible as a manual for successful living instead of an authoritative word for spiritual reformation. I know pastors who use the Bible all the time and it's nothing but something of a pop psychology lesson for you to have a better individual life in this difficult world. First of all, the Bible is not addressed to individuals. Very, very little is it addressed to individuals. It's addressed to groups. And churches are rejecting the law of God and setting aside his statutes when they seduce and manipulate the Bible to be nothing more than a pep talk from a psychological perspective of how you can have your best life now.

3. Pastors and churches reject the law of God and set aside his statutes when they bind up their pastors with lesser assignments and leave him with little energies to preach the word. It's just radically obvious to me as I counsel with pastors every week how they are expected to do all these things that drain their mental and emotional energies and yet they want their pastors to get in the pulpit and preach with the kind of content I'm able to preach with, or John MacArthur, whoever else it may be, and they think, "Why can't you do that?" I can tell you why he can't do that: you've got to prize and treasure the word enough to give him the time to pour his energies there. It's a subtle thing. It's not a malicious thing. It's this dumb business mentality of the way you run the church. We can milk all we can out of this guy and we'll get a lot of bang for the salary we're giving him and the church dries up and blows away spiritually because the church depends upon the faithful instruction of the word. That's just God's ordained means to do it.

A church rejects the law of God and sets aside his statutes when they begin to mingle carnal and sensual entertainments and amusements along with the preaching of the word,

thus in effect declaring that faithful Spirit-empowered preaching is not sufficient in itself for building the church. Did you hear that? It's the mingling of carnal and sensual worldly amusements in the church so that even if their pastor is preaching the word, the message is the preaching of the word is not sufficient alone, we've got to doctor it up with these other things, exactly what ancient Israel is doing, bringing the amusements of Baal worship into Jehovah worship. Folks, I'm not making this up. 2,800 years ago and this ought to be one of the epistles in the New Testament, it's so practically laid out for the church today.

A pastor and a church rejects the law of God and sets aside God's statutes when they grow weak in membership standards, accountability and discipline in the membership.

6. Pastors and churches reject the law of God and set aside his statutes when they resort to soft expository preaching. Here's what I mean by that: they have learned how to preach through the text or a book of the Bible and avoid the hard things and the weighty things. But, you see, it's the hard things and the weighty things that humble people and help conform them to the image of Christ and so the church doesn't become sweet and humble and unified. John MacArthur says it very directly, he says, "Hard preaching produces soft hearts."

Listen to your pastor: I'm getting old. Well, I feel old at times. Almost 38 years of doing this, there is not one ounce of me that prepares a sermon and says, "It's going to be hard this week." I avoid it if I can. I'm tired of it in a way. I just want to be faithful, but any faithful instruction of the word means preaching hard things and weighty, things that make you squirm in your mind a little bit and say, "I can't grasp all of that." Well, when you squirm and you can't quite grasp all of it, at least it leaves you with this: God is bigger than my brain. Hallelujah. I serve a transcendent holy God who is greater than me so I'm going to leave with a fresh new humility before this awesome God that I serve. And that's a good thing. Do you know why? God gives grace to the humble but he is opposed to the proud. Isaiah 30:10 says, "Who say to the seers, 'You must not see visions'; And to the prophets, 'You must not prophesy to us what is right, Speak to us pleasant words, Prophesy illusions.'" Wow.

7. Pastors and churches reject the law of God and set aside his statutes when pastors misuse the Bible to enforce harsh unbiblical legalisms on the congregation. That is, a misuse of the Bible for them to get on their idol and enforce it as law in the church. Now, I have to confess I've been guilty there but I have repented of it and I hope I never walk in it again. Perhaps all young pastors have to work through that. I think all young Christians have to work through that. And we've seen it so much in America and some sweet and godly people went to these churches so don't categorically throw everything out, but the churches that teach a woman has got to dress in an exact certain way, she can't wear makeup in an exact certain way, her hair has got to be an exact certain way, the men have got to have a certain kind of haircut, and on and on we could go with these harsh legalisms. But to find that in the Bible, you'd have to stand on one foot on the 4th of July, look through the bottom of a 1942 Coke bottle to find that in the word of God because it's not there.

Then we come up to our modern day and even in the "reformed movement" that we are generally a part of, we don't try to be a part of it, we're just trying to follow the word but we are generally a part of the reformed movement, we've got folks walking in the church that say if you don't homeschool your children, you're not as spiritual and godly as you ought to be. Not in the Bible. Now, we support homeschoolers, help them and applaud them, but that's not an absolute. Amen? Then another group floats by and says, "Well, if you have a nursery or children or a student ministry, then you're not biblical and you're compromising. Children should be with their parents at all times in the church." Not in the Bible. What I'm saying is we reject the law of God and his statutes when we bring our own legalistic preferences to bear on others. Now, churches have to have some standards and sometimes in a culture things change that we have to agree upon we're going to stand on, but we ought to be very, very careful before we adopt anything as a body. And I don't know of anything that we have done that. I can understand that it does happen in some context but we've got to be very careful with that.

So we, the church today, find ourselves like ancient Judah here. We are more guilty because we have sinned against greater light. We did have the law of conscience like the Gentiles, we've sinned against that. We have the law of God written in our hearts, we've sinned against that. We have the completed Canon of Scripture and now we live on this side of the cross. We have so very, very much that we are accountable for. Well, hearts that did not treasure the instruction of the word of God.

II. The lion has roared against Judah because their hearts embraced lies instead. Obviously this is just the other side of the same coin. They embraced lies instead. He says in verse 4 as the prophet continues, "Because they rejected the law of the LORD And have not kept His statutes; Their lies also have led them astray." Now, scholars tell us and I believe this is totally accurate, the word "lies" there can be amplified to "lying idols." They threw away their heart to embrace the truth of God's word and then they embraced the idols which were the creations of their own hands. Psalm 31:6 reminds us that they are "vain idols." You could also say they are lying idols. It just means generally, now we don't build little statues very often today and worship them but we do embrace lies instead of the truth. It's the same thing in God's heart, in God's mind.

Now, lying voices have always been there and will always be there. We live in a fallen world and Satan is the father of all liars and he's the God of this world. A robust, faithful preaching of the word and a humble receptive heart to hear the word of God and be a continual repenter, is the only way to safeguard your life and your family and your church from being overtaken by lies. Judah and Israel had rejected God's law and set aside his statutes. Rejecting God's law is always first, then embracing lies is always second. You see, at the point when we deem the Scriptures as helpful or important instead of all important, when we esteem the creativity and wisdom of man as equal or as a rival, even if we still view the Bible as important, then we are inviting in the lies. When anything other than Scripture is given the supreme place in our hearts and we base and guide our lives upon it, then we are giving ourselves over to lies.

When you come in for counseling at Grace Life Church, one of the first things we typically say, I can't say always done but our premise is always this: we are not psychologists, we are not counselors, we are Gospel ministers, and we'll open the Bible and we'll go from there with where you are. Now, can I say something to you, and I've had this same therapy done on me so I'm not just picking on you: the great great majority of the time when you're having a real difficulty, especially emotionally, the cure is repentance. The Bible will point out usually something in your heart and in your thinking that is not true and the Bible says to think on what's true. So you have to as a gut level act of the will, call it sin and say, "I reject that thinking even though my emotions love it so much. And my past experience makes me want to believe it so much but the Bible has exposed it as not true and I reject that. I turn from that. I repent of that and I have purposed to begin as an act of the will, thinking on what is true." Because we're not building this ministry on lies.

So much of what the world and too many in the professing church call compassion, kindness, tolerance and love, is just simply a façade for embracing lies. It makes a lie seem so reasonable and acceptable if you surround it with compassion and love. Sometimes, well, all the time the most loving thing you can do to a person is speak the truth in love.

One can accurately say that the church is God's means to safeguard and proclaim the truth and if she does not do so, he has no Plan B. And equally, it is the truth that safeguards the church. And the church which is anchored in truth and the individual believer that is anchored in truth is impregnable. That will keep you from the stronghold of lies in your own heart, in your own thinking, and in your church.

Hurrying along, thirdly, let's note here that it was a family tradition. They did not treasure God's word and God's instruction in their lives and in their churches. They embraced lies instead, primarily the lie that we can have the worldly sensual lust, entertainments in our worship and in our lives and still be a faithful Jehovah worshiper. But then he says in the last part of verse 4, III. It was a family tradition. "Those after which their fathers walked." You see, this didn't just happen six years ago or 60 years ago. Decades and decades and decades have passed, about 150 years since Jeroboam I established this Jehovah-Baal cult in Bethel and in Dan. This had been going on a long time.

Sin and compromise within religion was passed on from generation to generation. In fact, it was proven true that over and over again that what the fathers – now listen to me, don't go dull on me – what the fathers allow in minimum, the children will excuse in excess. Did you hear that? That's why as I get older, I get more antsy about the next generation because they will look at some of my compromise, hopefully not willful but some of the things we got lax on and they'll say, "Oh, they were lax here and there, let's be lax here, here, here and here." What the fathers allow in minimum, the next generation excuses in excess.

Now listen to this: the sin and compromise coddled in one generation is canonized in the next. When Jeroboam I brought in the sensual pleasures of Baal worship into the house of

God and called it Jehovah's worship, I guarantee you there was a good percentage of the people that said, "We like it because our flesh likes it but we are troubled by it." But a generation went by, a generation went by, a generation went by and now the whole bunch of them embrace it as, "This is the way you do it," even though the word of God clearly condemned any trace of mingling the sensual pleasures of Baal worship with the true worship of Jehovah.

And can I say something to you, folks? What God wants us to get is this: he does not want you to rob your pleasure barometer with the hollow temporal pleasures of Baal because he wants to give you the eternal wondrous pleasures of himself. He has tried to wean you off the poison and give you the true milk, and the church is to be his channel, his agent to help you along, not to put you in the backwards, digressing process of going back to worldly amusements and pleasures. Pleasure is not wrong, God just wants us to have the high pleasures of God.

Let's note, again, that they have maintained rigorous observance to the ceremonial law: the sacrifices, the tithes, the offerings, the others. The point is they submitted the Scriptures, though, to their own traditions. Again it's been 150 years and this has been going on. They made the Scriptures to support their carnal traditions – now listen – instead of using the Scriptures to judge and validate the traditions.

I think that's probably the greatest gift God gave me, and understand this in balance, that I was not raised in church. I mean, I have almost no church experience before I was converted and I walked in the door of a number of churches after my conversion, driving to college as a freshman, and when I walked in those churches, you couldn't have been more green, you couldn't have been more naïve, you couldn't have been more ignorant, and I had a lot of pride and sin that I have had to repent of and still do, but all that being said, I would walk in those church doors and sit down and watch what they were doing and thought, "What in the world are they doing?" Because I had no past to go on, I only had this. And that was a great gift and maybe that's why when God looked for a prophet to come into the metropolitan regions and pronounce judgment, he went out to the rural remote hills of Tekoa and got a shepherd and said, "You've been away from the mess enough, I think I can trust you with the truth."

I think the truth of the matter is, God did me that way because he knows I'm too weak. If I had grown up in the compromise, I would have embraced the compromise. I'm not strong. I'm not wise. He needed me to be out of it so that when he converted me I'd be shocked by it. Now we raise our children hopefully in a strong and healthy church environment so the whole world thinks they're weird and it's a good weird, though. I don't want my children to feel comfortable in the world, I want them to be troubled by what they see in the world. I don't want them just to comfortably fit in, I want them to be disturbed by it. The world has not been changed for the better by people who fit the world but by people who contradict the world.

So we don't want to fall into the same grievous error of our forefathers, like they were. He said, "Your fathers walked in all of this." We don't want to use some human criterion

of judgment, some handed down tradition, some religious ritual our forefathers performed as the supreme authority of our doctrine and our practice, we want to use the clear instruction of Scripture. Have you matured enough as a Christian, 1, to honor and respect your forefathers in the faith? Because your moms and dads and grandmothers and granddaddys and great-grandmothers and great-grandfathers did a lot of things right spiritually. But at the same time say where they erred from the truth, "I still honor and respect them but I want to go in the truth," because if they're in heaven, they are shouting to you, "Don't stop where we stopped! Don't compromise where we compromised! Go on in the truth!"

My grandfather was the best man I knew. He was a splendid gentleman. Funny. I mean, almost to the day he died, got up in the morning, put on his bowtie, just a classy guy. But he was a member of the Church of Christ. I think he knew Christ but he knew a lot of false doctrine around it. You know, I honor and respect the memory of my grandfather and thank God for him, but I've rejected the false doctrine of his religion. We have to do that, amen? You are not rejecting them, we're just saying... Don't you hope, those of you in my generation, don't you hope our kids come along and do better for God than we have? Reject Jeff Noblit but don't reject God's truth. And hopefully we line up close enough together you can love both of us, but you know what I'm saying.

Matthew 15:1-3, we are about done. The plane is circling the field. "Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, 'Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders?'" We've had this tradition, Jesus, for all these generations and now you're coming along and your disciples don't do it that way. He says, "For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread." Jesus, verse 3 says, "And He answered and said to them, 'Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?'" Wooo, that's it. That's it. "Well, pastor, we've always done it this way. We can't have membership standards here in the Baptist Church, we have never done it that way. We can't do church discipline here at this church, we've never done it that way. We can't preach a Gospel whereby we look for a genuine evidence of repentance and the new birth, we've never done it that way. That won't work." Why do you embrace the traditions of men of the forefathers and neglect the commandments of God? Mark 7:5-7, "The Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, 'Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?' And He said to them, 'Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites.'" In other words, the sins of Isaiah's day are the sins of our day. "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men."

IV. Judgment is sure and severe. Verse 5, so we come to all of this. They did not embrace, they did not treasure the instruction of God's word from the heart, they were instead embracing the lies that, "We can bring pagan religions that accommodate our sensual pleasures and lusts for entertainments in with our Christian worship." I said, Christian, same parallel, Jehovah worship. And then thirdly, this was a family tradition. It's been going on for generation after generation after generation. Now Amos says, "Well, here's what you've got to know, the lion has already roared." You may feel like,

"Well, I'm innocent. My forefathers taught me religion this way." Well, I'm sorry. You should know better.

Can I say something to you, church? Do you realize this instruction is not addressed to the priests or to the preachers, it's entrusted and addressed to the people. Men, heads of households of this church, fathers, listen up: you are accountable to God for where you put your family in God's churches, and you'd better have a backbone like a saw log and some manly courage at times because Satan is going to try to manipulate your children and your wives to get you to at least veer toward lies and away from truth. Be a man! Be a man! Be a man! Did I make that clear enough? Be a man. We've got enough sissy, effeminate men in our culture. We don't need any more. Be a man.

Now, look, you be kind, you be sweet, you be gracious to your wives but if she reads some book or hears some goofball or somebody else's kids come in and says this is the coolest happening thing we've ever seen, and you sense that's not a treasuring of the instruction of the word, that looks a little bit like what old Baal worship looks like, then you say, "Sweetheart, I'd die for you. We are staying in a true church for the glory of God. It may not be as fun, it may not be as exciting at times but that's what we're doing." And by the way, if Jeff Noblit, the elders of this church begin to go toward Baal worship, then you ought to find you somewhere else to serve God. And I've asked God to kill me first and he may do it. God forbid I have that on my hands that I helped lead a church away from treasuring the instruction of God's word.

Judgment is coming, sure and severe, IV. So verse 5 of Amos 2, "So I will send fire upon Judah And it will consume the citadels of Jerusalem." Citadels just means your protection. You can put up all the protection you want, I'm wiping it out. He just means sure and severe judgment.

Now, as we close this morning, here are four words very briefly. 1. Repent of hoop jump religion. Repent of hoop jump religion. "Well, I did that. Well, I did that." I used to witness to people and I'd find some old fellow, bless his heart, been taught this little easy believism nonsense that has sent more people to hell than about anything else and I said, "Have you been saved?" "Well, preacher, I did that." What he meant was when he was seven he walked down to the front. That doesn't matter to God. That is hoop jump. Have you been born again? Have you experienced repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ from your heart? That's what they were doing here, just checking off some boxes, jumping through some hoops and then living life their own way. Repent of hoop jump religion and strive to love the instruction of God's word.

Let me just throw this out. I know I'm going long but let me just throw this out. Here's what we're finding in churches today: the old guard began to go through old kind of hoop jumps and then a new contemporary group came along and they said, "Your way is not working. We're going to do it a new way," and all they did was make some contemporary hoop jumps. What we need is just true religion. Amen? So, often they're replacing one old form of idolatry with just another new form of idolatry. We are not against tradition,

we are not for contemporary. We are not against contemporary and we're not for tradition. We're just for truth.

2. Affirm that any tradition that is not supported by clear biblical instructions is a lie and we will not embrace it. Any tradition that is not supported by clear biblical instruction is of the lie and we will not embrace it.

3. Recognize that all too often these lies are handed down from previous generations. Boy, I thoroughly dealt with this through the years. I hate to go here. I don't have time. I'm going to take a risk because some of you will hear what you want to hear and you'll say bad things about me because you're not hearing what I'm saying. Do you realize the walk to the front thing that Baptists and evangelical churches have done is about 150 years old at best? The church has been around 2,000 years but the walk to the front thing was invented about 150 years ago. Do you know why it was invented? Because they were looking for ways to get better numbers. Now, some very good and godly men have used that system so let's don't categorically throw it all out, but the system was only invented about 150 years ago. And as it went down from generation to generation, it became an idol where if you didn't do it that way, you had forsaken the faith to where I would raise my hand and say, "Wait a minute. I've got a question: what about the 8 million Southern Baptists who never go to church? They all walked down the aisle but something didn't happen."

Vance Havner preached in this church. Go online and listen to at least Vance Havner sermons in the next month. Vance Havner was a Southern Baptist who in the fifties and sixties began telling us, "Folks, we're going down a wrong track. We're looking at stuff that don't matter." And I believe he said this when he was preaching here, this would have been 36, 37 years ago. He was preaching here. He was an old doctor, a little old squirrelly guy, a little squirrelly voice. He got through the end of his sermon he said, "I'm not going to ask you to walk to the front. You've already done that." His point was it hasn't helped any of you. It's like we are Roman Catholics and if you get down here to the magic spot God saves you.

Now, again, some of that can be okay – now listen carefully to what your pastor is saying – if you make sure people don't make an idol out of coming to the front; if you make sure people do not believe coming to the front saved them. Because I'm telling you millions do at least partially believe that the thing they did has saved them. But listen to what I'm going to tell you: no one has ever missed salvation by not walking to the front. No one. No one. No one has ever gained salvation by walking to the front. Salvation is by faith in Christ alone. You may have walked to the front the day you placed faith in Christ. I'm fine with that, but to somehow imply if we can manipulate, scheme, browbeat, shame you into coming to the front we can get you saved better is not in the Scripture. It's a tradition that's been handed down by some good men who were trying to help and I know that and I respect them for that, but they went across the line and let it become a golden calf we all die over.

I can fix that whole idolatry in every church: practice church discipline, because when you start dealing with the unrepented of open sins and immorality in your congregation, you will decide, "We're doing something wrong on the front end." Amen. By the way, are you listening to me? My children and my grandchildren are far more valuable than for you to put them through a hoop jump and tell them they're going to heaven. I want to know that godly men and godly women have labored and prayed and discussed and taught and exhorted and encouraged to where they come to the place we hear what we just heard at the beginning of this service.

What's my point? These things get handed down and from time to time with a gracious spirit and a respectful spirit, we appreciate our forefathers but we realize some things went too far and got in the place of the instruction of the word. By the way, are you listening to your pastor this morning? Amos says you keep on doing that generation after generation and God is going to come after you like a male lion who has risen to his feet and is about to devour his prey. It's serious with God. It's serious with God.

Repent of hoop jump religion, affirm that any tradition that is not supported by clear Bible is a lie we will not embrace, recognize that these things are often lies handed down from previous generations. 4. Let's humble ourselves under the realization that God's fierce judgment will come up on those who embrace lies instead of the truth of his word. Old time religion is not always good religion. Now, keep the good but test it all by the book. Judah and Israel could have pointed to 101 good things but it was that overarching embracing of compromise that wasn't in the book that brought God's judgment like a roaring lion. Is that what you came to church for this morning? Well, it's not what I came for but it was next in the text and that's why we follow the text, amen? It keeps the preacher on track and it keeps the church on track.