

The Plumb Line

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Bible Text: Amos 7:7-9
Preached on: Sunday, September 3, 2017

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Grab your Bibles let's go back to Amos. If you're new around here, I've been going through the book of Amos. I took a little break to touch on some things for a few weeks but we're back in Amos. We're in chapter 7. Amos 7. It's somewhere in the Old Testament if you're looking for it. If you go to Matthew and go left, you'll find it fairly quickly. I didn't grow up in church so I didn't learn those songs so that you remember the books of the Bible but actually if you've got to sing it through to find it, you might as well go to the table of contents and look it up anyway.

Amos. A little history to catch us up. Israel, the northern kingdom, has been split off from the more righteous southern kingdom, Judah, and Israel has been in wanton rebellion for quite a while. God has been very patient with Israel but she keeps plunging into further decline spiritually speaking. Two things seem to come up over and over again and I'll mention this a lot throughout the sermon today. First of all, how they clearly blatantly violated the law of God, particularly the law as it concerns how you treat your fellow man. The wealthy and the powerful were brazenly trampling upon the poor man, extorting him, abusing him through the justice system etc., and God has had enough of that and he's bringing judgment to bear on Israel for that. Secondly was their perversion of worship. For today's sermon, I'm going to turn that to this phrase: their perversion of grace. That is that they took the sacred city, Jerusalem where Israel is supposed to be having the center of worship, and they said, "We don't need that. We'll build us some churches up here in the northern kingdom so our people don't have to travel from the northern kingdom of Israel down to Judah where Jerusalem is because, by the way, if they keep doing that, they may think we don't need the northern kingdom. They may think let's go down to Judah because that's where God's city is and that's where God's worship is." So Jeroboam got clever and creative – now that's the king, Jeroboam – and contemporary and he developed some worship centers. The primary one was Bethel but you've got Dan and Gilgal and Beersheba, but primarily at Bethel and he said, "I'm going to be so smart because the people are going to love this. We're going to keep some orthodox aspects of Judaism. We're going to keep some of the offerings, sacrificial system." As a matter of fact, Amos points out that they were diligent and faithful in bringing the right offerings on the right days, bringing the right sacrifices etc. But he said, "I'm going to bring in Baal worship also. I'm going to get some golden calves," and sometimes they are called golden bulls because it had to be male calves, and that was the idol for Baal worship, "and I'm going to bring that into the worship service also so we'll

have all the orthodox worship to make it look good but really it will be about the Baal worship because Baal worship is a lot more fun. It's a lot more exciting. It's much much much more stimulating to the flesh than just Jehovah worship." As a matter of fact, sexual immoralities and having sexual relations with temple prostitutes was associated with Baal worship. Ecstatic riotous services of great exuberance was also connected with Baal worship. It's nothing but simply bringing in what the world was presently into into the church. That's what it was. Does that ring a bell to you? Isn't it interesting that 6,000 years ago Satan was doing this in the church and he's still doing it today?

So God is very angry for this corruption of his church and his worship and so that's kind of the background. Then God says, "Okay, it's time to pronounce judgment. I'm going to find a faithful man to be the proclaimer of judgment against the northern kingdom, Israel." So God goes down to Tekoa. Now Tekoa is a rough and rugged land, good for no agricultural use but good for livestock and that's where the shepherds would be, and he found this shepherd named Amos, a country boy, a shepherd. He said, "Amos, I want you to go primarily to the northern kingdom and primarily to Bethel where they built this big, new, contemporary, clever, creative, Baal-centered, Jehovah church." Some scholars call it the Jehovah bull cult the way they mixed the two together. "And I want you to cry against it and pronounce judgments against it." And Amos was committed to do just what God told him to do.

Now, as Amos is preaching and pronouncing judgments, God would give him visions and this text is one of those visions that God has given him. Now let's read that together. Amos 7, beginning in verse 7,

7 Thus He [that's God] showed me, and behold, the Lord was standing by a vertical wall with a plumb line in His hand. 8 The LORD said to me, "What do you see, Amos?" And I said, "A plumb line." Then the Lord said, "Behold I am about to put a plumb line In the midst of My people Israel. I will spare them no longer. 9 The high places of Isaac will be destroyed And the sanctuaries of Israel laid waste. Then I will rise up against the house of Jeroboam with the sword."

Now three things right quick I want to say. First of all, two questions. There are two questions that in one form or another are taught or implied throughout the canon of Scripture. Two questions that in one form or another are taught or implied throughout the canon of Scripture. 1. How are you going to keep the law? God's law is immutable, unchangeable, absolute, eternal. How are you going to keep God's law? Secondly, what are you going to do with grace? What are you going to do with God's offer of grace? In one form or another you find that throughout Scripture. How are you going to keep this law, the law of God? And what are you going to do with grace? Amos points out in this book that indeed Israel repeatedly failed at keeping the law, and indeed Israel repeatedly sinned against grace and she's going to be held accountable for that. And by the way, the message for all men of all time from Amos, among other things, is we also will be held accountable for how we kept the law and how we honored or dishonored grace.

Now, he sees a vision here of the plumb line. That's what we've entitled the message "The Plumb Line," and I guess everyone here perhaps knows what a plumb line is. I assume I could ask some of our contractor guys but I assume they use electronics today for this but an old plumb line...well, there it is. There is one right there. I had no idea but Brother Tim found one. It's a string with, I assume that the bottom is the plumb and I guess it's because it has the shape somewhat similar to a plum, and it shows if a wall or a corner is true, vertically true. As a contractor or a carpenter might say, "Is that wall true to plumb?" Well, that's the vision Amos sees, is the Lord standing with a plumb line.

Let's look at it. Let me give you three thoughts here. I. Truth is revealed where truth is embraced. Truth is revealed where truth is embraced. I thought it was very interesting and we don't need to just run by this first little phrase in verse 7, "Thus He showed me." That's Amos. "God showed me something he didn't show others." He didn't show Azariah. He didn't show, rather I should say Amaziah. I'm sorry. Amaziah. I wrote this on an airplane somewhere over the ocean. Amaziah, the priest of Bethel who was actually the kind of the northern kingdom's high priest who shepherded over and Amaziah's main goal in life was to keep the religious system intact because they liked it the way they had it. So Amaziah was not interested in God's truth, God's rebukes, he wasn't interested in correcting anything. Let's just keep it the way it is because everybody is happy with it. It's going good. But God didn't appear and show Amaziah the vision. He did not show King Jeroboam the vision. King Jeroboam was a a very able king from all secular perspectives. He had greatly expanded Israel's borders which greatly increased Israel's economy. He had really advanced the elite upper-class at the expense of the lower class or the powers that be loved him. But God didn't reveal his truth to this Jeroboam. This Amaziah high priest and Jeroboam the king had continued what Jeroboam I 150 years ago had started and that's the corruption of worship by bringing Baal worship into Jehovah worship. No, it's kind of like what God did when it was time to send his Savior into the world, he didn't go to the dignitaries and the high muckety-mucks in Jerusalem, he went out on the edge of a nowhere, a place called Bethlehem, and there he brought the Lord God, the Savior of the world, into the world.

And here God comes to this nobody out in the middle of nowhere, Tekoa, Amos, and God reveals this vision to him, the lowly Shepherd, and he commissions Amos to be a preacher of judgment. And I'm convinced Amos probably was already a preacher. As some scholars teach, Amos was likely a part of a small reform group, a group that was trying to call Israel to repentance and reform Israel back to sound doctrine and sound practice as a nation and as the church of God on the earth. So Amos sees this vision among several visions. Now, this vision in particular is going to reveal the justness of God's judgment and also the entities whom he is going to judge.

Amos is not like Amaziah, the high priest of Bethel. He's not like King Jeroboam who instead of shaping God into their own images and reconstructing the church and its worship to amuse and entertain carnal men, Amos wasn't like that. That's not what he's about. Amos loved God and sought to be a humble repentor as he learned God's truth and Amos was fully committed to the integrity of preaching what God told him to preach. If you believe somehow, some way, God is calling you to the ministry, you must draw a

line in the sand, drive a stake down and say, "I am fully committed to preach what God calls me to preach." Now I'm going to put my finger in there and say what's the current trends? How can I make this church bigger? It's not about that. It's about truth.

So why did God show that to Amos? Because God reveals truth to those who love him and desire to know and embrace the truth. It's always been that way. This is why an atheist can read the Bible and when the atheist gets through reading the Bible he says, "It doesn't mean anything to me." Do you know why? God didn't show him anything. He thinks he's smart and since he's smart and he didn't get anything, it's not that he's smart, it's that God didn't open his eyes. It takes the Holy Spirit to see the truth and grasp it and embrace it. In Matthew 13:14-16, "In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'You will keep on hearing, but will not understand,'" they didn't get it, "you will keep on seeing, but you will not perceive; for the heart of this people has become dull, with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes, otherwise they would see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return, and I would bless them." He says, "Your heart has become dull so I'm not going to give you anything else. You don't treasure the truth so I'm not going to show you any truth." God reveals the truth to those who will embrace the truth. Don't be surprised, child of God, if you're in the public square out in the world somewhere and you meet a professing Christian who just doesn't really grasp the truth at all. They know religion but they don't have a heart to be open to the truth. You know, a man cannot find, or rather a thief cannot find, I'm sorry, a man can't find God for the same reason a thief can't find a policeman, he's not looking for one. If men want to know God and want to be humbled and want to receive God as Lord and that's their authority, then God will show himself to them.

In Matthew 11:25, Jesus reminded us, "At that time Jesus said, 'I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants.'" Interesting. You have hidden these things. This is Jesus, "God, you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent." That's a figure of speech. He doesn't mean they are really wise and intelligent, he means they think they are. Those who think they've got it all figured out, those who think they have nothing to learn – listen – those who are not humble repenters to keep learning and keep growing, God says, "Do you know what? I'm not showing you anything." But give me a 12 year old boy or an uneducated man or whoever it may be that says, "O God, I need to know you and correct me where I need it," then God will open your heart to give you the truth. God reveals the truth to those who will embrace the truth. Amos said, "He showed me the vision."

II. The one true standard of righteousness. The one true standard of righteousness. The vision is unfolding before Amos. We see it there in verse 7, "Thus He showed me, and behold," here's the vision, "the Lord was standing by a vertical wall with a plumb line in His hand." Now here we have the Lord standing, literally the Hebrew means standing upon a vertical wall. It's a vertical wall, the emphasis is it's a perfect, true, upright wall. It's straight. So the Lord is standing upon this wall. Now we know this is the Lord Jesus Christ. The New Testament tells us in John 5:22 that all judgment has been given over to him. Jesus Christ is the final, the only, the true standard of righteousness by which all

things and all men will be judged. He is the plumb line of God which will be stood up beside everyone who has ever lived to see if they are fit for eternity in heaven. He will judge the world, creation itself which has been cursed by sin will one day be judged and come under fiery judgment because creation, having been corrupted by sin, no longer fits with the plumb line. He will judge men. He will judge those who do not know Christ. He will even judge his children in the sense that he will judge them for the works they did in the body after their conversion and service unto him on the earth.

But again, this verse means Amos sees this vision of the Lord upon a vertical wall and I believe the idea there is that he is one with this wall. This wall is his creation. He made this wall true. He made this wall sound. This wall is perfect as he stands there with the plumb line beside it. And very importantly as he is standing by this wall, he has every reason to expect the wall to remain true and the wall to remain sound just like he made it in the first place. I think it's important to understand the parallels here or the imagery here. The Lord is the man, of course, standing there. The plumb line is the standard of righteousness. And the wall is Israel. Israel was his creation. Israel was his people. He made her to be sound. He made her to be upright. He made her to be true. He made her to be holy. His point is, "I made you a certain way, what have you done with it? I made you straight and true and righteous so I've got a plumb line and I'm going to put this plumb line out against Israel because I made you by this plumb line and now I'm going to judge you by that same plumb line." A carpenter, again, might say, "Well, that wall or that corner is true to plumb." God is saying, "Israel, I made you true to plumb. If you have leaned off of true vertical, then it's of your own doing because that's not the way I originally made you." By the way, everything God does is true to plumb. Everything God does is right and righteous and good. He can't make it any other way. If there is any warping, any leaning, any perversion, it's of man's doing, not God's doing.

So we say that here God made them out of his righteousness and God made them according to his righteousness. You could say it a different way: he made Israel out of his own strength and according to his perfections. Let me say that again: he made Israel out of his own strength and he made her according to his own perfections. Once again, the application for us here is that he is the one true, even eternal righteous standard and you and I will answer to him and all things and all beings will ultimately be measured by him and if you do not square with him, you do not square at all. That's the standard. It can't be altered. It can't be decreased. And can I say this pointedly and clearly this morning: all of these new inventions of what morality is, all of these new definitions of what marriage is, it's absolutely 100% unrighteous because the standard is eternal. God is the Creator. God made things a certain way. And God does not change.

"Yeah, but people, they feel this." Sometimes you feel like murdering your husband. Are you going to chase every lust that comes across your fallen and depraved heart? I have deep sympathy for people who have certain lusts and temptations. We're all fallen sinners who fight lust and temptations, amen? We're all depraved. That does not mean we're to give in to the filth. These things are wrong. They're unrighteous. They're filthy. They're not of God. They're not plumb. They will be judged and the nations that embrace them also. Ask ancient Israel.

Brothers and sisters, as long as I'm your pastor, we are not backing up on these things. We are not giving our children and our grandchildren to the hell and the wickedness of this world. We're going to fight for them and protect them and defend them while showing compassion and love but having backbones like saw logs. We are not moving because the one who saved us and the one who owns us and the one who loves us and the one whom we love is an eternal standard that doesn't change. Amen? Alright, we'll all go to jail together.

III. Now we're getting down to brass tacks in Israel as the vision unfolds: the plumb line test. The plumb line test. In verse 8, the Lord speaks from the vision, "The LORD said to me, 'What do you see, Amos?' And I said, 'A plumb line.' Then the Lord said, 'Behold I am about to put a plumb line in the midst of My people Israel. I will spare them no longer.'" Now from the balance of Scripture and certainly repetitively in Amos's preaching so far, we've seen those two things I mentioned earlier jump out at us. Amos said, "You've violated the law of God particularly in the way you're treating one another, particularly in the way the elite and powerful class is brazenly abusing the poor; and secondly, you've sinned against God because you've violated grace, you've perverted grace."

So we could picture the plumb line, you see it there, there's the string coming down into the plumb but in this particular plumb line, let's envision that there are two cords or two strands that make up the plumb line string. One of the cords or one of the strands in the plumb line string is law, the strand of law. The other is the strand of grace. And God says, "Did you keep my law and what have you done with my grace? You have sinned against both. You have violated both." Israel was a grace-bought nation. Israel was redeemed by grace, naturally speaking, there in Egypt. You remember the plagues that God brought against the Egyptians to release the Israelites and the final plague, what was it? The vision of the death angel. And God told the nation of Israel, "Every one of you get a spotless lamb and slay that lamb and gather some of that blood of that spotless lamb on a hyssop branch and apply the blood to the lintel and to the doorpost of your house and tonight I'm sending a death angel into Egypt and every house that has the blood applied, I will pass over that house. But every house that does not have the blood applied, I will visit and it will be death to the firstborn in that house." And that night the death angel came and killed all of the firstborn in all of those homes that didn't have the blood applied, and then the pharaoh was humbled and he relented of his determination to keep Israel as his slaves and they were redeemed and released out from Egypt and became a people. How did that happen? Grace. They didn't do that. God did that and it's grace. No other people on earth knew grace like Israel knew grace.

They had experienced a glorious and wonderful redemption and then also in grace, Moses later goes on Sinai and he receives the law of God. My friend, it is a gift of grace that you get the law of God. When God gives us his law, it's not to burden us, it's not to confine us. When God gives us his law, his law tells us things we can do and he says, "Help yourself." When his law says things we must not do, he says, "Don't hurt yourself." The law is good. So they had grace to be a redeemed people and then in embracing the law

but the prophet says, "What have you done with the law and how have you handled grace?"

Notice some statements here about this grace and law. Deuteronomy 7:8-11, it should be on the screen, "but because the LORD loved you," now can I just stop right there? Not because you were obedient. Not because you did something. Not because you jumped through a hoop. Not because you were special. Not because you were precious to me more than other people. God just loved you. Christian, have you not come to grasp that, that there is nothing unique, special or wonderful about you? Just in God's grace he showed a love for you. That's what it is to Israel, "[I] loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD," the LORD, that's grace, "the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you," that's a New Testament grace term, is it not, "redeemed you from the house of slavery," a picture of us coming out of the house of sin and the house of Satan, being redeemed unto God, "from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments; but repays those who hate Him to their faces, to destroy them; He will not delay with him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face." And here comes the law. We've seen all the grace, now look at the law, verse 11, "Therefore, you shall keep the commandment and the statutes and the judgments which I am commanding you to this day." So as Amos comes preaching, he's picking out two things all the time: you have sinned against the law, you keep breaking the law, and you have dishonored and sinned against grace. You are a precious, grace redeemed people.

Now, one of the ways we see grace being so vilely sinned against, again, was in their worship. Think about it: everything in Israel's worship was to point to grace. Everything. The cleansings and the washings pointed to in grace how God cleanses and washes us. The whole sacrificial system centering in the great Day of Atonement and the Passover lamb. When they brought that lamb, what were they symbolizing? They were symbolizing by bringing that lamb that God made us a people and God saves us by grace. It's the blood of another. It's the lamb, not us. It's not our work, our effort, or our sacrifice. It's grace. So they were to carry on these ordinances year after year, day after day, week after week, month after month, in purity and in genuineness and in honor of this God who showed this love and grace to them. But what did they do? They perverted grace. They said, "Oh, we took a poll of Baptists and we found out Baptists just aren't that excited about the old Gospel anymore and building true churches anymore. They want it jazzed up. It's got to be exciting." Well, in this day the most exciting thing going was Baal worship. All the other nations loved it and Israel was jealous of how they were so into it. They rolled them carts with those golden calves in the sanctuary in Bethel and said, "Wait a minute now, keep the offerings, keep the sacrifices, keep the ordinances, keep some orthodoxy going, but this right here is going to be fun." They sinned against grace and when churches today that supposedly preach the grace of God and the Gospel of grace increasingly bring in the world, it's the very same thing.

Can I just be honest and balanced? I don't know where the line is. I'm not saying everything churches do to be creative is all evil and all wrong but I will say this – are you

listening to me – when you start down that road and unsaved Baptists get to enjoying the sensualities of Baal worship, they'll never go back to Jesus alone. Now you moms and dads listen to your pastor: do not put your children in that environment. Do the long hard and sometimes difficult work of getting your children to love Christ preached from the word, not dressed up with the sensuous garb of the world. Are you hearing me, church? Don't do it to your children or your grandchildren or your great-grandchildren. Help them know and love Christ – listen – alone. And if they ever really get attached to Jesus, not this Jesus that we are making up in contemporary society but the real Christ as he is revealed in Scripture, if they ever get hooked on him, he'll hold them forever. "Pastor, when do some of these churches doing some of these wild unique things, when are they crossing the line?" I'm not sure but I am sure a lot of them have crossed.

So they had sinned against grace by taking the ordinances of the temple worship and everything that pointed to grace and perverting it by bringing Baal and sensuality in the world into it. They sinned against the law by willfully violating what the law taught about loving your fellow man and serving your fellow man and being equitable and righteous and having integrity in your dealings, the way they abused their fellow man. So God's plumb line, the true plumb line, hangs out there, two strands on it: the law of God and the grace of God, and God says, Amos says, "I hold it up." They failed both of them. They are not truly plumb at all. All failed that test.

He says here in verse 8, he said, "I'm going to take this plumb line and I'm going to put it in the midst of my people." Where is it, down there in verse 8, the next to the last phrase, "I am going to take the plumb line and put it in the midst of My people Israel." I think that has the idea of, "I'm going to the central-most part, I'm going to the heart of the nation." You see, what's in the heart is the true you. A man could put on a lot of external stuff and look good or righteous but God judges the heart. He says, "I'm going to put it in the midst." He said, "I'm going to the center-most part. I'm going to expose the real true heart of this nation and there will be no denying, no excuses of your guilt." Because what's in the heart is what comes out in the life. What's in the heart comes out on your tongue. What's in the heart rolls around in your mind. What's in the heart comes out in your hands and your feet. But when the heart is laid bare, the truth is known, and the Lord is putting their innermost heart to the plumb line test and all the people will be judged and the implication is every single one fails the plumb line test and so do you. Actually, every man who has ever walked this earth, every woman who has ever walked this earth, fails the plumb line test.

Also, not only do we all fail the test, notice that God's patience is finished. The last line of verse 8, "I will spare them no longer." Now, think about the long-suffering of God. They had been rolling these carts in for 150 years, calling it worshiping God and it's a bunch of garbage, worldly Baal worship. For 150 years God has been patient but God says, "I'm done now. My patience is gone. I will spare them no longer. Today is payday. I made them by the righteous plumb line, I'm going to judge them by the righteous plumb line, and they're going to fail."

Actually, this plumb line image is a lot like when Daniel was in Babylon. Remember Belshazzar had conquered Israel and he had taken some of the sacred vessels from the temple in Jerusalem and he brought them back to Babylon and one night when he had his drunken orgies just in brazen arrogance of how he conquered Israel and Israel's God, he said, "Bring me the vessels we took out of the temple in Israel. We're going to drink our wine and have our orgies and dance to our music drinking out of the vessels dedicated to their Jehovah." And that's just exactly what they did and old Belshazzar was in there and he was half drunk and he brought up one of the goblets that came out of the temple in Israel and he took him a big swig and then he looked around on the wall and behold there was a hand, a hand writing on the wall. He knew he was about half drunk but he knew he wasn't just seeing things, there was a hand writing on the wall. He thought, "Now I might be half drunk but this is strange."

It's a little like I was in a hotel room this last week and they had actually put a stereo system in there and there was a base woofer in there and in the middle of the night twice that base woofer went Boom! Boom! Louder than that. I'm jetlagged, sleep deprived, don't know where I am, and I'm thinking, "Somebody's coming in here to get me." Just shocked me. Didn't know what it was until about six hours later when it happened again and I thought, "That sounds electronic." Then I saw the base woofer and I unplugged the thing.

Well, that's what happened to Belshazzar. I mean, he's just half drunk, boom, he sees that hand but he doesn't know what it says and he understands and remembers there is an exile we took from Israel, one of the teenage boys that we think has great promise to serve us. His name is Daniel and he can interpret these things. And they brought Daniel in and Daniel explained what the hand wrote and in essence Daniel said, "King, here's what the hand says: you have been weighed in God's balance and you have come up wanting." That's what Amos is saying here. That's what the Lord is saying here, "You have been measured by God's plumb line and you've all come up wanting. My patience has run out."

Then he said there is going to be judgment from the church house to the statehouse. Verse 9, "The high places of Isaac will be desolated And the sanctuaries of Israel laid waste." Is it not interesting how over and over and over he's pointing to that place of worship, God points out the place of worship is so detestable to him. He uses the name Isaac here because I think what he's saying is, "You know your godly forefather Isaac, how far you have backslidden from him." Boy, I hope by God's grace that when I'm done here people will say, "He faithfully preached the truth to us and never let us veer into wickedness." But you know, the trend is in church history that after a solid ministry, a generation or two goes by and then some liberal takes over and teaches heresy and corrupts the church or the ministry. And perhaps in those days, somehow in God's grace somebody might say, "If Jeff Noblit was here, that wouldn't be going on. If Steve McAllister were there still, that wouldn't be going on. If Matt Fowler or David Young," I could go all through our elders, "if those brethren were here, that would not be going on." That's what he means when he raises up the name Isaac. You know if you're forefather Isaac were here, this is the kind of stuff, this rolling the Baal cart into Jehovah's worship

would never happen. And I'm sitting here looking at a number of you and you have come out of churches where in all practical realities they rolled the Baal cart out most Sundays because it was of the world and of the flesh. The attachment was not Jesus, it was the things they could do in the worship service. Am I getting too straight? That's what this book is teaching us.

Isaac would have never been a part of this kind of stuff. You're claiming you are his descendant, you are claiming you are one of his descendants, you are claiming you are of his heritage. It's kind of sarcastic. He's saying, "You don't look anything like Isaac," and he hits on those worship centers, those new, contemporary, clever, culturally relevant churches. He said, "And the sanctuaries of Israel will be laid waste." That's Bethel. That's Dan. That's Gilgal. That's Beersheba. All the places where they had built these new types of worship centers.

Then lastly, the statehouse. He said, "I will rise up against the house of Jeroboam with the sword." He said, "I'm going to get the king too." You mark it down: God's fiercest judgment is coming against the preacher and the president. Mark it down: the preacher and the president. And by the way, if the preacher is faithful, you'll have the right president. 41,000 Southern Baptist churches, are you kidding me, if just 41,000 Southern Baptist churches are thundering the truth of God in the Spirit of God, we would have enough salt and light we would never have a hellion in the White House again. Is that not the truth? Take every pulpit that claims to believe the Bible, get them right and get them solid and our nation would be a nation of piercing light of righteousness. If the pulpits were right, the president would be right and the people would be right. It's always been that way and God said, "I'm coming to the church house with judgment and I'm coming to the statehouse."

In conclusion, let me say there is certainly a strong word for us and I've already pointed that out and that is that God's plumb line judgment is coming against all and, first of all, it's coming against the church. In 1 Peter 4:17, "For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" I think the point is: if you're a Christian, God disciplines you, judges you in a sense, in this life. He breaks you. He humbles you. You drift off and he pulls you back to the truth. He lets you go through something painful and difficult and... He doesn't let his own children just wander forever. So he's saying if God does some pretty severe things to his own children to keep them on track, what's going to happen to those who are not his children? Severe judgment will come upon them. All those will be held up to the plumb line test.

Psalm 110:6, "He will judge among the nations, He will fill them with corpses, He will shatter the chief men over a broad country." That's a prophecy of the end time final judgment. By the way, all of these judgments of Israel are foreshadows of the ultimate end time judgment that God will bring against all the nations, and when that judgment comes, the same plumb line test will be out there. He's going to say, "Did you break my law?" That's one of the strands in this plumb line. "Did you break my law? If you claim to be mine, did you pervert my grace? Did you do what Jude said, did you turn the grace

of God into licentiousness?" That's exactly what they did in Israel, they turned that grace picture of redemption, the atonement lamb, all that they were to do as an annual ritual, they perverted it and turned it into a licentiousness. That's a word in Jude 4, and licentiousness means a license to sin. You interpreted grace as a permit for you to just go and live in sin.

You're going to be judged by the law of God and you are going to be judged by the grace of God. This is a clear word to all of us who believe in Christ and profess to be in the church. There are some in the church who embrace law believing they have the possibility to gain heaven through law keeping and they're going to be judged and condemned by that very law. It's not going to work because by the works of the law no flesh will be justified in his sight, Romans 3:20. But also those who claim to be redeemed children, children of grace, if they view grace and have no grace as an ongoing lifestyle, as some kind of a licentiousness or license to sin, they will be judged for perverting grace because they were never really truly children of grace, they were never truly really children of God. Brothers and sisters, if you're a child of grace, God changed something in your heart to make you want to honor his law. Now, you fail all the time but there is a germ in there, a difference now. Listen, are you listening to your pastor? The times when you do sin, taking advantage of grace, you get sick of yourself for doing it. You can't just pervert grace and be at home with it. Amen? You can't just pervert grace and be comfortable with it like Israel did for all those years, 150 years they hauled those carts in there.

But can I tell you some glorious and wonderful good news? If you know Christ as your Lord and Savior – are you listening to me, I might run out there and jump on you so listen – if you know Jesus, you have a righteousness – now listen – that does not correspond to the plumb line, your righteousness corresponds to God. You don't get a righteousness that takes you back to the status of Adam and Eve before they sinned. You get the very righteousness of Jesus Christ. Woo! You don't just line up to the plumb line, you lineup in him. I'm in the one who created and holds the plumb line. That's why Jesus said you've got to have a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees. The scribes and Pharisees proclaimed and acted like they kept the law that made them righteous, he said, "You've got to have a better one than that. You need the righteousness of my Son Jesus Christ." It doesn't mean you've got to do more works than the Pharisees, it just means you've just got to have a different type righteousness. So we don't just compare to the plumb line the external standard that comes from the nature of God, we are in God himself.

Now listen to me, listen to me, listen to me, church: you're going to make it, you're going to be sanctified, you're going to persevere, you're making it to heaven, you're going to be glorified because to condemn you God would have to condemn God and that is a sure salvation, amen? But make sure you're not a phony and a hypocrite who embrace grace and just view it as a license to sin. That's not a true born-again child of God. We all struggle, we are all prone to wander, we are all weak, but something in us hates us when we do it because he has changed our hearts.

God's plumb line. You can just keep looking at the plumb line all you want, I'm looking at Jesus. Amen? I'm in him safe and secure. Glory be to the Lamb! Hallelujah! Praise God! It's just all wonderful and good.