

ActNow! (Applying Christ's Teaching NOW) follows the weekly sermon series of TPMC, and challenges us to apply and put into practice the biblical truths we hear each week. It is the recommended Bible discussion material for TPMC's Connect Groups, and leader's notes are available to all Connect Group Leaders and at the Information Counter.

Amos 2: What is the Bad Life?

Amos chapters 1 and 2

Rev Benjamin Lee

SERMON SYNOPSIS

- **Definition of "The Bad Life":** The sermon defines "the bad life" as a life that disregards the welfare of others, characterised by cruelty and injustice. In contrast, the "good life" is lived with righteousness and justice. Genuine love for God is demonstrated through how people treat and care for one another.
- **Structure of God's Indictment:** Chapters 1 & 2 reveal God's strategy of indictment or charges against the cities. First, God proclaims judgement over the nations surrounding Israel, then Judah, and finally Israel itself. Each judgment begins with "Thus says the Lord" and uses the literary device "for three transgressions... even for four, I will not revoke the punishment," signifying that the nations have been "completely bad". God also repeatedly states, "I will send a fire," which implies both complete destruction & a desire for refinement to burn away evil and preserve good.
- **Specific Transgressions of the Cities:** Each nation was indicted or charged for specific sins. For example, Damascus for "*cruelty*," Gaza for "*human trafficking*," Tyre for "*breaking treaties*," Edom for "*family feuds*," Ammon for "*self-gain*," Moab for "*inhumanity*," Judah for "*breaching of Covenant with the Lord*," and Israel for "*oppressing the vulnerable*".
- **Significance and Application:** The sermon emphasises the importance of contrition over condemnation, urging us to first look at our own faults before judging others. Hence, we should reflect on our own hearts and acknowledge aspects of our lives where we have fallen short of showing God's love to others and not to judge others for their sins.

We are to also actively look out for those who are vulnerable and poor in society and to reflect and repent for the times we had contributed to their sad plight because of our apathy and lack of compassionate action to help them.

The sermon also highlights the increasing lack of controlled reprisal or retaliation particularly in international conflicts. The concept of controlled reprisal is rooted in Exodus 21:23-24 ("life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth"), which was intended to limit the extent of retaliation and prevent disproportionate violence.

- **Conclusion:** When God sends judgment, symbolised by "fire", He aims not just for destruction but for refinement into pure gold. Hence, we *must heed* the warnings in Amos and *show contrition* for our own failures to care for the vulnerable and to *exercise* controlled reprisal during conflicts.

The fundamental reason is because *we are* God's people saved by His grace and *are called* to reflect who the Lord is – Yahweh who is holy, merciful, loving & gracious – and we *are thus held* at a higher standard. Ultimately, **our IDENTITY in God through Jesus Christ determines how we live our lives**, that is, to love and care for others as a disciple of Jesus because we first love God.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

RELATE

1. Think of someone you know who is living a good life here in Singapore. Then think of someone who you feel is living a really very bad life now. Share with your group what defines a good or bad life when you think of these 2 persons.

REFLECT

2. God is holy, righteous and just and hates evilness. Amos tells us that the Lord charged and judged the ancient cities (including His chosen people - Israel and Judah) because they lived a bad life according to God's standard, *even though they were materially well off*. From the verses below, describe God's standard of a good life.

[Verses to help us go deeper: Leviticus 23:22; 1 John 3:16-18; Matthew 25:35-40]

RESPOND

3. Take some time to be quiet before our loving Father and *take stock* of the state of our hearts. While we may not be guilty of the same 'heinous' crimes as the ancient cities, our hearts do wrestle with the same sins and temptations in subtler forms.

Allow God to convict you of an area that He is aligning you to live the good life described in Question 2 by asking yourself, "Have I valued my own comfort and convenience over compassion? Have I claimed to worship God but ignored the plight of the vulnerable, needy or those who are being exploited? Have I lived in my own luxuries and become indifferent to the sufferings of others?"

Ask God to purify your heart and *identify* a concrete act of change in alignment to *the* area of your life that the Lord *has convicted you* and let God build from there. (Eg. A kind word, a shared meal, a visit, a listening ear, etc). Compassion does not wait for convenience - it simply obeys in love. Start now. Start small. Start with someone. For the Bible teaches that when we know the right thing to do and fail to do it, it is still sin (James 4:17).

PRAYER POINTERS

- Thank God for His patient lovingkindness. He forgives our sins freely when we fail to love our neighbours and His Spirit continually guides us towards biblical living.
- As a CG, ask God to fill each one's heart with His love and compassion, so that each one will be compelled to love as He loves and extend God's love and compassion with others in need.

SCRIPTURE TO MEDITATE ON

"Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me." [Matt 25:40]