

INTRODUCTION

Amos has nine chapters and it's located between Joel and Obadiah. This is the fourth message in the series The Major Message of the Minor Prophets.

Prophets are never popular while they are alive. Instead, they are usually not respected until after they have died and people realize their prophecies came true. Vance Havner used to say that prophets, poets, and pigs have one thing in common: They usually aren't appreciated until after they're dead! We're going to see that Amos' message wasn't appreciated.

Amos 1:1-2. "The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa—what he saw concerning Israel two years before the earthquake, when Uzziah was king of Judah and Jeroboam son of Jehoash was king of Israel. He said: 'The Lord roars from Zion and thunders from Jerusalem; the pastures of the shepherds dry up, and the top of Carmel withers.'"

We're going to spend our time digging into Amos' message, but for now, let's turn over to Amos 7:7-17. There we find a summary of God's message to Israel and we also see how unpopular Amos was.

Amos 7:7-17. "This is what he showed me: The Lord was standing by a wall that had been built true to plumb, with a plumb line in his hand. And the Lord asked me, 'What do you see, Amos?' 'A plumb line,' I replied. Then the Lord said, 'Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people Israel; I will spare them no longer. The high places of Isaac will be destroyed and the sanctuaries of Israel will be ruined; with my sword I will rise against the house of Jeroboam.'"

"Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent a message to Jeroboam king of Israel: 'Amos is raising a conspiracy against you in the very heart of Israel. The land cannot bear all his words. For this is what Amos is saying: 'Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land.'"

"Then Amaziah said to Amos, 'Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there. Don't prophesy anymore at Bethel, because this is the king's sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom.'"

"Amos answered Amaziah, 'I was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. But the Lord took me from tending the flock and said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.' Now then, hear the word of the Lord. You say, 'Do not prophesy against Israel, and stop preaching against the house of Isaac.'"

"Therefore this is what the Lord says: 'Your wife will become a prostitute in the city, and your sons and daughters will fall by the sword. Your land will be measured and divided up, and you yourself will die in a pagan country. And Israel will certainly go into exile, away from their native land.'"

One of the visions God gave Amos was a plumb line. Now I'm not much of a carpenter, but my best friend is a carpenter. In fact, He's a Jewish carpenter. Today most carpenters use a level, but for thousands of years, builders have used a simple plumb line tool to make sure a wall is built straight. Brick masons still use a simple plumb line to make sure the wall they are building is straight. The plumb line works on a simple principle of gravity. Gravity always pulls the plumb straight toward the center of the earth. If you build your wall on that line, it will be straight. But any builder can tell you what happens if a wall is out of plumb. Even if it's leaning just a little bit, that can lead to all kinds of problems.

God's plumb line is His Word, which gives us His moral standard. Let's hold God's plumb line up to the moral wall America has built over the past 250 years. For much of our history, this wall was straight and in line with God's standard. But over the past 60 years, America has tossed aside God's plumb line and has been building the wall based on what people feel or think is right. America has leaned to the left and right at times, but unless we straighten up and get in line with God's standard there's only one thing that will happen to our wall—we will fall. Today people are more interested in making money and pleasure than they are in following God's standard.

Theodore Roosevelt was president at the beginning of the 20th Century and he is usually rated among the top five American Presidents. His face is on Mt. Rushmore along with Washington, Jefferson, and Obama...I mean Lincoln. Roosevelt predicted: "The things that will destroy America are prosperity-at-any-price, peace-at-any-price, safety-first instead of duty-first, the love of soft living, and the get-rich-quick theory of life." In this message I want to address the question, "Could Apathy Destroy America?" Let's look at the powerful message of the prophet Amos because the things he said 800 years before Jesus are the things that need to be said to America today.

I. GOD SENDS A WARNING BEFORE HE SENDS JUDGMENT

That's why God sent prophets to Judah and Israel, so they could warn them that if they didn't turn back to God, they would face God's judgment. Amos began his preaching by declaring how God was going to punish the neighboring nations. He said, "God is going to punish Damascus, Gaza, and Tyre for their sins." And because these were the enemies of Israel, the people probably shouted, "Amen, preach it Amos!" Then he said, "God is going to punish Edom, Ammon, Moab." And once again the people shouted, "Amen, brother, preach it!" Then Amos said God is going to punish Judah, the southern kingdom, for their sins. The people of the northern kingdom, Israel, didn't like the people in Judah, so they shouted even louder, "Amen, preach it, Amos!" But then Amos said, "And God is going to punish YOU, Israel, for your sins!" And the people said, "Go home, you're no prophet!"

It would be like me proclaiming that God is going to destroy the Middle Eastern nations because they are the hotbed of radical Islam. You'd like that. Or I could preach that Russia will disappear unless they turn to God, and you'd say, "Amen!" Or I could say that God is going to bring calamity on Mexico because of the violence and crime from the drug cartels. You'd like that message. But I'm not here to talk about the Middle East, Russia, or Mexico. I'm here to declare

upon the authority of the Word of God that unless America repents and turns to God, we are going to face His judgment.

That was the message of Amos. And God said they shouldn't have been surprised because He sent them warning after warning, but they ignored the warnings. In Amos 4:6 God said, "I gave you empty stomachs in every city and lack of bread in every town, yet you have not returned to me." God repeats that refrain five times. In 4:7-8 He says, "I also withheld rain from you when the harvest was still three months away...yet you have not returned to me." In 4:9 He said, "Many times I struck your gardens and vineyards...yet you have not returned to me." In 4:10 He says, "I sent plagues among you as I did to Egypt...yet you have not returned to me." Finally God says in 4:11-12: "I overthrew some of you as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. You were like a burning stick snatched from the fire, yet you have not returned to me," declares the Lord. Therefore this is what I will do to you, Israel, and because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel."

Could it be that God is saying to America, "You went through two unwinnable wars in Korea and Vietnam, yet you did not return to me, instead you removed prayer and Bible reading from your schools. You went through the global embarrassment of having your embassy in Iran invaded and American citizens held as hostage for 444 days, and your rescue attempt crashed in the desert, and yet you did not return to me. Instead you legalized the killing of unborn babies. You've become the target of terrorism, and yet you did not return to me, instead you led the world in the production and distribution of pornography. You faced the worst economic recession since the great depression, and massive super storms. Yet you did not return to me, instead you decided to change My definition of marriage to what my Word calls an abomination. Therefore, America, prepare to meet your God."

God is sending me, and plenty of other pastors to warn our nation that judgment is coming unless America repents and returns to God.

II. APATHY AND AFFLUENCE CAN DESTROY A NATION

Did you hear about the recent survey going on in America? People were asked, "What is the biggest problem in America, ignorance or apathy?" And the number one answer was, "I don't know, and I don't care." Well, none of us should blame ignorance as our reason for inaction in these days; we know what's happening. So if we aren't doing anything about it, the only other option is apathy—we just don't really care.

As I read the prophecy of Amos, I can't help but notice the similarities between ancient Israel and modern America. It was a time of great prosperity for Israel, but it was also a time of great immorality. But in the midst of it all, they just didn't really care. They were complacent.

Amos warned them in the first verse of the sixth chapter, "Woe to you who are complacent in Zion, and to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria, you notable men of the foremost nation, to whom the people of Israel come!" Then he continued in Amos 6:3-7: "You put off the evil day and bring near a reign of terror. You lie on beds inlaid with ivory and lounge on your couches. You dine on choice lambs and fattened calves. You strum away on your harps like

David and improvise on musical instruments. You drink wine by the bowlful and use the finest lotions, but you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph. Therefore you will be among the first to go into exile; your feasting and lounging will end." We don't have to doubt that they were affluent because in God warned, "I will tear down the winter house along with the summer house; the houses adorned with ivory will be destroyed and the mansions will be demolished." (Amos 3:15) Compared to the rest of the world, all of us live in mansions, and many Americans have a winter home and a summer home.

Israel was guilty of that deadly mixture of apathy and affluence. If I could paraphrase that passage for East Texas it would read: "Woe to you who are apathetic and affluent in East Texas, And to you who feel secure in your fine homes, you notable men, to whom conservative Christians look. Think about History. Read the prophecies of Amos to Israel; are you better than them? You lie on your beds and sit on your recliners and click through the hundreds of channels on your flat screen. Every night you search for the next best restaurant to eat at, while passing homeless people on the side of the road. You trust the money in your wallet and the smart twenty first century technology more than you trust God. You do not help those who need help, while you live the American dream. Therefore, don't be surprised when you are stripped of your luxuries. Perhaps then you will seek God."

The Church is dying from apathy. Visit a GLBT website and you'll see they are passionate about changing our culture. They call it a movement. And most Christians just yawn and the only movement they make is from the couch to the refrigerator. Half the members of this church don't even care enough to get out of bed and show up on Sunday.

Keith Green was one of my favorite Christian singers. We were the same age, but at age 28 Keith died in a plane crash right out here in Garden Valley. One of his most powerful songs was "Asleep in the Light." He sounded much like an Old Testament prophet when he sang, "The world is sleeping in the dark; And the church just can't fight; Cause it's asleep in the light. How can you be so dead; When you've been so well fed? Jesus rose from the grave; And you, you can't even get out of bed! Oh, Jesus rose from the dead, Come on, get out of your bed! How can you be so numb; Not to care if they come? You close your eyes; And pretend the job's done. You close your eyes; And pretend the job's done."

Do you care about the direction of our nation? Are you alarmed that our nation's moral foundation has been cracking for the past few decades? The sad truth is many Christians don't even care enough to vote. You should let your voice and your vote be heard. There are about 60 million evangelical Christians in America. According to George Barna about 50% of these eligible voters haven't registered—that's 30 million people. Then in 2008, 25% of evangelicals who were registered didn't vote. That's another 7.5 million voters. That means in 2008, 37.5 million evangelical Christians didn't cast a vote. We know that a president is elected by electoral votes from the states, and we don't know where those non-voting Christians lived, but just consider the popular vote. In 2008 President Obama beat John McCain by 10.5 million popular votes. It breaks my heart that almost 40 million evangelicals didn't care enough to even vote! Like drinking and driving, and fire and gasoline, apathy and affluence is a deadly combination.

III. GOD WILL RESTORE ANY NATION THAT RETURNS TO HIM

By now you're probably thinking, "Pastor do you have any good news for us?" Yes, I do, and I always save the best for last. So did Amos. His message of judgment was unpleasant and unpopular, but in the last verses of the book Amos relayed God's promise of restoration. God said, "'In that day I will restore David's fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins, and build it as it used to be, so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name,' declares the Lord, who will do these things. 'The days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills. I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them,' says the Lord your God.'" (Amos 9:11-15)

The Assyrians overran Israel in 722 B.C. and Judah fell to the Babylonians in 587 B.C. But in spite of those invasions, God says there is still hope. He is the God of restoration. Most commentaries will tell you that God's promise was fulfilled when Judah returned from the Babylonian exile, but read it carefully. It says, "Never again to be uprooted." Israel was uprooted again in 70 A.D. when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. The Jews were dispersed across the globe for the next 1900 years, but at the beginning of the 20th Century, Jews started returning to the Holy Land. They were drawn there like moths to a flame. And in 1948, Israel became a nation again. And I've seen the fulfillment of this scripture with my own eyes. I've seen David's tent restored, I've seen the ruins rebuilt, and I've seen the miraculous agriculture happening in Israel. They are back NEVER again to be uprooted. That's why if America knows what is good for her she will always be the friend and ally of Israel. And that's not a political statement; it's a biblical statement. God's promise to Abraham still stands. He said He would bless those that bless Israel and curse those who curse Israel. Isn't it exciting to know you're living in the very time of fulfilled scripture?

Modern schoolchildren have been duped into thinking America never had a moral and Biblical foundation. But the evidence is indisputable. Men and women who were deeply committed to the God of the Bible founded our nation.

Let me tell you about one of our Founding Fathers, Benjamin Rush. Benjamin signed the Declaration of Independence and was part of the Constitutional Convention. He wasn't a pastor, he was a physician. He was the first surgeon general for the Continental army. In fact, he is called the Father of American Psychiatry and there is a Medical School named after him in Chicago. Rush was asked, "Are you a democrat or an aristocrat?" He replied, "Neither, I am a Christocrat. I believe He, alone, who created and redeemed man is qualified to govern him." Rush was a great proponent of the government printing and distributing Bibles He proposed that it be used as a textbook in every public school, and that the government print and distribute a free Bible to every American family.

In 1789 he wrote: "We waste so much time and money punishing crimes, and take so little pains to prevent them. We claim to be republicans, and yet we neglect the only means of establishing

and perpetuating our republican forms of government, that is, the universal education of our youth in the principles of Christianity, by means of the Bible; for this Divine Book, above all others favors that equality among mankind, and respect for just laws.”

In 1806 Rush proposed inscribing the words “The Son of Man Came into the World, not to Destroy Men’s Lives, but to Save them” above the doors courthouses and other public buildings. This is the kind of leader who founded our nation. Don’t let anyone ever tell you that our nation never had a biblical foundation. And God will restore America if we return to Him!

Before we leave Amos, let me share three personal lessons we can draw from this powerful prophecy.

A. God doesn’t play favorites

Israel mistakenly thought she had favored nation status with God. They thought they would get special treatment from God. But Amos said otherwise. “Hear this word the Lord has spoken against you, O people of Israel—against the whole family I brought up out of Egypt: ‘You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins.’” (Amos 3:1-2)

We should avoid the temptation to think that just because we’re Americans God will give us favored-nation status. The same is true personally. God is no respecter of persons. He doesn’t deal with you on the basis of your nationality, your race, or your bank account. God truly has created all people equally. So, don’t think you can sin and get away with it. But also, don’t think that you’re ever too far from the grace of God to find forgiveness and pardon. God loves you, just like He loves everyone else. He deals with everyone on the same basis. He’s not cutting any special deals. There’s only one way to come to God; and that is through Jesus Christ.

B. God despises empty worship

The Israelites were extremely religious, but their worship wasn’t sincere. He said, “I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies...Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!” (Amos 5:21-24) You probably didn’t think God could hate anything, but He HATES religious hypocrisy. Empty worship makes God sick. God doesn’t judge us by the lyrics of our praise songs. Instead He is looking for people who will practice justice and righteousness. In Matthew 15:8 Jesus warned about people “who honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.”

Have you ever shown up for church and you sing the songs, you stand up and sit down, drop a dollar in the offering? But the whole time your heart and mind have been on something else other than your Creator? God says, “I hate that kind of empty worship.”

C. Be ready to meet God

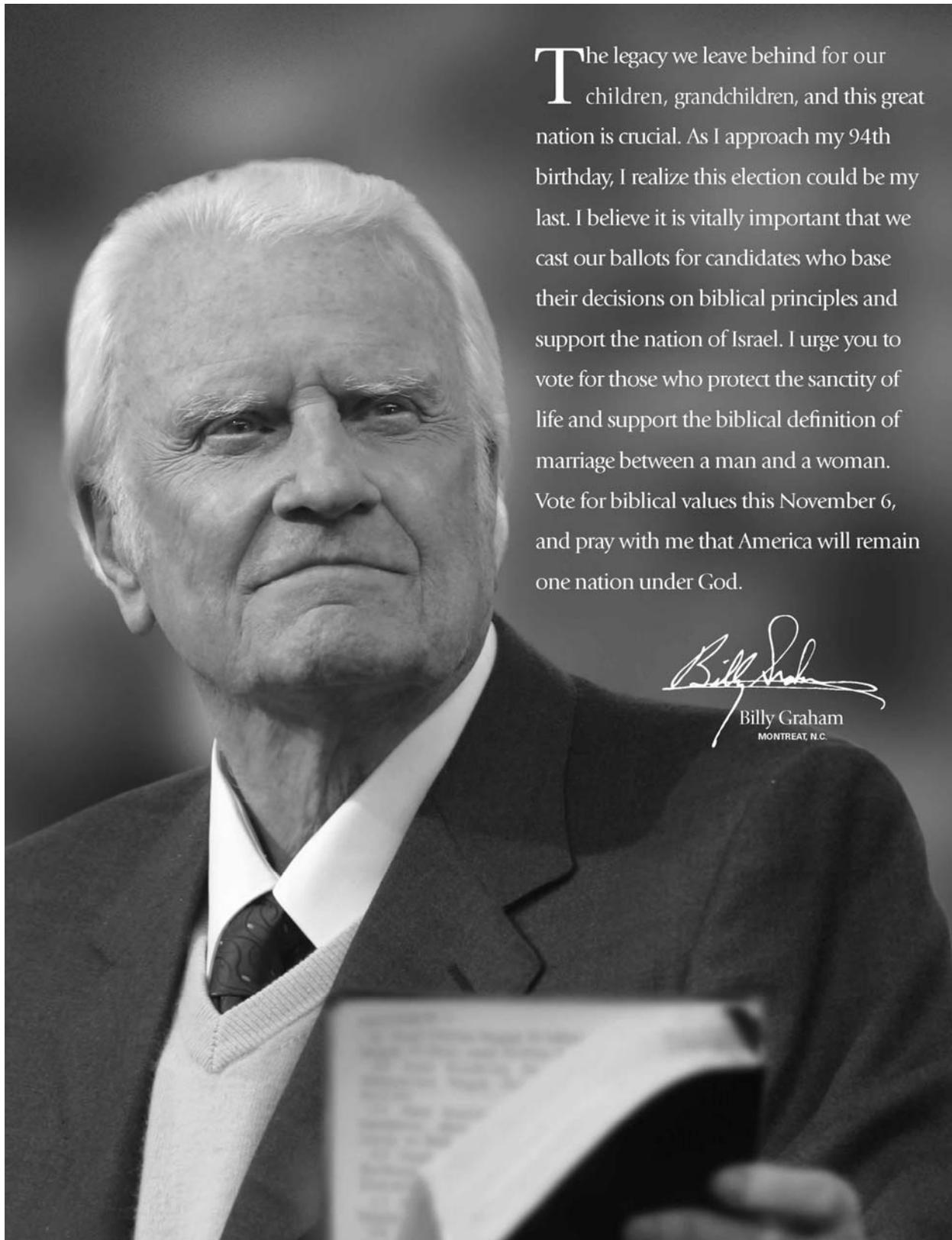
Perhaps the most famous words of Amos are those where he said "Prepare to meet your God." (Amos 4:12) The actual context of that statement had to do with God's judgment against Israel, but it's also a great personal challenge. Are you prepared to meet God?

One day every person will die and stand before a holy God. Are you prepared? Suppose you were standing before God right now and He asked you, "Why should I let you into heaven?" What would your answer be? Would you say, "Because I've done more good things than bad things in my life?" If that's your answer, you're not prepared. Or maybe you would say, "Because I'm better than most people." If that's your answer, you aren't prepared to meet God. Let me give you the right answer. You should say, "Because I have admitted I'm a sinner and that I can never be good enough to earn your forgiveness. Instead I trust Jesus Christ and the blood He shed for me on the cross. I confess that He is my Lord and my Savior and because He is your son, I'm standing in His righteousness, not my own." If you can answer that way, then you are prepared to meet God.

CONCLUSION

We are at the crossroads as a nation. It is a spiritual and moral crossroad, but it has also become a political crossroads, and I can no longer be silent. I'm not the only one. There is no person more respected in America than Billy Graham, and for the past sixty years, he has never issued a statement that could be considered political. But just a few days ago, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association took out full-page ads in *The Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today*. There was a picture of Billy Graham with this statement: "The legacy we leave behind for our children, grandchildren, and this great nation is crucial. As I approach my 94th birthday, I realize this election could be my last. I believe it is vitally important that we cast our ballots for candidates who base their decisions on biblical principles and support the nation of Israel. I urge you to vote for those who protect the sanctity of life and support the biblical definition of marriage between a man and a woman. Vote for biblical values this November 6, and pray with me that America will remain one nation under God." I say, "Amen!" to that and if I had a vote, we'd add Billy Graham's face up there beside the presidents on Mt. Rushmore.

Will apathy destroy America? It can, but will it? That's up to each one of us as citizens and as Christians. The problem isn't ignorance. We *know* how far we've leaned away from God's plumb line. The issue is apathy. Do you *care* about where America is heading? Will you ask God to deliver you from apathy and burden your heart for our nation? Let's join together and say like Joshua of old, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." And let's expand it to say, "As for me and my country, we will be one nation under God!"



The legacy we leave behind for our children, grandchildren, and this great nation is crucial. As I approach my 94th birthday, I realize this election could be my last. I believe it is vitally important that we cast our ballots for candidates who base their decisions on biblical principles and support the nation of Israel. I urge you to vote for those who protect the sanctity of life and support the biblical definition of marriage between a man and a woman. Vote for biblical values this November 6, and pray with me that America will remain one nation under God.

Billy Graham
Billy Graham
MONTREAT, N.C.

Source: www.billygraham.org

OUTLINE

- I. GOD SENDS A WARNING BEFORE HE SENDS JUDGMENT (Amos 4:6-11)
- II. APATHY AND AFFLUENCE CAN DESTROY A NATION (Amos 6:1-7)
- III. GOD WILL RESTORE ANY NATION THAT RETURNS TO HIM (Amos 9:11-15)
 - A. God doesn't play favorites

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes