

Dr. Robert Chisholm, Amos, Session 5, Amos 5:18-6:14 Obedience not Sacrifice... Podcast Audio Overview

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Have you ever found yourself really truly yearning for a specific day? You know, that moment you believe will just deliver you from all your troubles, bring security, prosperity, and finally end the struggle. Oh, absolutely. It's such a human thing, isn't it? That longing for a day that changes everything.

Yeah. But I mean, what happens if that day finally arrives and it's nothing as you imagined? Maybe even the opposite. That's a chilling thought.

It really is. And that's exactly where we're diving in today. We're going to unpack this incredibly potent message from the ancient prophet Amos.

We're looking specifically at chapter 5, verses 18 to 27, and then chapter 6, verses 1 to 14. And our guide for this is the insightful teaching of Dr. Robert Chisholm. Yeah.

And our mission really is to pull out these crucial nuggets of knowledge. What does real obedience look like? What about genuine justice? Right. And we'll confront the stark consequences of hypocrisy and arrogance.

You'll see these connections that, honestly, resonate just as powerfully today. It's amazing how timeless these warnings are. Complacency, moral insanity.

They offer profound lessons we just can't afford to ignore. Absolutely. So let's dig in.

Amos' time, the Northern Kingdom. They were holding onto this, well, this huge misconception. They were desperately longing for the day of the Lord.

Convinced it was their day. Exactly. They thought, this is it.

Light, deliverance, salvation, security, prosperity, all coming our way. They truly believed it was their big moment of divine favor. And then Amos just drops the hammer.

He hits them with this blunt, almost shocking reality check. Yeah. He declares that the day will be darkness, not light.

It wasn't their salvation party. Uh-uh. It was judgment day.

Wow. So the very thing they're praying for. Is their undoing.

Their ultimate deliverance turns out to be, well, their ultimate judgment. It's a total reversal. And to really hammer home how inescapable this is, Amos uses this incredibly vivid analogy.

It's almost visceral. It really is. Imagine you're running for your life from a lion.

Yeah. Just pure terror. You somehow get away, panting, heart pounding, only to run smack into a bear.

Oh. So you flee the bear, scramble into your house, slam the door, lean against it thinking, okay, safe. You take that deep breath.

I'm mad. And then a poisonous snake hiding in the wall bites you. There's just no escape.

None. It just makes your skin crawl, doesn't it? The sheer futility. You just cannot outrun what's coming.

It's a chilling picture. Absolutely inescapable. Every turn leads you right back to the judgment.

It completely overturns their expectations. And right at the start of this section, Amos uses this one word that just signals the gravity- whoa. The Hebrew is hoy.

Hoy. Yeah. What's the weight of that word? It's more than just saying, uh-oh, right? Oh, much more.

Hoy is an interjection. Yeah. Like, uh, or oh.

But culturally, it was the sound of mourning at funerals. Really? Like a lament? Exactly. Think of someone crying out, "Whoa, my father."

So when the prophets use hoy in these judgment speeches, they're basically pronouncing the death of the nation. Wow. And it's leadership in advance.

It's like they're singing the funeral song while the person's still standing there. So it's not just a warning. It's like saying you're already dead.

Our source even suggests paraphrasing it like, "You who long for the day of the Lord, you're as good as dead." That's the force of it. It's meant to shock them awake.

It really makes you stop and think, doesn't it? How our own expectations, when they're way off base, can lead us into really unexpected, difficult places. Absolutely. Misguided hope is a dangerous thing.

And Amos just nails how perilous it can be. Which leads right into God's response, what he despises. Yeah.

And there's a real irony here, isn't there? Because the people, especially the leaders, were the ones described earlier as hating justice. Exactly. Now the tables are turned.

God declares he hates their religious festivals; he despises their solemn assemblies. He says their offerings are a stench. I mean, that's strong language.

It is. He rejects their burnt offerings, grain offerings, even their fellowship offerings, specifically the peace offerings of fattened calves. It's a complete, startling rejection of their religious activity.

They think they're doing the right things, the prescribed things. But God finds it repulsive. Imagine that.

Thinking you're devout, but it's a stench to God. They were going through the motions, sure. Festivals, sacrifices.

Let's check, check, check. But without genuine obedience, without loving your neighbor, God wants the religious activity, yes, but not when it's just a performance, not when it's soaked in hypocrisy. And it doesn't stop at sacrifices.

He gets specific about their worship music, too. He says he won't even listen to the noise of your songs or the music of your harps. Yeah, that's pretty direct.

So if the rituals and the music aren't cutting it, what's missing? What does God actually want from them? Well, our source emphasizes that God expects worship to be both vertical and horizontal. Vertical and horizontal meaning? Vertical is our love for God. Horizontal is our love for our neighbor, our obedience to his commands in how we treat others.

The music, the offerings, the festivals- those are expressions of the vertical. But if that vertical part isn't matched by the horizontal, by real justice, real compassion, real obedience, then it's empty. It's hollow.

It's hypocrisy. It lacks integrity. And this all culminates in that incredibly famous verse, doesn't it? That core demand.

But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream. Such a powerful image. And the power is in the contrast, you know? The contrast with what? With the Wadis, those seasonal riverbeds in the region.

They might flood powerfully in the rainy season, but then they dry up completely. Bone dry. Ah, right.

God doesn't want that kind of justice. Sporadic, convenient, shows up sometimes, disappears; others, no. He wants it like a river.

All the time. Perennial. Unfailing.

Flowing constantly. That really makes you reflect, doesn't it? Are we sometimes just going through the motions? Is our sense of justice or care for others more like a Wadi than a river? It's a serious question to ask ourselves. Definitely.

Then Amos throws in this question in verses 25, 26 that scholars apparently find a bit tricky. He asked, did you bring me sacrifices and offerings 40 years in the wilderness, people of Israel? Yeah, that one causes some head scratching. Because, well, didn't God command sacrifices in the wilderness? So what's the challenge here? What's Amos getting at? Right.

It's nuanced. The point isn't that they offered nothing back then. The key issue, the problem now, is the combination.

Combination of what? Sacrifices plus idolatry. God's basically saying, sure, you brought offerings in the wilderness, but you weren't mixing it with rampant idol worship like you are now. Ah, okay.

So the problem isn't the sacrifices per se, but doing them while also worshiping other gods and being unjust. Exactly. God simply cannot accept worship, even technically correct worship, from people who are disobedient, polytheistic, and unjust.

Their worship is polluted. Their hearts are divided. And the consequence for all this is laid out starkly.

Therefore, I will send you into exile beyond Damascus. Yeah. And this isn't just like a timeout.

Our source describes it as salvation history coming unraveled. Unraveled. What does that mean for them practically? It means everything God had built for them is being undone.

Think about it. Reversing the promises of the land, becoming a great nation, reversing the acts of deliverance, escaping Egypt, crossing the Red Sea, conquering Canaan, the whole Davidic expansion. All being unwound.

Completely. Exile is the ultimate punishment because it strips them of their independence, their presence in the promised land. It's a total reversal of God's saving work in their history.

It's like pulling every thread out of the national tapestry. That sounds absolutely devastating. Just the end of everything they knew.

It is. Although, as you mentioned, the book does eventually offer a glimmer of hope, a promise that salvation history will be redone later, a second exodus, renewal. But for this generation listening to Amos, it's about the unraveling.

The consequences are severe. Indeed. And the big takeaway, the principle for this whole chapter five, really boils down to this.

God prioritizes relationships, or relationships with him and with our neighbors, way above just performing rituals. Relationship over ritual. Exactly.

And crucially, even in judgment, he always provides that chance to repent, to turn back and escape the worst. OK, so building on that devastating picture for the nation, Amos then zooms in, right? Chapter six starts with another woe. Woe.

Another hoi oracle. Yep. Another funeral dirge, essentially.

But this one is aimed squarely at the leadership, isn't it? Those complacent in Zion and secure on Mount Samaria. That's right. He's calling them out.

It's basically you who are lounging around feeling safe and complacent. You're as good as dead. Why were they feeling so secure? What was going on? Well, they were living high on the hog under King Jeroboam II.

Things were on the surface pretty good. Military victories, economic prosperity. They felt untouchable.

Secure. Totally secure. Right.

And critically, they were ignoring the warning signs, the smaller judgments God had already sent. They interpreted their success as God's blessing, not as, you know, the quiet before the storm. And then Amos hits them with this comparison in verse two.

He tells them to look at other cities, Kalna, Hamath, Gath, cities that had already faced judgment. What's the point of that comparison? It's a reality check. He's saying, look around.

Don't think you're special just because you have a covenant with God or a bigger territory. Your status won't save you. Nope.

God is sovereign over all nations. He judged them. He can judge you.

He can shrink your borders just like he did theirs. Your perceived strength, your covenant status, means nothing if you're corrupt and disobedient. And while they're living in this bubble of false security, they're indulging in extreme luxury.

Right. But it's not just luxury. It's tied to violence.

Yes. Our source points out this chilling phrase. They put off the day of disaster for themselves, but they bring near a reign of terror.

The Hebrew word there is Hamas: violence within their own nation. So their comfort is built on oppressing their own people. Through oppressive systems.

Yeah. Leading to starvation, death. Meanwhile, they are living it up.

The text paints this picture. Beds inlaid with ivory, lounging on couches, feasting on the best lambs, the fattest calves. Just have entertainment.

Frivolous. Strumming harps like David, dripping with sarcasm, implying they think they're his equal but lack his heart entirely. Improvising tunes, drinking wine not by the glass, but by the bowlful.

Using the most expensive lotions and oils. It's sheer excessive self-indulgence, completely disconnected from the reality of the suffering they're causing or ignoring. And the ultimate indictment, this sin of neglect, is captured in that line.

They do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph. That sounds significant. What does the ruin of Joseph mean here? It's deep.

Our source calls it a double entendre. It has two layers of meaning at once. Okay.

First, it refers to the moral ruin of the Northern Kingdom. Joseph often represents the Northern tribes, their ethical collapse. Second, it points to the coming national disaster, the actual physical ruin.

Ah, so their moral ruin leads to their national ruin. Exactly. The two are intertwined.

And leaders. They show zero grief, zero concern for either. They are blind to their own decay and its inevitable, devastating consequences.

And the punishment fits the crime perfectly. It's that Lex Talionic justice idea again. Our source highlights this wordplay on, first, the Hebrew word, Rosh.

Yes, Rosh. They saw themselves as the Rishet, the first, the foremost, the elite, the notable men. They demanded the Rishet, the best, the first pick of everything, like those fancy lotions.

They wanted to be first in line for the good stuff. Right. So God says, okay, you want to be first? I'll honor you.

You'll be the first to go into exile. Wow. You'll be right up front at the Rosh of the Lion heading into captivity.

It's this bitter, ironic reversal of the status they cherished. That perfectly illustrates the principle for this part of chapter six, then. Yeah.

God hates arrogance. He actively opposes the proud and brings them low. Absolutely.

It's a consistent theme. So that brings us to the final section of chapter six, verses 8, 9, 14. Our source titles this part, The Stench of Death Settles.

Grim. It is grim. And it starts with God making the most solemn oath possible.

The sovereign Lord has sworn by himself, literally by his own nephesh, his own life, his own being. What does that signal when God swears by himself? It signals absolute certainty. This is a steady, lasting, eternal declaration.

It will happen. There's no turning back from this. And what is it he swears about? What does he abhor? He abhors their pride.

That's the root of it all. And he detests their fortresses, their strongholds, the very symbols and products of that pride and self-reliance. The physical manifestations of their arrogance.

Precisely. And because of this deep-seated pride, God declares he will deliver up the city and everything in it. Total devastation.

The imagery is intense. If ten people are left hiding in one house... They'll die too. Yeah.

There's no escaping this judgment. And the aftermath described is chilling. A relative comes to get the bodies for burning, and he whispers, Hush, don't even mention the name of the Lord.

Why, out of fear? Fear of attracting even more judgment. It shows the utter terror and the sense that even invoking God's name might bring further wrath. It's a picture of complete despair.

It's a sobering picture of how judgment can sweep through, affecting everyone. Collateral damage. Yeah.

It reminds us that judgment is often corporate. It impacts the whole community, even those who might seem less directly culpable. It's a theme you see elsewhere, like in Habakkuk's laments.

And then Amos uses these rhetorical questions to diagnose their state. He calls it moral insanity. That's a powerful term.

He asks, "Do horses run on rocky crags? Does one plow the sea with oxen?" These are just absurd, self-destructive actions. Completely bizarre. Crazy.

Nobody would do that. So what's the point he's making about Israel's leadership? His point is that their actions are just as insane, just as fundamentally irrational and self-destructive. They have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness.

Taking something good and making it toxic. Exactly. It's a profound perversion.

They're defending and living out a reality that makes no logical or moral sense. It's moral insanity. And even their military victories, the things they boast about, are shown to be empty.

They're celebrating the capture of Lo-debar. Which, as our source points out, literally means nothing. So they conquered nothing, though.

Pretty much. Their great success is meaningless. It's fool's gold.

And they boast, didn't we take Carneim by our own strength? And Carneim means? Two horns. It's a symbol of great power, great strength. So they're bragging about their own might, conquering nothing, and thinking they're as strong as ox horns.

What's the underlying message? The message is crystal clear. Your perceived strength, your military might, your self-congratulation. It means nothing.

It won't shield you from God's judgment. And God explicitly names the instrument of that judgment. He does.

I will stir up a nation against you, he says. And historically, this points to Assyria. And this nation will oppress them totally.

From Labo Hamath, way up north, down to the valley of the Erebah in the south. Covering the whole territory, both Israel and Judah. Signifying a complete, inescapable national judgment.

Their strength is irrelevant against God's determined will. So again, that principle echoes. God detests arrogance; he opposes the proud, and he will reverse their status, bringing judgment upon their self-reliance.

It's a powerful recurring theme throughout Amos. What a journey through these chapters. We've gone from these misguided hopes about the day of the Lord.

Yeah, expecting light, getting darkness. Through God's absolute demand for real obedience and justice, not just empty rituals. Rejecting the sacrifices, demanding that justice roll like a river.

To the scathing condemnation of the complacent, arrogant leaders. Living in luxury while ignoring the ruin, merrily insane. And facing the profound, devastating consequences.

The core insights are just so piercing, aren't they? True faith requires active justice, real humility. It's not just about showing up for religious services. Right, those outward acts are meaningless, even offensive, without that interchange, without genuine love for your neighbor.

And pride, that self-reliance apart from God. It leads ultimately to devastation. It unravels everything.

So as we wrap up, think about the mirror Amos holds up. These themes: the lure of false security, the danger of just performing religion, being blind to our own internal decay, the consequences of turning justice into poison. How do they challenge our assumptions today? About success, about integrity, even about our own spiritual practices.

Yeah, and maybe the most piercing question to leave you with is this. What does it truly mean for us, right here, right now, to grieve over the ruin of Joseph in our own time, in our own communities, maybe even in our own lives? It's about seeing the brokenness, isn't it? And actually caring, not just looking away. That's something really worth pondering long after this deep dive is over.