

# CHAPTER 3

A stupid, senseless, heedless people, are, in this chapter, called upon to take notice,

**I.** Of the judgments of God denounced against them and the warnings he gave them of those judgments, and to be hereby awakened out of their security (v. 1-8).

**II.** Of the sins that were found among them, by which God was provoked thus to threaten, thus to punish, that they might justify God in his controversy with them, and, unless they repented and reformed, might expect no other than that God should proceed in his controversy (v. 9-15).

## ~~III.~~ AMOS 3:1-8

### THREATENINGS OF JUDGMENT

The scope of these verses is to convince the people of Israel that God had a controversy with them. That which the prophet has to say to them is to let them know that the Lord has something to say against them, v. 1. They were his peculiar people above others, knew his name, and were called by it; *nevertheless he had something against them*, and they were called to hear what it was, that they might consider what answer they should make, as the prisoner at the bar is told to hearken to his indictment. The *children of Israel* would not regard the words of counsel and comfort that God had many a time spoken to them, and now they shall be made to hear the word of reproof and threatening that the Lord has spoken against them; for he will act as he has spoken.

**I.** Let them know that the gracious cognizance God has taken of them, and the favours he has bestowed upon them, should not exempt them from the punishment due to them for their sins. Israel is a *family* that *God brought up out of the land of Egypt*, (v. 1), and it was no more than a family when it went down thither; thence God delivered it; thence he fetched it to be a family to himself. It is not only the ten tribes, the kingdom of Israel, that must take notice of this, but that of Judah also, for it is spoken against the

whole *family* that God *brought up out of Egypt*. It is a family that God has bestowed distinguishing favours upon, has owned in a peculiar manner. *You only have I known of all the families of the earth*. Note, God's church in the world is a family dignified above all the families of the earth. Those that know God are known of him. *In Judah is God known*, and therefore Judah is more than any people known of God. God has *known* them, that is, he has chosen them, covenanted with them, and conversed with them as his acquaintance. Now, one would think, it should follow, "Therefore I will spare you, will connive at your faults, and excuse you." No: *Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities*. Note, The distinguishing favours of God to us, if they do not serve to restrain us from sin, shall not serve to exempt us from punishment; nay, the nearer any are to God in profession, and the kinder notice he has taken of them, the more surely, the more quickly, and the more severely will he reckon with them, if they by a course of wilful sin profane their character, disgrace their relation to him, violate their engagements, and put a slight upon the favours and honours with which they have been distinguished. *Therefore* they shall be punished, because their sins dishonour him, affront him, and grieve him, more than the sins of others, and because it is necessary that God should vindicate his own honour by making it appear that he hates sin and hates it most in those that are nearest to him; if they be but as bad as others, they shall be punished worse than others, because it is justly expected that they should be so much better than others. *Judgment begins at the house of God*, begins at the sanctuary; for God will be sanctified either by or upon those that *come nigh unto him*, <sup><003></sup>Leviticus 10:3.

**II.** Let them know that they could not expect any comfortable communion with God unless they first made their peace with him (v. 3): *Can two walk together except they be agreed?* No; how should they? Where there is not friendship there can be no fellowship; if two persons be at variance, they must first accommodate the matters in difference between them before there can be any interchanging of good offices. Israel has affronted God, had broken their covenant with him, and ill-requited his favours to them; and yet they expected that he should continue to walk with them, should take their part, act for them, and give them assurances of his presence with them, though they took no care by repentance and reformation to *agree with their adversary* and to turn away his wrath. "But how can that be?" says God. "While you continue to *walk contrary to God* you can look for no other than that he should *walk contrary to you*," <sup><002></sup>Leviticus 26:23, 24.

Note, We cannot expect that God should be present with us, or act for us, unless we be reconciled to him. God and man cannot *walk together except they be agreed*. Unless we agree with God in our end, which is his glory, we cannot walk with him by the way.

**III.** Let them know that the warnings God gave them of judgments approaching were not causeless and groundless, merely to amuse them, but certain declarations of the wrath of God against them, which (if they did not speedily repent) they would infallibly feel the effects of (v. 4): “*Will a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey in view? No: he roars upon his prey. Nor will a young lion cry out of his den if the old lion have taken nothing to bring home to him; nor would God thus give you warning both by the threatenings of his word, and by less judgments, if you had not by your sins made yourselves a prey to his wrath, nor if he were not really about to fall upon you with desolating destroying judgments.*” Note, The threatenings of the word and providence of God are not bugbears, to frighten children and fools, but are certain inferences from the sin of man and certain presages of the judgments of God.

**IV.** Let them know that, as their own wickedness was the procuring cause of these judgments, so they shall not be removed till they have done their work, v. 5. When God has come forth to contend with a sinful people it is necessary that they should understand,

**1.** That it is their own sin that has entangled them; for *can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth where no gin is for him?* No, nature does not lay snares for the creatures, but the art of men; a bird is not taken in a snare by chance, but with the fowler's design; so the providence of God prepares trouble for sinners, and it is *in the work of their own hands* that they are *snares*. Affliction does not *spring out of the dust*, but it is God's justice, and *our own wickedness*, that *correct us*.

**2.** It is nothing but their own repentance that can disentangle them; for *shall one take up a snare from the earth*, which he laid with design, except he have *taken something* as he designed? So neither will God remove the affliction he has sent till it have done its work and accomplished that for which he sent it. If our hearts be duly humbled, and we are brought by our afflictions to confess and forsake our sins, then the snare has taken something, then the point is gained, the end is answered, and then, and not

till then, the *snare is broken*, is taken up from the earth, and *we are delivered* in love and mercy.

**V.** Let them know that all their troubles came from the hand of God's providence and from the counsel of his will (v. 6): *Shall there be evil in a city, in a family, in a nation, and the Lord has not done it*, appointed it, and performed what he appointed? The evil of sin is from ourselves; it is our own doing. But the evil of trouble, personal or public, is from God, and is his doing; whoever are the instruments, God is the principal agent. *Out of his mouth both evil and good proceed*. This consideration, that, whatever evil is in the city, the Lord has done it, should engage us patiently to bear our share in public calamities and to study to answer God's intention in them.

**VI.** Let them know that their prophets, who give them warning of judgments approaching, deliver nothing to them but what they have *received from the Lord* to be delivered to his people.

**1.** God makes it known beforehand to the prophets (v. 7): *Surely the Lord Jehovah will do nothing*, none of that evil in the city spoken of (v. 6), *but he reveals it to his servants the prophets*, though to others it is a secret. Therefore those know not what they do who make light of the warnings which the prophets give them, in God's name. Observe, God's prophets are *his servants*, whom he employs to go on his errands to the children of men. The *secret* of God is with them; it is in some sense with all *the righteous* (<sup>118</sup>Proverbs 3:32), with *all that fear God* (<sup>124</sup>Psalms 25:14), but in a peculiar manner with the prophets, to whom the Spirit of prophecy is a Spirit of revelation. It would have put honour enough upon prophets if it had been only said that sometimes God is pleased to reveal to his prophets what he designs to do, but it speaks something very great to say that he *does nothing* but what he *reveals to them*, as if they were *the men of his counsel*. *Shall I hide from Abraham, who is a prophet, the thing which I do?* (<sup>187</sup>Genesis 18:17. God will therefore be sure to reckon with those that put contempt on the prophets, whom he puts this honour upon.

**2.** The prophets cannot but make that known to the people which God has made known to them (v. 8): *The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?* His prophets, to whom he has spoken in secret by dreams and visions, cannot but speak in public to the people what they have heard from God. They are so full of those things themselves, so well assured

concerning them, and so much affected with them, that they cannot but speak of them; for *out of the abundance of the heart* the mouth will speak. *I believed; therefore have I spoken,* <sup><400></sup>Acts 4:20. Nay, and besides the prophetic impulse which went along with the inspiration, and made the word *like a fire in their bones* (<sup><309></sup>Jeremiah 20:9), they received a command from God to deliver what they had been charged with; and they would have been false to their trust if they had not done it. *Necessity was laid upon them,* as upon the preachers of the gospel, <sup><406></sup>1 Corinthians 9:16.

**VII.** Let them know that they ought to tremble before God upon the fair warning he had given them, as they would,

**1.** Upon the sounding of a trumpet, to give notice of the approach of the enemy, that all may stand upon their guard and stand to their arms: *Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people be not afraid, or run together?* so some read it, v. 6. Will they not immediately come together in a fright, to consider what is best to be done for the common safety? Yet when God by his prophets gives them notice of their danger, and summons them to come and enlist themselves under his banner, it makes no impression; they will sooner give credit to a watchman on their walls than to a prophet sent of God, will sooner obey the summons of the governor of their city than the orders given them by the Governor of the world. God says, *Hearken to the voice of the trumpet;* but *they will not hearken,* nay, and they tell him plainly that they will not, <sup><207></sup>Jeremiah 6:17.

**2.** Upon the roaring of a lion. God is sometimes *as a lion, and a young lion, to the house of Judah,* <sup><354></sup>Hosea 5:14. The lion roars before he tears; thus God warns before he wounds. If therefore the lion roars upon a poor traveller (as he did against Samson, <sup><045></sup>Judges 14:5), he cannot but be put into great consternation; yet the *Lord roars out of Zion* (<sup><300></sup>Amos 1:2), and none are afraid, but they go on securely as if they were in no danger. Note, The fair warning given to a careless world, if it be not taken, will aggravate its condemnation another day. The lion roared, and they were not moved with fear to prepare an ark. O the amazing stupidity of an unbelieving world, that will not be wrought upon, no, not by the *terrors of the Lord!*

## AMOS 3:9-15

### ISRAEL CONVICTED AND CONDEMNED

The Israelites are here again convicted and condemned, and particular notice given of the crimes they are convicted of and the punishment they are condemned to.

**1.** Notice is given of it to their neighbours. The prophet is ordered to *publish it in the palaces of Ashdod*, one of the chief cities of the Philistines; nay, the summons must go further, even to *the palaces in the land of Egypt*. “The great men of both those nations, that dwell in the palaces, that are inquisitive concerning the affairs of the neighboring nations, and are conversant with the public intelligence, let them *assemble themselves upon the mountains of Samaria*,” v. 9. There, upon a *throne high and lifted up*, the judgment is set. Samaria is the criminal that is to be tried; let them be present at the trial, for it shall be (as other trials are) public, in the face of the country; let them make an appointment to meet there from all parts, to judge between God and his vineyard. God appeals to all impartial righteous men, <sup>235</sup>Ezekiel 23:45. They will all subscribe to the equity of his proceedings when they see how the case stands. Note, God’s controversies with sinners do not fear a scrutiny; even Philistines and Egyptians will be made to see, and say, that *the ways of the Lord are equal, but our ways are unequal*. They are likewise summoned to attend, not only that they may justify God and be witness for him that he deals fairly, but that they may themselves take warning; for, if *judgment begin at the house of God*, as they see it does, what shall be the end of those that are strangers to him? <sup>4017</sup>1 Peter 4:17. *If this be done in a green tree, what shall be done in a dry?* Or this intimates that the sin of Israel had been so notorious that the neighboring nations could come in witnesses against them, and therefore it was fit that their punishment should be so. “If it could have been concealed, we would have said, *Tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon;*” but why should their friends consult their reputation, when they themselves do not consult it? If they have grown impudent in sin, let them bear the shame: “*Publish it in Ashdod, in Egypt.*”

**1.** Let them see how black the charge is, and how well proved. Let them observe the behaviour of the inhabitants of Samaria; let them look off

from the adjacent hills, and they may see how rude and boisterous they are, and hear how loud they cry of their sin is, as was that of Sodom.

(1.) Look into their streets and you will see nothing but riot and disorder, *great tumults in the midst thereof*; reason and justice are upon all occasions run down by the noise and fury of an outrageous mob, the dominion of which is the sin and shame of any people, and is likely to be their ruin.

(2.) Look into their prisons, and you will see them filled with injured innocents: *The oppressed are in the midst thereof*, thrown down and crushed by their oppressors, overpowered and overwhelmed, and *they had no comfort*, <sup><201></sup>Ecclesiastes 4:1.

(3.) Look into their courts of justice, and you will see that those who preside in those courts *know not to do right*, because they have always been accustomed to do wrong; they act as if they had no notion at all of the thing called justice, are in no care to do justice themselves nor to see that others do justice.

(4.) Look into their treasures and stores, and you will see them replenished with *violence and robbery*, with that which was unjustly got and is still unjustly kept. Thus *they have heaped treasures together for the last days*, but it will prove a *treasure of wrath against the day of wrath*. It may well be said, Those *know not to do right* who think to enrich themselves by doing wrong.

2. Let them see how heavy the doom is, and how well executed, v. 11, 12.

(1.) Their country shall be invaded and ruined; and observe how the punishment answers to the sin.

[1.] *Great tumults are in the midst of the land*, and therefore *an adversary shall be even round about the land*; the Assyrian forces shall surround it and break in upon it on every side. Note, When sin is harboured and indulged in the midst of a people they can expect no other than that adversaries should be round about them, so that, go which way they will, they go into the mouth of danger, <sup><208></sup>Luke 19:43.

[2.] They strengthened themselves in their wickedness, but the enemy shall *bring down their strength* from them, that strength which they abused in oppressing the poor, and doing violence to all about them. Note, That

power which is made an instrument of unrighteousness will justly be brought down and broken.

[3.] They *stored up robbery in their palaces*, and therefore their *palaces shall be spoiled*; for what is got and kept wrongfully will not be kept long. Even palaces will be no protection to fraud and oppression; but the greatest of men, if they have spoiled others, shall themselves be spoiled, for *the Lord is the avenger of all such*.

(2.) Their countrymen shall not escape, v. 12. They shall be in the hands of the enemy, as a lamb in the mouth of a lion, all devoured and eaten up, and they shall be utterly unable to make an resistance; and if any do make their escape, so as neither to fall by the sword or go into captivity, yet they shall be very few, and those of the meanest and least considerable, like *two legs*, or *shanks*, of a lamb, or, it may be, *a piece of an ear*, which the lion drops, or *the shepherd* takes from him, when he has eaten the whole body; so, perhaps, here and there one may escape from Samaria and from Damascus, when the king of Assyria shall fall upon them both, but none to make any account of; and those that do escape shall do so with the utmost difficult and hazard, by hiding themselves in the *corner of a bed* or under the *bed's feet*, which intimates that their spirits shall sneak shamefully in the time of danger. They shall not hide themselves in dens and caves, but in the *corner of a bed*, or the *piece of a bed*, such as poor people must be content with. They shall very narrowly escape, as it is foretold concerning the last destruction of Jerusalem that there shall be *two in a bed together, one taken and the other left*. Note, When God's judgments come forth against a people with commission it will be in vain to think of escaping them. Some make their *dwelling in the corner of a bed*, and *in a couch*, to denote their present security and sensuality; they are at ease, as *in a bed*, or *on a couch*, but, when God comes to contend with them, he shall make them uneasy, shall take them away out of the bed of their sloth and slumber. Those that stretch themselves lazily upon their couches when God's judgments are abroad shall *go captive with the first that go captive*.

II. Notice is given of it to themselves, v. 13. Let this be *testified*, and *heard*, in the house of Jacob, among all the seed of Israel, for it is spoken by *the Lord God, the God of hosts*, who has authority to pass this sentence and ability to execute it; let them know from him that the day is at hand when God will *visit the transgressions of Israel upon him*, when he will enquire into them and reckon for them: there will come *a day of visitation*,



a day of punishment, and in that day all those things they are proud of, and put confidence in, shall fail them, and so they shall smart for the sins they have been guilty of about them.

**1.** Woe to *their altars*, for God will *visit* them. He will enquire into the sins they have been guilty of at their altars, and bring into the account all their superstition and idolatry, all their expenses on their false gods, and all their expectations from them; and he will lay the altars themselves under the marks of his displeasure, for *the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground*, and with them the altar itself demolished and broken to pieces. We find the altar at Bethel prophesied against (<sup>118</sup>1 Kings 13:2), and immediately *rent* (v. 3), and that prophecy fulfilled with *Josiah burnt men's bones upon it*, (<sup>125</sup>2 Kings 23:15, 16). This seconds that prophecy, and seems to point at the same event. Note, If men will not destroy idolatrous altars, God will, and those with them that had them in veneration. Some make *the horns of the altar* to signify all those things which they flee to for refuge, and trust in, and which they make their sanctuary: they shall all be cut off, so that they shall have nothing to take hold of.

**2.** Woe to their houses, for God will visit them too. He will enquire into the sins they have been guilty of in their houses, the robbery that have stored up in their houses, and the luxury in which they lived: *and I will smite the winter-house with the summer-house*, v. 15. Their nobility, and gentry, and rich merchants, had their winter-houses in the city and their summer-houses in the country, so nice were they in guarding against the inconveniences of the winter when the country was thought too cold, and of the summer when the city was thought too hot, though the climate of that good land was so temperate, like that of ours, that neither the cold nor heat was ever in extremity. They indulged a foolish affectation of change and variety; but God will, either by war or by the earthquake, smite both the winter-house and the summer-house; neither shall serve to shelter them from his judgments. *The houses of ivory* (so called because the ceiling, or wainscot, or some of the ornaments of them, were edged or inlaid with ivory) *shall perish*, shall be burnt or pulled down; *and the great houses shall have an end*; the most splendid and spacious houses, the houses of their great men, shall no longer be, or at least be no longer theirs. Note, The pomp or pleasantness of men's houses will be so far from fortifying them against God's judgments that it will make them the more

grievous and vexatious, as their extravagance about them will be put to the score of their sins and follies.