

The Perils of Spiritual Complacency

Amos 6:1-14

1. What do you continue to do (or not do) even though it may not be good or helpful for you?

Amos chapter 6 begins with a “woe” which relates this section to the woe pronounced in 5:18.

2. **Read** Amos 6:1 and Amos 5:18. Share your observations below.

Open Your Heart: Dear Father, I pray that You will use this study to refocus my vision of You. Give me a heart that thirsts for the living God above all else—grant me a passionate longing after You that consumes me and leaves all traces of complacency behind.

The people of Israel appear to have taken little notice of the demands made by Amos thus far. Perhaps the men felt smug when they heard the prophet condemning the selfishness of their women (4:1). And they may have suffered little concern when they heard the “woes” uttered against those of a more religious frame of mind—those who had been longing for the day of the LORD to arrive. But now the searching eye of God turns to Israel’s “notable” leaders and Amos’ voice seems to rise to an even greater volume as he calls out to them.... Prayerfully **read** Amos 6:1-7 from more than one translation. Use Map 2 to identify the locations mentioned.

Note: *Calneh* and *Hamath* had lost their independence and were merely city-states in northern Israel at the time of Amos’ prophecy. In the past *Gath* had been a dominant city in the powerful nation of Philistia. Presently Judah had control of Gath (2 Chronicles 26:6).

With this in view, Amos challenges the men from both kingdoms in 6:1-2. *The purpose of Amos’ reference to other cities has been the subject of some debate.* Does he mention them because they have been destroyed and are examples of what will happen to Samaria? Or are they examples of prosperous Gentile cities, indicating to Samaria that it is just another prosperous city with no special status in the world of cities?

3. **Reread** 6:1-2 and tell which interpretation you think is the most plausible and why.

Amos now hammers his message home by roaring out—“*O you who put far away the evil day of punishment*” (6:3a Amplified Old Testament).

4. a. For some people their sole occupation is their present enjoyments. Could that ever be said of us? Can you give a personal example?

- b. According to Amos 6:3b what are the leaders of Israel really doing when they procrastinate about their sins and their complacent attitudes? (Check several translations.)

Sometimes Amos can be an uncomfortable fellow to be around, especially when he points to practices that sound like things close to us.

5. Read the handout for this lesson on Spiritual Complacency. In what ways has God spoken to you about the sins of complacency in your life? Be specific about the steps you want to take to rid your life of this subtle sin.

In Amos 6:4-6 he paints a shocking picture of the complacency among the “notable” leaders in Israel. Carefully **reread** this section.

6. How was their lifestyle a mockery of all that was honest, good and true?

7. How were the days ahead going to be a reign of terror for Israel? (See Amos 5:27; 6:7, 14.)

Heart Check: Have you ever pondered the effect our sin has upon God? Do you identify with God's attitude toward sin? Do you share His hatred? His grief?

8. What should *grieve us* today about our personal lives, our church and our nation?

The last portion of chapter 6 brings this middle section of Amos (chapters 3-6) to its final climax. **Read** Amos 6:8-14 with this in mind.

9. Why do you think the powerful name of the LORD is used twice in verse 8?

The men of Israel should have been vital leaders during this time of peace—improving the lot of the lower classes—but instead they influenced the nation to self-indulgence and pride. The poor were exploited and the rich got richer, indulging themselves in extravagant living when they should have been sitting in sackcloth and ashes over the spiritual condition of the kingdom. *While Israel played the fool and relaxed in luxury (feeling secure as verse 1 says), God was saying to Amos:*

*“I abhor the pride of Jacob
and detest his fortresses;
I will deliver up the city
and everything in it.”*

In 6:9-11 Amos gives us an example of the kind of complete destruction that will come upon the people. **Read** these verses again noticing how God will demolish the pride of both the rich and the poor.

10. Put the example from verses 9-11 in story form as if you were a reporter writing for the Jerusalem Post. The note on the next page may be helpful as well.

Note: In accordance with the words of Genesis 3:19, burial was the accepted method of disposal of the dead in ancient Israel. The New Testament doctrine concerning the “body” is no different. Thus, cremation was not considered an option (see Amos 2:1). But when God’s judgment falls upon His people there will be so many dead that they will not be able to bury them—they must burn them to prevent contamination. This case here and the one in 1 Samuel 31:12 are exceptional cases. In 1 Samuel it was done to prevent further dishonor to the bodies of Saul and his sons by the Philistines.

Take time to reflect and *compare* the sobering conditions outlined in Amos 6:4-6 and 6:9-11.

11. What valuable points are being driven home to us through this dramatic contrast?

Amos introduced a final scathing rebuke in 6:12. Take time to contemplate this verse.

12. How does the poetic picture of making horses run on jagged rocky crags and oxen plowing them—a picture that completely reverses the normal way of working with horses and plows on level fields—illustrate the truth of what Israel had done with *justice* and *righteousness*? State your answer in your own words. ♥ **Store in your heart:** Amos 6:12b

13. The prophet piles on the irony in verse 13. Sarcastically, Amos points out that they rejoiced in the conquest of Lo Debar, saying _____.

Note: The significance of these towns lies in their names. Lo Debar means “nothing” and Karnaim means “horns.” Perhaps Amos was pointing out that their strength had been for nothing.

And now the LORD will demonstrate that He means what He says! Amos began chapter 6 with the pronouncement of “woe” and he concludes it with the execution of that “woe.” The Assyrian army will do an effective work on Israel—for they will smite the kingdom from one end of the land to the other (Amos 6:14).

14. Take time in your group to discuss the impact of this lesson on your life. What about this study has been difficult for you—has challenged your priorities, or caused you to examine your thinking about God or yourself?

After your discussion spend time praying for each other and praising God for who He is; the Sovereign LORD of history, the faithful God who keeps His Word, and the longsuffering Father who gives His children every opportunity to “seek Him and live!”

SPIRITUAL COMPLACENCY

Lesson 8 – Amos 6:1-14

Complacency can be defined as being “calmly content/smugly self-satisfied.” The underlying mind-set of complacency is pride and a sense of false security.

One of the greatest enemies of the Christian life is spiritual complacency. When we examine the Scriptures we see that the attitude that leads to apostasy most often is complacency on the part of believers. Spiritual complacency isn't ever an *intention*, but too often it can creep into our lives unnoticed—a tragic consequence of failing to be *intentional* in our spiritual growth and relationship with God. Sadly, complacent people don't normally recognize their complacency and as a result, often remain complacent. A.W. Tozer once said: “Every Christian will become at last what his desires have made him. We are the sum total of our cravings.”

The great saints all had thirsting hearts for God. Their longing after God consumed them. Do you have a passionate desire for God? Do you long to know Him in the most intimate of fellowship?

For all of us the first step is to recognize how we can avoid the sin of complacency in our spiritual lives. Here are at least five ways:

1. Be aware of what breeds complacency. God's blessings to Israel were fast becoming a curse because they were being used selfishly and even sinfully. Often when times are good and troubles are few we are the most vulnerable to complacency.
2. Remember who we are fighting against! Satan is always present; therefore remember the words of Peter in 1 Peter 5:8: “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”
3. Examine yourself! Ask God to reveal to you areas of complacency in your life. Repent of those things that God brings to mind. Be thankful for God's grace that will enable you to do what God wants you to do.
4. Find a friend or a small-group that will help hold you accountable to the changes you want to make in your life. Be open and transparent with them.
5. Immerse yourself in spiritual things. Pursue the Word of God with intensity. Make a commitment to study the character and attributes of God. Spend time on your knees in prayer beholding the glorious person of Jesus Christ—pour your heart out to Him—embrace Him as your all in all!