

January 15, 2006

“Yielding to the Word”
Amos 7:10-17

FCF: Our struggle with authority – even God’s Word over our lives

PROPOSITION: (anchor) Because this word is the Word of God,
(magnet) we must bow before it – yielding our lives to it.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

We have all heard stories of great stubbornness. I recently read of a captain on the bridge of a large naval vessel as he realized he was on a collision course with a light ahead. He signaled, “*Alter your course ten degrees south.*” The reply came back, “*Alter your course ten degrees north.*” The captain then signaled, “*Alter your course ten degrees south. I am a captain.*” The reply: “*Alter your course ten degrees north. I am a seaman first-class.*” The furious captain signaled, “*Alter your course ten degrees south. I am a battleship.*” The reply: “*Alter your course ten degrees north. I am a lighthouse.*”

Now we’d like to believe that we could never be guilty of such foolish bravado. Such stubbornness seems too much to envision. To insist on our way before someone who will not or can not yield – surely not! But that said, most of us would acknowledge we’ve been guilty of it in one way or another. It’s a dangerous position to be in not only in sailing out on the open sea but for each of us standing before the Lord. Dare we stand before Him insisting on our own way, refusing to yield? Will we heed Him?

SCRIPTURE READING: Amos 7:10-17

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

I seem to be reading quite a bit these days. Multiple commentaries and ministry related studies for things here. Then at home, there are instruction manuals telling me “how to” on things I know nothing about, investment guides giving advice on the wiles of the market, books on marriage reflecting on the mysteries of what it means to be “one flesh,” and books on parenting helping me to keep from falling too many steps behind the curve. These authors are mentors, trusted advisors. They’ve gone to places and explored where I haven’t. And so, if I’m going to grow in those areas, I’m going to have to listen to what they have to say – to hear, heed, and yield. One could even say to “bow.”

Certainly the need to bow before an authority larger than oneself is what we see here in Amos 7. The prophet has come under attack. The words we looked at last week have caused offense (**READ Amos 7:7-9**). This was too much, too hard to hear, for one priest, a man named Amaziah. And what follows is his response to the prophet and then the prophet’s response to him – the realities of what has been said showing themselves in full. The God of the plumb line draws near and measures these two men. And as we look in at this measuring, we find ourselves confronted with the need to “bow” ourselves – yielding the whole of our lives. It is a bowing in full called for here in this passage.

I. IN WHAT WE SAY

Beginning first with what we say, in what we proclaim, in the message we bear. We see this in Amos’ response to Amaziah’s charge. Let’s look at how it’s described.

A) Not with Fear

Amos is severely tested. Yet despite all that befalls him, he shows no fear.

1. Misrepresented

His words were clearly misrepresented to the king – most likely intentionally (**READ Amos 7:10-11**). Yes, he had spoken of exile, and, yes, implicit in that would have been a

conquest and an end to Jeroboam's reign. Yet in no way was motivated by conspiracy of any kind. But Amaziah knows such a charge would get the king's attention.

2. Tempted

But for whatever reason, Jeroboam takes no action. And so Amaziah takes a more direct approach (**READ Amos 7:12-13**). *“Look, Amos, this is the king's sanctuary, the place for the people's worship. You can't say such things here. Besides, no one's going to listen to you here. Go back to Judah, go back home. Go where you're welcome, where people will listen to you, where you'll be taken care of, where you'll have security.”*

3. Confronted

Deliberately misrepresented, sorely tempted, and certainly an element of confrontation as well. Think of Amaziah's status, his reputation, his place as spokesman of the church.

Not that this would be the last time the LORD's servants would face such opposition (**READ Acts 5:27-28**). Such opposition is expected (**READ 1 Peter 4:12-13**). Even more, such opposition can be a mark of faithfulness (**READ Matthew 5:10-12**).

Illustration:

During the Watergate scandal, some took it as a compliment to be on President Nixon's “enemies list.” They saw it as a credit, a badge of honor, that people in the administration opposed them. In much the same way, Amaziah's opposition was a credit, a badge of honor, for Amos. In a sense, it was a sign that he was doing something right.

B) But with Faithfulness

And through it all, Amos stood firm – his response being not one of fear but of faithfulness. How? We see it in the groundedness, the rootedness, so evident within him.

1. Assured of whose he was

Assured of whose he was – keenly aware of both his past and the work of the LORD in his life (**READ Amos 7:14-15**). Amos makes clear he had not chosen this path as a profession, as a means by which to make a living. He had not set out on this course or studied in this field. He was a herdsman, a farmer. But the LORD had laid hold of him.

2. Confident in His calling

Which created confidence in his calling, the conviction that to forbid him to prophesy, to oppose his message, was to oppose the One who had commissioned him – the LORD Himself. And so he had to prophesy – to continue with his ministry of forthtelling and foretelling. He had to preach. For it was the LORD who had called Him to it.

Which then steeled him for such opposition as he faced here with Amaziah. It's what allowed him to speak with unflinching boldness, not just not backing down but going so far as to reiterate what he had been saying and applying it to Amaziah himself.

Application:

The point is this. The LORD had called him. And so, when it came to proclaiming this Word, Amos could do no other. And neither can we. The LORD has commissioned us as well – calling us and sending us out – each one of us in one way or another as His emissaries and ambassadors, heralding His message with our very lives. And as with Amos, we are to go, not with fear but with faithfulness. Why do we need to hear that? There are times when you may, as the His servant, say all the right things to people who should be listening, to people who should know better. And, like Amaziah, they will hate you for it, even to their peril. But the LORD will sustain you in it.

Illustration:

Church History is filled with examples of this. Let me give you one – the life of the great Scottish Reformer, John Knox ([READ Between Two Worlds, pp.304-305](#)):

His contemporaries described him as little and frail, but he had a fiery disposition and a vehement way of speaking. After his return to Scotland in 1559 from his exile in Geneva, his audacious biblical preaching put new heart into the Scots who longed for deliverance from the Catholic French and for a reformed kirk. As Randolph, the English envoy, said in a dispatch to Queen Elizabeth, “the voice of one man is able in one hour to put more life in us than 500 trumpets continually blustering in our ears.” When Mary Queen of Scots was contemplating marriage with Don Carlos, son and heir of King Philip of Spain, which would have brought the Pope’s power (political as well as religious) and the Spanish Inquisition to Scotland, Knox preached publicly against it. Such a union, he cried, would “banish Christ Jesus from this realm.” The Queen was deeply offended, sent for him, protested, burst into tears, and vowed that she would get her revenge. Knox replied:

Without (sc. outside) the preaching place, Madam, I think few have occasion to be offended at me; but there, Madam, I am not master of myself, but maun (sc. must) obey him who commands me to speak plain, and to flatter no flesh upon the face of the earth.

Knox died in 1572, and was buried with national mourning in the churchyard behind St. Giles’, Edinburgh. The Regent (the Earl of Morton) said at his grave, “Here lies one who never feared the face of man.”

This is the inevitable effect of embracing the call upon us – a confidence that braces us, that steels us, even in the face of the most fiery opposition. For we know who sends us.

II. IN WHAT WE HEAR

God has sent us. And He has spoken in His Word. And we must bow before this Word – letting it steel us as we go. And letting it confront us as we hear. Here we shift from Amos’ response to Amaziah’s rejection to Amaziah’s response to Amos’ message. Here we shift from one who serves as an example to one who serves as a warning.

A) Not by Rejecting

We see a man who, though serving as a priest in the northern nation of Israel – ostensibly serving the God of Israel – rejects the prophetic word. Amos had spoken against Bethel more than once ([READ Amos 3:13-14; 4:4; 5:4-7](#)). Now Amaziah is the chief priest. Implicating Bethel is implicating him. In addition, his was an appointment made by the king. His was thus a loyalty to the king and a vested interest in his reign.

1. Shaped his assumptions

All of this would have worked together to shape the assumptions Amaziah would have had regarding this upstart from the south. Amaziah was accustomed to religion, politics, and privilege intermeshed together. And he would have seen Amos through that lens.

2. Led to his threats

All of this would have led to the threats he makes as well. For Amaziah feels threatened himself, cornered and snapping like some rabid, untamed animal.

All of this working together to cause Amaziah’s rejection of the prophetic word.

B) But by Accepting

Rejecting it when he should have been accepting it.

1. Recognizing who was speaking

He should have recognized who this was who was speaking – not just Amos, this shepherd from Tekoa but the LORD through him. Amos was the LORD’s ambassador.

2. Yielding to the message

Amaziah should have recognized who it was that was speaking and then yielded to the message. For Amos bore the LORD’s message. And the only appropriate response then from Amaziah was not to silence that message but to join in spreading it.

But he didn't. And given his position and influence (which he so desperately wanted to cling to), he would be judged all the more severely (**READ Amos 7:16-17**). Amaziah rejected the Word of the LORD. And the LORD of the Word rejected him.

Application:

The first part of what we looked at serves as an encouragement. But this second part serves as a warning – a warning to us all. For we make Amaziah's mistake any number of times – holding the Word at arm's length, subjecting it to our own criteria and leaving it to ourselves to approve. And we need to be aware of how vulnerable we are here. Israel's history bears this out. So too do the early years of the church – the chastening by the apostles and the struggles of their congregations. The fact is that there are some things we would rather not hear. There are some things that are painful to hear. People do strange things when they're in pain. It exposes them. It exposes us.

Illustration:

It is as commonplace as when the hammer slips off the nail and onto our thumb. What comes out of our mouths? Words of celebration and joy? No, frustration and cursing. But what comes out of the mouth was in the heart all along. The pain simply exposed it. It's much the same here. The Word painfully exposes things within us.

We need to be prepared and forewarned of what our own response may be. Some of this comes about because some teaching is difficult to understand and demands our wrestling. But some is just difficult to accept and demands our repentance.

Here too we simply have to say that this is the Word of God and we can do no other – not rejecting it but receiving it. There may be times when others will say the right thing to us. And we (though we should be listening) will then hate them for it. And, like Amaziah, we may find ourselves in some way suffering for it as well.

CONCLUSION:

But this is the Word of God. Not simply the word of man but the Word of God. And as such we must bow before it, not stubbornly resisting it but yielding the whole of our lives to it. We noted this was reflected in the Reformers. Let me give you another example – Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms. It was 1521 and Luther was demanded by church authorities to recant his beliefs. Before the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, princes, hundreds of clerics, and politicians, Luther boldly declared (**READ quote**):

Unless I am convinced by Scripture, and plain reason, I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other...My conscience is captive to the Word of God; I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen.

According to some accounts, Luther also added these words (**READ quote**): “*Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise.*” Nor can we. Nor can we.

This is the Word of God. It is the Word of God. And before it we must yield – yielding in what we proclaim, yielding in what we embrace. Let that encourage you and give steel to your bones. But let that warn you as well. For we cannot do otherwise.

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