

AMOS: GOD'S URGENT CALL TO REPENT
X: The Limit Of God's Forbearance With Israel
(Amos 7:1-17)

I. Introduction

- A. When God needed a messenger to the Kingdom of Israel as it was at the height of its rebellion against Him, the Lord sent Amos, a layman from Judah, to go north to Israel to voice severe judgment against that nation.
- B. Though God was warning Israel through Amos to repent, His patience had a limit because Israel's sin needed to be punished. Amos 7:1-17 teaches the limit of God's patience, so we view it for insight and application:

II. The Limit Of God's Forbearance With Israel, Amos 7:1-17.

- A. To display His forbearance with Israel, God gave the prophet Amos two visions about great destructions God could bring upon Israel only to let Amos plead successfully with the Lord not to perform them, Amos 7:1-6:
 - 1. First, God revealed His forbearance with Israel by way of a vision of destroying locusts, Amos 7:1-3:
 - a. Amos saw God prepare swarms of locusts at the most vulnerable time of the year when the locusts would produce the greatest threat to Israel's survival, **Bible Know. Com., O. T.**, p. 1444. The locusts were being released after the king's share had been harvested and the second crop for the people was growing, Amos 7:1. This second crop was the last one before the summer's dryness, so if it were lost to locusts, the "people would have nothing to eat until the next harvest," creating a famine, *Ibid.*
 - b. When Amos saw the locusts strip the land, anticipating the people would starve were this vision to become a reality, he begged God to forgive Israel's sins, for she would never survive such a punishment, Amos 7:2.
 - c. God mercifully relented, promising that a swarm of locusts would not destroy Israel, Amos 7:3.
 - 2. Second, God revealed His forbearance with Israel by way of a vision of a destroying fire, Amos 7:4-6:
 - a. The Lord showed a judgment by fire, intensifying "the blazing summer heat till all grasslands and trees became tinder dry" and "fires broke out and spread in every direction," Amos 7:4; *Ibid.*, p. 1445.
 - b. Amos begged God to relent of this vision's judgement, for Israel would never survive it, Amos 7:5.
 - c. God mercifully relented of this punishment, demonstrating His forbearance with Israel, Amos 7:6.
- B. However, in a third vision, that of a plumbline, God gave no room for Amos to intercede, but He determined to punish Israel with an "unalterable" punishment for her rebellious sins of idolatry, Amos 7:7-9; *Ibid.*:
 - 1. In the third vision, Amos saw the Lord standing beside a wall "with a plumb line in His hand," Amos 7:7 NIV. "A plumb line was a cord with a lead weight" used not only to build walls straightly upright, but "to test existing walls to see whether they had settled and tilted, needing to be torn down," *Ibid.*
 - 2. The Lord was setting a plumb line, likely the Law and its requirements, among His people in Israel, for though the nation had been built "true to plumb," it was "now out of line and needed to be torn down" due to her waywardness from the standards of the Mosaic Law, *Ibid.*, Amos 7:8.
 - 3. God added that Israel's idolatrous places of worship would be torn down, and God would cause the house of Jeroboam II who promoted and practiced this idolatrous worship to be slain, Amos 7:9.
 - 4. The Lord did not let Amos beg for mercy with this punishment, for God had determined to perform it!
- C. To illustrate how valid was God's decision to punish Israel for her idolatry, a conversation that then occurred between Amos and the king's royal chaplain, Amaziah was included in the text in Amos 7:10-17; *Ibid.*:
 - 1. Hearing Amos' pronouncement of the vision of the plumb line, Amaziah told king Jeroboam II that Amos was raising a conspiracy against him and the nation of Israel, Amos 7:10-11; *Ibid.*, p. 1446.
 - 2. Amaziah then told Amos to go back home to Judah, to do his prophesying there, not at Bethel, the sanctuary established by Jeroboam I, for that was the temple of the Northern Kingdom, Amos 7:12-13.
 - 3. Amos replied that he was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, but a shepherd and caretaker of sycamore-fig trees whom the Lord had sent north from Judah to prophesy in Israel, Amos 7:14-15 NIV. Thus, Amos predicted that Amaziah's rebellion against the Lord in rejecting the message of the plumb line would result in Amaziah's wife becoming a prostitute to earn a living, his children being slain, his land being divided up and that he would die as a captive in a pagan land while Israel went into exile, Amos 7:16-17.
 - 4. Amos himself thus saw how God's judgment **had** to fall on Amaziah, one example of Israel's rebellion!

Lesson: *Though God was forbearing with Israel, her rebellious idolatry left Him no choice but to punish her.*

Application: *(1) May we repent as needed to avoid God's eventual sure punishment, for there is a limit to His patience. (2) If God lets us be clearly wronged by another party, He is showing us His need to punish that party.*