

Danger of Defiance

by Thaddeus Barnum

The sermon warns against the dangers of defiance towards God while emphasizing the importance of seeking true vertical alignment through grace and the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 32:24

Scripture: Amos 2:12, Amos 5:4, Amos 5:10, Amos 5:12, Amos 5:24

Topics: "Danger"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the message of Amos, particularly in chapter 5 and verse 24. He emphasizes the importance of hating evil, loving good, and establishing justice in society. The preacher highlights the increasing intensity of Amos' message as he addresses the defiance and disobedience of the people. He also mentions the people's worship of golden calves, which they mixed with the redemptive narrative of the Old Testament.

Transcript

Heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise today for the gift of your Son, Jesus our Lord. And we pray that you would, by your Holy Spirit, bring alive your Word to us. Feed us, O Lord.

Search us, O Lord. And do in us what only you can do. To the honor and the glory of your Holy Name we pray.

Amen. I bid you good morning again. If you've got Bibles, I would love it if you would turn to Amos, the prophet.

You're going to find him in the Old Testament. You're going to find him in the last part of the Old Testament where there are 12 minor prophets. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, he's in there.

You'll find him. Might read the whole sermon, but you'll find him. You know, a thing I want to call your attention to this morning is that as long as we do our ministries and as long as we do our preaching, sometimes it can all be summed up in just a few words, even though we've preached for a generation.

But in Amos' case, it all comes down to literally a single image. And it is a stunning image indeed that you find in Amos in chapter 7, where it says the Lord, he sees the Lord standing beside a wall that's been built with a plumb line. He sees the Lord standing with a plumb line in his hand.

Already I'm just simply captivated, mainly because again we see not just a vision of the Lord standing, it says he sees the Lord standing. Oh, if we could take time to see the person of Jesus in his appearances in the Old Testament and to hear his words every time he appears. And this is it to Amos.

Twice Amos says he sees the Lord, once by the altar, but here he sees the Lord standing with a plumb line in his hand. Now Amos is preaching 750 years prior to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And back in that day, they used a plumb line to build.

It's something contractors use. In 2018, it is still what contractors use. Nothing has changed.

It is a principle of a string, a plumb bob, and the power of gravity that teaches us what true vertical is. And so if you've got true vertical here on this wall, you're going to have true vertical as you go over and do it again. But if you're off here, you're off everywhere.

And so this little device that's used then in ancient times that is used now, yeah, to determine true vertical, the Lord has got it in his hand. Now I would have no problem with this sermon or with anything about what Amos is going to say as long as we stay with the conversation about building. But look what the Lord says in Amos chapter 7 and verse 8. He says, Behold, I am setting the plumb line in the midst of my people Israel.

What does that mean? Well, it means this, is that we just became the building. An external test applied to us. We became the building.

He's the builder applying the test of true vertical. Are you true vertical today? Now this is the heartache behind this because I think you already know the answer. If the plumb test, the plumb line test came to you today, how would you be? Are we indeed true? Are we indeed vertical? I asked a contractor in our congregation.

I won't point him out. But I said, Man, you've been doing this a long time. Surely by now you can just see it with your own eyes.

You can just see if something's straight vertical. Answer no. Because you could be off just a little.

And so here comes the Lord to test us, to test His people with an external test, the plumb line. And here it is. And I beg you to hear it the way it is.

There's nothing wrong with this test. If your heart is after the Lord, if your heart is tender to the Lord, then let this test happen. Let me say it the way Psalm 139 says it, the way King David said it at the end of Psalm 139.

Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me, test me, and my anxious thoughts. See if there be any offensive or hurtful way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Oh, let the plumb line come. Let the plumb line come. Lord, test me.

Lord, search me. You know me. You know my anxious thoughts.

You can build me true. You can build me vertical true. For unless the Lord build the house, they who labor, labor in vain.

It is tough to be Amos as he goes into this conversation. 100%. Again, 750 years prior to the coming of Jesus.

And what you've got in that day is a northern kingdom and a southern kingdom. To the south, which you have got, are the kings of David. You've got Jerusalem.

You've got the tribe of Judah. You've got the faithful kings, oftentimes, and then kings that were not faithful. But up to the northern kingdom, for 150 years, there had been division.

And what they decided to do 150 years plus back is that they decided to sort of mix things together. So they took from the Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the deliverance. They took the narrative, the redemptive narrative, out of the Old Testament.

But they also placed in it two golden calves. And they began to repeat the same story that happened in Exodus when they faced the that moment when Moses went up the mountain and they erected the gods, the gods of Egypt. They put forward a golden calf.

And there in the midst, they began to worship it. Moses and Joshua up the mountain, and they down the mountain offering sacrifices to the golden calf in front of the altar. Everything so mixed.

And then they began to play. They rise up. They begin to play the music.

They begin to sing and dance and eat and drink. And the way it says it in Exodus 32, they just break out into a party. Just that exotic living, gratifying the pleasures of the flesh, until down comes Moses.

And this is the story of where Jeroboam is sent in that culture of his time. They've brought back the golden calves, set one in Bethel, set one in Dan, and they worship them. And here's the problem.

When you have got this idolatry at the center of the people, it became wed to affluence. Everything was prospering. Everything was expanding.

The northern kingdom was in a political strength in those times. And so what you do is you immediately equate the blessing that's coming with the gods that we're serving. So the gods that we're serving are clearly blessing us.

Let the party roll. Look at it. We've got money.

We've got wealth. We've got everything. Always this leads to immorality, open and free sex, absolutely.

Always this leads to injustice, social injustice. And that, as you read through Amos, is a constant sense of them looking at the poor and trampling them down, the afflicted and the needy, levying high taxes against them, making sure that when they were in the marketplace, they paid more and got less. When they came to the law courts, they were denied legal representation and then sold into slavery.

Can you hear the thunder inside of Amos? When you're having a party, here's a clue. Don't invite a prophet. Who wants a prophet to hang around you? Listen to the thunder of his words in Amos chapter 4. He says, hear this word, you cows of Bashan.

I love that. Who are on the mountains of Samaria. You oppress the poor.

You crush the needy. You say to your husbands, bring that we may drink. When I watch the story of Amos unfold and see the culture full of idolatry, full of affluence, a nation that's prospering, when I see the immorality everywhere, the injustice between the rich and the poor, I wonder, suddenly, I wake up as if in a dream.

Am I in Amos' time or if I, and maybe just possibly, am I in my time? Because it looks similar to me. It looks like we're living in a culture that is very much the same. And so we've got this question.

We've got this question that undergirds every time the plumb line comes down. Is our heart tender before the Lord, able to search and ask him to do his work, or is our heart defiant against him? Defiant in a way that resists, that pushes him back. Is our heart tender to receive what he wants to do, or is our heart defiant inside? And that's the story behind Amos.

Every sound he made, every time he rose up, every time his voice became clear, they said, you shall not prophesy. You've got that in Amos and chapter 2 and verse 12, you shall not prophesy. Again, in Amos chapter 5 and verse 10, they hate him who reproves and rebukes in the gate.

They abhor him who speaks the truth. And again in 7, never again, Amos, prophesy at Bethel. Do not prophesy against Israel.

Do not preach against the house of Isaac. That's the defiance inside. And so what you've got in the book of Amos are series of sermons that have been put together over his lifetime of where the Spirit of God rose up inside of him, the image of the Lord holding the plumb line.

And there are, in a sense, gradations in his preaching. There are the tender moments when the Lord is calling them to come back. You've got it, for example, in chapter 5 and verse 4 and following.

Seek me and live. Do not seek Bethel where the golden calves are. Seek me and live.

Again, verse 12, I know how many are your transgressions. I know how great are your sins. You afflict the righteous.

You take a bribe. You turn aside the needy in the gate. Seek good and not evil that you may live.

And so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you. Hate evil and love good. Establish justice in the gate.

And so you've got the famous passage of Amos, especially in chapter 5 and verse 24, let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. He's calling the people of his day who have got a tender heart to come back to the Lord. Come back to the Lord.

But then his voice gets stronger. And what you find, you know this, by the way, as parents, right? When your child messes up, you speak to them. Your child messes up again, you get louder.

When there is a defiance inside the child, the sound of the lion roars, does it not? And so we have an increase, for example, in chapter 4, where you've got, in a sense, five plagues versus six and following, where it says that the Lord is going to... He sends famine, and yet they did not return. He sends drought, and yet they did not return to Him. He sends locusts, and they did not return to Him.

He sends pestilence, and they do not return to Him. He overthrows some of their cities, and still they do not return to Him. And so Amos, and this is the heart behind Amos, he is indeed the lion behind the

passages of Old Testament.

You've got it right in the beginning, the Lord roars from Zion. Again, in chapter 3, the Lord God does nothing without revealing His secret to the prophets. The lion has roared, who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken, who can but prophesy? And what you think inside is, they'll hear it this time.

The lion's going to roar, who cannot fear? And yet Amos roared, and they did not fear. Why? Because defiance had come upon them. A defiance that kicked him out, and yet everything.

Amos said to his generation, within a generation, it came about. He said, if you do not turn, a nation will come against you. A nation will send you into exile.

They will come with a sword, they will kill your king, and you will be gone from this land. And in 722 BC, before Christ, Assyria came down upon the nation of Israel, and everything Amos said came into being. And why is it? Because defiance reigned.

When I was a young priest, a young pastor, I was in my first church plant up in Pittsburgh, and I had a young man at the age of 19, a grandson, come to my office. He was just simply in tears. He said, pastor, you've got to come with me.

He said, my grandfather is dying, and there's nothing we can do to rescue him. I've gone to him. My sister's gone to him.

My mother has gone to him. We've all gone. We've gone around.

We have given him the gospel. We want him to know Jesus. We don't want him to die without knowing Jesus in his life, and he's not hearing.

Would you come? Would you come be with me? Would you speak to him? So I did. We got in the car, and we went to grandpa. And I'll never forget it.

As long as I live, I will never forget those eyes. I went right to his face, and I begged him for the sake of his own family's love for him. I begged him for the Lord's kindness to him to turn his heart to Jesus.

And though he had been so hardened and so cold for so many years, how many of you believe that even now grace can come? Grace can still come. And we begged for grace to still come, but he spat in my face and said, take my body, turn it to ash, and throw it on the dump heap of life. Defiance to the bitter end.

Defiance is a terrifying condition of the soul, and it's for this reason the Lord in every single generation, since the day we were sent out from Eden, he has come in every generation and held true vertical to all of us. The way Hebrews says it, God, after he spoke long ago to the fathers and the prophets, in many portions, in many ways, down through the generations, the Lord speaking to his people, return to me, I will return to you, holding out in front of us what is true vertical. This is not a hard sermon to preach.

For Noah in his day, if there are tender hearts here, if you want to find true vertical, get inside the ark. It's about to rain. It's not difficult, this.

For Moses, he would set the law and give them the statutes and the commandments, and he would put the blessing of following the Lord. For all those who have a tender heart, he would put them on Mount Gerizim, in which there is blessing. But over on Mount Ebal, he showed that if you do not follow the Lord, if

you live in defiance, there's only curse that's promised you.

And so I set before you life and good and death and evil. Choose life. Always that same principle.

I will circumcise your heart. This is the same sermon that Elijah preached on Mount Carmel, is it not? He came to a day that everybody was so mixed. What did he do? He said a sacrifice for him, a sacrifice for the prophets of Baal.

Let's decide. If you're going to follow Baal, then follow him. If you're going to follow the Lord, follow him.

Defiance or tenderness, which is it? It's the same thing in every generation, which is why I say to you that the glory of the gospel comes when we start hearing the rumblings of John the Baptist. Now John the Baptist saw the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. It was part of his gospel message.

But John saw what Amos saw. He saw that now Messiah is going to come. And when Messiah comes, he is going to stand with a plumb line.

The axe is already laid to the root of the trees. Those who do good, those who do not. The winnowing fork is in his hand.

Those that are the wheat will go into eternal life. Those who are the chaff will go into eternal fire. John, he saw the judgment day to come.

And for those with a tender heart, they came, they confessed, they repented, they went down into the waters, and they waited upon Jesus who would come to rescue. But for those who were defiant, John was the sound of the roar of a lion, was he not? Who told you to flee from the wrath of God to come? And so John waited, fully expecting that when Jesus arrived, he's going to come as a judge, to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will have no end.

He's going to come with a plumb line in his hand and going to administer to us and to all generations. He will sit on his glorious throne. The sheep will be to side and the goats to the side.

He's coming in power. He's coming with fire. And Jesus arrived.

And this is the surprise of the gospel. This is the stunning surprise of the gospel. He didn't first come to administer the test to us.

He came to take the test himself. I don't know how else to say it. You say to me, but that's odd.

He who says, and is the truth, I am the way, the truth, and the life, he who is faithful and true, takes the test of truth, will he not be found to be true? Or say it another way, he who is the definition of plumb, if he takes the test of the plumb line, will he not be found to be plumb? Answer, yes. But listen to me carefully, really, really carefully. He failed the test.

You say, but how did he fail the test? He failed the test because he took it after his father laid upon him the iniquity of us all. That's Isaiah 53. The Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all.

And now he who knew no sin became sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him. He who knew no sin became sin that you and I may be plumb, may be right, may be true vertical. And that's the glory of the cross.

Of all the places in the world today, of all the places in the earth, there is no place like the cross. It is the only place that is true vertical. Because by it we come, and by it we're rescued, by it we're saved.

For Jesus takes to himself the judgment that was due us. Lord, have mercy. If he applied the test to us, we would have failed.

For we all know the passage, do we not? All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We would have failed unless he took our failure, unless he took our shame to himself and went to the cross of Calvary and there died our death so that he might rise and breathe for as many as receive him, breathe the resurrected life inside of us that we might be born again in Christ, alive in him. So it's no longer me trying to measure up to a standard I can't measure up to.

Oh man, there's too much preaching like that today. Yeah? You go to church and you find out I'm not measuring up, I'm not being good enough, I'm not a good enough Christian, I'm not doing what I should do. It's like you always feel the plumb line and the plumb police come out and say it's you, isn't it? You're not so plumb.

Oh, thanks be to God. That's not the gospel of Jesus. No, no, it's the entire confession.

That's true. But praise be the Lord. He's taken my sin upon him.

He's rescued me. That blood has cleansed me. And now I'm a new person because he's breathed new life in me.

And now my foundation is Jesus Christ. On Christ the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand.

All other ground is sinking sand. He breathes his Holy Spirit into us. He who is called the Spirit of truth, who will guide us into truth.

That's John 16, 13. He who is the Spirit of truth, who will guide us into truth. Let me say it another way.

He who is the plumb, who will guide us to be plumb. And all we have to do then is surrender to the working of the Holy Spirit who knows how to make us, who are off center all the time, how to make us true vertical. For without the Spirit of God applying the wonders of the salvation found in Jesus Christ and the glory and the wonder of the Father upon us, how can we ever be plumb? We cannot.

And so the Spirit of God comes to speak to us. He speaks to us by lighting upon the Word of God to us so we are guided into truth. He lights upon the people of God for none of us walk alone.

Did you hear that? Did I lose you? None of us walk alone. We need the counsel of the body of Christ, the Spirit of God speaking as we pray together, as we listen together. The Word of God, the people of God.

But inside also the Spirit of God brings testimony inside, the inner witness of the Spirit. Does He not? Can I prove it to you for a moment? How many of you in this church have ever done something wrong? Six, seven, eight? Mostly on that side where my wife is sitting which is really interesting. That inner nudge of the Holy Spirit is a gift to us.

Every time we sin, every time we go wrong, every time we go off plumb, and the nudge of the Holy Spirit always testing us. Friend, is your heart tender today? Or can you feel yourself resisting? Doing it your way? Going your own way? Can you feel the defiance inside of you when He speaks and says, don't go

this way, don't do this thing? And inside can you feel? I can. I can feel it when He's got that nudge to do something and I don't want to.

And I can feel inside the resistance. It's called defiance. Do you have it inside you? Can you feel it inside you? You see, this is what the Lord wants us to do.

I'm never scared of the person who sins. I'm scared of the heart that's defiant and continues in that sin. That's what I'm scared about.

Right there. Because the tender heart knows the conviction of the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God comes and does this and we know it and can feel it.

And we can feel the tears of actually doing what we ought not to do. Lord, help me. Lord, heal me.

Lord, make me true. Lord, make me plumb. But inside, there's that thing inside still that pushes to defiance.

My friends, the world out there today, this is the wonder of it. I don't know why it is, but Jesus said He was going to clothe us with the power of the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses. And we go out into this world which is crashing into the times of Amos.

Crashing into immorality and injustice just like Amos was in his day. So our day is becoming the same. And now, like never before, we need a church that does not shrink back but that stands up.

Strong in the Lord. Do you not agree with me? But you see, the point behind it is we're not sent out as plumb police. We're not sent out as plumb police.

We're right. You're wrong. You're messed up.

We're not. We win. You lose.

Come to Jesus. No, no, it's the opposite. I know exactly what it's like not to be plumb.

This is where we love and know the culture that's in there. There are tender hearts still in this world today. Defiance is growing, but there are still tender hearts.

How do I know that? I know that because Jesus hasn't returned yet. When he does, the defiance will be complete. But as long as it's called today, we are sent out not to be the plumb police but to testify of the wonder, the mercy, the grace of what Jesus did for us on Calvary's Hill.

Come, take them to Jesus. Take them to where there is true vertical because they're seeking in every direction what is true because their parties are not satisfying. Their self-medication is not satisfying.

All the sex and the money and the power, it's not satisfying, and some people know it. And we are to be the light in this world, pointing to the plumb line himself, the cross of Jesus. Ours is not to simply say, look, he's coming to judge the living and the dead.

Our first message is to point them to the cross where that judgment has already taken place and that we can be set free and made new. So that when he does come in glory to judge the living and the dead, guess what? We shall be found plumb because he has made us a people that are true and straight. He has done something in us to make us righteous when we couldn't do it ourselves.

And so we sing the song, when he shall come with trumpet sound. Oh, may I then in him be found, dressed in his righteousness alone. Not mine, dressed in his righteousness alone.

And here's the miracle word. Faultless to stand before the throne. Oh, how is it possible I could be found faultless unless it was the saving mercy and grace of Jesus.

Friends, I'm going to tell you a basic truth. Defiance never ends well. We still are in control.

We're still resisting. We think we're absolutely right and we keep on with the defiance and we keep on with the defiance and we do not know that our heart is growing colder, that our heart is growing hard. We don't know it.

And people surround us and they tell us, please don't go this way. Don't do this thing. And yet we're on a trajectory that we cannot stop because there's a day when we can choose defiance and there's a day when defiance chooses us.

You and I, in the last 20 years, we have seen denominations fall because of defiance. You and I have seen churches ripped apart and broken apart because of defiance. We have seen great ministers of the gospel broken down, ripped apart because of defiance.

We've seen churches and ministries crash and burn because this is what the devil wants, to give defiance into our soul. You've seen him rip marriages apart. You see him rip the soul apart.

And my friends, I just simply tell you, oh, please say, Jesus, give me a tender heart today. Lord Jesus, Psalm 139, and David said, oh, Lord Jesus, search me, know my heart. Seek me, test me, try me, and know my anxious thoughts.

Would you see if there's any hurtful, offensive way in me? Would you guide me and lead me in the way everlasting? So the Lord wants to do with you and me and with this church and with our heart, with our homes, with our families. Do not let defiance rule. The spirit of God is upon you, convicting you, surrender to him.

Repent of your defiance. Say, oh, Jesus, cleanse me, wash me, help me, guide me, touch me, move me, give me a tender heart. Is that you? I pray it's you.

And I beg of you, wherever there is defiance, defiance inside of you, say no to it now. Receive the grace of Jesus, the blood of Jesus to forgive, and let him set you free. In Jesus' name.

Let us stand together.

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