



CAPITOL COMMISSION

So Help Me God (Amos 9)

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Capitol Commission state directors are pastors/missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. These Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. The love and grace of God compels us to proclaim the truth of the Gospel with a heartfelt compassion for the Capitol community, to faithfully teach and apply the Word of God, and it is our desire to build meaningful relationships that bear fruit for an eternity to come.

With the Bible as our foundation and authority, the mission of Capitol Commission is obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) within the capitol communities of the world. We are not a lobbying group attempting to garner votes or reform society. Our mandate is to see the hearts and lives of elected officials transformed with the Word of God. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through the verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture. In the Bible, we see God's great love for the world, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you.

The church is instructed to submit and to honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and as a matter of first importance, to pray for their salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). The desire of Capitol Commission is to witness God transform the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four major areas of making disciples: (1) *evangelize* those who have not experienced saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to mature in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.

Introduction

The prophecy of Amos is concluded with a fifth and final climactic vision (9:1-10), which is followed by an epilogue that promises restoration for a faithful remnant (9:11-15). Amos was a herdsman and a keeper of sycamore trees in the country town of Tekoa. The only reason that he became a preacher was divine compulsion. Amos declared, "A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken! Who can but prophesy?" (3:8). In response to the priest of Bethel (Amaziah), Amos replied, "I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet; for I am a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs. 'But the LORD took me from following the flock and the LORD said

to me, 'Go prophesy to My people Israel'" (7:14-15). In obedience to God's calling, Amos departed from his pastoral setting in the south and traveled to the Northern Kingdom to proclaim the message that God entrusted to him.

God sent Amos to preach his message to Israel, and until the work was accomplished, he was bound to that duty and could not refuse the divine compulsion. Amos was similar to Martin Luther in the days of the Reformation in Germany.¹ Luther received threats and persuasion to desist from his teaching. Having been compelled to teach, Luther said, "Here I stand; I can do no other; so help me God." It is the test of a true and faithful messenger of God to persevere in obedience to the Lord, even among threats and persuasion to do otherwise.

GOD'S DIVINE COMMANDS ARE ALWAYS MET WITH GOD'S DIVINE PROVISIONS.

The words of Amos communicate an important point. Amos stated several times in his prophecy that the words he spoke were the very words of God who chose him to proclaim the message. You and I will not be inspired by God (as Amos was); however, through diligent and prayerful preparation, we need to be certain that our actions and thoughts are in obedience to the revealed and living Word of God, and not simply our own perspectives on the issues of the day or whatever we may experience in life. The truth of this statement is especially true with regard to those that God installs providentially as leaders (cf. Prov 8:15; Dan 2:21; 4:17; John 19:11; Rom 13:1).

At his first inauguration on 30 April 1789, our nation's first President, George Washington, placed his right hand upon the Holy Bible. Following his acceptance of the oath of office, he added, "So help me God." In his inaugural address, Washington confessed his fervent prayers to God, "who presides in the Councils of Nations, and whose providential aids can supply every human defect, [and] his benediction [consecrates] the liberties and happiness of the People of the United States. . . ." It is wise for you and I to acknowledge the providence of God, and therefore, to obey His will, to be grateful for His provisions, and to seek His blessing with humility.

It is crucial to understand that God's divine commands are always met with God's divine provisions. God's provision is declared in 1

Timothy 2:4 (“who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”). God’s desire is not only salvation, but also “knowledge of the truth.” According to Psalm 19, God has provided general revelation in creation and special revelation through His inspired Word (cf. Ps 138:2; John 14:6). “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Ps 46:1). It is not an understatement to say that our lives depend upon Him (Amos 5:4, 6).

GOD IS HOLY AND LOVING

(9:1-10) Amos saw the Lord “standing beside the altar” (9:1). The vision was certainly unexpected because the presence of God was always within the inner sanctum of the Temple, the Holy of Holies, and His presence was veiled behind thick curtains where only the high priest could enter yearly on the Day of Atonement. Despite warning Israel with regard to judgment for its social and religious sins, the people would not repent. God was standing beside the altar not to bless or receive worship, but to destroy the Temple and to set His eyes against the people “for evil and not for good” (9:4; cf. 7:10). The sovereignty of God to bless or curse nations is communicated clearly, and is never an accident of history.

God longed to meet His people in grace, but the people would not change their actions and turn to God for forgiveness. God is patient, but His leniency toward the guilty had expired. When any people or nation persistently refuse God’s will, and dismiss His blessings through arrogance, then judgment is inevitable. The reason is that God is both holy and loving. However, his love will not allow what His holiness condemns. We are wise to pray, “so help me God,” but if you or I do not obey His will as revealed in Scripture, and do not gratefully and humbly receive His provisions, we cannot be surprised at His judgment.

GOD LONGED TO MEET HIS PEOPLE IN GRACE. . . . THE REASON IS THAT GOD IS BOTH HOLY AND LOVING. HOWEVER, HIS LOVE WILL NOT ALLOW WHAT HIS HOLINESS CONDEMNS.

God’s Word is readily available in our nation today to nourish us “on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine” (1 Tim 4:6). “But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Tim 1:5). Scripture reminds His people that their minds are renewed through the truth of His Word. Sanctification is the result of systematic study of Scripture and the application of its truths to our lives. If the Word of God is rejected persistently, God may withdraw its availability (Amos 8:11-12). When God withdrew His Word from Israel, the next outcome was spiritual and physical devastation for the people.

The vision of the Lord speaking from the altar reveals that God’s judgment is entirely consistent with His character. God has power to accomplish what He says He will do. The biblical doctrines of creation and providence are not abstract theories. The positive truth of these doctrines is that God’s people may trust their lives to Him, knowing that the Lord will guide them throughout their lives and complete the good work He has begun (Rom 8:28; Phil 1:6). The negative truth of these doctrines is that God is the Creator and Lord of History, who will punish those who disobey and despise His Word.

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GOD IS FAITHFUL TO RESTORE

(9:11-15) The concluding verses of this prophecy are splendid. The contrast to the warning of judgment is consistent with Amos’ emphasis upon the faithfulness of God and the hope that belongs to those who trust in Him (Amos 4:12; 5:14-15, 24; 7:2, 5). The Lord who roars from Zion is emphasized at the beginning and the end of the message (1:2; 9:5-6). The point is that God is faithful to His promises (cf. Isa 11—12; 24; 35; Ezek 40—48; Zeph 3:14-20; Zech 14). The message is consistent with God’s own nature. The God whose words are recorded in Scripture is the Lord of Creation and History.

THE GOD WHOSE WORDS ARE RECORDED IN SCRIPTURE IS THE LORD OF CREATION AND HISTORY.

The Lord has spoken; it is our responsibility and benefit to understand and heed that message. History will not climax into nothingness; rather, it will become the continual relationship of God with His people in the new heaven and new earth (Rev 21—22). The Lord is faithful to complete His purposes in history (Amos 9:11-12) and to restore His people and creation (9:13-15). God is faithful to restore, which will not only affect Israel but also all nations. Hope is always a possibility, but it is for those whose confession is “so help me God,” and then live by God’s grace and for His glory.

¹ It is interesting to note that according to *The Times* (6 March 2008), Pope Benedict XVI is seeking “to rehabilitate Martin Luther, arguing that he did not intend to split Christianity but only to purge the Church of corrupt practices. . . . According to Vatican insiders the Pope will argue that Luther, who was excommunicated and condemned for heresy, was not a heretic.”

² As quoted in Frank E. Gizzard Jr., *George Washington: A Biographical Companion* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2002) 272. See also, Luther Hess Waring, *The Political Theories of Martin Luther* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1910) 83.