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MID-ATLANTIC BIBLE SCHOOL - 1987

AMOS - THE HERDSMAN OF TEKOA

Speaker: Bro. John Ullman

Study #2: Can two walk together except they be agreed?

Good morning brethren and sisters.

This morning we're going to have a brief look at one or two of the features of chapter 1, which delineates some of the major sins of the Gentile nations against Israel, and for which Israel's God was going to punish those nations. Now unfortunately at this time, we will not be able to go through this chapter as we would prefer to do, but there is one point in particular that we would like to draw from the various nations, the 6 Gentile nations that are listed here, who were to receive the wrath of Almighty God, because of their treatment of His people.

You'll notice that the terminology occurs there, 'for three transgressions and for four', that type of terminology does occur in scripture. It is used in a way to indicate that there is no determinate number of sins, and the implication if you consider where those types of phrases occur in scripture, you'll find that the implication is that the sins are so numerous that they can't actually be numbered, and so that's why you find that type of language, 'for three transgressions or for four'. But this morning we would like to make a brief comment in regard to Tyrus in verse 9. Verse 9 says, 'Thus saith Yahweh, For three transgressions of Tyrus and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom (that means the captivity of Israel and handed them over to the Edomites) and remembered not the brotherly covenant'. Now we especially want to comment on that this morning, because that was such an abomination in the eyes of Almighty God. Those words really contain a frightening denunciation of the Phoenicians, the Tyrians.

You'll notice that this particular crime is not levelled against any of the other Gentile powers that are listed and condemned in this chapter by Amos. Why then did this special added condemnation come upon the Tyrians? It says that they had failed to remember the brotherly covenant, a phrase that also could be rendered more intimately as the covenant between brothers. That's something that's very, very important in divine principles, so far as God's standards are concerned in relation to human behaviour. You may recall that a brotherly covenant had earlier been made between David and Solomon and the Tyrians; you may recall that Hiram had established a very warm and a very close relationship with David, especially in relation to the work for the preparation for the building of the temple. Hiram had sent timber and artists and workmen and so

forth to David at that particular time. Now in addition to this crime, it is compounded by the fact that the action of the Tyrians was really quite unprovoked because for all their weakness and failures, no Jewish king had made war against either the Phoenicians or their capital city. So in other words, the Israelites had respect to the covenant (at least that particular one anyway), but the Phoenicians or the Tyrians had not.

Now we mention this specifically this morning because there is a powerful lesson for everyone of us in regard to God's condemnation of the men of Tyre for this particular reason. We learn that the lesson here is that God thinks very, very revoltingly of covenant

breakers! The making of a covenant as far as Almighty God is concerned is sacred, and to Yahweh it represents an unequivocal commitment, so therefore, a covenant breaker is one who goes back on his word. Now it is not a divine characteristic to do that! it is not a characteristic of God to break covenants, and so therefore, God deplores such a failure on the part of men. Yahweh always remembers His covenants and will always remain faithful to them!

You might recall His covenant with the fathers of Israel has been described in Genesis 17 verse 7 as an everlasting covenant. We're told also for example, in Psalm 111 verse 5 that He will ever be mindful of His covenant, so therefore, the point for us is, should we not be similarly minded, since we like the Israelites of old and the ancient Phoenicians, are responsible to the covenant that we have made? the only difference being is that our covenant relationship is a far greater standing in the eyes of God, than that made been the Phoenicians or the Tyrians and the people of Israel, because our covenant is with no less a one than Yahweh Himself? So how carefully we should ponder the responsibilities and

obligations that our covenant places upon us in regard to our God. We cannot afford to treat lightly our covenant relationship; we cannot be indifferent to the responsibilities that our covenant relationship with our God places upon us. As did the men of Tyre in relation to the people of Israel. We must remember that God will keep covenant with us, faithfully, totally, absolutely, with total fidelity in every sense, and He expects us to do the same! We have, therefore, that remarkable lesson in so far as the Tyrians were concerned.

Now when we come into chapter 2, know doubt we would imagine the people of Israel listening to these prophecies of the first chapter from the lips of Amos. Being very absorbed in what they had heard, listening perhaps with a great deal of self satisfaction, and possibly even an element of grim pleasure, listening to the words that had been recorded concerning the judgments that were to come upon the Gentile nations, mentioned here by the prophet, but what horror and with what utter disbelief would they now observe that the prophet turns his full attention upon Judah and then upon Israel. Not because of atrocities that they had committed against other nations as was the case with the Gentiles, but because of the vices practiced, because of the ungodly conduct, and the oppression conducted within their own borders among their own people.

And so in verses 4 and 5, we have an account of the judgment that was to come upon Judah. And isn't it rather dramatic that we find God's judgments to come, listed very clearly upon 6 Gentile nations, one after the other. Mighty nations in their day, nations that had not treated Israel as kindly as they might have; and then suddenly, dramatically the prophet, almost without a change of voice, without a change of scene, now turns his attention upon the judgment that were to come upon Judah. So in verses 4 and 5 of chapter 2, it is the southern kingdom of Judah which is especially singled out for mention, why should that be so? Just look what we read in verse 4, 'Thus saith Yahweh, For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of Yahweh, and have not kept His commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked'.

That was the beginning of God's verdict against the people of Judah. We notice the first expression there in verse 4, 'because they have despised the law of God', we find the Rotherham and the Jerusalem bible and the RV all render that phrase, 'they have rejected the law of Yahweh'. That's the point, they have rejected the law of their God, and therefore, to accept this alternate rendering, indicates that they had considered the law and then rejected it, because after all, it is well nigh impossible to reject something, about which we know absolutely nothing! We must know something about a thing before we can make the decision to reject it. It's rather interesting too, isn't it? the way in which Christ uses very similar language in Mark 16 verse 16, a verse of scripture that we quote quite a lot, 'he that believes the gospel and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not, shall be condemned' (or shall face judgment). The word rendered 'condemned' there is correctly rendered in the RV as 'he that disbelieves' which is rather different to believing not, because one who disbelieves is one who has the opportunity to believe but refuses to do so, or declines to do so. So therefore, the most devastating aspect of this word is that it can apply both ways; that is, if a man rejects God's law, then God in His turn may well reject them. In fact, in 2 Kings 17 verse 20 you will find this exact word used in the same way, where it says that God would reject the people because of their rejection of Him. And so, b&s, through our covenant relationship with Almighty God, He makes certain demands upon us, and rightly so, after all He is the Creator, we are the work of His hands, He has created us for His glory not our own! We're not here to please ourselves once we become enlightened with the scriptures of truth and the ways of God and the will of God and God's purpose in our lives. Surely the basic principle of the truth is that when we accept baptism, we surrender up our own lives to the will of God, and that is how it should be, so that He can make of our lives something fit for the honour and the glory of His name; and therefore, it is only right that He should have the right and exercise it, to make demands upon His people no matter in what generation they might live. So that if we consider those demands and then reject them, we may well expect that He will reject us; and that is nothing less than we should really expect, merely from the basis of common logic even without that which the scripture teaches us concerning that matter, so therefore, Judah would have manifested such an attitude in many, many ways.

But basically, we find throughout this book of Amos, that when it comes to saying that they had 'rejected the law of their God', it really comes down to a very fundamental manifestation of their rejection; they rejected Him in a very loose and careless attitude toward the principles of divine worship, and therein again, is a most sobering lesson for us all. Divine worship is a very serious matter, divine worship is something to be undertaken only on the terms and conditions established by Almighty God. At the very dawn of history Cain and Abel both found that out, and we know what the scripture says there, it says, 'Unto Abel and his offering, God had respect, but unto Cain and his offering, God had not respect'. The reason being that Abel came and offered to God that which God required; as far as Cain was concerned, he came and offered to God that which he thought God should be pleased with; and so therefore, the principles of divine worship are very, very important, they are to be regarded very, very soberly indeed. The true way to the basic principles of divine worship are to be sought eagerly and humbly and submissively by the people of God in every generation. And of course, we will all appreciate the fact that it presents no great difficulty for sin prone human nature, to fall into a casual, apathetic, even bored attitude toward the worship of Israel's 'God. But what folly that would be! and what folly it was among the kingdom of Judah. We are not to follow the weak and beggarly deficiencies of our human nature, but rather as Peter says, 'to gird up the loins of our minds, and with our intellect sharpened by a clear understanding of the Word, to give earnest heed to thinking and walking in a manner that will be pleasing to God. And so Judah is challenged on this particular point because they have rejected the law of Yahweh.

Then the prophet adds this phrase, 'and have not kept His commandments', so therefore, Judah like Israel in the north, were reminded that they had a God-given obligation to keep God's commandments, because they had been chosen from among the nations of the earth to be God's light bearers, that's made very clear in chapter 3 and verse 2, what an incredible statement there is there! 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities'. If their privileges were great, if their calling was high, then their responsibilities and their obligations to their God were equal, to the blessings that He had presented to them. So they had been called to be God's light bearers among the nations! And what of ourselves? In these times, we carry no lesser responsibility than these people to whom Amos wrote so long ago. We have to ask ourselves, 'how do we view the responsibilities that our God has placed upon us?' How do we respond to those responsibilities and obligations? and these are the sole searching questions which a consideration of the book of Amos will cause us to ask ourselves. I find personally in every verse of the book of Amos, it's just not simply a matter of reading, about a people of so long ago, who didn't have the spiritual sensibility to understand their God and the requirements that He asked of them and how that they failed to walk in His ways and to honour Him as they should have done. I can't read the book of Amos like that, because when I read the book of Amos, every verse has a message for me personally. Every failure that I see in the nation of Israel, I see as containing a very powerful lesson for me in my own life personally. I know that I must learn to respond to the wisdom and the love and the mercy that God would extend to me, even to the point of bringing me into His

kingdom and giving me the gift of divine nature, a glory that's beyond human comprehension at this time; He will do that for me, but He expects things from me in return as He expects things from all of those who are called out of the world to become a people for His name.

So here we find that the people of Judah are told that they had even lied, they had not only rejected the law of their God, they had not only failed to keep His commandments, but also the prophet adds there, 'and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked'. The implication is that they lied their way out of keeping God's commandments, and that is the reason for God's confrontation with the people of Judah at this time.

In fact, maybe we should just reiterate a small point that we endeavoured to make yesterday, but perhaps not very, very clearly, and that is, although the basic message of Amos was to the kingdom in the north, the kingdom of Israel with their headquarters in Samaria, and yet here we find, that Judah is also condemned. So it's almost as though God is saying, 'well, although the message of Amos is really concerning the dreadful state of affairs and the spiritual declension from the truth among the northern tribes, yet those in the south are not guiltless either; and so therefore, the message seems to be that every tribe in Israel, every family in Israel, every individual in Israel should examine themselves, in the light of the demands that their God made upon them. And you know, when you come to think of it, it is difficult to imagine a more serious charge being laid at the feet of God's people, than the fact that they would lie their way out of keeping His commandments. Really, what that means is that it can be done in so many different ways, because sin is so deceitful; we can tell ourselves that a certain thing is not really bad or it's not as bad as something else, or it's not as bad as some other thing. It is very easy therefore, to set up a line of thought, a line of philosophy in our minds, which presents a very valid line of argument within our own selves as to why we should not do this, or why we should ignore this aspect of the truth; or why we can afford to do this which is contrary to God's will, because He'll make allowances for it or so forth, whatever it might be. The flesh is deceitful, sin is deceitful, and it will talk us into accepting things that God will not accept. That is why it is necessary in life constantly day by day, in our reading of the Word, our meditation upon the Word, our discussion of the Word with one another, to always have in our minds the fact that God does not deal in mysteries; God sets things forth for us, as we desire to know them as we should know them, and therefore, His Word is revealed to us in that way.

What a tragedy that we have here in this verse before us, the mention of the fact that it is 'after which their fathers had walked' and there, of course, we're being told at the end of verse 4, that the generation to whom Amos wrote acted only as their fathers had done before them. And what a remarkable thing that is, and what a tragic thing it is, and what a lesson there is there too, that the example of the fathers should be to lead the children into the truth! to show them the way of the truth, not only to teach them with a mature understanding but to show them by their own example, that they have a total commitment to Israel's God, that their way of life is a way of life in harmony with the

revealed will of God, and therefore, fathers have that incredible obligation and responsibility; but on the other hand fathers as we find here in Amos can just as easily lead their children away from the truth. So b&s, this reminds us when we look at the aspect of fathers and children as related here at the end of verse 4 of Amos chapter 2. It constantly comes to my mind and I've said again and again, at bible schools throughout the world and in ecclesias throughout the world, that as far as the truth is concerned, we must not only teach our children the truth, we must also teach them to love the truth! and those things are interrelated and interdependent upon each other, if our families are going to be united in a praise to God that is acceptable to Him. We have not only to teach our children the truth, we have to teach them to love the truth; and that is very, very important. So therefore, this had not been done in this particular case and the fathers are condemned now for the iniquitous ways in which the children were walking. The tragedy is, b&s, that these children who are now condemned, this generation of whom Amos wrote, were condemned because of the foolishness of the fathers, so then in verse 5, God says, 'He will send a fire upon Judah'.

And as we look at those words, there's a contrast there, a terrible contrast, one that we would rather not have to read, but it's in the Word of God and therefore, it is there to be read. I want us all to appreciate the dreadfulness of that statement! a fire upon Judah. The thing that I find so dreadful about that statement in the sense of its meaning, is the fact that the name Judah signifies 'praise'; and so in effect God is saying, 'I will send a fire of judgment upon 'praise'! Judah had been called and separated from among the Gentiles like all the other tribes. In their case, to offer praise unto Almighty God, but was Judah offering up praise to Yahweh in acceptable worship? They were in fact, as the prophet says, doing the very opposite; spiritually they were living a lie, and what a tragic state that was! and yet for the judgment that was to come, the people had no one to blame but themselves, and of course, that is always a stark reminder to us, isn't it? So the fire of divine judgment will come upon those who have been called to praise Yahweh, but who have failed to do so or who have rejected His way or who have turned away from His commandments and who refuse to honour Him in the way that He requires of those who would be numbered among His servants. God goes on to say there, that when the fire of judgment does come upon Jerusalem, and of course, it was to come at the hands of the Babylonians, He says, 'it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem'.

That again, is a great tragedy when you think of the play on words of the meaning of that phrase, 'a fire on praise'. Now we read here that, 'it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem', sometimes we hear it said, that the word 'Jerusalem' signifies 'vision of peace'; I have not found that to be correct. I believe the name 'Jerusalem' correctly means 'foundation of peace' or 'habitation of peace'(3389)(Gesenius) and therefore, the city of Jerusalem stands as a type of a very strong firm foundation upon which peace should be built. It also represents in a figure, the temple of the age to come, when it will be a 'habitation of peace'; not peace as the world talks about it, but divine peace. Peace that comes from God, so here we have a situation, in which the words of Amos are, 'the fire of divine judgment shall devour the foundation of peace and the habitation of peace'.

Why would God do that subsequent to the days of Amos? For only one reason, because that place was no longer fit to be defined as the 'foundation of peace' or 'a habitation of peace'. So where would peace be for that city once the Babylonians poured down on it, besieging it and putting its people to the sword, and carrying the rest away into a frightful captivity?

And so when we look at verses 6 to 16 to the end of that second chapter, we find that we are dealing with a section which is dealing with judgment upon Israel, that is, the northern kingdom. You'll find in that section of the prophecy from verse 6 through to the end of the chapter, that the sins of Israel are outlined. They are the sins of injustice, oppression, immorality, debauchery, idolatry, ingratitude, corrupting righteous principles and refusing to hear the Word of God. You know, as we shake our heads in horror, as we list off these dreadful crimes, we should be reminded that the people of God may be found guilty of any of these crimes, in any generation, for the simple reason that all men and women bear the same nature as those condemned here by the prophet Amos. We must bear in mind that such moral and spiritual weaknesses that are found here in this section of this chapter, should certainly not be regarded as being exclusive to the generation to whom Amos wrote, as though we can afford to read through that 2nd chapter and say, 'how awful' 'how dreadful' 'how absolutely shocking', how could they ever do all those things? how could it be necessary for God to find them guilty of such frightful crimes against the truth? What we do need to do, b&s, as the Word of God tells us, is to constantly measure ourselves against that perfect man, the Son of the living God, the Lord Jesus Christ. The only man who ever walked this earth who was a perfect manifestation of the Father's character, the man whom we are called upon to follow, the man whom we are called upon to imitate in His total commitment and His life of total dedication to walking in the ways of His God, and to honouring Him. So let us remember that the sins of Israel set forth here are by no means exclusive to the generation to whom Amos wrote, because all human beings are made of the same stuff, we all have the same nature, we're all subject to the same pressures, not only from without but from our own nature and so therefore, God will provide the way. He will provide the means and above all else He has provided the example in His own Son by which, day by day, we can measure our own lives and struggle only ever upward, trying to attain toward that glorious example of perfection of character in every respect, that we find and we see manifested for us in the character of God's own Son.

Some of the crimes that are listed here are so dreadful and not only don't we have the time, but it's very distressing to have to read what God says about His people, but read it we should, (perhaps later on today when you have a little more time than we have this morning). You might carefully read through Amos chapter 2, it's only 16 verses, because God willing, it will prepare you for some of the things that we hope to consider tomorrow. We should read it, we should know about it, we should face up to what is written here, because these are the things that God finds revolting, because they are in complete contrast and complete opposition to the characteristics that God does wish to see, developed in His people. For example here in verse 6, 'they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes'; the word rendered 'righteous' here is perhaps

rendered best by Moffat in his translation, where he refers to them as 'honest folk' (6662). Now that's not the literal translation at all, because the word does mean 'righteous' but in that sense, Moffat is trying to get to the sense or the spirit of what the prophet is saying. They sold honest folk for silver and the poor for a pair of shoes. So here is represented in this phrase, those who were struggling to try and maintain some integrity before God. They were trying to do what was right, they were the innocent people, they really weren't the wrong doers but they were being treated with utter contempt by their other brethren who were more powerful and who could rule over them.

You'll notice it refers also to the selling of the poor for a pair of shoes. An absolutely frightful situation, totally condemned by the Law of Moses, in Deuteronomy 16 verse 18 to 20, and again in Leviticus chapter 25 verse 39. The idea seems to be that of a creditor, one that is owed money, who would sell a man, a fellow Israelite, into slavery simply to recoup the amount owed by the hapless victim on a pair of sandals. But nevertheless, that's the way the mind of the flesh can work, that's the way men and women can justify evil, the way they can justify wrong doing. And you know, throughout this section of his book, Amos has demonstrated a particular overriding principle in part one of his book, and it's quite simply this, that God will punish evil and He will punish wrong doing in whatever nation such conduct might be manifested, even if it means punishing His own people! That's the message of Amos in these verses.

The people of Israel always seemed to suffer under a delusion; that because they were the chosen people, they were in some way above divine judgment, and in that regard, they failed to see, as they really do today in the majority; that Almighty God quite likely makes moral and spiritual demands upon His people. So therefore, there was no thought of looking to themselves as to why things might be wrong. There was no thought of thinking that perhaps we have done wrong, some little while ago we even read in one of the American news magazines of an article concerning a certain influential element within the nation of Israel today, who were proclaiming in the course of this report that was written up in the magazine, that they really ought to disown the God of Israel! Can you imagine anything like that? and the basis of that was, in the article that I read, that in view of all the suffering of the people of Israel, down through all the generations of time, that if they had a God who treated them like that, then He wasn't worth having as a God, and therefore, they should publicly and nationally repudiate the God of the Old Testament bible. Typical of the perversity of human nature, typical of the perversity of fleshly thinking, that produces such ungodly thoughts. Instead of looking at themselves and saying 'we have suffered greatly, we've gone through all kinds of tragedies over the centuries, why is there a fault in us? I will also remember reading a very interesting book by David Ben-Gurion, in which he details the aspects of the restoration of the Jewish nation. In that book, in one section, I remember very, very clearly (although my wording is not quoted word for word, but nevertheless, it has the kernel of the line of argument presented), he wrote on one occasion, 'it might readily be asked how it is that over all time, the Jewish nation has continued to survive? The answer to the question lies in the strength of the Jewish people'. Not in the fact, that our

God has sustained us, our God has helped us, that we survived absolutely unparalleled examples of genocide down through the ages, because our God has caused us to survive. Not at all! the arm of flesh, is the arm of strength.

Now how easy it is, that we can fall into a category like that! These people would not look at themselves to see why things had gone wrong! why God was allowing these things to come upon them? if they had done so, they would have been able to rectify that situation. As we mentioned yesterday in the case of the people of Laodicea, 'they knew not that they were wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked' and we made the point then, and we'll make it again now, it wasn't that they were wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, those are spiritual matters that can be rectified, if only people will turn again to their God. The tragedy was that they didn't know! and not only that they didn't know, but they didn't want to know! and we've got a similar situation here in the days of Amos. Sad and tragic but nevertheless true, and may we never, b&s, fall into the same attitude of self assurance and complacency, to say 'we're the people of God, we know the truth, we've got the truth, we've got nothing to worry about, when what we have to be concerned about is hearing the Word of God, as we quoted from the Lord Jesus Christ yesterday, 'he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias'.

Now to the Gentile world that is perishing out there, that's our job to convey that on, but Christ said, if those 7 ecclesias of Asia were to survive, then they had an obligation to rise to, 'him that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias', because the Spirit was interested in the survival of the ecclesias, as Christ and those that laboured with Him, were interested in seeing men and women come into the kingdom of God and gain that kingdom at the return of Christ. They loved the brethren and that is why sometimes their words appear strong, their words appear rather blunt, but therefore, they spoke the truth that their brethren and sisters might be enlightened and encouraged and developed to seek God's way! to walk in holiness of life, to manifest the righteousness that is seen in God's own Son, that they might learn to become pleasing and acceptable to Almighty God. There is nothing that will destroy that more in people, the people of God, than to fall into an attitude of self-assurance and complacency, and be self deluded that we are the people of God, therefore, what do we have to worry about? everything will be alright! The Gentiles have a very, very odd absolutely impossible saying, 'God's in His heaven, all's right in the world'; well, God may be in His heaven but all is not right in the world, and it never has been, and so therefore, self delusion can be a very dreadful thing.

These people did not want to hear the message of Amos. You'll find a very interesting point in verse 7 of chapter 2, he describes 'those that pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek'. You know it's an incredible expression there in verse 7, 'that pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor', do you know that the Vulgate version of the bible renders it in this way, 'who bruise the heads of the poor on the dust of the earth'. Now you can immediately make a connection there, can't you? with Genesis 3 and verse 15; it's absolutely startling, 'who

bruise the heads of the poor on the dust of the earth', but what these people were doing in the days of Amos were the very reverse of what God intended in Genesis 3 and verse 15. The evil men in Israel were striving to ram their heel into the head, not of the serpent, but rather of their brethren and those that were innocent and undeserving of this sort of treatment; they were being treated in this way and all of that is the outworking of selfishness and self interest, putting self above all other considerations. But it was worse than that, because as it says there in verse 7, 'and they turn aside the way of the meek'. They turn aside the way of the meek and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid', Rotherham renders that phrase 'turn aside the way of the meek' as the way of the oppressed they pervert.

The way of the oppressed they pervert and so here you've got those who were actually encouraging brethren and sisters to walk in a way that was contrary to the principles of divine truth. How that highlights the fact, that like Amos of old, b&s, like that very great prophet of Almighty God, bearing that name of Amos, how it highlights the fact that we have a responsibility and an obligation to do everything possible we can, to influence our brethren and sisters toward good, toward godliness, toward righteousness, toward the development of a character and a way of life that will be pleasing to our God. To encourage them to remain loyal to the standards of the truth and to the way of God that is set before us in the scriptures of truth. If there were only some who could have arisen in response to the plea of Amos, and formed a nucleus within those kingdoms that tribe in the north and that tribe in the south, that could have generated and carried his message on further amongst the brethren and sisters of that time. If only that could have been done, but there was no response! it was a sad and a tragic situation.

So we even read of a situation here where a man and his father will go in unto the same maid. There is a thing there that is rather distasteful even to think of it happening, in so far as the lack of moral principle is concerned; but the point is here, which we just want to stress for the moment, is that we're always emphasizing as we've even done this morning, come to think of it, the need for fathers to be good examples to their sons, but you'll notice in this verse the order is reversed. So here we learn that it is not simply a matter of fathers being a good example to sons, what of sons in relation to their fathers? sons should also be good examples to their fathers. So the overriding principle is, that in the truth whether fathers or sons, sons or fathers, mothers and daughters, daughters and mothers, we should all be indelibly sound examples to one another, because it is by sound example that we encourage one another in the truth. That we hope to develop in our mutual relationships, an understanding of godliness, an awareness of what it means in our lives. We can encourage one another, and we do receive great encouragement from faithful brethren and sisters, in their way of life and in their attitude toward the truth and in the way they speak about the things of God. It's a wonderful encouragement, I know it is to me, and I know it is to so many other brethren and sisters, it should really be to all of us, shouldn't it? that it is there!

But you'll notice here, the final point that is made in this 7th verse, it really is quite an important point and a note on which to conclude our comments this morning. When God

says in regard to all these things in verse 7, 'they that pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane My holy name'. To profane My holy name, now it wasn't simply that they were doing things morally wrong, that they were setting aside the Law of God in regard to human relationships, that they were perverting their way of life in a most grotesque and revolting way; it went further than that! because God says here that in doing that you are profaning My holy name! Something for us to think about, b&s, because all sin profanes the holy name of God, but when sin is openly and blatantly practiced, the profaning of Yahweh's name is openly proclaimed to the world, and that is a fearful thing. Now that is not to suggest that sins performed in secret are any less heinous than others, but I feel sure that the point we are making will be readily understood. It's one thing to sin against God, but it is compounded and it is an additional sin, to flagrantly flaunt that sin from the housetops, which is what these people were doing. They were openly sinning, openly transgressing and saying, 'who is to stop us? and what's wrong with what we're doing anyway?' The word rendered 'profane' (2490) there in verse 7, is very important, because in addition to having that meaning, it also means 'to wound or to dissolve' and therefore, it tell us that our God can be wounded by our iniquities! He feels sorrow, He experiences sadness when He sees His people turning away from the way in which He is striving lovingly and mercifully to direct them. He feels wounded but also as we've said, the word signifies 'to dissolve', and therefore, sin, blatantly revealed, practiced before all, is something that dishonours and blasphemes and therefore, dissolves those things that the name of God stands for, and represents. As far as we are concerned in our responsibilities and our obligations to our God, let us learn from the words of the inspired prophet Amos, let us be encouraged and let us be strengthened and let us see the truth with a continuing clarity, so that we know where we are and we know what manner of people we ought to be!