

Sun., Dec. 4, 2011

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## Scripture

Amos 6:1-14

<sup>1</sup>Alas for those who are at ease in Zion,  
and for those who feel secure on Mount Samaria,  
the notables of the first of the nations,  
to whom the house of Israel resorts!

<sup>2</sup>Cross over to Calneh, and see;  
from there go to Hamath the great;  
then go down to Gath of the Philistines.  
Are you better than these kingdoms  
Or is your territory greater than their territory,  
<sup>3</sup>O you that put far away the evil day,  
and bring near a reign of violence?

<sup>4</sup>Alas for those who lie on beds of ivory,  
and lounge on their couches,  
and eat lambs from the flock,  
and calves from the stall;  
<sup>5</sup>who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp,  
and like David improvise on instruments of music;  
<sup>6</sup>who drink wine from bowls,  
and anoint themselves with the finest oils,  
but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!  
<sup>7</sup>Therefore they shall now be the first to go into exile,  
and the revelry of the loungers shall pass away.

<sup>8</sup>The Lord GOD has sworn by himself  
(says the LORD, the God of hosts):  
I abhor the pride of Jacob  
and hate his strongholds;  
and I will deliver up the city and all that is in it.

<sup>9</sup>If ten people remain in one house, they shall die. <sup>10</sup>And if a relative, one who burns the dead, shall take  
up the body to bring it out of the house, and shall say to someone in the innermost parts of the house,  
"Is anyone else with you?" the answer will come, "No." Then the relative shall say, "Hush! We must not  
mention the name of the LORD."

<sup>11</sup>See, the LORD commands,  
and the great house shall be shattered to bits,

and the little house to pieces.

<sup>12</sup>Do horses run on rocks?

Does one plow the sea with oxen?

But you have turned justice into poison

and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood —

<sup>13</sup>you who rejoice in Lo-debar,

who say, "Have we not by our own strength

taken Karnaim for ourselves?"

<sup>14</sup>Indeed, I am raising up against you a nation,

O house of Israel, says the LORD, the God of hosts,

and they shall oppress you from Lebo-hamath

to the Wadi Arabah.

## 2 Thessalonians 1:5-12

<sup>5</sup>This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, and is intended to make you worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering. <sup>6</sup>For it is indeed just of God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, <sup>7</sup>and to give relief to the afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels <sup>8</sup>in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup>These will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, <sup>10</sup>when he comes to be glorified by his saints and to be marveled at on that day among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. <sup>11</sup>To this end we always pray for you, asking that our God will make you worthy of his call and will fulfill by his power every good resolve and work of faith, <sup>12</sup>so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Devotional**

Israel's sin is our sin. Judgment found in our reading from Amos and 2 Thessalonians is the dark backdrop not only of Israel's history, but of the human story and of our own hearts. It is expressed as injustice and an avaricious life. However, its source is always the same. We can follow the moral thread from avarice and injustice (Amos 6:1-7) to its common root—pride. Throughout the Old Testament God points out that the pride of his people (stiff-necked and hard-hearted) brings on God's judgment. The only way to avoid the coming just fulfillment of the law, is to ascend the hill of the Lord with "clean hands and pure hearts" (Ps 24:3f). Most religions have a self-cleaning program by doing good for others, or working on a personal self-rectification program. But, it is impossible and the height of arrogance to think that we can purify ourselves. In trying to do so, we fall into pride, the very vice we must crush.

Then we read the great miracle which causes all the angels to sing and gives us hope beyond all hope: "Blessed be the Lord of Israel, for he has looked favorable on his people and redeemed them" (Lk 1:68). Hopeless without God's help, we become hope-filled agents of joy through God's mercy.

**Prayer**

Lord, in your mercy, crush our pride and prepare us to receive your grace which is the only way we can have clean hands and a pure heart. Through your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.