

It Is Written

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“AMOS OR AMAZIAH”

By R. J. Evans

A number of years ago, in a conversation with someone concerning preachers and preaching, the person stated that he thought a preacher needed to have charisma and be entertaining in order to be effective. As I reflect back on that, it causes me to do some thinking about some of the present-day trends.

Perhaps the story of Amos and Amaziah can provide us with some insight concerning present-day attitudes toward preachers and preaching. Amos was a shepherd turned preacher. His “congregation” was made up of high society people in the nation of Israel, including the king himself. He preached to them, but not at their invitation. They did not consider him as being refined and elegant enough for their polite society. They would have fired him if they had the power to do so. But they could not fire him, because they had not hired him.

There was a priest during the days of Amos by the name of Amaziah. He sent word to king Jeroboam that “Amos has conspired against you in the midst of the house of Israel. The land is not able to bear his words. For thus Amos has said: Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive from their own land. Then Amaziah said to Amos: Go, you seer! Flee to the land of Judah. There eat bread, and there prophesy. But never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary. And it is the royal residence,” Amos 7:10-13.

The expression “the land is not able to bear his words” is much like Paul’s words to Timothy: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables,” (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Had Amaziah been their preacher, he would have been the kind that preached things the hearers wanted to hear, rather than what they needed to hear. Amaziah ridiculed the idea that judgment was to come upon Israel because of her sins, as Amos had prophesied. The king, no doubt, was pleased to hear Amaziah rebuke Amos for condemning the sins of the nation. It was an attitude much like those described by the prophet Isaiah: “And to the prophets, Do not prophesy to us right things; speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits,” (Isa. 30:10).

The reply that Amos gave to Amaziah was as follows: “I was no prophet, nor was I a son of a prophet, but I was a herdsman and a tender of sycamore fruit. Then the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said to me, Go prophesy to my people Israel,” (Amos 7:14-15). In other words, Amos had not planned to be a prophet and had not gone to the school of the prophets. He was now a prophet because he was told by God to go prophesy. His inspired message was filled with warnings and coming judgment. It can be summarized in one sentence: “Prepare to meet your God, O Israel,” (Amos 4:12).

Those who preach today must heed the words of Paul to Timothy: “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching,” (2 Tim. 4:2). Paul practiced what he preached, as he stated to the Ephesian elders ---“For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God,” (Acts 20:27). But how pleasant it would have been to have a preacher like Amaziah! He would never be so rude as to disturb a congregation by calling attention to their sins, or by calling upon them to repent. All of his sermons would have been entertaining, full of stories and jokes. Never would he have made the mistake of preaching something “negative” or taken

a stand against sin. He would have never preached a distinctive message. No one would have ever left a single service without feeling good –they would have never felt any sense of guilt. Instead, they would have been persuaded that whatever they chose to do, or not do, was perfectly right.

On the other hand, think of the possible disturbance, unrest, strong rebukes, and guilt feelings which resulted from the preaching of Amos. It might not always have been pleasant to sit and hear what he had to say as he presented God's message to them. But the message Amos had for the people was needed! But sadly the message is never received and acted upon properly when people are more interested in their own selfish desires than the will of the Lord, (2 Tim. 4:1-5). Which type of preacher would we prefer today, Amos or Amaziah?

"Scoffers"

By Jarrod Jacobs

We are warned in II Peter 3:3 about "scoffers, walking after their own lust" who would come and question whether or not the Lord would return because "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (v. 4). What are "scoffers"? What is their work? Why was the Holy Spirit, through Peter, warning Christians about them?

According to Mr. Strong, the word "scoffer" means, "a derider, by implication a false teacher, mocker." For further clarification, to "deride" someone is "to laugh at in scorn or contempt" (Dictionary.com). In the text, Peter warns of those who will laugh or mock at the idea of the Lord's second coming. They don't think it is real and scoff, make fun of, or mock those who speak the truth.

Let's make this a little more general for our article. Have you ever had someone scoff at you (make fun of, mock) for merely speaking the truth of God's word? How did that make you feel? One way the devil works is to scoff or make fun of us when we know we are right. This affects our senses and causes us to either question our beliefs or simply be scared to express them. Through scoffing, people can be made to stop speaking the truth. This was the intention of scoffers in the first century, and it is the intention of scoffers today.

When I speak the truth from God's word (I Pet. 4:11; II Tim. 4:2), and people call me a "Pharisee," "legalist," "literalist," and the like, this is scoffing. When they say that I am "too narrow," or too bold, this is scoffing as well. It should be apparent that scoffing occurs when people curse and say wicked things to insult me. Please note that when people do such things and call names, make fun of, sneer, and the like, they have done nothing to prove their point! This is a lesson I had to learn quickly in preaching. Having added my work on the internet, and coming in contact with "internet trolls," the scoffing has reached new levels! In almost 30 years of preaching, though, I have come to terms with the fact that just because someone screams at you or knows how to make cutting remarks does not mean he has the truth on his side! It is usually the opposite.

Being mocked and ridiculed does not feel good, but for those who respect God's authority (Col. 3:17), speak His truth (II Tim. 4:2), and are determined to live it (I Tim. 4:12, 16; Phil. 4:9; I Cor. 15:58), this is a way of life! The darkness hates the light and hates those who are in the light (Jn. 3:19-21). Why should I be surprised at these people's actions when I speak the truth that brings light to the world (Ps. 119:105)? Scoffers were there to criticize my Lord unjustly (Jn. 7:7). Why should I expect different treatment (Jn. 15:18-20; II Tim. 3:12)?

Let these words encourage the hurting and those who have been criticized unjustly, to keep on keeping on. "Preach the Word" (II Tim. 4:2)! Stand "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" (Eph. 6:10)! Stand firm on the Lord's word and do not waver! Scoffers will come and go, but "the word of the Lord endureth for ever" (I Pet. 1:25). We can make it! We can be faithful to God (Rev. 2:10), and look forward to God's reward when this life is over (II Tim. 4:6-8)!