Amos 8:7 The Lord swears by the Pride of Jacob, “I will never forget any of their deeds!””

 Boy, I have to tell you that this is one tough text. I say that because of all the circumstances that surround the text and the fact that the lesson of the text is mostly law. Let me give you the background information.

 Amos was a prophet of the Lord who wrote his book around 755 B.C. At this time in the history of the Northern Kingdom of Israel the country is experiencing prosperity and good times. King Jeroboam II is on the throne and Scripture makes it clear that this king continues the same godless policies that Jeroboam I had begun some 150 years earlier. As I look at this history it is rather clear what is happening. The Lord is coming to the end of his patience with these people. Through a number of prophets, the Lord is getting his message out. Hosea, Jonah, and Amos are preaching God’s message in Israel and to the south in Judah, you find Isaiah and Micah delivering God’s message. Without a doubt, the message of all of these prophets is “Repent.” Get back to the worship of the Lord God, back to the promises, the truths and the grace of what the true God offers.

 But there is prosperity and good times, a sign the people felt, of God’s approval of them. Doesn’t surprise me that Satan should bring his work to bear on this kingdom. Fact is, Israel was deeply involved in the worship of the two golden calves that were set up in Dan and Bethel. Along with that they were very much involved in the Canaanite gods and the fertility rites of those gods which included sexual immorality with the “priestesses” of Ashera along with the sacrificing of children to gain the “gods” favor. Because of this godlessness of the people, God allows Satan to bring prosperity and good times…well, almost.

 I say “almost” because the times were very corrupt. One group, the rich and powerful were doing great but the middle class and the poor were oppressed and struggling. The wealthy of the country had absolutely no regard for the lower classes or even for justice. Let me explain that, because in many ways it parallels some of the things happening in our world of today.

The picture we have from both archeology and the Bible is that these prosperous times brought great wealth to the ruling and merchant class of people of the land. Now, being prosperous is not what is ungodly, but when you use your prosperity to trample the poor, despise the righteous and corrupt justice, that’s when it is clear there are serious problems. The ruling class and the merchants cheated in every way they could in order to gain more wealth. The poor and the middle class were ripped off in every way. The sad part is that the courts were also corrupt. If it was the poor or the righteous who were in court against the cheating ways of the rich and powerful, you can bet the decision was going to go in favor of the rich and powerful. In other words, all semblance of morality, decency, law and order was gone. And since the forces of evil were at work to grant prosperity and good times everyone over looked that stuff and figured that God was blessing them instead of grasping that God was upset with them.

 That’s where our text from Amos comes in. This text is designed to show the people what the problem was and to point to the solution. Let’s consider more under the theme: **LISTEN TO THIS!**

 As you listened to the introductory words and to our text I am sure you can see the problem. Go back to our text again and I am sure you will grasp the true depth of the godlessness that was going on. Verses 4-6 say, **“**4**Listen to this, you who trample on the needy to wipe out the oppressed from the land,** 5**who say, “When will the New Moon be over so that we can sell grain? When will the Sabbath end, so that we can open the grain bins? Then we will make the bushel smaller and make the shekel weight heavier. We will cheat with dishonest scales.** 6**We will buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals. We will sell the chaff with the grain.”**

 The picture presented here is so very sad. If you paid attention you realize that we have a deep religious problem here and it is that religious problem that creates all the other problems. The religious problem is brought out as this text speaks of the impatience of the merchants to get the “religious festivities” done so they can get back to selling and making money. In other words, “religion,” the idea of some sort of morality or standard for society was considered a waste of time when it came to life. The attitude toward what was “godly” and “right” is horrid and the attitude of “how can I get more, make more money, be more successful” is the one that rules. So much so, that cheating in every way possible is laid forth as the normal way of doing business. Clearly this society and its people are in trouble and that simple but startling call **“Listen to this!”** becomes very important.

 Please note a few things. The people are not chastised because they are prospering but rather because they are prospering with cheating and injustice. The merchants and rich have no regard for the Lord God and His ways, no regard for the lower classes, so much so that enslaving people for silver or even for the price of sandals is the way things are done. It is a group without any care or concern for what God deems right and proper but a group who nonetheless likes to make a big show of being godly and right with God.

 Let me just make mention of something here. Today, the cry of many is that the poor and needy are being overlooked. In a way that is true, but be careful. I believe that many of the people of our land who are genuinely poor and needy, who because of circumstances beyond their control struggle in life, I believe that we could do better for them. But here is the problem. We have a huge part of our population that is sucking the very life out of our society because they refuse to work, they refuse to become educated, they refuse to actually contribute to society but rather only want society to carry them, to take care of them and let them do what they want, which is nothing. Remember God makes a clear statement in 2 Thess.: **“If any one does not want to work, he should not eat.”** Our duty as God’s children is to work to our best. Where there are truly the poor and needy we are to take care of them. But to create an “entitlement” mentality is not the Godly way of living. Our society should be fair, just and law abiding and in this way all will be taken care of as God encourages.

 Of course, in a way that is our problem. We have a society that honors and rewards the law breakers while at the same time putting greater burdens on the law-abiding. This was the problem that is found in Amos’ day. Doing what was evil and wrong was considered good and doing what was good was consider evil and wrong. A problem serious enough that God is fed up and God is calling for repentance, a complete change of heart among the people. Please note this godlessness has been going on for a couple of centuries among the Israelites of the North.

 Now you have to grasp that the Almighty God knows all things. He knew the godless attitudes of the people. He knew they did not care for his ways or His Word. And that’s why we find verse 7 that says, **“The Lord swears by the Pride of Jacob: “I will never forget any of their deeds.”**

 I do want you to grasp the threat that is found in these words. What does the Lord say? **“I will never forget any of their deeds.”** This is God’s justice and righteousness speaking. This is God clearly and precisely threating against godlessness and wrong. If you can hear those words and then think that God is okay with what is going on, then you have not heard the truth.

 To help you grasp even more listen to the words of Amos 5:18-24. These words speak of the judgment of God. They say, “**Woe to those who long for the Day of the Lord! What good will the Day of the Lord be for you? It will be darkness and not light. 19It will be as if a man flees from a lion, but a bear meets him, or he enters a house and rests his hand upon a wall, but a snake bites him. 20Won’t the Day of the Lord be darkness and not light, gloom without a trace of brightness? 21I hate, I reject, your festivals! I do not delight in the aroma of the sacrifices at your sacred convocations. 22Even if you offer up to me your whole burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them. I will not pay any attention to your fellowship offerings of fattened calves. 23Get the noise of your songs away from me! I will not listen to the music of your harps. 24But let justice roll like the waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”**

 Get the feeling God is not happy? Now, it is clear by those words that the people outwardly looked pretty religious but God who knows the heart points out that their religion and rituals appall Him. For that matter God makes it clear that his justice is coming. He gives these people time to repent and the warning that if they don’t then God promises to send an enemy that will destroy them.

It is my sad duty to tell you that in 722 B.C. the Assyrians rise up, march in, and the nation and people of this Northern Kingdom of Israel will be no more! The lesson is clear. Do not mess with God. Do not despise and ignore the Lord and His Ways. And if you think God is unfair and unjust, well, then, you just take that up with Him when you are before Him and good luck to you! Do not take lightly the threat of the Lord. In this case the threat is an end to your nation and people…and yes, the threat of eternal justice and judgment in hell!

 What is awesome here is a little phrase that we dare not overlook. The words, **“the Pride of Jacob.”** Do you know what that is? Jacob is the one of the Patriarchs who carried forth the promise of a Savior for the world. Jacob is the one given the name “Israel” as God grants him blessings and His grace. Without a doubt the words here refer to what was at the heart and core of Jacob and his life namely, the promise of the Savior with his deliverance from sin and his eternal salvation for all who believe.

 This phrase has the same impact that a passage like Mark 16:16 has, **“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”** If you are a child of God there is nothing to fear but if you have despised the Lord, then you will have a problem. If you were one of the few in Israel who still believed, who still had trust and faith in God, you had nothing to fear no matter what was to be but if you did not believe, there would be an eternal payment due. This is what I love about the simple message of our Lord. If you believe in Him, he will deliver but if you do not believe in Him, you will be condemned.

 Make sure you get this! This phrase and name is about eternal life and salvation. This world, tainted as it is by sin is most difficult and a hard place to live. What we are promised through the Savior is that God will be with us, God will save us and God will take us to His eternal paradise in Heaven to be with Him forever. This promise is not about this world. It is not about you being wealthy or comfortable. It is about you trusting in God to give you what you need, when you need it and how you need it as God sees fit. It is about striving to live to the glory of God even in the midst of a world that will hate you, despise you because of Jesus, and that may bring you, because of the infection of sin, trial, hardship and difficulty. It will surely bring you death. But in Jesus, the Pride of Jacob, there is nothing to fear in this world or the one to come. God always delivers and always keeps his promises. Trust in the Lord. Trust his promises. Trust His Holy Word.

 This section of God’s Word then presents you with a challenge. The world and its agenda or the Lord and His agenda! Again, stick to God’s Word and promises. Give Him praise and glory, honor and worship. Make sure the one you are serving is the Lord and not false gods of your imagination. What God has given, use with goodness and honesty to his praise and wonder. And you will find even greater treasure in Him. It was true in Amos’ day and it is still true today. Believe and follow the Lord! In Him there is justice and His righteousness for you. Amen.