

# Does Anyone Care?

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*Amos 2:6-8*

## INTRODUCTION

- A. Robert E. Lee was once riding on a train to Richmond.
  - 1. The general was seated at the rear, and all the other places were filled with officers and soldiers.
  - 2. An elderly woman, poorly dressed, entered the coach at one of the stations.
    - a. Having no seat offered to her, she trudged down the aisle to the back of the car.
    - b. Immediately, Lee stood up and gave her his place.
  - 3. One man after another then arose to give the general his seat. “No, gentlemen,” he said, “if there is none for this lady, there can be none for me!”
- B. Compassion — caring about others — is quickly becoming a thing of the past.
  - 1. How many young men will stand to allow an elderly woman to have their seat?
  - 2. How many people will pause to allow you to cross in front of them at Wal-Mart even though you have a buggy full of stuff, you have a kid on both side, and the rain is pouring down?
  - 3. How many husbands take the time to listen when their wives had a horrible day at work?
- C. Compassion for the Christian is no option, for Jesus showed great compassion.
  - 1. “A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, ‘If you are willing, you can make me clean.’ Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. ‘I am willing,’ he said, ‘Be clean!’” (Mk. 1:40-41).
  - 2. Do notice that Jesus wasn’t showing compassion about something little — giving a woman his seat, allowing someone to pass in front of him at Wal-Mart, or allowing someone to cry on his shoulder — he’s showing compassion for a man who was unclean.
    - a. Leprosy is a horrible disease; it makes your flesh simply fall off
    - b. Leprosy was a disease that made you unclean — this man had been banished from society, but Jesus still cared for him.
- D. Amos writes to rebuke the Israelites because they have shown to compassion — these people were nothing like Jesus would be when he came.
  - 1. Amos begins his book by declaring God’s anger at Israel’s neighbors — he directs God’s wrath against Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, Moab, and Judah.
  - 2. You can almost hear the Israelites shouting “Amen” as the prophet declares God’s judgment upon their enemies, and ends on a high note of declaring judgment against Judah, that evil neighbor to the South who had broken away and said you needed to go to Jerusalem to worship God.
  - 3. But, then, the Israelites have to wipe the smile off their faces — God condemns them, too.
    - a. They couldn’t point their fingers and talk about how evil everyone else was, because they had their own problems.
    - b. The Israelites’ problems really boil down to one major problem — they didn’t care.
      - 1) This morning, I want us to look at the judgment upon the Israelites and simply ask, “Does Anyone Care?”
      - 2) DOES ANYONE CARE ABOUT THE POOR?; DOES ANYONE CARE ABOUT THE OPPRESSED?; DOES ANYONE CARE ABOUT SEXUAL IMMORALITY?; DOES ANYONE CARE ABOUT HYPOCRISY?

## DOES ANYONE CARE ABOUT THE POOR?, vv. 6-7a

- A. The Israelites - by and large — didn’t care about the poor; notice what God declares: “They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor.”
- B. The Israelites sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals.
  - 1. The Hebrew word “righteous” here does not refer to one who was blameless, but one who had a right cause; this person had a case that deserved to be heard.
    - a. Instead of hearing the case judiciously, the judge would accept a bribe — some silver — and he’d rule in favor of the one who had given him the most money.
    - b. These judges had a serious problem with greed and didn’t care about the needs of others.
  - 2. Their greed becomes obvious when God says that they would sell the needy for a pair of sandals.
    - a. These judges were so corrupt that instead of delivering justice, they’d accept a pair of shoes as a bribe.
    - b. Generally, when people accept a bribe, it’s worth a little bit of money, but these judges were so corrupt they’d take anything — even a cheap pair of shoes.

- C. The judges — and creditors come into view here — would trample on the heads of the poor.
1. The KJV translates this passage quite literally: “that pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor.”
  2. Throwing dust on one’s head was a sign of anguish in the ancient world.
  3. We can’t be positively certain what this line means, but there are two main possibilities:
    - a. This could mean that the oppressive classes longed to see the poor brought to extreme anguish; that’s pretty much the meaning the NIV gives to this line.
    - b. This could also mean that the rich were so greedy that they even wanted to take the dust the poor had cast on their heads away from them.
    - c. Either way we understand this line, the rich were showing absolutely no regard for the poor.
- D. We need to care about the poor.
1. Throughout the pages of Scripture, the children of God are called upon to care for the poor.
    - a. “Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed” (Ps. 82:3).
    - b. “If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered” (Prov. 21:13).
    - c. About his and Barnabas’ meeting with James, Peter, and John, Paul wrote, “All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do” (Gal. 2:10).
  2. Do we remember the poor, or are the poor simply a bother on the street when they stand there with a hand out wanting money?
  3. There are several ways we can care about the poor.
    - a. We can care about the poor through the church.
      - 1) We can care for the poor through the church: “There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need” (Acts 4:34-35).
      - 2) The church here does much good to the poor from time to time: we’ll provide food, we’ll help pay an electric or water bill, we’ll help pay a medical bill when the need warrants.
    - b. We can also care for the poor individually.
      - 1) You remember what Jesus said to the rich young ruler: “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven” (Mt. 19:21).
      - 2) How can we help individually “give to the poor” as Jesus instructed?
        - a) There are regular pantry and baby items announced, and we can bring them that they might be given to the less fortunate.
        - b) Those of you filling up the cans from Potters’ Children’s Home are giving to the poor.
    - c. The Lord expects us to be good stewards of what he has given — the parable of the talents demonstrates that.
      - 1) Therefore, I’m not a fan of individuals or churches giving out money.
      - 2) If someone needs food, feed him, if he needs clothes, clothe him, if he needs a bus ticket, buy the ticket- don’t give money.
  4. If we care about the poor, we’ll have treasure in heaven. There is an ancient legend that the Apostle Thomas worked in the Indies.
    - a. Gondofernes, the King of the Indies, gave him a vast sum of money to build a palace.
      - 1) Thomas gave all away to help the poor.
      - 2) Gondofernes, on his return from a long absence, was greatly enraged, and caused Thomas to be seized and cast into prison.
    - b. Meanwhile the King’s brother died, but after four days he came back from the dead.
      - 1) He told Gondofernes that he has been in paradise, and that Thomas built him there a beautiful palace, which he had seen.
      - 2) The King rushed to the prison and liberated Thomas with passionate expressions of gratitude and regret.
    - c. Are you storing up for yourself treasure in heaven?

## **WHO CARES ABOUT THE OPPRESSED?, v. 7b**

- A. The upper classes in Israel denied “justice to the oppressed.”
1. The KJV translates this: “turn aside the way of the meek.”
  2. “Turn aside” literally means “to bend” and is used to mean “turn” or divert”; the word “meek” means not those who are humble morally but those who are in a lowly position — they are humble because of circumstances, not because of choice.
  3. Thus, the ruling classes in Israel frustrated the pursuit of equality for the lowly.
- B. We need to care about equality for the lowly.
1. Oppression is forbidden for the people of God.
    - a. “Do not oppress an alien; you yourselves know how it feels to be aliens, because you were aliens in

- Egypt” (Ex. 23:9).
- b. “He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God” (Prov. 14:31).
2. Not only are we not to be oppressive, but biblical principles instruct us to be active in seeking good for the lowly.
    - a. “If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother” (Deut. 15:7).
    - b. “Blessed is he who has regard for the weak; the LORD delivers him in times of trouble” (Ps. 41:1).
  3. You know this principle runs through the New Testament as well as the Old Testament.
    - a. To the Ephesian elders, Paul said, “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (Acts 20:35).
    - b. “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world” (Js. 1:27).
- C. How do we — with our limited resources — care for the oppressed of society?
1. Many call for social action — demonstrations about injustice, political involvement.
    - a. For example, if a landlord is taking advantage of poor tenants, you go out with placards and stand in front of his office and protest.
    - b. Personally, I don’t care for that type of involvement — it’s probably not going to help the situation and doesn’t reveal the spirit of Christ to the world.
  2. What should we do? I would personally rather see personal involvement with the oppressed.
    - a. That’s what Jesus did — he went to the tax collectors and “sinners,” he ministered to a probable prostitute when she anointed his feet (Lk. 7), he ministered to the leprous, and other oppressed classes.
    - b. Can we not minister to oppressed people?
      - 1) What are we going to do when a homosexual needs help buying groceries? What are we going to do when he desires to come to Jesus?
      - 2) What are we going to do when someone who did hard time for a hard crime comes and sits in the pew next to us?
      - 3) What are we going to do when a mentally handicapped individual needs a ride to the grocery store?
      - 4) What are we going to do when a drug addict needs help moving from one apartment to another?
    - c. We must never condone sin — Jesus never condoned sin. But, he ministered to the oppressed, and can we do anything else?

## **DOES ANYONE CARE ABOUT SEXUAL IMMORALITY?, v. 7c**

- A. “Father and son use the same girl and so profane my holy name.”
- B. It’s impossible to know specifically to what sexual sin the Lord here refers.
  1. It likely refers to incest.
    - a. This could be, as is likely the case in 1 Cor. 5, that this refers to a son’s having a sexual relationship with his step-mother.
    - b. If that is the case, the laws against incest would apply: “Do not have sexual relations with your father’s wife; that would dishonor your father” (Lev. 18:8).
  2. It could be that both father and son were having an affair with the same woman, but she wasn’t related to either one.
  3. It could be that this refers to temple prostitution — father and son were having sexual relations with the same woman to honor some pagan deity.
  4. Whatever specific sin this is here, it’s obvious that the Israelites, by and large, didn’t care about sexual immorality.
- C. In our society, how many people care about sexual immorality?
  1. You can watch the latest soap opera to find out whose sleeping with whom these days.
  2. When it comes to sex education in the schools, you can’t teach abstinence. They’re going to have sex — that’s what teens are just going to do — so you teach them how to do so safely.
  3. If contraception fails, the girl can go down to the local abortion clinic and kill the consequences of that encounter.
- D. I’m afraid that too many of us don’t really care about sexual immorality.
  1. How many of us will sit in front of the television to be entertained by the latest love triangle of our favorite characters? How many of us will teach our children that sex only belongs in marriage, but will allow those children to find Mom and Dad watching TV programming where every girl is sleeping with every guy?
  2. How many of us will allow people at work or at school tell off-colored stories — whether jokes or truth? We may not want to preach and give book-chapter-and-verse, but can’t we at least say, “I really don’t want to

- hear that”?
3. Have we come simply to accept sexual immorality in this world rather than standing against it?

## **DOES ANYONE CARE ABOUT HYPOCRISY?, v. 8**

- A. The oppressive classes would lie beside every altar on garments taken in pledge.
  1. Garments were permitted to be taken as collateral for loans.
    - a. But according to the Law, they were to be given back at night so the owner could cover himself while he slept.
    - b. “If you take your neighbor’s cloak as a pledge, return it to him by sunset, because his cloak is the only covering he has for his body. What else will he sleep in?” (Ex. 22:26-27).
  2. Yet, the Israelites of Amos’ day disregarded that instruction, and not only slept in garments they had taken as collateral, but slept in them next to altars.
- B. In the house of their God they drink wine taken as fines.
  1. While in the NIV and the KJV “god” is not capitalized, it is in the RSV and NRSV and I think it should be — these Israelites were going into the house of God and drinking wine they had collected from the poor.
  2. They’re going into the house of God and getting drunk.
- C. What are we to make of their sleeping in these garments taken as collateral and drinking wine?
  1. I think the key to our understanding is that they were doing this before God — they were totally disregarding God’s instructions, but they were coming before God to worship as though everything was ok.
  2. They didn’t care about hypocrisy — they didn’t care to come before God with pretense, pretending to be one thing they really weren’t.
    - a. Let us not be hypocrites — let us not come before God with pretense — let us come before God genuinely.
    - b. You remember the strong words Jesus had for the hypocrites.
      - 1) “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence” (Mt. 23:25).
      - 2) “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean” (Mt. 23:27).
    - c. Mahatma Gandhi, who was a Hindu, was once asked by a group of Christian missionaries about conversion. He said this: “I believe in Christian conversion if it is genuine. On the other hand, there is nothing worse than being something on the outside that you are not on the inside. If a man has found God through Jesus Christ, then he must show the world he is a follower of Jesus or else be living a lie!”
    - d. Socrates once said, “The shortest and sweetest way to live with honor in this world is to be in reality what we appear to be.”
    - e. If those two pagans understood the importance of living as we claim to live, can we as children of the true God do anything less?

## **CONCLUSION**

- A. My brethren, let us care about hypocrisy, let us care about sexual immorality, let us care about the oppressed, and let us care about the poor!
- B. How much do you care about your salvation? Do you need to come this morning and express concern about your salvation?