

Amos 9:7-15 (1984 NIV) ***Our Hope of Restoration***

Introduction

Amos 9:7-15 is a passage of hope and comfort. The other chapters speak of the certainty and magnitude of God's judgement. But Amos 9:7-15 speaks of the permanence of God's love, mercy, and restoration for those who remain true to Him.

- It gives comfort and hope to those who have lost much and who have to face much uncertainty of the future.
- It reassures us that God is not an empty hope, but He does restore and brings certainty to the ones who believe in Him.

In light of this, I would like us to refocus the way we look at God today.

- Some see God as one who gives and does not take away because His grace is all-surpassing.
- Others see Him as one who takes and does not give because His ownership is all-embracing.

We need to avoid viewing God from either of these two extremes. So, I would like us to look at God today as our irrefutable hope of restoration. This is because He can give far beyond what we may have lost; He has better things for us in place of what He may have taken away from us.

- Have you lost something precious to you?
- Are you in danger of losing something precious to you?
- Are you afraid of losing something precious to you?

If so, take heart ... because there is hope of restoration in God. This is irrefutable because of ...

I. God's Sovereign Power

Amos 9:7-8 reads:

7 "Are not you Israelites the same to me as the Cushites?" declares the Lord. "Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir? 8 "Surely the eyes of the Sovereign Lord are on the sinful kingdom. I will destroy it from the face of the earth—yet I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob," declares the Lord.

God's sovereign power is over the whole of human history.

- He is in control of all nations and all people.
- He lays His claim over the history of the Israelites, Cushites, Philistines, and Arameans.

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Every nation, every man answers to God; no nation, no man is beyond God's control. God through Amos had told the Israelites that He was the God in sovereign control, never mind if the Cushites, Philistines, and Arameans refused to recognise Him as their God.

Just as God has exercised His sovereign control over the history of the nation of Israel, He has also exercised His sovereign control over the history of the church. Since the beginning of church history, Christians in the church have faced numerous persecutions from without and within.

- Rome was the first world power to officially persecute the church.
 - There was a big fire in Rome in A.D. 64 that lasted for 9 days, destroying 10 of the 14 city districts.
 - This brought great hardship to the population there.
 - Emperor Nero made scapegoats out of the Christians in Rome.
 - The church was ruthlessly persecuted—many Christians were burnt alive on stakes at night to light up the gardens near Nero's palace; others were thrown to the wild beasts or mad dogs.
- The church also faced persecution from within in the form of internal perversion.
 - False teachings threatened the purity of the church.
 - One of these in the 2nd century was Gnosticism. This taught that matter was evil and only the human spirit was good.
 - Since matter was evil, the physical body of Jesus Christ was not considered to be matter—it only had the appearance of matter (i.e. Jesus Christ was not considered to be truly man when He was on earth).
 - Also, since matter was evil, strict asceticism was taught and practised, with some torturing their bodies with lots of do's and don'ts in order to suppress the physical appetites.
 - Conversely, there were some who practised licentiousness, indulging in sinful activities because they argued that no matter how sinful the body, it still could not defile the purity of the spirit that was intrinsically good.

Indeed, the church throughout history has faced numerous persecutions both from without and within. But the fact that the church is still existing and serving God today testifies to God's sovereign control over the history of His people.

God has never failed His church, but the church has failed God at various points in history. One of these periods was in the early 1200s.

- The Bishop of Rome overcame all the other bishops and gained control of the church at large.
- Some rebel groups opposed the authority of Rome.
- In order to check these rebels, great purges were carried out against those who refused to "toe the line".

- Trials were held in secret, but there was no way for these rebels to be defended because any lawyer representing such an accused would himself become the target of the church.
- Confessions were extracted by torture and testimonies against the accused were obtained from witnesses by the same cruel means.
- Those who refused to repent were imprisoned for life or executed by burning.
- This dark period in church history is known as the “Medieval Inquisition”; a period when the church was notorious for its violation of human rights and its reign of terror; a period when the once persecuted church forgot its past ordeals and became the persecuting church.

But God has always been in control, and the church today can still stand and shine as God’s witness to a lost world in spite of its many failures in history.

We today may be facing many pressures living as God’s people in a lost and fallen world. People may be mocking at us, saying that we are weak, weird, unrealistic, fanatical, superstitious, or religiously deceived.

- We may have people daring us to do what they are doing because they think that behind every Christian is a hypocrite.
- We may have people manipulating us to do their whims and fancies because they think that all Christians are supposed to be submissive, timid, and obliging.

Sometimes, the pressures we experience are from within ourselves. We are in so much trouble that we think our whole world is crumbling down; we are fast losing control of our own world.

Is there hope for us to restore our focus and balance as all these pressures threaten to crush us? Yes, there is hope for us! And our hope of restoration is in God Himself. We may have failed God many times as an individual or as a church, but God can restore us and use us again for His own glory.

- God is in control, even in control of His own wrath so that we who have failed Him can be given yet another chance to make it right.
- There’s hope of restoration in God when we repent.
- This hope of restoration reassures us that we who may have failed need not wallow in our defeated past or present.
- When we repent of our failures before God, we not only can hope, but more importantly, can experience God’s restoration of us.
- Indeed, if our hope of restoration is in God, then we have hope for our future no matter how we have failed in the past or present.

Our hope of restoration is in God because of His sovereign power. Also, our hope of restoration is in God because of ...

II. God's Sure Promises

Even during Amos' time, the people of God were very familiar with the phrase "the day of the Lord". This was supposed to be a great day for God's people. They looked upon it as the day when God would shower them with special blessings, and the enemies of Israel would be humiliated by the power of Israel's God.

But Amos warned the people that this day to come was not going to be a time of celebration for them. He prophesied the words of God in vv. 9-10:

9 "In that day," declares the Sovereign Lord, "I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. 10 I will turn your religious feasts into mourning and all your singing into weeping. I will make all of you wear sackcloth and shave your heads. I will make that time like mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day."

When this day came in 722 B.C., it was a time of humiliation—not for the enemies of Israel, but for the Israelites themselves. It was a day of painful defeat for God's people, but victory for their enemies.

- The Assyrians conquered Israel and led them out of their own country into captivity.
- Every Israelite was affected—the faithful as well as the faithless.
- You could almost hear the faithful ones protesting, "God, why must this happen? Why can't you spare Israel because of our faithfulness? Why can't you spare us since we are the faithful ones? God, this is unfair!"

Don't we feel the same way sometimes? We live faithfully for God until a tragedy or setback strikes us, and we protest, "God, why must this happen to me? I have been good to you. God, this is unfair!"

But bad things do happen to even godly people. Perhaps, one way we can try to explain this is to recognise that to be human is to be able to exercise the gift of free choice.

- God gives us the gift of free choice, and along with it, calls us to be responsible for the consequences of our choices in life.
- God does not always intervene such that we will always make right choices in life.
- If God always intervenes such that we will always make right choices, we will then make no mistakes in life.
- If God always does so, He will not be allowing us to be human, but to be like God Himself, making no wrong choices/mistakes.
- Thus, when human beings exercise this gift of free choice, they have to bear the consequences, good or bad, as well.
- Sometimes, these consequences have wide-spreading effects—they can even affect the innocent and the good.

- When the innocent and good suffer, it may seem unfair, humanly speaking.

However, in the overall scheme of God's justice, we read of this element of hope in v. 8:

8 "Surely the eyes of the Sovereign Lord are on the sinful kingdom. I will destroy it from the face of the earth—yet I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob," declares the Lord.

This is a promise of imminent destruction, yet not of total destruction. This seems to reassure us that God keeps a keen eye on the faithless as well as notices the faithful at the same time. While God promises judgement, He also tempers that with His mercy because of the faithful ones.

- Thus, this promise is also a call for the faithless ones to turn from their faithlessness, and for the faithful ones to keep pressing on in their faithfulness.
- God may seem unfair to the good and innocent when they suffer the wrongs of some evildoers, but if they press on in faithfulness, they can hope to experience God's grace, love, and mercy one day.
- This is the restoration of the faithful ones as faithfully promised of God.

Yes, no matter what others do, God wants us to remain faithful; to press on in faithfulness.

- Of course, this can be difficult if we view God as the source of all our bad experiences, and that God is always against us.
- Conversely, we can continue to draw strength if we view God as always on our side, even in our seemingly helplessness and hopelessness.

Do we feel like giving up being faithful to God because of some feeling of unfairness or injustice in us?

- Remember, God wants us to press on in faithfulness.
- God promises to restore our broken situation one day because He honours the faithfulness of the faithful ones.
- Sometimes, to be faithful is to be willing to be pruned by God—and pruning is often painful because it involves cutting away some parts in our lives.
- Often these parts may seem good to us, but not good to God.
- God honours the faithful as they allow God to take away what is not pleasing to Him.

Such a pruning brings about restoration, and it also demands that we do not take the easy way out. We often make the mistake of coming to God for all the wrong reasons when we try to take the easy way out.

The story is told of a church that tried to make things easy for people to come to church. So, it once proclaimed "No Excuse Sunday" in its mail-out. The mail read:

To make it possible for everyone to attend church this coming Sunday, we will be providing the following:

1. Beds will be placed in the fellowship hall for those who say, "Sunday is my only day to sleep."
2. Eye drops will be available for those with tired eyes from watching TV too late on Saturday night.
3. Steel helmets will be provided for those who say, "The roof would cave in if I ever went to church."
4. Blankets will be furnished for those who think that the church is too cold and air-conditioning for those who say that it is too hot.
5. We will reserve the front pews for those who like the pastor's sermons and the back rows with ear plugs for those who dislike his sermons.

Of course, this story is grossly exaggerated, but you get the point. We often make the mistake of coming to God for all the wrong reasons when we try to take the easy way out; to make things easy for ourselves.

No matter where we are today, our hope of restoration is in God's sure promises. And through Amos in vv. 11-12, God promised Israel this:

11 "In that day I will restore David's fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins, and build it as it used to be, 12 so that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that bear my name," declares the Lord, who will do these things.

This is a promise that the throne of David will be restored to a place of leadership over former enemies. In fact, this picture of restoration is not merely one of regaining the old self. It is a picture of superabundance, as depicted in v. 13:

13 "The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills."

- The harvest would be so plentiful that even before the crops could be completely gathered, it was time for sowing again.
- The overflowing wine from the gathered grapes flooded all the hills and submerged them out of sight.

What a picturesque way of describing how God can bless far beyond what we have lost. Such a restoration by God tells us that we cannot out-give God, and God will not short-change us.

- Having lost something can be painful; going to lose something can be fearful.
- But there is hope of restoration in God for we can be sure that He is still on our side, even as we are going through our pain, trauma, and deprivation ... if we press on in faithfulness.

This is good news to those who have become discouraged at the barrenness in their lives.

- When nothing we do seems to make any difference; when our life seems to be going nowhere, we need to remember that God has designed a master plan to bring about fruitfulness and fulfilment.
- God gives us life and a purpose of living faithfully for Him.
- You and I have a place in His master plan.

Conclusion

When things in life seems to be one big mess, our text today reassures that there is hope of restoration in God. This is irrefutable because of ...

- God's sovereign power.
- God's sure promises.

Which area of your life and my life is broken today and needs a touch of God's restoration and renewal? Let's learn to pray, confess, and claim God's sovereign power and sure promises of restoration and renewal today.

And God will sovereignly and surely restores and renews us as we persevere in our faithfulness. This is because He has chosen to honour our faithfulness, and He can give much more than what we have lost. That's our hope of restoration, and even renewal in Him.

Let's seek God to help us remain faithful, even if it means going through the pain of losing something not pleasing to Him so that we can gain something richer in Him and from Him.

Amen!