

Attitudes that Destroy: Arrogance to Pride

Amos 6:8-14

I. God abhors pride; 6:8.

⁸ The Sovereign LORD has sworn by himself--the LORD God Almighty declares: "I abhor the pride of Jacob and detest his fortresses; I will deliver up the city and everything in it."

The Lord swears by Himself - the most binding form of commitment. The Lord's character, integrity, and power stood behind the oath. When God swears an oath, it will happen. By communicating these words of judgment in an oath form, Amos leaves no doubt about what God will do. His very existence as God is behind this statement.

God abhors the continuing attitude toward the pride of Jacob - their arrogant self-confidence. God detests their fortresses. Israel had placed their trust in them and made them the center of their lives. God hates anything that replaces Him in the lives of His people.

God will deliver up the city and everything in it. The people do not need to trust Him for protection because the people are already protected. They do not need to depend on God to deliver them from warring enemies, or to humble themselves since their mighty fortresses are their gods. They already have everything they need to be successful and safe.

We need to pay careful attention to what our God and Creator abhors and detests in our lives. *"God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Submit yourselves therefore to God.* "-James 4:6-7 and 1 Peter 5:5

II. Pride hushes the name of the LORD; 6:9-11.

⁹ If ten men are left in one house, they too will die. ¹⁰ And if a relative who is to burn the bodies comes to carry them out of the house and asks anyone still hiding there, "Is anyone with you?" and he says, "No," then he will say, "Hush! We must not mention the name of the LORD." ¹¹ For the LORD has given the command, and he will smash the great house into pieces and the small house into bits.

Amos illustrates what will happen to the people who live in these fortresses. There may be a house where a small remnant of ten men will be left, but they too will die. Some relatives and someone assigned to burn the decaying bodies will come to see what has happened. One of the first things the person will do is to search the house for any survivors.

The imperative *"Hush! We must not mention the name of the Lord"* is the response. To use the name of the Lord in prayer would risk additional disaster. Their pride is what has caused the destruction from the Lord. It is no longer possible to call on the name of the LORD. Since they are all dead, it will not do any good to call on God to save someone. There is a day coming when it's too late to call on the name of the Lord.

Israel's God was the one in charge of the nation's destruction. He was giving the orders. The great house and the small house left in pieces and bits is a picture of complete destruction. The primary thought is that the result of the Lord's command will be to reduce all houses to rubble.

"God will judge many for the very things that they have taken pride and even claimed to do for Him. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" Matt. 7:22-23

III. God judges the proud; 6:12-14.

*¹² Do horses run on the rocky crags? Does one plow there with oxen? But you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness--
¹³ you who rejoice in the conquest of Lo Debar and say, "Did we not take Karnaim by our own strength?" ¹⁴ For the LORD God Almighty declares, "I will stir up a nation against you, O house of Israel, that will oppress you all the way from Lebo Hamath to the valley of the Arabah."*

Amos now asks a series of absurd questions. Would anyone do anything as absurd as to run a horse on a rocky cliff? Would anyone try to plow a rocky cliff with a pair of oxen? Amos's audience would have understood the absurdity of either scenario.

This makes it easier for them to see the absurdity of their own action of turning righteousness into something vile, bitter, or poisonous. Such perversion of right relationships and of justice was self-destructive. People are

not living according to the standards of God's law or demonstrating just behavior or pure heart attitudes in their relationships with God and other people. In pride God's people sacrifice relationships for their version of what brings them comfort and security.

Also absurd was Israel's arrogant dependence on their own strength and wisdom. Amos described the people responsible for the absurd perversion of justice and righteousness as doing it for their benefit. Then he set the Lord's announcement of judgment against their prideful boasting.

A final absurdity is the proud claim that Israel has won great victories east of the Jordan as a result of the campaigning of Jeroboam II. Two of the cities he recovered were Lo Debar, which means "not a thing," and Karnaim, which means "a pair of horns." Amos used the names to engage in sarcasm. Their rejoicing over "not a thing" and their saying they had by their own strength taken "a pair of horns" were prideful boastings. Perhaps Israel thought that by taking Karnaim they had doubled their strength. Actually, Karnaim was a relatively insignificant city.

In God's eye there is no reason to rejoice over nothing. They are bragging about this great victory, but it amounts to nothing significant, it is mostly just propaganda. In their minds they won. From God's perspective, they won nothing, but more of His judgment.

God's judgment was that the whole land north to south would be oppressed. Lebo Hamath was Israel's northernmost border. The valley of the Arabah was the southernmost boundary. The emphasis is total defeat for Israel. The proud would be humbled, and the oppressor oppressed. No place will be safe or unaffected when the divine warrior goes to battle against His people. Assyria eventually executed God's judgment against Israel.

There is probably not a country, culture, or neighborhood where the attitude that I am "bigger or better" is not a problem. Pride means that I am more discerning or more successful than you. Pride is not based on who we are, but on what we think about ourselves. Pride grows out of self-righteousness; humility grows from God's righteousness.

Jesus told us that *"The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."* Matt 23:2-12

Paul reminded us to *“Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”* Philippians 2:3-4