

## AT EASE IN ZION

### **TEXT: AMOS 6:1-7**

#### **Introduction:**

1. In 1857, the steamship *Central America*, on a voyage from Panama to NY, sprang a leak in mid-ocean. A vessel, seeing her distress signal, came to her side. The captain of the rescue ship asked, “What is amiss?”
2. “We are in bad repair, and we’re going down, lie by till morning,” came the reply.
3. The captain of the rescue ship said, “Let me take your passengers on board now.”
4. But since it was night and so difficult to get passengers off in the night, he replied: “Lie by till morning.”
5. Once again the captain of the rescue ship called, “You had better let me take them now.”
6. Again the answer came, “Lie by till morning.”
7. About an hour and a half later, her lights were missed, and the *Central America* had gone down, with all on board losing their lives because it was thought they could be saved better at another time.
8. God, through the prophet Amos, was telling Israel that they needed to repent – their time was up. But they thought they had plenty of time (cf. 6:3).
9. We can only wonder how much time America has before it is too late.

#### **I. WARNING AGAINST FALSE SECURITY AND COMPLACENCY**

1. The great commentator, Matthew Henry, said in Amos 6 we have a sinful people (Israel) and a serious prophet (Amos).
2. Matthew Henry divided his exposition of Amos 6 into two parts.
  - I. A sinful people studying to put a slight upon God’s threatenings and to make them appear trivial, confiding in their privileges and pre-eminences above other nations (6:2, 3), and their power (6:13), and wholly addicted to their pleasures (6:4-6).
  - II. A serious prophet studying to put a weight upon God’s threatenings and to make them appear terrible, by setting forth the severity of those judgments that were coming upon these sensualists (6:7), God’s abhorring them, and abandoning them and theirs to death (6:8–11), and bringing utter desolation upon them, since they would not be wrought upon by the methods he had taken for their conviction (6:12–14).
3. The Israelites were so deluded they actually desired the day of the LORD (5:18; cf. 6:1).

4. They were “at ease” (6:1) both in the south (Zion) and in the north (Samaria).
5. They were trusting in “the mountain of Samaria” (6:1). The mountains of Samaria provided such excellent natural fortifications that the city was able to stand the Assyrian siege for three years before it eventually fell (II Kings 17:5, 6).
6. But the mountains of Samaria were not impregnable, and Samaria did eventually fall. We are told in II Kings 17:6 that the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.
7. The people of Israel (like most Americans) were only concerned with their own ease and comfort.
8. Calneh, Hamath the great, and Gath of the Philistines (6:2) were great cities at one time but at the time of Amos’ prophecy they were in decline.
9. Amos was warning them the same thing was going to happen to Samaria.
10. Genesis 10:10 tells us that Nimrod built Calneh in the land of Shinar (Babylon).
11. Amos mentions the principle cities of the Philistines in Amos 1:6-8, but Gath is not mentioned – probably because it was in decline.

## **II. WARNING AGAINST VIOLENCE (6:3).**

1. Israel understood God’s judgment would come eventually but they were hoping it would not come for a long time (cf. Ezek. 12:22, 27).
2. Notice the contrast in Amos 6:3 – they were putting “far away” their day of reckoning, but at the same time they were causing “the seat of violence to come near” (6:3).
3. It is common for man to think that he is getting away with sin when actually he is just making things worse.
4. Ecclesiastes 8:11 says, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”

## **III. WARNING AGAINST AFFLUENCE AND SELF-INDULGENCE (6:4-6).**

1. They had their fill of wine, women, and song. They were consumed with hedonism, gluttony, sloth, and drunkenness (6:4).
2. Matthew Henry said, “Here is a description of their pride, security, and sensuality, for which God would reckon with them.”
3. Music that is degrading is a definite sign that a country is in decline both spiritually and morally (6:5).

4. David played music that glorified God, but they were playing music that was dishonoring to God (6:5).
5. Matthew Henry says this “intimates their profaneness in their mirth; they mimicked the temple-music, and made a jest” of it.
6. They were not content to drink their wine in cups – they drank their “wine in bowls” (6:6). The prophets often preached against the sin of drunkenness.
7. Isaiah said, “Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the LORD, neither consider the operation of his hands. Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst. Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it” (Isaiah 5:11-14).
8. “Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink” (Isa. 5:22).
9. “But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean” (Isa. 28:7, 8).
10. Joel said, “Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth” (Joel 1:5).
11. Habakkuk said, “Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!” (Hab. 2:15).
12. The people of Israel were “not grieved” (6:6). There was no repentance, no admission that they had sinned against God, no weeping over their sin, etc.

### **CONCLUSION:**

1. Because they would not repent – “Therefore...” (6:7), God’s judgment was inevitable.
2. Horatius Bonar was a Scottish preacher, a powerful soul-winner, and writer. He had a passionate heart for revival, and authored a couple of excellent books on the subject of revival.

3. Horatius Bonar was the brother to the more well known preacher Andrew Bonar.
4. He was born in 1808, and died in 1889.
5. This is what Horatius Bonar said about being at ease in Zion.

What do we say to our self-indulgence, our sloth, our love of ease, our avoidance of hardship, our luxury, our pampering of the body, our costly feasts, our silken couches, our brilliant furniture, our gay clothing, our braided hair, our jeweled fingers, our idle mirth, our voluptuous music, our jovial tables, loaded with every variety of wine and rich viands? Are we Christians? Or are we worldlings? Where is the self-denial of primitive days? Where is the separation from a self-pleasing luxurious world? Where is the cross, the true badge of discipleship, to be seen except in useless religious ornaments for the body, or worse than useless decorations for the sanctuary? “Woe to those who are at ease in Zion!” Is not this the description of multitudes who name the name of Christ? They may not always be “living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry.” But even where these are absent, there is 'high living,'—luxury of the table or the wardrobe—in conformity to 'this present evil world.'

“At ease in Zion!” Yes! there is the shrinking from hard service; from 'spending and being spent;' from toil and burden-bearing and conflict; from self-sacrifice and noble adventure, for the Master's sake. There is conformity to the world instead of conformity to Christ. There is a following afar off, instead of a keeping pace with Him whom we profess to follow. There is a laying down, instead of a taking up of the cross. Or there is a velvet-lining of the cross, lest it should gall our shoulders as we carry it. Or there is an adorning of the cross, that it may suit the taste and the manners of our refined and intellectual age. Anything but the bare, rugged and simple cross!

We think that we can make the strait gate wider and the narrow way broader, so as to be able to walk more comfortably to the heavenly kingdom. We try to prove that modern enlightenment has so elevated the race, that there is no longer the battle or the burden or the discipline; or has so refined the world and its pleasures, that we may safely drink the poisoned cup, and give ourselves up to the inebriation of the Siren song.

“At ease in Zion!” Even when the walls of the city are besieged, and the citadel on the point of being stormed! Instead of grasping our weapons, we lie down upon our couches. Instead of the armor, we put on the silken robe. We are cowards when we should be brave; we are faint-hearted when we should be bold as Elijah or as Paul. We are lukewarm when we should be fervent; cold when we should be full of zeal. We compromise and shuffle and apologize, when we should lift up our voice like a trumpet. We pare down truth, or palliate error, or extenuate sin, in order to placate the world, or suit the spirit of the age, or 'unify' the Church.

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