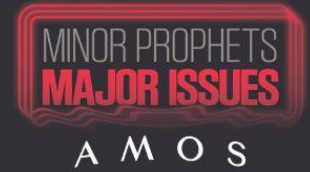


You were supposed to be different

Brett McBride

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Bible verses: Amos 3

Consider

Discuss: Think about these two words: STRONG and HOLD. What do they mean separately? What do they mean when you put them together?

Let's Examine

Setting the stage: Amos 3:

- **Discuss:** Using Amos 3:1-10, Deuteronomy 7:7 & 9:4 and Ephesians 2:8 and 1 Peter 2:9-12. Discuss what it means for God's people to be 'chosen.' Discuss why God had 'a people' in the first place and what they were/are supposed to be/do.
- **Discuss:** By the time Amos came around, what had gone terribly wrong?

Church history: Portugal and the west Coast of Africa

The Portugues were given the *Dum Diversas* and the *Romanus Pontifex* from the Pope which gave them freedoms to subject any enemies into the Christian faith. Also, they were looking for trade routes which would give them greater access to economic superiority and growth. So began centuries of trade in resources from the land...and trade in people.

- **Discuss:** Quickly summarize how far had these people had drifted from representing who Jesus was? * (see question below after this question)

STORNGHOLDS:

Read this quote from Brett: *Strongholds are mind-sets impregnated with lies or false-truths that we know are contrary to the will of God. -an opposing bulwark of error or vice, -a fortress -a "prison".*

And we see them at work in our world – today!

- *Strongholds of false-theology that embrace the culture and throw out the teachings of Scripture!*
- *Strongholds of political power supported with theological arguments that don't reflect Jesus!*
- *Strongholds of bias and hatred with His name attached to it.*
- **Discuss:** * Discuss what strongholds the 'explorers' of the west coast of Africa must have believed.
- **Discuss** some of the strongholds you see which are prevalent in our Toronto/Canadian society today.
- **Discuss:** How is it that two followers of Jesus might have a very different perspectives on the same issue/idea/ideology? Is it really the idea or issue that differs or the response to it? How should we deal with that?

Let's Apply

Group discussion: A Heart of Worship and STRONGHOLDS

- **Discuss:** God is calling us to a Heart of Worship which reflects Him. But believing distortions, allowing strongholds to take hold in our lives, can lead to hard hearts, distorted views etc. How do people tend to allow DRIFT to take place so that they slide into the thoughts and ideologies which the world tries to tell us rather than following God's ways? How do we stop that drift? Do you need to?
- **Discuss:** The title of this sermon is "***You were supposed to be different***". How can we embrace God's ways and represent him well in a world that seems to way to pull us in the opposite direction continually.

Personal Reflection: Brett reminds us that the Bible calls us to examine our ideas:

Do you know the Bible well enough to understand what strongholds have gripped your mind?

How do you view God's word? How do you interact with it?

Is it a book of suggestions to you?

Is it a book that you think you examine its contents and you're sitting in judgement on it?

Or is it TRUTH that is examining you?

Some of us treat it like a blunted object – but the word of God is a sharp double-edged sword.

If you are interacting with it properly – it can cut to the core of your life!!!

But some of you are approaching it in a flawed way and therefore getting nothing out of it! (Brett)

- Quietly reflect on these questions and comments as if you are sitting with Jesus. Are any of them jumping out to you? Is there a step you can take to bring about a change in your life?

Personal Reflection: Are there strongholds in your own life which God wants to tear down? All of us have them. Humbly admit this. Sit with God asking him that question. Walk through James 4:7-10, asking God to reveal to you where you have not submitted or resisted. Ask Him to come near to you and help you to wash and purify your mind, heart and lives. Confess, grieve, mourn, cry. Humbly ask God to help you start anew.

Let's Pray

- At the end of the service, we sang "*Victor's Crown*." Find it on a streaming source and worship with it a few times, paying close attention to the words. Pray after it has been played, using some of the words and ideas in the song.
- Pray James 4:7-10 with each other.
- Continue to pray for our church and the church around the world; That we will embrace Jesus' ways, teaching and thinking. That we will be different. That we will be like Jesus.