

"You Are More Than Good Enough." – February 19, 2017  
by Wayne J. Schneider – Soli Deo Gloria

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Amos 7:7-15

I remember when our youngest, Julia, was in a kindergarten program. I was amused by her teacher attempting to organize the students before the show. She was trying to line up our daughter and her classmates by physical height. It appeared to be a task as difficult as herding cats.

In each generation, speaking of the past three, our children and grandchildren reach puberty earlier than the last. And with this change comes the increasing desire to be like, or measure up to, someone else or some social objective. Marketing is consumed with finding a 'new something' for which our pre-teens and teens long for.

God is also interested in our growth, not only physically but spiritually as well. Our Old Testament lesson speaks to God's curiosity regarding the spiritual measurement of 'Followers of the Way.' The prophet Amos writes, not only for the Israelites but for all creation too.

We have little knowledge of Amos, a shepherd who lived in Tekoa and was called by God to bring indictments on the enemies of the Israelites. The major portion of Amos' prophecy has to do with the sin of God's people in their relationship with Him. The people of God had a sort of memory (as with someone I know!), forgetting all God had done for them.

The judgment of God was systematic, speaking to their scandalous sin and disrupting self-righteousness. Chapter seven holds three forms, or visions, of God's communication for and the intensification of God's people.

In the first two visions, Amos pleads for the people's forgiveness, and God grants it. In the last vision, God gives the perfect perpendicular. This is a metaphor for the measurement of Israel, all of creation, and especially the church.

In verse 9, the prophet tells of God's plan to destroy all of Israel's holy places, and the lineage of the wicked King Jeroboam of Judah (1 Kings 13 & 2 Kings 14) As you may suppose, this did not make him the local priest's favorite. This, however, does not stop Amos.

The wall is a perfect and powerful metaphor and, perhaps, the best known in the entire book of Amos. You know by now I am no mechanic or carpenter, but as I understand a plumb line, today it would be called a laser-level, something to assure whatever is built is correct or straight. It is not a massive tool but an important one.

It has a different meaning when God uses the metaphor. God has a measuring tool, and it is evident that God's people will not be equal to God's blueprint. And, their failure to meet the measurement means their ruin.

To you and I, these events from thousands of years ago, appear punitive or cruel. But remember that God had blessed them in thousands of ways, but they had become coldhearted and cannot remember God's goodness as redeemer and creator.

We live in a time when God's plumb line is not noticed or even known to most Americans. Our culture measures everything, ethics, theology, even life itself by a 'sliding scale' rather than God's measurements. 'Sliding scales' do not create right or precise walls.

God's word through Amos can be a learning tool in the measurement of our relationship with God and others. So, how do we measure on God's "Plumb Line?" We need, of course, to understand what God expects of us. Holy Scripture is filled with information about how God wants us to live for Him and others. And, as I have said before, God's requirements must be accepted and then in joy, obeyed in our daily lives.

This information from God is not subjective or obsolete, and as we follow these instructions, our lives will be filled with joy. This is possible because these Godly

expectations are measured by God's Plume Line, and the structure of our lives will be built straight, sturdy, and functional, and we will be made complete, fulfilled.

Americans are saturated with a fascination of size, quantity, length, and magnitude. Our culture's is insane with the desire to be shorter or taller, richer or poorer, happy or more satisfied, this 'sliding scale' I spoke of earlier, does not produce what we so desire. While it may be true that life lived on a 'sliding scale' appears to be simpler, this life ends in feebleness and spiritual bankruptcy.

The only measurement that "Followers of the Way" know, is the truth that is God's way. God only wants us to Walk in the Light, as the prophet Micah wrote:

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.  
And what does the Lord require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8 NIV)

Let us so walk. Alleluia. Amen.