



[Amos 5:4-6](#)

(4) For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel, "Seek Me, and you shall live. (5) But do not seek Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and do not pass to Beersheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into exile, and Bethel shall come to nothing. (6) Seek the LORD and you shall live, lest He break out like a fire *on* the house of Joseph and devour it, and there be none to quench it in Bethel—

A Faithful Version

Beersheba played a role in the lives of Abraham, [Isaac](#), and Jacob. Though the event for each was a little different, something was said to each that is significant to our lives, especially in light of the Holy Spirit.

Abraham's incident at Beersheba is written in [Genesis 21:22-24](#):

And it came to pass at that time that Abimelech and Phichol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, "[God](#) is with you in all that you do. Now therefore swear to me by God that you will not deal falsely with me, with my offspring, or with my posterity; but that according to the [kindness](#) that I have done to you, you will do to me and to the land in which you have sojourned." And Abraham said, "I will swear."

In this event, Abimelech utters the words that become central to what Beersheba came to represent to the Israelites: "God is with you in all that you do." A pagan king observed Abraham's life as one that reflected godliness.

In Isaac's incident at Beersheba, recorded in [Genesis 26:23-24](#), God Himself utters the assurance necessary for Isaac to trust Him: "Then He went up from

there to Beersheba. And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, 'I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham's sake.'" Like Isaac, we need assurance, we need to believe, that God is with us.

In Jacob's case, he is on his way to Egypt to meet with Joseph, filled with a stressful mixture of [joy](#) and fear, when the event of [Genesis 46:1-4](#) occurs:

So Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, "Jacob, Jacob!" And he said, "Here I am." And He said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes."

Thus, at Beersheba, each of the three patriarchs receives assurance of the companionship of God. What might have been the reaction of the Israelites when Amos said, "Don't pass over to Beersheba"?

It is a pastor's responsibility, not only to help to build peoples' trust in God, but also from time to time to sow doubt about their condition or standing before God. This is necessary because we often assume that all is well in our relationship with God. Amos filled not only the role of prophet but also of pastor of these wayward people, who were falsely confident in their standing with God.

An analysis of Paul's writings shows that his tactics at meeting church problems varied. At times, he energetically battered the opposition's position, and at others, he merely asked questions accompanied by some well-placed, incisive, solid, logical reasoning. In [Amos 5:5](#), the prophet uses some strong imperatives, then turns to a recitation of matters the Israelites would have immediately recognized as accurate, even though they might not have accepted the truth of his statements.

Could these people have assumed - because of the general prosperity in Israel - that God was with them in all they did, despite all the evidence of

their sinfulness Amos observed during their festival in Beersheba? Were they blind to the fact that prosperity is no guarantee that one is righteous before God?

The essence of the "God is with you" promise is that all is well and [peace](#) exists between God and a person; there is no barrier or constraint between them, and harmony reigns. Thus, the two can walk together because they have an understanding ([Amos 3:3](#)) - in fact, they may even have a covenant.

Amos had many reasons to believe that their assumption that God was with them was on shaky ground. First, in [Amos 5:6](#), he briefly warns them of the fire of God's judgment, an allusion to the Day of the Lord, soon to fall upon them. He knows they are not [seeking God](#) to walk in His steps, so he proceeds to list a number of their sins. Finally, in verses 18-20, he shows them that they had no fear of the consequences of their way of life.

They truly assumed that everything was okay between them and God despite the sorry record of their sins that Amos laid before them! They completely ignored the fact that they, in reality, lived their lives apart from God. They really did not know the God they claimed to be walking with!

Consider the seriousness of verses 14-16:

Seek good and not evil, that you may live; so the LORD God of hosts will be with you, as you have spoken. Hate evil, love good; establish justice in the gate. It may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph. Therefore the LORD God of hosts, the Lord, says this. . . .

Nowhere else in the Bible do three successive verses feature the awesome name, "the LORD God of hosts," underscoring His leading the armies of heaven! Amos is making a very strong point by drawing their attention to the sovereign, omnipotent God of Armies, who is so far above us He is out of sight. These complacent people might choose to believe they were walking with Him, but it begs the question, did this great God want to walk with them as they were?

Adam would have happily remained in the Garden, provided he could hide, but God knew He could not allow such a condition to continue. What good would it do Adam? The Israelites' complacency had been telling them that, when the Day of the Lord arrived, God would side with His people, making it a day of great glory for them. Instead, Amos informs them that it would be just the opposite! It is a time of wailing and disaster (verses 16-17). They had been feeding themselves on false hopes. God says, "I will pass through you"!

In saying, "Seek good and not evil, that you may live; so the LORD God of hosts will be with you, as you have spoken" (verse 14), Amos admonishes them to seek [holiness](#). He is urging them to see that it is not just a way or rule of life, but a *means* of life. [Hebrews 12:14](#) confirms its importance, "... without holiness no one will see the Lord." When the people of God follow the way that accords with God's will, they come into possession of life. We must never presume God's grace or take it for granted. We must always fervently seek and submit to the will of God in order to be in His Kingdom.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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