

Micah 7

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning again. As Dave said, we come today to Micah chapter 7.

! I invite you to turn there with me. If you don't have a Bible of your own, we have some for you on the back and you can also follow along here on the screen. Today, we come to the conclusion. The final chapter of the book of Micah. And I wonder, what will you take away with you as we conclude this series?

What will stick? What will stay with you? Will you come away thinking that the Lord permits no idolatry among his people?

It's a good thing to take from this. Will you take with you the thought that God is a holy God, hating injustice and abuses of powers and all false dealings?

[1 : 07] Another good lesson. Will you take with you the idea that God is almighty, wielding even the great empires of the earth as tools in his hands?

That the Lord takes the sins of his own people very, very seriously, disciplining them when they trample upon his grace?

Or that the Lord does not abandon his people? That this message of discipline, this book of Micah, this message of discipline, is littered with promises of a future redemption?

What will you take with you from the book of Micah? I wonder. Today we hear a new voice in the book.

For six chapters, Micah has been speaking the Lord's words to the people of Israel and to Judah. And today we hear him, the prophet himself, speak on his own behalf.

[2 : 14] He shows us what his takeaway is. He speaks to the Lord. He speaks to the nation. He speaks to himself. And I think he speaks to us.

And so, turning to Micah chapter 7, we hear the voice of the prophet reflecting on all that he has said and ministered over roughly three decades of ministry.

And I hope that we can, too, learn from his experience how we ought to reflect on this message. Hear now God's word.

Woe is me. For I have become as when the summer fruit has been gathered. As when the grapes have been gleaned and there is no cluster to eat.

No first ripe fig that my soul desires. The godly has perished from the earth. There is no one upright among mankind. They all lie in wait for blood.

[3 : 18] Each hunts the other with a net. Their hands are on what is evil to do it well. The prince and the judge ask for a bribe. And the great man utters the evil desire of his soul.

Thus, they weave it together. The best of them is like a briar. The most upright of them a thorn hedge. The day of your watchmen, of your punishment, has come. Now their confusion is at hand. But no trust in a neighbor. Have no confidence in a friend. Guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your arms. For the son treats the father with contempt. And the daughter rises up against her mother.

The daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man's enemies are the men of his own house. But as for me, I will look to the Lord.

I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me. Rejoice not over me. Oh, my enemy, when I fall, I shall rise.

[4 : 16] When I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me.

He will bring me out to the light. I shall look upon his vindication. And my enemy will see. And shame will cover her who said to me, Where is the Lord your God?

My eyes will look upon her. Now she will be trampled down, like the mire of the streets. A day for the building of your walls. In that day, the boundaries shall be far extended. In that day, they will come to you from Assyria, and the cities of Egypt, and from Egypt to the river, from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain. But the earth will be desolate, because of its inhabitants, for the fruit of their deeds. Shepherd your people with your staff. The flock of your inheritance, who dwell alone in a forest, in the midst of a garden land.

[5 : 18] Let them graze in Bashad and Gilead, as in the days of old. As in the days when you came up out of the land of Egypt. I will show them marvelous things. The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might.

They shall lay their hands on their mouths. Their ears shall be deaf. They shall lick the dust like a serpent, like the crawling things of the earth. They shall come trembling out of their strongholds. They shall turn in dread to the Lord our God, and they shall be in fear of you. Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity, and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us. He will tread our iniquities underfoot.

You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will show faithfulness to Jacob, and steadfast love to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.

[6 : 23] This is God's word. Let's pray. Lord, will you, by the power of your spirit, give his eyes to see and ears to hear what you would have us learn and become from your word?

Will you do it by your might and for Christ's glory, in whose name we pray. Amen. Today's passage falls roughly into three or four, but we'll treat it as three sections.

The first section of this passage begins in verse one, goes through verse seven. It's Micah's lament. What we're hearing is his anguish over human depravity, over Israel's sin, and the coming discipline.

In verses two through six, we get this picture of a corrupted society. He paints a picture of why the discipline is coming from the Lord, the sins of the people.

It's a picture of deceit and corruption and violence that was pervasive among God's people. So widespread was it that, verse two, there seemed to Micah that there was no righteous one left in the land.

[7 : 56] We know later that he talks about a remnant, so this might be expressive speech, some hyperbole, so to speak, but he's painting this picture where the land is thoroughly corrupted.

He looks around and sees people figuratively hunting one another. And how do they do that? Well, verse three, those in positions of authority not only accept a bribe and corrupt justice, they solicit, they demand bribes.

The perversion of justice isn't just possible, it's assured in this society. And the rich work right alongside them. Those in authority, the judges here who are soliciting the bribes, then the wealthy can procure whatever they want.

The judge asks for a bribe and the great man utters the evil desire of his soul along with his bribe, obviously, and thus they weave it together, the injustice that Micah has been discussing from chapter one on.

Verse four, they are as fruitless and gnarled and pointed and dangerous as thorns the people are on the day of judgment and of discipline is coming.

[9 : 10] And so verses five and six, Micah says, don't place your hope in any person. There's no salvation to be found in even the best of men because sin is so universal.

So no one's safe in the hands of men. Verses five and six are a picture of what sin does. It destroys. It isolates. It breaks down even the bonds of family. What are we to do with this description?

Verses two through six of a corrupted society. What is it, you know, for? Is this like a universal thing? Is it a timeless truth? Or is it a temporary and narrowly focused thing on a particular people? Well, who is Micah speaking to? He's not a prophet to Nineveh, which is the capital of Assyria.

[10 : 14] He's not a prophet to Babylon. He's a prophet to who? Israel. To Judah. It's a divided kingdom at this time. And who are those people?

They're the people to whom the Lord said when he founded the nation. Exodus chapter 19. He said to these people, he said, you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

He's talking to the people of God. He's not talking about to the outsiders or the pagans or the secularists. He's talking to the people who are his kingdom of priests, his representatives in the world.

And who is that? Who is that? Last Sunday, I read a benediction from Revelation chapter 1. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father.

To him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Does that sound familiar? It's us. Michael was lamenting our forefathers, the visible people of God on the earth at that point in time named Israel and Judah and warning us that they can fall, that we can fall into extraordinary evil.

[11 : 43] So this isn't first a club that we use to beat and berate the culture around us. It's a call to examine ourselves, the kingdom of priests.

Are we treating others like commodities? Are we being dishonest for personal gain? Do we benefit from or employ crooked, the crooked work of others?

Does our sin cause the breakdown of relationships in our lives? It is time, the apostle Peter said, for the judgment to begin at the household of God.

Let's examine ourselves. And that's what we've been doing, right? We've been examining ourselves all the way through the book of Micah.

Perhaps that repeated self-examination over and over again has become tedious to us. Perhaps it's unnecessary now that we've done it a good six times.

[12 : 51] Is it unnecessary at this point? I think that Micah would answer us the repeated turning back to this self-inspection should teach us something, should teach us the importance of vigilance over our own lives, our own actions and intentions.

Sin is insidious. It does not rest end, neither should we. No one said, you know, be killing sin or sin will be killing you.

But chapter seven is not just a rehash of what's come before. This is important. Chapter seven adds a new development to this introspection.

Micah's own reaction, that's the new wrinkle. his reaction bookends that section, verses two through six. They're surrounded by his reaction in verses one and verse seven.

And it is a good model for our hearts. And I pray that it becomes our own reaction. Verse one is a lament.

[14 : 08] Woe is me. Micah is sorrowful, troubled, anguished over the sins of his people and of himself. He literally admits his own sin, right?

Well, how's that enlightening? You might ask. Of course he's upset. That's not the only reaction we might have toward the sin. sin. I suspect you can imagine many.

We might be indifferent to sin, ours and to others. Hopefully by now the book has pricked our hearts and we aren't indifferent to our sins, to the sins of God's people.

Hopefully we recognize the seriousness and feel the weight of sin before so holy a God as this. But hopefully we don't sense that weight in a vindictive way.

It's another way we could behold and evaluate sin because Micah doesn't relish the calamity that's coming upon sinners. But unfortunately I think there is a kind of Christian and a certain kind of Christian leader who seems to relish the wrath of God.

[15 : 28] Who seems not just to want to warn about fire and brimstone but to love fire and brimstone. Like that's their thing. But that's not Micah.

He laments. And it's not God either. Micah sees human sin. He sees Israel's unfaithfulness and he weeps. Just as our Lord wept as he approached Jerusalem.

Matthew chapter 23. He said, Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it. How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you were not willing.

And just as the apostles weep over sin. Oftentimes people's perspective of the apostle Paul is that he's like this harsh, hard man.

But just last spring in the book of Philippians we heard him say, those who were walking in sin, he said, many of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.

[16 : 43] And so Micah laments just like his Lord. And he pictures himself verse 1 as a vine that's just been stripped bare. Woe is me, he says, for I have become as when the summer fruit has been

gathered, when the grapes have been gleaned.

There is no cluster to eat, no first ripe fig that my soul desires. As one writer put it, Micah had pronounced woe on those in the city who devised wickedness upon their beds.

That was back in chapter 2. But now he feels the woe deep within his inner being. And I wonder if we feel that way about unrighteousness.

The sin, our own sin and the sins around us does it have this effect on us? Do we see it, lament it, mourn it? Do we ignore it?

Or even relish the judgment to come? And friends, by the way, this is the key, I believe. When Christ says, love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you.

[18:02] That interview that Dave was talking about those pastors who escaped Afghanistan as the Taliban were closing in on them. One of the things they were saying, we don't know what happened to our home.

Soldiers were coming. We still don't know two years on what happened to it, or a year on whatever it is. They talked about loving their enemies and how it is difficult, but this, I think, is the key, the lament over sin.

Do we see in others that they are slaved, enslaved to their own sin? That they are darkened by the enemy?

And that they are under a righteous judgment and do we mourn for them? Do we weep for them more than we care about our own situation and what's happening to us? Do we weep over sin and all its consequences?

That's the key to loving your enemy. Oh, that we would have this heart that sorrows over sin, just like Micah, just like our Lord, and that we would have hearts like Micah that lean on God alone, which is where he goes.

[19:22] Just after saying verses five and six that we can't rely finally on humanity, which is a fitting reminder in the wake of an election this past week, just after saying we can't finally rely on humanity, in verse seven Micah finds somewhere he can place all his hope.

But as for me, I will look to the Lord. I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me. I like how one writer put it, the world around Micah offers him no reason to hope.

Only God is left, and that is reason enough. But I wonder if that sounds, if that feels a little bit like giving up to you.

I guess I can't rely on anyone else. I guess I'll wait and see what God does. I wonder if you have ever been in a difficult spot and a brother or sister in Christ gave you counsel and encouraged you to wait on the Lord.

And you thought, well, you mean give up? You know, wait passively by? What good is that? What good is that? That same writer that said, you know, only God has left, and that is reason enough, put it like this.

[20:56] The verbs watch in hope, watch and wait and hear, entail not a passive waiting for the victory, but an active participating in it through prayer and hope.

as the ship of state broke apart, first internally from corrupt officials and then externally from the Assyrian invasion. Our poet prophet Micah does not give up and surrender to depression, but waits the most powerful form of action by the helpless who express in their waiting the knowledge that God comes to them in the form of salvation.

Waiting on the Lord and not in our circumstances, not in politicians, not on pastors, not on technology, not on any created thing. It's not giving up.

It's an active reliance, an active trust, an active life of prayer and expectation and placing the weight of our hopes in the Lord and those who cast themselves on Him will not be disappointed.

Which is just what we see in the next section, verses 8 through 17. As he says, rejoice not over me, O my enemy. When I fall, I shall rise.

[22:25] When I sit in darkness, the Lord will be light, a light to me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against Him until He pleads my cause and executes judgment for me.

He will bring me out to the light. I shall look upon His vindication and my enemy will see and shame will cover her who said to me, where is the Lord your God?

My eyes will look upon her. Now she will be trampled down like the mire of the streets. A day for the building of your walls. In that day the boundary shall be far extended.

in that day they will come to you from Assyria and the cities of Egypt and from Egypt to the river and from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain but the earth will be desolate because of its inhabitants for the fruit of their deeds.

Shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your inheritance who dwell alone in a forest, in the midst of a garden land, let them graze in Bashan and Gilead as in the days of old, as in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt.

[23 : 36] I will show them marvelous things. The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might. They shall lay their hands on their mouths, their ears shall be deaf.

They shall lick the dust like a serpent, like the crawling things of the earth. They shall come trembling out of their strongholds. They shall turn in dread to the Lord our God.

and they shall be in fear of you. Micah's trust in the Lord, verse 7, spills over into this rousing speech of redemption and justification as God lifts up, will lift up his people and will shame those who have persecuted them.

In verses 8-10 there, he speaks on behalf of Jerusalem. He tells mighty Assyria and Babylon, your victory will be short-lived. We will be home soon when the Lord has accomplished his purpose in disciplining us.

Then in verses 11-13 there, he speaks to Jerusalem. First he spoke on behalf of Jerusalem, now he speaks to Jerusalem, saying, prepare yourselves for restoration, the rebuilding of the walls.

[24 : 56] This is more than 100 years before Jerusalem even falls. Even 100 years before Jerusalem fell, before the walls fell, he's like, get ready to rebuild your walls.

How encouraging is that? That's some confidence in God, verse 7. And his hope is rightly placed, is it not? There's a whole book of the Bible Nehemiah about the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. The Lord is good on his promise. He always is. And interesting, in verses 14-17 he speaks to Jerusalem's savior as he tramples the wicked nations.

And he points back to the great act of salvation in the past, the exodus out of Egypt where God shepherded his people out of bondage to spoiling the enemy and set them safely in the land.

And Micah says, Lord, we trust that you will do that same thing again. It doesn't matter if it's Egypt or if it's Babylon or even if it's the grave. We who hope in Christ.

[26 : 16] Right? Those who think they are triumphing over the Lord of Israel, over Israel, over the church, they don't have the long view in mind.

It was true of Egypt, it was true of Babylon, it is true of the Taliban today, it is true of every enemy of the cross. They don't have the long view in mind because he has written the end from the beginning.

Micah, like many of the prophets, looks forward to all that the Lord will do. There's a mixing here of Assyria is going to be undone, we're going to come back from this immediate trouble and trial. There's also this to the ends of the earth thing going on from sea to sea, from mountain to mountain as he looks forward that this is not the final and the best redemption. There's coming something greater.

The worldwide kingdom of God that will come on the last day is also mingled in. So whenever things look bleak, look like the church is fizzling, look like the culture is winning out, remember, friends, have the long view in mind.

[27 : 44] Get ready to rebuild the walls. in a hundred years' time. Have the long view in mind. Restoration is coming. Vindication is coming eventually to the ends of the earth because our Lord reigns.

And so Micah has learned to weep over sin and I hope we have to. He's learned to lean hard on God and I hope we have to.

He's learned to take the long view, which is why he concludes verses 18 through 20. Who is a God like you?

Pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance. He does not retain his anger forever because he delights in steadfast love. He will again have compassion on us.

He will tread our iniquities underfoot. He will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. You will show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.

[29 : 01] He ends with a question. Who is a God like you? Incidentally, that's what Micah's name actually means.

Who like Yahweh? Who is like Yahweh? It's as if he's signing a little bit of himself at the end of the book. Who is a God like you?

And that's the question we ought to ask. Who is like this God? This is the question that it asks us to distinguish from what distinguishes the God of the Bible from all other beings, all their philosophies, and all other conceptions of the Almighty, and all of the things that we would place our trust in, and our hope in, and find in it our treasure?

Let me ask you, what is, in your mind, is the defining feature of the God of the Bible? Is it His holiness?

This book is filled with it. In a day and in an age where the surrounding nations were full of temple prostitution and all sorts of abominations, even today the Christian moral view, worldview, looks so different, is so much higher and more stringent than that of the world around us.

[30 : 42] Is that the defining feature? It's part of it. Is it His power? We just finished this section where He's going to trample the nations underfoot.

He's going to vindicate His people in a show of power, just like the show of power over Egypt and over Egypt's Pharaoh and over Egypt's gods. In the ancient Near East, the predominant conception of the heavenly realm was like regional deities tied to nation states.

As a god grew in power, their nation would prosper and even expand over the nations of less powerful gods. But the idea of the god that Micah sees, the god who wields these other nations as his own tools, another empire even, meant to discipline his own people with them.

That was the way he used the tool. That was incredible on several accounts. First, that one god could use another nation as his own tool.

It meant that he was sovereign even over the gods of those nations. Second, that the god of a seemingly weak nation could do this to the mightiest empires on the planet in succession, not just once but twice in a row.

[32 : 12] In the heavenlies then, this god was dominant even over the greatest of the other powers. And I think there is something biblically true, this worldview, this conception of the world. But that he would discipline his own nation, that that's the thing he would do?

A god who would subject his own name to scorn as his people were taken into captivity. Well, we spent an entire week considering the shame of the cross a few weeks back.

Truly, who is like this god? And so we sing with Moses after the great deliverance, who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome, in glorious deeds, doing wonders?

He sang that song after the Lord had plunged the Egyptian army into the sea. What is the defining feature of this god?

Is it his high ethical standard, especially for his own people? Is it his awesome power that Micah has just been reflecting on?

[33 : 25] that's not what Micah singles out as so extraordinary about this god. What's unique about the god of the bible, friends?

He is more powerful than all other gods, but that's not what Micah focuses on. He demands holiness to degrees far beyond what other gods do.

like we rejoiced last week, he is inviting us into his own character. It's a beautiful thing. But here's what Micah focuses on.

He loves mercy. He forgives sin. Who is a god like you? Verse 18. pardoning iniquity.

And passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance. He will tread our iniquities underfoot, not us.

[34 : 35] God's people lived generation after generation after generation at the center of their worship looking to a sacrifice by which the Lord promised to forgive their sins.

And this, Micah says, this is that thing that distinguishes God. It is his loving kindness, steadfast mercy that he forgives, pardons iniquity, passes over transgression, and treads our iniquities underfoot, which he did by the cross of Christ.

Because that central feature of Israel's worship led to one sacrifice for all and for all time.

That made it possible for God to forgive all sin without being unjust. Because in Christ, he did indeed trample our sin.

And as Christ was plunged into the depths of the grave, so too were our sins plunged into the depths. The image here is the depths of the sea. And this, Micah says in the very last verse, is his faithfulness.

[36 : 15] His faithfulness to his promises. Specifically, the covenant he made with Abraham that he would bless the whole world through Abraham's seed.

God's love. And that's what we see in the cross of Christ. What has Abraham to do with us? The scriptures are actually quite clear.

In Galatians chapter 3, the apostle Paul ties us to Abraham. Just as Abraham believed God, he says, it was counted to him as righteousness.

know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, in you shall all the nations be blessed.

So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. If you have entrusted yourself to this savior, you belong to the God who is faithful.

[37 : 32] You are tied to Abraham, the one that he made the promise to, and you will forever be safe in his arms, and you are the beneficiary of this promise that this God, unlike any other, will pardon your iniquity and pass over your transgression for the remnant of his inheritance.

You are the one that he treasures, and have poured out the blood of his son for to redeem and make his own forever. For anyone who hasn't called on the name of the Lord and trusted in him for this great blessing, you can in this very moment will you repent and believe.

And then you will become an heir of Abraham and the promise to him God. And all this history will be your history with a faithful God, and all this future will be your future with this faithful God.

Friends, Christians, we are a people like Micah, a people of hope because of this steadfast God. It's not all gee, I hope. It turns out all right. But the God who century after century has shown his power and his faithfulness and his love has demonstrated that what he says is true.

[39 : 05] Which means that when we lose something precious, precious, when we lose someone precious, our story is not done.

When we make a terrible mistake, our story is not done. When someone sins against us grievously, our story is not done. When we fall ill and grow frail and begin to lose our memories, our story is not done.

When the world around us changes and is hostile and we no longer recognize this, that is not the end. When they lower our casket into the ground, our story is not done.

Michael looked to the future and saw a shepherd king coming to plunge his people's sins into the depths and that shepherd king, who speaks the end from the beginning, king has spoken of us and he has said, just as Micah looked into the future and saw my coming, you may also look into the future and expect my coming.

I first, in my first coming, plunged sin into the depths and soon I will plunge the results of sin there too. All sickness I will heal, he says.

[40 : 33] All wrongdoing I will right. All death I will undo. All tears I will wipe away with my own hand. I am making all things new and the end of your story is joy and perfection and victory and glory and life in my kingdom forever more.

Let's pray. who is a God like you?

Lord, will you do in our hearts what you did in Micah's heart? Lord, may that steady us and set our hearts on your long term.

May you be glorified in us as we set our hopes in you. Father, may we be built up even as you do it in us.

We ask this in your matchless name. Amen.