

Ultimate Trust

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[0 : 00] Well, if you could keep your Bibles open to page 822, I'll be looking at this passage from Micah. I'm sorry, I'm changing the title. I'm going to call this Ultimate Trust.

I want to look at the way Micah trusted in God and in God's promise for forgiveness and restoration. Today takes us to the end of our sermon series on Micah's prophecy.

And I must say it has provided some bleak and exciting reading at times with stirring descriptions of sin and prophecies of punishment and exile. I have yet to live down preaching on the crunching of bones and tearing of flesh from chapter 3.

But also we've heard of hope, deliverance, a remnant. And now in the beginning of chapter 7, Micah brings it all to a close. He sums up the situation on the ground, summarizes the extent to which sin has perverted the nation and turned them away from God.

Woe is me, he says. In another translation, what misery is mine. And he goes on to show the way that sin led to a breakdown of civil order, of leadership, of societal friendships and relationships, familial relationships, but also a breakdown of righteousness.

[1 : 23] In verse 1 he says, For I have become as when the summer fruit has been gathered, as when the vintage has been gleaned. There is no cluster to eat. He goes on, the godly man has perished from the earth.

You see, there has been a breakdown of righteousness. And that is his take on the human situation. And some of that language carries on into the reading we had today.

He talks about darkness, uses an image of imprisonment. But you see, all of that language in the first part of the chapter 7 shows Micah with his eyes fixed on the situation around him.

He sees what is going on. He's speaking into it, talking about it. And it fills him with utter grief. And yet, it's a great contrast with what he then says in verse 7.

He says this, But as for me, I will look to the Lord. I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me.

[2 : 27] I think it's a great contrast between what he starts out with at the beginning of chapter 7, Woe is me. And then in verse 7, I will look to the Lord.

I will wait for the God of my salvation. I think that's extraordinary. In the middle of this terrible human situation, he is casting his eyes upon God and says, I will wait on the Lord.

See, that is a statement of trust, of ultimate trust in the Lord. In the middle of darkness, in the middle of sin, with disaster looming, he is able to look up and trust in the Lord.

And this is not just trust willy-nilly. This is not fingers-crossed religion. For if you look at the passage, you will see that in the middle of a sinful and degenerate people, with disaster looming, in this case caused by sin, Micah trusts in God's power to redeem.

In the middle of darkness, he trusts in God's ability to shed light. I want to talk to you today about trust.

[3 : 39] I want you to look within your heart, within yourselves, and ask yourself this question, Do I trust God? Do I trust completely?

Do I have ultimate trust in God? Is there a situation that you could imagine that is beyond God's ability to intervene, to help?

Is there a sin so great? Is there a sinner so trapped in their sin that God does not desire to save? But Micah's trust, Micah's trust in God comes from knowing who God is.

It's as simple as that. Micah knew the God he was dealing with and how he operated. Micah knew who God is. That is the basis of his trust.

He knew that God has the power and the desire to redeem his people from sin. Who is this God? Well, look at me at the passage.

[4 : 46] I've got two headings. One is that God is the forgiver, and second, God the restorer. Follow with me from verse 8. Rejoice not over me, O my enemy.

When I fall, I shall rise. 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 forth to the light. I shall behold his deliverance. Then my enemy will see, and shame will cover her who said to me, Where is the Lord your God?

You get a great deal of imagery here, the imagery of falling and rising, of darkness and light. God is both judge and advocate and the parole officer. But now you see, this is Israel speaking.

This is words of confession. But you see, there is a process going on in these verses. It starts with sin. And sin is understood as a violation against God.

[5 : 54] Sin brings about God's wrath, his just punishment. In the case of Israel, that punishment would be the destruction of the nation and exile. But then comes redemption.

The Lord will be my light. He will bring me out into the light. I will see his righteousness. Because God is a forgiving God.

It is not God's nature to condemn sin. But nor is it his nature to overlook sin. For sin is something that God takes very seriously.

Yet sin is something that God has the power and the desire to overcome in his people. And these words from verse 8 are being placed in the mouth of the nation.

In a sense, within their exile. Within their punishment. And there is the recognition there of the justice of that punishment. But then, of God acting to forgive and to restore.

[6 : 58] And what Micah is showing here is the way God operates. The sin of Israel brought the power of other nations to bear against the country.

And that was God's punishment. But in that comes repentance. Then forgiveness. For that is God's way. That is God's nature. Verse 18.

Who is a God like thee? 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 upon us. He will tread our iniquities underfoot. Thou wilt cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

And so while the sin amongst the people brought misery and woe to Micah, he could look ahead to a punishment and through that punishment to repentance and so forgiveness.

[8 : 02] For he understood that punishment was part of God's purpose in bringing his people to repentance. People say that the God of the Old Testament is about vengeance and wrath.

While the God of the New Testament is about love and acceptance. Well, that's ridiculous. God has not changed his nature. And just as God spoke plainly to his people Israel about sin and the consequences of sin, so he speaks to us, his people, now.

For example, in Romans 1, Paul writes, The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of those who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.

You see, there's no difference. For just as God took sin seriously amongst his people Israel then, so he takes sin seriously amongst his people now.

And we are God's people. And just as God wanted to bring his ancient people to repentance so that he might forgive them and love them, so he wants to bring everyone to repentance through faith in Jesus Christ now so that he might forgive.

[9 : 17] Who is a God like thee, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression? He does not retain his anger forever because he did light in steadfast love.

He will tread our iniquities underfoot. Thou wilt cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. God accomplished that through Jesus Christ. God brought that about through Jesus Christ.

For by his death on the cross for our behalf, Jesus took our punishment upon himself and so made an end to sin. And so while by nature we stand under God's wrath as sinners, under Christ we stand forgiven.

For God is the forgiver. But second, God is the restorer. Verse 11. 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 to Egypt and from Egypt to the river, from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain.

[10 : 25] But the earth will be desolate because of its inhabitants for the fruits of their doing. See, God forgives. But God also restores. For the punishment which Israel suffered brought about the physical destruction of the nation.

Jerusalem fell. The temple was destroyed. The people sent into exile. The walls of the city were breached and the boundaries of the nation violated. But Micah is looking forward not just to forgiveness, but also to a restoration that the Lord would accomplish in which He would restore the nation and restore His relationship with His people.

The faithful remnant would return. Verse 14. Shepherd thy people with thy staff, the flock of thy inheritance, who dwell alone in a forest, in the midst of a garden land.

Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead as in the days of old. And then in verse 15, God speaks. As in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt, I will show them marvelous things.

So you see, God goes right back to the beginning. Right back to that time when God and His people walked so closely together. When God took care of them, took care of all their needs.

[11 : 48] For that is the restoration God wants for His people, His stiff-necked and rebellious people, to take His place as the shepherd who tends to His people, who provides for them.

You see, forgiveness is the first part of the process. Then comes repentance. Then comes God's restoration. God's nature is to restore.

He wants to build. He wants to care for us. When God forgives us from our sins, He then wants to restore in us His image and His likeness.

He wants to restore relationship with us. God does not want to punish people. He wants to restore. Restore us, O God. Make Your face to shine upon us that we may be saved.

Psalm 80. Ended Acts chapter 3. Repent, therefore, and turn again that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

[12 : 54] You see, restoration is what God gives His people when He has dealt with our sin. Forgiveness. Then comes restoration. For God is the restorer.

Well, what does this have to do with us today? What does this have to do with God's people now? The question here has to do with trust.

How far do you trust God? Are there limits to your trust of God? Do you have ultimate trust in God?

Of course, difficult and terrible things do happen in our lives for all sorts of reasons. Often, nothing to do with sin at all. And part of the message here is that God is powerful and God is trustworthy.

But sometimes we do see the consequences of sin in our lives. And we have to realize that that is not the end of the road with God, but that God desires that we should come to repentance through faith in Jesus Christ.

[14 : 00] And that if we repent, then there is nothing so terrible that God cannot forgive us and restore us. But the story of Micah is about what happens when sin becomes the very fabric of God's people.

And just as Micah was engaged with the sin reality around him, he spoke about it, he preached into it, was grieved by it. Neither can we close our eyes to sin, to sin in our families, to sin in ourselves, or to sin amongst us, God's people.

Oh, woe is me. He is there, preaching, speaking, bringing God's word to the people. They would listen. Yet at the same time, I watch in hope for the Lord.

I wait for God, my Savior. My God will hear me. For Micah trusted in God and in his process, however painful, of repentance and then forgiveness and restoration.

So we must also trust that when sin gets the upper hand in people we love, in ourselves or amongst God's people, that God desires to bring about forgiveness and restoration.

[15 : 21] That may be painful. It may involve exile and consequence. But it is meant to bring about repentance and so forgiveness and restoration.

Oh, Micah knew. Micah knew God and how God operated. Thou wilt show faithfulness to Jacob and steadfast love to Abraham as thou hast sworn to our fathers from the days of old.

Oh, yes, he knew. And so he trusted. He had ultimate trust in God that in the middle of darkness and in the middle of sin that God would, could, wanted to overcome.

And that is why Micah is so remarkable. It is the same ultimate trust that Jesus had when he accepted the cross in the face of humiliation and the darkness of death, trusting that through him God would bring about forgiveness and reconciliation for all who repent.

Micah's trust transcended the darkness of sin in God's people and saw even there the beginning of God's redemption. it was a Christ-like trust.

[16 : 39] So let us, as God's people, put on the same trust, knowing that God does not want sin to have the last word, but wants to bring his people through repentance into forgiveness and into a glorious restoration.

and to a glorious restoration. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.