

# Light In The Darkness

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn for a little to the chapter we read in Micah, Micah chapter 7, reading at 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 out to the light. I will look upon his vindication. Now as we know, Micah was a country prophet who prophesied at the same time as Isaiah.

Isaiah was more a royal prophet. Isaiah prophesied to the kings, to the nobility, to the landowners. A lot of his prophecy was during the reigns of various kings within the palaces. And while he prophesied to the kings and to the nobility, Micah was a rural prophet who went about in the countryside.

[ 1 : 12 ] And his prophecies were more towards the people, the people living in the rural communities. And as we say, God's spokesmen, these two main spokesmen at this particular time, Isaiah in the palace and Micah in the country.

But they were both prophesying the same thing. And part of that prophecy was that their continued sinning against God, their continued rebellion against God was going to lead to disaster.

And particularly people who had the light, who had the privilege, who had the knowledge, who had the blessing of God, who had been shown the way and God had worked for them.

To turn your back on that, to turn your back on the light, to turn your back upon God, does eventually bring God's judgment down upon them.

And it's important that we heed God's word. God has told us, the Bible makes it very clear when we read in the New Testament, that all that we find in the Old Testament, all the different characters, all the historical accounts that are given to us, are there for our instruction and for our edification.

[ 2 : 27 ] God in his wisdom has seen fit to highlight particular things. And they're there for our spiritual edification, for our instruction, for our benefit, so that we will heed and hear what God is saying to us.

And as we could see, the nation of Israel and of Judah, you'll remember how the nation of Israel, it was so strong in the time of David and the time of Solomon, but after Solomon's reign, son Rehoboam reigned, and the nation divided into two.

The northern kingdom split following a man, Jeroboam, who became the king of Israel, but the southern part remained loyal to the house of David, and they remained with Rehoboam, who was their king.

So there was this split within the land, Israel, there was the northern part of Israel and the southern part of Judah. The history of Israel went on a downward spiral through a succession of wicked kings.

And those in authority have a huge impact upon the nation and upon the people. And sometimes we forget that the leadership of a place has a huge impact upon society.

[ 3 : 53 ] And that is true locally, and it is true nationally as well. And that is why it's so important that we pray for all who are in authority over us, because they have huge responsibility and are ultimately responsible to God.

But what they are and the way they influence society has a huge impact upon the well-being, or the lack of it, in the days that we live.

And that's how it was back then. And of course the king had huge influence. And there was a succession of evil kings in Israel that brought it into this downward spiral until at last the northern kingdoms went into captivity.

The southern kingdoms had a mixed bag of kings. There were superb kings who were really loyal to the Lord. Kings like Josiah and Hezekiah, men who feared the Lord and honored the Lord and worshiped the Lord.

And brought through the reign national good as they turned the nation away from idolatry, smashed up idols and turned the people to seek the living and through God.

[ 5 : 04 ] But it wasn't always the case. And so there was this, as we say, a mixed bag of kings. And that's why Isaiah was prophesying and Micah was prophesying, because they were saying, if you don't heed the Lord, if you don't turn from your evil ways, if you don't ditch this idolatry which you're practicing in the secret and in quiet, then the Lord is going to judge you.

And we know from the Bible that righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people. That's what the Bible tells us. And that is proved through so often.

But in Judah, when you go through the book, you will read that there were many glaring national sins. There was idolatry and covetousness. There was oppression, violence, bribery and corruption. These were a list of sins that you will find over and over and over and over again. And these were particular sins that the Lord hated, where he sees the oppression of people, where he sees corruption in high places, where he sees bribery, where there's violence, where there's idolatry. And when a nation is given over to these things, then it's almost inevitable that following on eventually will be the judgment of God. And it's serious. And that is why we must take it to heart and that we must plead with the Lord to be merciful to us.

[ 6 : 35 ] Because many of these sins, which were national sins back there in those days, they can also be said that this is part of our own problems in the day in which we're living.

So we need, and as the Lord says, if my people who are called by my name, if they repent, if they seek my face, if they repent, that he will hear from heaven and he will heal the land.

So there's a huge responsibility given to the people of God right through the land. In fact, the Lord is really saying, ultimately the responsibility lies with my people.

And if they will heed this, then he says, I will, I will heal the land. Now, Micah, at the beginning of the chapter, and it's often true in the minor prophets, some of the, as you read through some of the minor prophets, some of the reading can be very, almost depressing because of the way that judgment is spoken of and of how God is going to deal with them.

But all was mingled with the dark prophecies that are always glimmers of shining light. And the Lord is showing and says, yes, I'm going to have to deal with you.

[ 7 : 53 ] And it may be in judgment, but because of my covenant love, I will not abandon you. And so there's always a ray of hope. There's always this light.

And it's true also in this prophecy where Micah, for instance, in verse 7 says, But as for me, I will look to the Lord. I will wait for the God of my salvation.

My God will hear me. Things may be grim. Things may be dark. And in fact, things are so bad at the beginning of the chapter, Micah highlights this, that there doesn't seem to be, he cannot seem to be able to find any believers, any people that he can have fellowship with, that he can have communion with, people of a like mind, people that he wants to spend time with, enjoying communion and fellowship and talking of the things of the Lord.

Can't find any. And he says, It's like those, For I have become, as when the summer fruit has been gathered, so when the grapes have gleaned, there is no cluster to eat, no first ripe fig that my soul desires.

It's like if you had, if you had planted potatoes and you had, you know, you're looking forward to the, to the first taste of new potatoes, you're waiting for it and you, you go out and you, you lift the first shawl, there's nothing.

[ 9 : 15 ] And it looks like there has been it. It kind of had budded and it had flowered but it had flowered and then it had gone and you say, well, it should be ready now. But there's nothing. Then you take up the next shawl, there's nothing.

Nothing. You can imagine the disappointment and you say, oh, this is, this is terrible. Well, that's the way that Micah is highlighting and he's saying, there are, there's, I'm going out looking for someone that I can have fellowship with, somebody that I can enjoy sharing and there's nobody.

It's empty. And so, this is showing straight away things are, things are really in a bad way. And, in fact, things appear so bad that not only have the godly perished but he says, there's no one upright.

They all lie in wait for blood. Each hunts the other with a net. Their hands are on what is evil to do it well. And so, the prince and the judge ask for a bribe.

The great man utters the evil desire of his soul and so on. But then, it gets really bad because when it comes down to verses 5 and verses 6 it shows that even in the one place where you would expect, you would say, well, at least in my own home.

[10:34] In my home, I will have confidence. In my own home, I have trust. But even there, it's just betrayal and treachery. The neighbors, you can't trust them. Put 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 his father with contempt. The daughters rise up against her mother and so on.

It's a fearful picture. It's depressing reading. You go through that and you say, that's awful. What a society. And that's why God's judgment is going to come.

Because a society cannot keep going like that. And this is where Micah is. And you know, in a sense where it says there that a man's enemies are the men of his own house.

You know this, we could apply that spiritually to ourselves. And that's part of what makes a Christian life so difficult. Because our own enemies are here right within our own heart.

[11:43] that is one of the huge problems that we have as Christians. And that's why the Apostle Paul said, the good that I would, I do not. And the evil that I would not, that's what I end up doing.

Why? Because our own enemies are here within our own heart. The heart, we're told in the Bible, is deceitful above all things.

There's nothing in all the world more deceitful than your heart and my heart. The heart is deceitful above all things. I'm desperately wicked. Who can know it? That's a question that's asked.

And you and I can't. We don't. And often we're surprised at ourselves. Sometimes when we catch ourselves what we're thinking, what we feel that we might even be capable of, and we're saying, is that really me?

And that's really what shows the marvel of God's grace. Where God's grace is at work subduing, just the corruption, the perverseness, the iniquity that is within, the twistedness that is within our own heart, the inclination to evil that is within us, the whole movement of rebellion that exists within our human heart, and yet grace is at work subduing.

[13:03] Grace is at work inclining us to the things of God. And so there is this conflict going on within the believer's heart. Always the clash, the bashing together with the good and with the bad, with the natural intent of the heart and yet the working of grace in opposition to it.

And every Christian knows of it. And there's sometimes the coalition course is worse than at other times. Sometimes you feel bruised and you feel battered by it. Other times it's maybe not as intense.

But anyway, that by the way. Then Micah says in verse 8, Rejoice not over me, rejoice not over me, O my enemy.

When I fall, I shall arise. And Micah is showing here that the possibility of falling is very real.

In fact, the word of God makes it very clear to us that although we ought to be walking in obedience and every day our footsteps should be walking in the paths of righteousness and that as Christians we should be walking in a right way, following the Lord, not falling, not stumbling.

[14:18] Yet we know to our cost that we do fall and we do stumble and we know from experience and we know from the word of God that people, even the best, sometimes fall and stumble.

You go to the father of the faithful, to Abraham. And he was a man of remarkable faith. And it was a faith, the life of Abraham rightly is so highlighted in the New Testament of that great, great faith, hoping against hope and yet that immovable faith in the Lord and yet there was a period in Abraham's life when he gave in to the temptation from his wife to help God because they're kind of saying, well, the promise that God has given to us, it doesn't look like it's going to be fulfilled because time has gone.

We're going to be too old now to have a son. And so there was this, Sarah was saying, I'm past the age of being able to bear a son and we know the story of how Abraham took Hagar, the servant girl, in order to father a child with her.

And this was a child, this was not God's promise. This was not what God had intended for Abraham. He was going to give Abraham a son through Sarah as he had promised.

And we know the problems that it brought into Abraham's life. We know how Ishmael had to be cast out, how he was mocking Isaac, the son of promise when Isaac was eventually born.

[ 15 : 59 ] And Abraham's lack of faith is falling in his strongest point. We're still reaping the repercussions of that to this very day.

All the struggles in the Middle East, all that is going on is between the Arab race and the Jewish race. All that goes back to Isaac Isaac and to Ishmael to Abraham.

And so we see how even the greatest, you look at Noah. Noah was a man who found favor, who found grace in the eyes of the Lord. The world was another wickedness.

The Lord said, I'm going to wipe out this world. I'm going to start it all over again with Noah and his family. Noah alone has found favor and grace in my sight. He was a good man.

He was a preacher of righteousness, as the New Testament tells us. He was preaching all the time. He was building the ark, warning the people, telling the people. And yet we find after the flood and after the great deliverance that Noah experienced, we find him passed out drunk.

[ 17 : 08 ] We should look at the likes of David, a man after God's own heart. David who penned the most beautiful, poetic songs, Christian songs ever.

A man who had a passionate desire for the glory of God in his life. A man who walked in the ways of God. And yet there was murder, there was adultery, there was everything in his heart.

And it broke out. And he was responsible for into an adulterous relationship and then in order to cover his tracks, one of his most loyal men, Uriah.

He had him killed. And it shows just how deceitful, how awful the human heart is. Peter, Peter was a man who was passionately in love with the Lord Jesus Christ.

And yet that same Peter who made the great confession, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God, is the same Peter who says, Jesus, I don't know anything about him. He means nothing to me.

[ 18 : 17 ] you remember how Peter was denying Jesus in the presence of Jesus at the time of Jesus' trial? And it just shows how far the best can fall.

So the Bible shows us that. In fact, we're told in Psalm 37 that the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, though he fall. It's a good person, remember. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down.

So we have to ask ourselves, how do we fall? How is it possible to fall? Well, there are many different things. And sometimes at one level, you know, it's always easier for a Christian to fall. When the spirit and the presence of God is not in real power within communities, such sometimes his presence has been in times of the past.

You know there are times when the presence of God is really known, can be known nationally, it can be known within communities, we know his presence. And at times like that, there is a warmth to the things of God, there's an inclination to the things of God.

[ 19 : 31 ] People are more careful about what they do and how they live. But when God's presence is being withdrawn, and we believe that is happening to us nationally, although the Lord will never leave his people, he's promised that today as a believer you will never be on your own, the Lord will never leave you in isolation.

He says, I will never leave you, I will never forsake you. My presence will always be with you. The Lord, you can count on that, guaranteed. That doesn't mean that we will always have a felt sense of his presence.

But there is no question whatever that the Lord withdraws a sense of his presence, and particularly when a nation goes against him, and when a nation is determined to be rid of him.

And that's happening in the nation we're living in. There is a determination at so many levels of society to remove the influence of God from our schools, from our parliaments, from our communities, in all the different areas of life.

And as that continues to happen, there is no doubt but that the Lord is saying, well, if this is what you're wanting, this is what I will give you.

[ 20 : 47 ] And one of the worst judgments that can happen is where God hands a people over to themselves. Let us pray the Lord will never do that to us. But it's harder for the Christian in that type of climate, where there isn't this sense of the Lord being close.

It's harder for the Christian to walk in that environment, to walk in that atmosphere than at other times. Again, we can fall by becoming over-concerned with the things of this world, with the cares of this world.

When you go to the parable of the sower, that's what happened. You remember there how the sower sowed, sometimes it was the birds that took away the good seed. There were other times

that it landed in good ground, but it didn't have enough root.

Others landed in decent ground, but there were thorns and there were briars and there were weeds there, and they grew up and they choked the good seed.

And Jesus, when he was illustrating that parable, he was saying that the good seed falling down where the birds are taking, it's like a picture of the evil one coming and taking away.

[ 22 : 02 ] And that that fell on shallow ground. There's a picture of where a person can be influenced a little by the gospel, but it doesn't take root and there's no lasting impact.

And then that falling where the weeds choke the good seed is showing about the chaos of this world. And that can happen even for the Christian although the life will never be utterly strangled out of them.

yet the life can be strangled sufficiently so that there isn't the awareness you're no longer so careful. And you find that there's a growing sense of worldliness that you're caught up, most of your thinking is with this world and what is happening in this world and what you've got to do and this and that and the next thing.

And it's when we're in that place, that's where it's so easy to fall. Again, sometimes we're brought into dark and sore providences. Sometimes we're overwhelmed.

[ 23 : 06 ] And you know, we're all fragile. Every single one of us. It doesn't take much. When we're in full health and strength, we can often think we're so robust, we're so strong, but it doesn't take much physically or even mentally.

Sometimes people can just be hit from nowhere just by darkness invading their mind. where they become depressed and overwhelmed and uncertain.

And they say, I don't know where this came from. It just came over me. And it's very difficult when these kind of oppressions and these dark thoughts come and people feel down over these things. And it's difficult. It's difficult as a Christian. And when you're going through sore providences, when maybe it's ill health or there's illness within your family or bereavements or losses, all these things, sometimes people can begin to question.

Question God. Does God still care for me? Does God abandon me? Does God love me? We can even have bad thoughts about God.

[ 24 : 18 ] And you know, that's one of the beauties about the Psalms. You know, when you go to the Psalms, we find there that sometimes the Psalmist is giving vent to these things. I think I've said this before.

Sometimes when I'm reading through the Psalms, I would say, do you know, actually, I would never speak to the Lord like that. I'd be frightened to speak to the Lord like that. That's part of the beauty of the Psalms.

It goes right in, right into our very being. It deals with what nothing else deals with. Brings out what is there. And so often we find the Psalms wrestling with these things.

Well, we've all been there. We know these things. Again, we can fall through a lack of vigilance. It's so important to look at that last Sunday.

Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. The importance of vigilance. We mentioned Peter. This man who just had such a passionate love for the Lord.

[ 25 : 20 ] He loved the Lord so much he wanted out of the boat to walk on the water to meet Jesus. I can't wait for you, Lord, to come to the boat. I want to go and meet you. That's how much he loved him. And yet, he's saying, I don't know you.

How did that happen? Well, remember how Jesus kept saying there were two things. First, Jesus had warned how Satan had desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat.

But in the garden, Jesus kept telling Peter, James, and John, watch and pray, watch and pray, watch and pray. Why? Lest you enter into temptation.

And every time he came back, he found them asleep. And because of Peter's inability to watch and pray, Satan, who was desiring to have him, got him.

And that's why Peter was now in a vulnerable, weakened position. And he finds himself denying the Lord, which brought a grief and a sorrow into the heart of Peter.

[ 26 : 22 ] That's why he went out and wept bitterly. That's why he went, it tells us in John chapter 21, that he says, I go fishing. In other words, I'm going back to the fishing.

Peter thought that he had lost all his privileges and his position because of what he had done. But Jesus, as we know, wonderful thing, he wasn't finished.

In fact, this verse could almost be a commentary of Peter. Rejoice not over me, O my enemy. Peter didn't know at that particular point, but Peter could have written this.

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 that's a wonderful thing. But you know the sad thing, as times move, which says, Rejoice not over me, O my enemy.

[ 27 : 27 ] I do not know at what level Satan and the demons are able to rejoice. They will take a perverse satisfaction at the fall of the Christian.

They will gloat at the fall of the Christian. I don't know if rejoicing is something in the term that we know what rejoicing is, is something which they are able to, I just don't know.

but there will certainly be a perverse satisfaction when the Christian falls. And you know the expression, kick someone when they're down.

Well, that's what Satan loves to do. And any time that we're down, or any time we're fallen, or any time we're going through dark periods within our mind, that's when Satan loves to put the boot in, to hurt us even more.

Even although he might be responsible for bringing us down in the first place, he will then come and he'll rejoice over us. Rejoice over us. And that's one of the things, and you know it's true, not only does Satan enjoy gloating, but those who are against the Christian, they gloat as well when they see the Christian fall.

[ 28 : 46 ] But he says, rejoice not against me, O my enemy. And we've got to remember that it is Satan's great purpose which is to try and bring us down.

He doesn't want you to bring glory to the Lord. You remember, God had no sooner finished the creation and declared his great delight over everything, saying it is very good, than Satan came straight in to try to dismantle the beauty and the glory of what God had just created.

And he went, of course, to the very highest point of God's creation to the man and to the woman.

This is where he attacked. And it's still the same, because he knows that God's people bring honour and glory to the name of the Lord.

And so you are a target. You'll always be a target, as long as you're in this world. You're going to be a target for him. because he wants to make you a person who's riddled with guilt.

And when you're riddled with guilt, you don't have freedom to speak in the same way. You can't speak to the Lord in the same way when you feel just riddled with guilt. And that's what Satan does.

[ 30 : 07 ] He accuses us all the time. And when he brings you to fall, then your witness won't be so effective. That's why he wants you to fall. So that he will ruin your witness.

So that you're not able to speak to people and to witness to people and to tell people the great news of Jesus Christ. All the time, this is his great aim. But you know, the great and wonderful thing is that no fall for the Christian is going to be fatal.

Because we see here, when I fall, I shall arise. And when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. And you know, sometimes it's through, that sometimes through the darkest providences and things that have broken your heart, that the Lord has been especially close to you.

It's not always the case, but sometimes. And you're able to say, well, I'm in a sore place, I'm in a dark place. But you know what, the Lord is with me.

And I'm so conscious of the Lord's presence. And it's sometimes even when you come out of there that you realize how much the Lord was with you. But there are also times that you go into the dark places, and the Lord's going to leave you in that dark place, because he's going to teach you in the dark place.

[ 31 : 27 ] You know, there are things that we can't learn in the light. We can only learn in the dark. The dark is necessary for us at times. Just as we need the night, we need the dark at night to sleep properly.

And that's important for our lives, that we get sleep. And very often it's in the darkness. And similarly there are times that it's only in the darkness that the Lord is able to deal with you.

They're not good times, they're not comfortable times, but he's going to take you out of it. He'll bring you back into the light. And you will be able then to rejoice, and be able to rejoice over your enemy, and rejoice in the Lord.

Do you today know this Lord, as your Lord, the Lord who is there to always be with you, and to deliver you even when things are difficult, when things are bad, when things appear to be crumbling

underneath you, that you're aware that the Lord's still there.

And even though today I might be right down there, I know from his word that he's not going to leave me there, but he's going to take me back up into the light.

[ 32 : 44 ] If the light already isn't there, he's going to bring me back up into the light. And you know it's a wonderful picture of how it will be at the end. Rejoice not over me, O my enemy, when I fall I shall arise.

You know there's going to come the day when the Lord, and he's going to plead our cause and execute judgment for us. He will bring me out to the light, and I shall look upon his vindication. And you know, I believe that that will be fully realized in glory, when he takes us into the everlasting light, and where he vindicates us completely, and where he will say to us, enter into the joy of the Lord.

And the full vindication will be when our bodies, although they are into the dust in the ground, will rise again to be reunited with our soul, and there will be the totality of that deliverance and of that salvation throughout an endless eternity.

Let us pray. Gracious and ever-blessed Lord, we give thanks that no fall for the Christian is fatal. We give thanks, O Lord, that you are the God who watches over your people.

[ 34 : 02 ] And we give thanks, Lord, that you are teaching your people in every stumble and in every fall. We pray for any of your people today who are in darkness. Lord, may your light be with them and in them and on them.

May they know your deliverance. May they know you pleading their cause. May you indeed lighten our eyes, and may you keep our feet from falling and our eyes from tears.

Bless us, we pray and take us away from here in safety, and take us to wherever we're going in safety. And may we go with your blessing upon us, forgiving us our every sin.

In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.