

Deliverance to the Repentant

The prophet Micah has been called, "The master of the metaphor." He foretold the fall of the Northern Kingdom, the capture of Samaria and the coming desolation of Judah. Although his prophetic oracles have a special reference to Judah, he envisions all Israel. His words today are as relevant for us as they were during the Old Testament. II Chronicles 7:14 says, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (II Chronicles 7:14). In mercy, God is looking for the repentant in even the most apostate circumstances. This is evident in Micah's prophecy. He said, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8). In the final chapter he said, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7: 18,19).

In the earlier part of this seventh chapter, we find one of the most helpful and hopeful passages of Scripture dealing with a people who, if they find themselves in a heartbroken, helpless situation and are willing to be right with God, can find a shelter and discover God to be a very present help in time of need (Psalm 46:1).

1. It is often the darkest before the dawn.

Micah said, "Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house" (Micah 7:5,6). In the judgment of God, internal domestic conflict became rampant. God was saying to the righteous man, your friends will desert you and you may not be able to have confidence in your wife and even your children will rise against you. This is the language the Lord Jesus used in Matthew 10: 35 and 36, "For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." To borrow the words of Shakespeare's Hamlet, "A little more than kin, and less than kind." There is probably nothing more devastating than having family members not only stand against you, but even more seriously, stand against the Savior. There seems to be no comfort in this situation. We hear the heartbreak of the betrayed and crucified Christ foretold in Zechariah 13:6, "And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."

Even though the darkness smothers us with family desertion, the prophet gives us hope.

2. In the midst of our darkest hour, God hears and answers prayer.

Micah 7:7 says, "Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me." This reminds us of the prayer Jehosaphat offered to the Lord when surrounded and outnumbered by the enemy, "O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee" (II Chronicles 20:12). The Psalmist said in Psalm 5:3, "My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." If we feel our back is pinned to the proverbial wrestling mat and this old world has the best of us, we find the only direction to look is up. Let us do so! God promises, "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer" (Psalm 102:17).

Please don't buy into the cliché, "God only helps those who help themselves." My friend, our God helps those who cannot help themselves. One thing for sure, God must get the glory if we have nothing to contribute but our willingness for Him to help us. And He is willing! In Isaiah 40:29, God declares, "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength."

3. It's not over until it's over.

I have borrowed one of the famous, pithy and often mind twisting maxims of Yogi Berra. As a famous baseball player for most of his life, he knew never to give up until the game was over. Many a game was turned completely around in the eighth and ninth innings. Micah 7:8 says, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me." What faith and courage is in this statement! He says to his opponents, you may have won this battle, but through the Lord, we'll win the war. I have fallen, but I'm getting up and although I cannot see where I'm going, the Light of the world is

coming to my rescue. *"If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me"* (Psalm 139:11).

I wonder how many have given up one day before the turnaround? How many have stopped one prayer short of the answer? We need to be like the patient farmer who prepares the soil, plants the seed and guards the growth until the harvest comes. *"Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you"* (Hosea 10:12).

4. I will take my medicine until I'm cured.

Micah 7:9 says, *"I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against Him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness."* I can recall my dad admonishing me just before he administered discipline, "Now lean over and take your medicine." I found the more compliant I was with Dad's disciplinary action, the sooner it was over.

Our character in Micah 7 realizes he is suffering from the hand of the Lord for his nation's wrongdoing and is willing to take his medicine. We hear this in the phrase, *"I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against Him...."* This is the best possible action - leave yourself to the mercy of the Lord. This is not the time to complain or blame others for your shortcomings; it is the time to take what the Lord deems best until the punitive action is over. We see a prophetic view of the Suffering Savior who would one day come and take the penalty for our sins in the words, *"...until He plead my cause, and execute judgment for me...."* As a result of our repentance, *"...He will bring me forth to the light..."* and the payoff is disclosed with these words, *"...and I shall behold His righteousness."* *"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God"* (Matthew 5:8). *"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness"* (Psalm 17:15). What a cure God applies to the repentant heart!

-Pastor Pope-