

Read Micah 1

For her wound is incurable, for it has come to Judah; It has reached the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem. Micah 1:9

I have tried to be compassionate towards my children when it comes to punishments. I worry that sometimes I am being too lenient when I talk to my children about grace and mercy, but I see minor infractions of my rules as opportunities to teach them spiritual lessons. However, there are moments that the punishment has to happen. My son is only a year older than his middle sister, but he's a lot stronger than her, so when he fights with her and hurts her, the hammer is coming down.

Judah's incurable wound is the judgment that God's about to bring. The word incurable means inescapable. Judah had lived contrary to God for a long time, and He had given them numerous chances to change and correct their behavior. But they chose disobedience and selfishness. Finally God says the punishment has to come, because He has to prove the consequences of sin. God doesn't delight in punishment, but He will bring it if that's what gets your attention. **What sin has God been trying to "cure" you of that you aren't done with? His discipline will continue on your life until the day comes that you make His priorities your priorities. God doesn't like to be ignored, especially since He never wastes words and always has a purpose behind everything He does. Have you been ignoring God's correction? Then you just need to stop, drop and pray right now and confess that sin. My guess is that you already know what it is...I always did. Do you have a friend or family member that is ignoring God's correction? Pray for them. Talk to them about it in a manner of support and not superiority. Christians need to get serious about the messages that God brings to them.**

Read Micah 2

Recently My people have arisen as an enemy— You strip the robe off the garment from unsuspecting passers-by, from those returned from war. Micah 2:8

"We have seen the enemy and it is us." This is a famous quote from a cartoon strip called POG. It ran from the 50's-70's and this line is the most memorable contribution of the strip. And we can all think of a time this line applied in our lives. A coach may say that his team wasn't beaten by the other team, but that they beat themselves. Their own mistakes and lack of concentration at critical times in the game may have cost them more than the performance of the other team. The sad part is when a coach say this about his team more than once in a season...it means that his team doesn't realize it's deficiencies.

Israel here is certainly an enemy to God by choosing sin, but they have also become an enemy to themselves. Their conduct leads them to miss God's best for them as they become selfish and uncaring towards others. When you get to the New Testament, 1 John tells us there is one great evidence that proves our faith: love. When we love, we are as God is. I suppose that even when we sin, love is still present. However it's a love only for ourselves. **Who do you blame for your sin? Do you blame someone who created a circumstance that caused you to sin? Do you blame a spouse, children, or parent?**

Remember that when we choose to sin, we stand alone on the decision-making for that. Even my son who is only 8 and has accepted Christ personally, is individually accountable to God for the sins he commits. As a parent I have an obligation to try to lead him away from sin, but he is old enough and aware enough to stop being an enemy to God and others.

Read Micah 3

Then they will cry out to the LORD, but He will not answer them. Instead, He will hide His face from them at that time because they have practiced evil deeds. Micah 3:4

Daddy was a great word of love from my daughter at first. Unfortunately it soon became my daughter's favorite word (Mommy might disagree). Instead of a million different requests, sometimes I wish she would just say "Daddy" and then give each and every one of her requests right then. Unfortunately, she tends to ask twenty separate requests over the course of a 2-3 minutes span. So while I can hear her, I do ignore her sometimes.

God doesn't get tired of hearing us, but God is also not an equation. Sometimes we think if we do X, then God will do Y. While God wants us to be obedient to Him, we should do so out of love and not out of expectation of what God will give us. Here Micah warns that the people will cry out to the Lord, but He will ignore them because of their evil deeds. We all have evil deeds (sin), so should we consider that God has been dismissing our prayers as well. Notice these people were practicing evil deeds. They were constantly involved in them. When we sin, God's hope for us is that we would recognize it and repent of it. If not, then our prayers are hindered when we choose worldliness, but ask God to help out when the world didn't come through. **Are your prayers hindered? It's not a result of the words you do or do not use. It's a result of the life that you live, concentrating on Him or yourself. You must be as quick to repent as you are to request.**

Read Micah 4

And He will judge between many peoples and render decisions for mighty, distant nations. Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they train for war. Micah 4:3

As long as man is in control, war will be a constant. I am not anti-war and I do believe there are times that tyrants, dictators and lawless people must be confronted and stopped. However, peace brought about by war is not long lasting. Plotting continues. Revenge is sought. No matter how many peace summits and meetings our leaders hold or attend, peace will never come about by the efforts of man. Someone once wrote, "Safety consists not in the absence of danger but in the presence of God."

This prophecy in Micah looks towards the 1000-year reign of Jesus Christ. After the time of the Antichrist is over, Jesus will reign here on the earth. Peace will be the theme and swords and spears will be changed from implements of war to implements of

work. **Worldwide peace is at the hands of Jesus, but what about peace in our lives? Do you have peaceful relationships with your neighbors? What about co-workers, or family members? While we won't have great situations in all our relationships, it's upon us to seek peace. So are you seeking peace with those around you?**

Read Micah 5

But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity. Micah 5:2

Freehold, New Jersey doesn't look like much. I traveled there to get a look at a youth mission trip site, and there were several homes in the area we were going to be working on to help the residents. The town was small and not much to look at. Then we heard about Federico's pizza. It has a room on the second floor that was built and reserved for the town's favorite son, so that whenever he comes home, he can eat there without being pestered. Freehold, New Jersey is the hometown of Bruce Springsteen, one of the most talented rock musicians and songwriters of his generation. And this town suddenly goes from nothing to something simply because they can claim him.

Bethlehem had nothing of notoriety. It was the smallest group amongst God's people. If Bethlehem had a division of tourism, they would have been working a pretty tough job. But Micah says that Bethlehem is going to get a bump in importance, because a ruler of unusual character will come out of them. That ruler is Jesus. I love the line that He is "from long ago." Literally the translation means "from the days of all time." There is no time in history that Jesus has not been. He came out of the weakest of the tribe to remind us that human might has never brought about salvation. Whether with Adam, Noah, Peter, or John, ever amazing work that was accomplished was done by the power of God. **A good reminder to me today is that Jesus has always been and will always been. Just as He's been there in all the days past, He is already in the days to come. God exists throughout time and for Him there is no future or past. He is completely aware of everything at all time. And can you believe there are still times I fail to pray? There are still times I fail to keep my relationship to Him fresh and remember I'm not just dealing with some religious figurehead, but with the God of all the universe! Let's pray remembering that today.**

Read Micah 6

He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8

My children cannot be allowed to forget the rules. As a parent, I don't particularly enjoy enforcing punishments when they have disobeyed. Recently my son made a pinewood derby car, and was very disappointed when it didn't win. Now I understand disappointment, but he had anger and a terrible attitude, which we have talked about in the past. So I had to take him aside, explain to him again what the rules were, and punish him accordingly. If I fail to enforce the rules that have already been set out, they'll simply think each sunrise is a restart on their education of right and wrong.

God makes it very clear that He has told man what is good. We have no excuse to wander around wondering what it is that God wants out of us. The entirety of Scripture points us towards humility: we are supposed to walk humbly, always putting God's priorities ahead of our own. Adrian Rogers liked to ask Christians, "Are you humbly grateful, or grumbly hateful?" Some people claim to be humble, when really they are just grumbling quietly. God wants us to recognize His power and authority and to treasure His leading at all times. **Are you doing what God has asked of you? There may be something specific He's told you to do or not do, but what about the general commands to all of us. If you have children, are you parenting them or leaving that job to the school and church? Are you loving your spouse, or elevating your own priorities? Recognize today what God has told you to do, and do not ignore it.**

Read Micah 7

Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love. Micah 7:18

I once made a youth mom mad in one of the churches I served. I'm sure I made more than one mom mad in all my days, but this mom was REALLY MAD! I went back to that church several years after I had left, and saw this woman. So I decided, "It's been a long time. I'm sure she's moved on, and I'm going to go talk to her." I walked up to her and said, "Hi." But instead of receiving a response, any response, she looked right through me and walked past as if I hadn't said a word. I wondered for a moment if I had finally achieved invisibility.

This may be the toughest chapter for me to pull just one thing out of. There are so many thoughts on being expectant and waiting for God to move. But towards the end of the chapter, we see some important thoughts on the forgiveness of God. He isn't like a human. Just as this mom withheld forgiveness, I have to admit there have been times in my own life that I have been slow on this point. God is always ready to move from His anger with our sin, to loving forgiveness. He's the one who pardons sin and lets it go. **So why can't we let it go ourselves? We asked him to forgive us, we know that He does, and yet the guilt and shame stay tagged to our lives. We feel that if we beat ourselves up over our mistakes that we are proving to God how upset we were by it. Remember, God knows your heart. Before the first word of repentance comes out, God sees the heart by which it's offered. God loves to forgive. It's who He is and what He does. Let's accept it and move on to effectiveness for the kingdom.**