



Lesson 4 March 21st, 2020

Corrupt Leaders

Study Scripture – Micah 3:1-3, 9-12; 6:6-8 22:1-7

Background Scripture – Micah 1-3

Key Verse:

“He has told you, O man, what is good
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy
And to walk humbly with your God?”

Micah 6:8

INTRODUCTION

Our Study Scripture deals simply with a man of God with a message that was against the Establishment. This man Micah is considered to be the prophet of social protest, speaking directly to the people and leaders in the nation of Israel and Judah that had departed from the faith given to them as descendants of Abraham. Note therefore that we are looking at people that are in a covenant with God. God and Israel are in a controversy. The language of this controversy is set up in legal language but this should not hide the fact that what God and Israel has to do concerns our relationship that needs close attention.

It is rather striking that God displayed a great deal of openness in His engagement in this dialogue. God did not simply brush aside their complaining and dragged them into court to punish them but interacted with the people about their concerns. We see therefore that the prophet of God addressed this sorrow-filled encounter with the expression ***O my people!***

And in chapter 6:1-5 God gave a brief history of what He had done for them through the years showing that they should be more grateful for the saving acts of God. They should remember that these divine actions were saving actions that have brought life, health, and well-being to the nation, their communities, and the people should realize more fully the meaning of what had happened in their history. This was therefore a prophet of social protest but a prophet of the love of God at the same time as is shown in the promise in Chapter 2:12-13.

This was a message given directly to people who were involved in doing what was wrong and causing **their** nation to depart from the faith given to them by the prophets and by godly leaders such as Moses. Every component of the Establishment was addressed and accused of being failures. They had perverted everything that they should have stood for. Because they themselves had been corrupted, their rule and their actions not only displayed corruption, but it displayed savagery of a most brutal kind.

We cannot simply shrug our shoulders and say that this was something unique to Israel and Judah. It is rather painful to read this book and to consider the lessons that it teaches for our day. One writer notes when he comments on the rulers in Micah day:

“They are the watchdogs of the Mosaic law, but in the same time they are aiding and abetting the criminals of the land.

Does that sound as if it might be something that is relevant to our day? Is it possible that in our day we have individuals who are appointed to uphold the laws of the land, who not only do not uphold the law of the land, but actually aid and abet the criminal of the land by their agreement with them by the bribes that they accept in their office? And by other things by which they get around the teachings of the laws that are found in our Constitution?

It seems to me that Micah is very much relevant to our day in which we have so much in our legal system that seems flawed by the wickedness and unrighteousness of men”.

The issues posed force us to consider therefore whether the leaders of today are as “morally derelict” as those in the past. In the case of our religious leaders we should ask ourselves the question as to whether they are carrying on their ministries dependent upon the kind of money and gifts that they receive from the people and whether or not the desires and tastes of the congregation dictate to the preachers of the word of God what they should say.

This is an important issue for the Text talks about divine retribution. This retribution would bring a rude awakening from the hypocrites and from the fantasies of the rebellious.

What we should also note is that faithful communication of the truth of God can bring repentance for eventually some in Judah listened and changes were made for the good. But unfortunately this did not last forever and divine retribution which had been postponed eventually came.

Leadership is arguably the ultimate determinant factor in the failure or success of any body, organization, institution or even a nation. This is particularly true in the Church of Jesus Christ and manifestly evident in the history of Israel and Judah. Those entrusted with the leadership of God’s people are held to the highest standards, but with God Himself being the ultimate leader of His people. The fall-out from a leadership failure can be catastrophic as was often the case in Israel. In the modern church we have seen many mainline denominations depart from the faith under the leadership of evil men.

God sent His prophets to remind and warn the leaders of His people of their responsibilities and those messages are not to be lost on His Church, (1 Cor. 10). Israel and Judah were bound to Yahweh by a clearly defined covenant that governed the religious, civil, economic and social life of the nation, as well as individual behavior, so there was much accountability in the relationship. The job of the prophet was never easy; it demanded courage and Micah clearly had a sense of God’s purpose in his life (vs.8) and showed himself a true prophet.



But note that this Study is not only about leaders, but it concerns the behaviour of the ordinary folk, and therefore it requires us to examine our own hearts and attitudes toward the poor and vulnerable who do not have the same advantages that we have in our community. We know that in every period of history we have people that suffer injustice at the hands of the strong and the powerful. One segment of the population comes to power and treats other sections unfairly forgetting what is right and what is wrong. Decisions are made not out of a concern for the common good.

But we must remember that when there are perverted politicians, prophets and pastors, it is an entire group that suffers. It is therefore incumbent on us to use whatever influences we have so that social chaos can be avoided. One might not be able to do much, but the Bible does tell us that God is one who always judges in equity and is strong on the behalf of justice. If we therefore do not do the same there will be divine retribution for all.

While the New Testament is our primary guide in training and setting standards for church leaders, Old Testament prophets like Micah also have much wisdom to offer concerning leadership. The leaders of God's people in Micah's day had shown no self-discipline in shaping their lives after God's holy standards. These frauds even dared to use the Lord's name to support their agendas, claiming (as did Micah's critics in last week's study) that any threat of disaster or judgment should not be taken seriously.

Micah not unlike other eight century prophets (Amos, Isaiah, Hosea) was a prophet very concerned with social conditions in Judah and Israel, (Southern and Northern Kingdoms). Of course, these prophets were the mouth pieces of God and even more-so reflected His concern with social issues. The prophet confronted the organs of leadership in his day, the priests, princes and 'prophets' with God's message

Micah prophesied during a period of upheaval and crisis following the death of good, king Uzziah (Azariah). The Book tells us that the word of God came to Micah ***"in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah king of Judah.***

The nation of Assyria located in Mesopotamia in the east and north of the Northern Kingdom was the superpower in those days and they dominated Syria, which was located directly to the north of Israel, as well as the nation of Israel which we call the Northern Kingdom. Uzziah generally served God well and had a long, stable and prosperous reign. When he died in about 750 B.C. his son Jotham inherited the throne of Judah and reigned for about 20 years doing reasonably well in the sight of God but he failed to remove the high places that were centers of idol worship. The nation of Assyria has become powerful and interfered more and more in the affairs of all its neighbours. Then he died and his son Ahaz came to the throne and reigned over Judah for 16 years developing the reputation as one of the worst Kings of Judah. 2 Kings 16:2. He ignored the advice from God given by Isaiah the prophet, developed relationship with the nation of Aram, an antagonist of Assyria, and finally the Assyrians who had reduced them to a



vassal state, attacked the Northern Kingdom destroyed it and deported most of the population ending the existence of the 10 tribes of the Northern Kingdom.

The reign of Ahaz brought spiritual lethargy, apostasy and hypocrisy. The people still worshipped Yahweh, but it was ritual without life-changing reality. Their treatment of fellow Israelites violated the basic tenants of the Mosaic covenant as they failed to practice justice, or covenant loyalty-love and their pursuit of idolatry revealed their failure to walk humbly before Yahweh. With the worship of the Baals the people participated in their abominable sexual other deviant practices.

It is important to note that Micah spoke of the incurable sickness of Israel, but its sickness of idolatry, injustice, and corruption has spread to Judah who have become as guilty as Israel.

Note how the sickness had spread and we should therefore take caution in what we do. The kings of Judah had begun to marry into the family of the kings of Israel. From time to time, there were all kinds of military alliances between Israel and Judah, as well as between these kingdoms and other pagan nations. As a result, the sins of Jeroboam and the house of Ahab spread throughout all Israel and Judah. The reign of Ahaz had accelerated the spiritual sickness, the apostasy, and the hypocrisy in worship.

Micah foretold that Yahweh, the covenant keeping God, would come against Israel and allow its destruction, Yahweh would also come against Judah because of the prevalence of social evils in both Israel and Judah. These leaders the prophet said, hated the good and loved the evil.

Micah took the leadership to task, calling them out by name for their exploitation and abuse of the poor and vulnerable. One particular tool of oppression was their corrupt justice system which they coupled with a mercenary and predatory attitude towards the common people in their exercise of justice. He confronted the people who were involved in this flagrant disregard for the covenant with Yahweh and who led the nation from the faith that had been given to them through the other Old Testament prophets and Moses.

Micah confronted those in Judah to remind them that a necessary product of their covenant relationship to God was to do justice and maintain holiness. His focus on God's justice was to remind the people that God would judge them for their sin and disobedience but that He would ultimately establish a kingdom whose king would reign in righteousness (Micah 2:12-13).

The Book of Micah may be regarded as a book of Judgement but even in the face of God's judgement there is always a word of mercy and though God's people had strayed to the point of being the *enemies* of God, the covenant promises to the Patriarchs would still be fulfilled

Micah had a message of hope as well as a message of condemnation and punishment. God would punish, but He would restore a remnant of Israel to a place of prominence.



Better yet, a righteous Shepherd would come from Bethlehem to establish and rule in a kingdom of everlasting righteousness. The Shepherd would be the opposite of the false rulers and shepherds now in the nation.

In our Study Text which focuses on corruption and the need for justice instead of injustice, the prophet grabbed the attention of the leaders as he described them as those “*who hate the good, and love the evil*” (Micah 3:2), a direct contrast with another prophet’s command to “*hate the evil, and love the good*” (Prov. 8:13; Isa. 1:16-17; Amos 5:15).

He went on to picture the actions and attitudes of the leadership with graphic and gruesome imagery. We may note that the prophet’s words are not far removed from the Apostle Paul’s words in Galatians 5:15: *But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.*” This warning was not addressed to church leaders only but to everyone in the churches in Galatia. Sadly many churches have been damaged, in some cases irreparably, by such cannibalism.

We may note as we read the Text that God’s judgment matches the sins of the people; those who showed no mercy, received no mercy. People reaped what they sowed, and this should give us pause, should we contemplate evil towards others.

In this chapter Micah prophesies against the Law courts and those that run it, and then he prophesies against the false prophets. Then he ends with his attack against the prophets and against all the leaders including the priests of the land.

THE TEXT

Verses 1 – 3. *And I said ...* ties this oracle to the preceding one and provides continuity. Micah had spoken against the elite, the centers of power, and he therefore would speak against the judges, against the prophets, against the priests, and against the rulers who were really pictured like kind of cannibals at a great feast devouring the poor and defenceless people. These were people that made decisions for the land and should have been guardians of the justice of the land.

Micah first denounced the political leadership and now set his attention to the courts opening the tone of his message with a rhetorical question; *Is it not for you to know judgment?*). It was not only proper, but it was essential. The emphasis is on practical knowledge which shows itself in the public administration of justice. All of what they should be doing had been stated in the law of Moses.

They were descendants of Jacob, the man whose name was changed to Israel. They were therefore rulers of the house of Israel. They had lived under the Law of Moses in Old Testament times from the time of Exodus 19 and the giving of the Law and so they were really subservient to and put under the covenantal Mosaic Law. They were supposed to be the watchdogs of the Mosaic Law and should never at the same time be aiding and abetting the criminals of the land.



It is one thing for anyone to pervert justice, but it is doubly destructive when those entrusted to uphold justice abuse the system to their benefit. So, here is a case where those whose official office was to uphold and execute justice were the ones who were radically corrupted and who hated that which was good and loved that which was evil; so Micah brought an accusation against them and then a word of condemnation.

Verses 2-3. Micah listed the sins of this group with an extended metaphor where they are pictured as cannibals at a cook-fest. The leaders are characterized as vicious cannibals *“who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones; who also eat the flesh of my people”*(Micah 3:2-3). So savage were the individuals in their callous treatment of others that only a metaphor as gruesome as cannibalism seem appropriate.

The mantra of the courts seemed to be, ‘If you want justice, it's going to cost you;’ *Pluck off the skin..* is the same as we would say, they were skinning them alive. They were ripping off the people. The leaders were the shepherds of the nation but instead of shepherds they were butchers. Rather than feed the flock, they were feeding on the flock. They callously ignored the peoples cries for justice. They were only concerned with money and power. Not unlike our day where the only ones who win court battles are those who can afford the best lawyers.

Note the irony. The Assyrians that were to come to destroy Israel were famous for skinning many of their captives alive so that fear would be instilled in all those that would bear to resist them. They were therefore being warned that their behaviour was not much different from the hated Assyrians who would do in reality physically what they were doing to their own people.

Notice that the justice that Micah was talking about was the justice that was stipulated in the Covenant of the Mosaic law. This was about God’s expressed wishes. They were therefore in a real sense fighting against God.

Verse 4. Not surprising, God’s punishment of these leaders will fit their crime. There will come a time when they will cry out to God for help in prayer and God will ignore them. They had turned deaf ears to the pleas of orphans and widows, now in their time of distress Yahweh would not answer their prayers (Prov. 21:13). God hiding His face from them is an anthropomorphism picturing God disregarding them, turning His back on them. God hears all prayers because He is omniscient, but He chooses not to respond to some prayers.

Verse 5. Now the prophet turned his attention to the false prophets that were misleading God’s people and making a meal of them. The false prophets had essentially become seers for hire along the line of Balaam. Self-interest motivated them rather than the fear of the Lord (2 Tim. 4:3). They would give benedictions to those who paid them, but people who were not able to compensate them received evil portents (Lam.2:14; Jer. 6:14). These false prophets more than anything were motivated by their selfish desires.



Notice that a prophet is to proclaim the will of God. They are not to misrepresent God in their messages and they are not to be opposed to the intention that God has. They definitely are not to say their own thing.

Now Micah says that they made the people to err. This means literally that they led them astray. That word is used to refer to someone wondering about and it was also used to mean that someone was staggering about from drunkenness. This was what the false prophets were doing by teaching error.

These prophets therefore were not teaching the people anything concerning the doctrines of God. Sometimes they might not have been intentionally falsifying the truth of God but even if they did not, whatever they were doing was causing the people to be led astray.

Not prophesying or teaching sound doctrine is of course one of the problems in the modern church for many people do not understand the doctrines of God because of false teachers.

... *bite with their teeth* ... refers to being fed (or paid) as long as they proclaim a message of peace. They were more than willing to speak a positive message that failed to hold people accountable for their sinful behaviour, if the price was right. But *he that putteth not into their mouths* (that is, the one who refused to pay their price) was treated as the enemy; the false prophets would malign them. There would be a holy war against those that did not go along with them and their false prophecy ideas.

To these leaders, the prophetic office was nothing more than a source of income. They will do whatever they can to increase that income; not an uncommon practice in today's church.

John Wesley in his diary records that after he preached in some churches he was told not to come by there to preach again. This was one of his common experiences. So we know that Micah is talking about people who let their audience determine their message and determine what they are going to say. The congregation might not believe things found in the word of God but that is fine for these preachers.

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One writer notes: **"It was an ancient and respectable practice for a prophet to accept payment for services rendered to his clients. After all, as Jesus affirmed, 'the worker is entitled to his wages' (Luke 10:7). But with so apparently subjective a craft as prophecy there was ever a temptation. Why not make the message match the customer's pocket?"**

Notice the power of these false prophets. If the people did not give them what they wanted then they spread the word that those individuals were in opposition to the Lord God and so they continued a kind of holy war against those who were not supporting these prophets with money. They would proclaim the vengeance of God on those that did not contribute.



Verse 6. Revelation was typical of the prophet's message but now God would cut-off all revelation. Their punishment would fit the crime. They abused the 'light', and had not been given any illumination and lifted the burdens from others, so God gave them darkness. Rather than seeing the light, they would grope in the dark. One writer notes: **"The sun, a symbol of God who bestows blessings and favor, would set on their day, and they would have to live in the darkness of His disfavor."**

Micah implied that these false spokesmen have actually had visions or received messages of some kind thus far. We can recall that the magicians of Pharaoh were able to duplicate Moses' first two actions of plague by their "enchantments" (Exodus 7:22; 8:7). It is clear though that whatever may have been working for these charlatans would no longer be available in the future. Whatever they had prophesied would have failed and embarrassment would be their lot.

ye shall not divine... Divination was associated with the practices of the pagan nations surrounding Israel, and was strictly forbidden by the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 18:9-14). This is another reason to view the false prophets with skepticism; not only was the content of their message suspect but also their methods for obtaining that content.

Verse 7. The false prophets particularly because of their convenient messages held a place of some prestige in the nation. Now shame and embarrassment awaited these seers and diviners because they would not be able to come up with any word from the Lord when the people made inquiry. Covering the face was a sign of mourning, (Lev. 13:45; Ezek. 24:17, 22).

Like unclean lepers they will go about with covered moustaches the very area of their abused gift
(Liv. 13:45; God's poetic justice would be on display.

A writer informs us: **"Seers received visions (v. 6), and diviners practiced divination (v. 6) to ascertain the future. The title "seer" is an old one describing a prophet (1 Sam. 9:9), but "diviners" sought knowledge of the future through illegitimate means and were outlawed in Israel (Deut. 18:10). Thus these two titles were derogatory terms for the false prophets.**

True prophets had insight into Israel's history from a sympathy with God's kingdom perspective; false prophets could not discern the hand of God in history because they saw life through vested interests. True prophets conditioned the nation's well-being on its fidelity to the Lord, whereas false prophets arrogantly conditioned it on fidelity to themselves. True prophets seek the Lord's gain; false prophets their own."

Verse 8. Micah struck a sharp contrast to the false prophets who were full of greed (Acts 5:3). He had a strong sense of the presence of God with him and claimed to be full of spiritual power, as a result of God's Spirit. As a true prophet of Yahweh, he claimed inspiration for his utterances.



Micah followed the will of God, and God's Spirit filled him (Eph.5:18). Justice marked his pronouncements (vv. 1-3, 5) and courage his ministry (4, 6-7; Acts 4:13). He did not tailor his prophecies to assuage Israel or fear loss of income if his message was negative (1 Thess. 2:2-6). His ministry was to declare the sins of the Israelites (as well as their future hope), and he faithfully carried out that ministry.

God met the false prophets with silence whereas Micah could emphatically declare *truly I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord*. While Micah's call is not described as are the calls of some other prophets (Isaiah 6; Jeremiah 1;.), he leaves no doubt that his ministry illustrates Peter's description of such prophets as "*holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*" (2 Peter 1:21).

Micah's empowerment gave him the courage to do what the false prophets will never do: *declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin*. The prophet expressed a single thought with parallel expressions.

To speak in the name of God concerning *judgment* means speaking openly about His justice and about His just standards. This includes calling sin what God calls sin. The true prophet does not gloss over the severity of this reality just to gain a more receptive audience or money.

So let us note therefore Micah's four spiritual resources that God had given him to speak the truth.

The first was power which enabled him to persevere despite opposition and discouragement. Then next, the Spirit of the Lord had filled him and so he had a zeal for justice and this of course was a powerful resource.

God had in addition given him discernment to understand right and wrong so that he held on to moral absolutes.

He understood the bad situation the poor were in and he also understood the bad situation that the powerful were in.

And then of course God had given him courage, the internal fortitude to fight fear in the face of enemies.

Let us note therefore the position of one writer who stated:

"Micah and God are on the same wavelength, and Micah delivers God's message regardless of whether the people like it. Fear does not immobilize Micah, and favoritism doesn't in any way control his ministry".

Now we should note that these four spiritual resources are not referring to mere intellectual or theoretical ideas. They are real and God can give us these resources so that we will fight fear, and deliver the messages of God. So do not think that you are helpless in the face of tremendous opposition.

Verse 9. Micah followed his purpose statement of declaring *Jacob's sin* by exposing that sin, especially the sins of the leadership. He deliberately broadens his attack insisting that every



class of leadership is corrupted. The language of this verse is similar to that found at the beginning of the chapter, which is also addressed to the *heads* or *princes* of the people (Micah 3:1). There the prophet asked rhetorically, “*Is it not for you to know judgment?*”

The leaders in fact did not promote judgment, or justice. They hated it! By their actions they *pervert all equity*. They twisted what God declared to be straight or true into something crooked. Isaiah pronounced “*woe*” on such as these, who “*call evil good, and good evil*” (Isaiah 5:20).

Verse 10. Micah now turned his attention to what was happening specifically in the capital city of Judah. *Zion* has particular spiritual significance in the Holy City (Psalm 87). Micah targeted the heart of religious life in Judah and the accusation was frightening. The tragedy here is painful to consider. In the very city that is associated with the presence of God, the rulers’ hearts were about as far from God as possible. They build the city *with blood* and *with iniquity*.

Micah’s words bring to mind Jeremiah’s later indictment of King Jehoiakim of Judah: “*Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbor’s service without wages, and giveth him not for his work*” (Jeremiah 22:13).

Jehoiakim would rule in Judah more than one hundred years after Micah’s ministry. The fact that such corrupt, ungodly leadership continued to plague God’s people did nothing to delay the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC

Verse 11. The prophet now pointed to the venal character of the leadership troika. A broad indictment of both civil and religious leadership is in view in the condemnation of *the heads*, *the priests*, and *the prophets*. The judges gave favourable verdicts to those who bribed them (Exod. 23:8; Deut. 27:25), and the priests only taught those who would pay them. The prophets likewise only prophesied for a price (Deut. 16:19).

They were all in it for the money. The phrase “follow the money trail” is often cynically used today to explain how certain decisions in business, politics, etc., are made. How sad when this is the case among God’s people! Where is the trail of sacrificial service to follow?

Yet they all claimed to lean on or trust in the Lord and encouraged themselves with the false hope that since the Lord was among them, He would allow no evil to overtake them (Ps. 46:4-5; Jer. 7:4). Here we read of the leaders’ flawed mind-set; their self-deluding claim of God’s presence among them, even as they participated in the disgusting practices noted by Micah.

One commentator notes: “**When these leaders brashly affirm that *none evil can come upon us*, they are referring to a physical evil, such as the destruction prophesied by Micah (Jeremiah 23:16-17), rather than a moral evil. A deadly and deadening complacency sets in when such twisted thinking characterizes the leaders of God’s people. The nation’s future was bleak indeed.**”



Verse 12. Micah announced a wholly different future for the Israelites. God would plow up (overthrow) Jerusalem like a field and tear down its buildings until they were only ruins (1:5-6). Even the temple mount, the most holy place in all Israel, would become like a hilltop in a forest: overgrown and neglected.

The leaders' reprehensible conduct is cited by Micah as the reason for the ominous judgment that loomed ahead. Zion, "*the joy of the whole earth*" and "*the city of the great King*" (Psalm 48:2), *will be plowed as a field*. Areas where crops are to be planted must first be cleared of debris; the picture is thus one of total destruction as the city of *Jerusalem shall become heaps*.

The designation *the mountain of the house* refers to the place where the temple was located; which meant that the forthcoming destruction of Jerusalem also will include that structure. ... *high places*... is often associated with pagan sites of worship (Jer.48:35). Here, however, it more likely refers to a height of overgrown thorns or bramble bushes found within a forest. In any case, what awaited Jerusalem would be similar to what Samaria, capital of the northern kingdom, first experienced (Micah 1:6, 7).

"It is worth noting that this verse will be quoted in Jerusalem some one hundred years in the future. When a mob clamours for Jeremiah's execution, some elders step forward and remind everyone what "Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah" (Jeremiah 26:8-19). They proceed to quote Micah 3:12 and note that Hezekiah did not put Micah to death for his prediction of doom. Instead, Hezekiah feared the Lord, sought His favor, and the city was spared. The implied plea is to heed Jeremiah as Hezekiah heeded Micah.

The message here is tough. We must ask ourselves if we have a right to expect certain good things from our civic leaders and government officials today.

Then we have to ask ourselves what God wants our attitudes to be toward the poor, the helpless and the defenceless, especially when we are in a position of power and strength and can take advantage of them. What exactly is our heart like?

Next we should ask ourselves whether or not we have a right to expect certain standards of behaviour from the spiritual leadership in the church. Remember that these standards are outlined carefully in the word of God.

Since we live in the Western world in a participatory democracy, we know that there are rights and responsibilities which those in government have. But God goes further than that for He focuses on the matter of justice and the fact that there are far-reaching and tragic results when people and their leaders love evil and hate good.

The personal morality of those in positions of power and strength does matter.



We have a responsibility to influence leaders and officials to guide the nation and the community in a proper way and to eliminate injustices that plague our life.

It is a fact that government can play a powerful role in making political, economic and social activity good, taking care of the poor and protecting the rights of everyone.

So look at your own personal responsibility and do not just focus on the responsibility of the wealthy and the powerful and the leadership. Remember that Jesus showed concern for the poor and He wants us to examine ourselves and our attitudes on this matter. Jesus told us in no uncertain terms we should invite not only our friends to dinner to share in our bounty. We should invite people who include the blind, the crippled, the poor, the helpless, and the weak, the kind of people can never return the favour to us.

Please remember that the poor are in a real bad situation and they can be oppressed by the people who have great advantages. Remember that you stand accountable before God for what you have done and what you have done with the benefits that you have received.

We know that if you follow spiritual leaders who give preferential treatment to people who can give money, and if we disdain and mistreat people that have no real value or can give no assistance to our ministries, and if we ignore the word of God in our teaching and preaching, God will remove us from leadership.

We should be like the brilliant light shown in Micah's own self-assessment.

Micah's words about corrupt, deficient leadership can bring to mind troubling applications to today's society. We see evidence of corruption almost daily on every level, locally, provincially, nationally, and internationally and in many areas, church, school, and workplace, etc.). How can we as followers of Jesus make a difference?

Paul's instructions to Timothy is the model: *"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty"* ([1 Timothy 2:1, 2](#)).

Paul encouraged prayer for all in authority so that we as Christians may be able to fulfill our God-appointed ministry of living lives pleasing to Him. Such lives can witness to others of God's grace and generate questions from those who want to know more about *"the hope that is in us"* ([1 Peter 3:15](#)).

The great apostle Paul realized the need to request prayers on his behalf (Col.4:2-4), how much more do church leaders in the twenty-first century need prayers as well! They are often faced with very challenging situations and do need our prayers.



We do not live in a theocratic state where meeting social needs is decreed in the law. However, God is no less concerned now about the poor, neglected, vulnerable and defenceless than He was in the days of Israel and Judah, particularly among His people. People of God must reflect His concern in our interactions with the needy and live with integrity so as not to corrupt others with even the smallest bribe.

Greed was at the root of much of the behaviour the Lord denounced through Micah and other prophets. Christians ought to develop a spirit of thanksgiving and contentment and not fall prey to this vice.

CHAPTER 6:6-8

In this chapter Micah presents God as bringing a lawsuit against the people with the mountains, the hills, and nature itself being a form of a jury. These would be witnesses to confirm that His behaviour to Israel and Judah had been righteous and just, while their behaviour had been wrong.

In this strange Law court Yahweh invited His people to address their complaints to the mountains and the hills, for these had always been there from time immemorial. They had seen all the actions of God and all the actions of Israel and Judah and so they were well suited to act as witnesses for they had watched the entire history of Israel as it unfolded.

So what role do I play in this relationship with God. Have we left our first love?

If God were to speak to you would He say, **I have a controversy with you?**

One writer asks whether or not the Christian experience and your personal experience parallel the experience of Israel and Judah?

Could God summon you to a lawsuit as in these five verses?

Clearly, this is a serious matter to God for He calls on the mountains and the foundations of the earth, the inanimate creation to confirm that He had done everything to make His people a happy, wise, and holy people. He had never burdened the people, but had redeemed, protected, and defended them.

So this is covenant litigation. God lays bare the need to show relationship with Israel for they were His people. But yet they have not been faithful to the covenant. There would not have been a nation called Israel if God's hand had not been on Abraham calling Abram out from among the Gentiles and giving him great covenant promises, confirming this covenant to Isaac and Jacob. The very existence of Israel therefore was the work of the Lord and not their work. They were His people and thus belonged to the Covenant.

God therefore set out His case, acting both as plaintiff and as defendant. In this covenant lawsuit, which has behind it a treaty between the Lord and His people Israel, God spells out the terms of the agreement, showing what He have done for Israel.



Here is an amazing situation. Here was God humbling Himself before His creatures, asking them to judge Him, and tell Him what He had done wrong. The Creator should not really be asking His creatures to tell Him what He had done wrong, but this is precisely what God did. He gave His creatures the right to judge Him and to tell Him in what way He had created offense.

God asked questions which proclaimed His innocence. What had He ever done to them that was not good, and what had He ever done that was not of service to them? In what way did He ever make them tired or fatigued because of the difficult requirements He had imposed on them?

So we read of God's sad and plaintive voice in God's words in verse 3:

'O my people, what have I done to you?

Or how have I wearied you?

Testify against Me."

This expression can actually be used of the church, our church, for we are a group of people who claim to have entered into covenant relationship with the Lord, made profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and acknowledged our hope and trust rest Him alone. We have said that when we gather there is divine presence there. Would God say to us that He remembered the time when our love was fresh, but it seems we have left our first love?

In order to rid ourselves of the false idea that these things were only relevant to the children of Israel, we should remind ourselves that from time to time we see believers who showed great evidence that they are genuine believers, but at a certain point in their lives spiritual things began to fade away and their interest in the word of God began to get less and less, with them treating the things of God as just ordinary things. They became totally indifferent to the things of God.

We remember the experience of the church at Ephesus which had benefited tremendously from the work of the Apostle Paul. Jesus congratulated them for their work, their labour, and their patience and for them not being able to bear those that are evil but examined those that claimed to be apostles and found them to be liars. But the Lord Jesus had something against them for they had left their first love, grieved Immanuel, wounded the One that loved them and gave Himself for them.

There are many examples of men and women who have done great work in interpretation of the Bible and in teaching and service but then they had left the work of God. So the Bible tells us that there is a possibility to fall into indifference and lethargy. It is a sad thing for a church to have left its first love. It is a sad thing for an individual to lose their first love, to have tasted of the Holy Spirit and have yet turned away, abandoning the teaching of the word of God.

So ask yourself the question whether it's possible that your Christian experience is parallel to the experience that God had with Judah and Israel. If that is the case, remember that the first two verses of Micah 6 speak of a covenant lawsuit with God issuing a covenant lawsuit through



the prophet Micah. So God is speaking and Micah tells us that God requires that everyone keep quiet and keep silent. The Lord is now in His holy Temple and all the Earth should be silent before Him.

This verse sounds good and impressive and you might even hear it repeated from the pulpits but it is definitely not one that we should be using in our churches for this is a verse or a theme of Judgment.

All creation is bearing witness to our unfaithfulness and not our faithfulness to the Covenant.

By His questioning God had given Israel the opportunity to say that He had wearied them and they would state how God had wearied them and made them tired so that they did not find life with Yahweh to be interesting and exciting.

So God now replies to any complaint against Him going way back and talking about what happened from the beginning, recounting the covenantal history and what He had done for the people of God. This is the story of the grace of God. It applied to Israel, and it applied to us. God is talking to ***“His People”***.

Note carefully that the evidence supports God case. So if you want to complain against God and say that God wearied you, look at your history again and where you came from. What were you like before God’s redemption and where are you likely to end up if God does not keep you? One writer tells a story of one man:

“If you have any questions about how much you owe, do like Thomas Goodwin, the Puritan. He used to say, “When I felt cold, and I was not filled with amazement at the grace of God, I used to take a turn up and down among the sins of my past life, and I always came down with a broken and contrite heart ready to preach that wonderful grace”.

The prophet now therefore has to bring to the nation that they are guilty because of the wonderful grace shown to them and now the nation is going to reply.

Verse 6. Micah, after presenting God's case now seems to present the case of the defending Israel and Judah.

They seemed to be pleading guilty, asking how to satisfy the demands of their covenant God or alternatively it could be looked at as Micah asking God what must be done in order to regain favour with Him. The question therefore was how could the people come before the Lord and make atonement for the sins that they had committed.

Should they approach God with burnt offerings, or with the choicest of animal sacrifices (year old calves), as required by the Law? How could this High God in that exalted Heavens be reached?

Verse 7. Would the Lord want the sacrifice of thousands of rams in order to get His favour, or would God want the use of the impossibly large quantities of oil? Or would God want people to



offer their firstborn sons to atone for their sins, the firstborn being the best and most valuable and precious thing that a man had?

The list culminated in the mention of the sacrifice of the firstborn. This giving of the firstborn was a sinful, wicked custom practiced by the heathen. Some in Israel had adopted this practice.

Micah was clearly pointing out that these things were not what God wanted. Micah knew these things would not appease the wrath of God. Certainly, the things which most pagan regarded as ones the gods wanted, namely, child sacrifice, was abhorrent to God.

By presenting these things which seems most valuable, Micah would suggest that they were unacceptable. He would then give the right answer.

Nothing offered to God would restore what has been done in terms of sin before Him. They were all insignificant and insufficient to attain the end proposed. They could not answer the demands of divine justice, nor satisfy the wrong done to God by sin. They could not serve in lieu of the sanctification of the heart and the reformation of life.

They were what God wanted. There was a covenant. God wanted to maintain an ongoing love relationship with His people. They very well knew that the sacrificial system in the Old Testament was not a means of BRIBING God but represented something given from a broken spirit and a contrite heart. One scholar tells us the truth about worshippers who ask these kinds of questions:

“Outwardly, the worshiper appears spiritual as he bows before the Most High with Gifts in hand. But his insulting questions betray a desperately wicked heart. Blinded to God's goodness and character he reasons with his own depraved frame of reference. He needs not change. God must change. He compounds his sin of refusing to repent by suggesting that God, like man, can be bought. His willingness to raise the price does not reflect his generosity but veils a complaint that God demands too much. The reverse side of the bargain is that he hopes to buy God off as cheaply as possible”.

Empty and insincere religious acts of devotion were not what God wanted or required. The right heart well knows the right action was required. Actions without the right heart were not acceptable.

Man knows deep down in his heart that an atoning sacrifice is necessary, but these instructions have been ignored. Man is asking but asking in complaining tones.

Verse 8. So Micah gives the divine answer. He repeats essentially 1 Samuel 15:22. And so God tells them plainly what He demands and insists upon from those that would be accepted of Him. It is a discovery of that which is good, and which the Lord requires of us.



He has shown us our end, which we should aim at. In showing us what is good, wherein our true happiness does consist, Micah does not say that we should not sacrifice but he tells us that to obey is better than sacrifice. We cannot just keep on going through the motions.

Sad to say many keep repeating that there are many people in the Christian church who have gone through all the motions but never had a personal relationship to the Lord. Also sad to say is that there are many professing believers who have gone through a conversion experience but who have relapsed into a state of no reasonable Christian fellowship.

There is something which God requires; we should do for Him and devote to Him all that is good. It is good in itself; there is an innate goodness in moral duties antecedent to the command. They are not, as ceremonial observances, good because they are commanded, but commanded because they are good, consonant to the eternal rule and reason of good and evil which are unalterable.

“Good” is a technical term which describes the stipulations of the covenant between God and Israel so when the prophet told Israel to listen, he was saying that you very well know what you should do, for the stipulations of the covenant is what you should be following and observing.

The covenant that Israel had with God and which we have with God tells us that we must do what is right or what is in accordance with the word of God in law and in life. It describes right relationships with other people based on how God views other people. It calls on us to treat others in a way that honours and glorifies God. This means that we must have attitudes and behaviours showing that we are committed to justice in the same way as God is committed to justice. One writer comments:

“God had made this clear in the law that Israel already has. He is concerned about the protection of foreigners and slaves, of orphans and widows, anyone who is vulnerable and can be easily taken advantage of and wronged. Micah has already attacked injustice in the first three chapters of this book. He denounced violent acts of physical abuse, confiscation of other peoples’ land and possessions, treating people inhumanely, and cheating other people for financial benefit.

The call here is to “do justice”, not just be supportive of justice accomplished by other people. We are ourselves to be people that live our justice. It requires pro-activity on our part. We are called to challenge those in authority who are using their position to take advantage of people who are weak and vulnerable. We are to defend and serve the helpless victims who live in our communities-battered women, children of poverty, immigrants among us, even illegal aliens. Justice means concern for the unborn and for those working in our communities who live below the poverty line”.

We must love mercy, we must delight in it, as our God does, must be glad for an opportunity to do good, and do it cheerfully. Justice is put before mercy for we must not give that in alms which is wrongfully gained, or from which our debts should be paid.



This Hebrew word mercy is often translated loving-kindness or loyal love, but the idea is faithfulness to the covenant.

So let us know become personal, direct and blunt. We live in a society that doesn't know much about loyalty in love relationships. So we have to challenge parents to cultivate loyalty with their children, spend time with them and invest in them and not place their careers ahead of their own family. Micah calls on loyalty in marriage, loving-kindness in business relationships.

Finally therefore we are called on to do something special. We must walk humbly with our God. This means we are to walk circumspectly, not proud, not self-willed, not arrogant. We are to walk in submission to God and to His heart, to His will, and His ways, says one writer. This is living attentively and carefully, being prudent to follow God's will. This is what God requires, and without which the most costly services are vain oblations; this is more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices. One writer says:

“The contrast, I think, would be to live carelessly, presumptuously, doing things our own way instead of being attentive to God's will. When I live out of presumption, carelessly trusting my own judgment, my impulsiveness can be a very hurtful thing. I can run ahead of God, and end up harmfully inconsiderate of the needs of other people, so I am called to be the opposite. Learning to walk humbly with God frees me to do justice and to cultivate loyal relationships with the people around me”.

The elite, the leaders of Israel were corrupt. They preferred mammon, the material things of the world rather than God. We seem to be following their path. We have ignored the classic definition that directs our duty to God.

Today there is bribery, corruption, selfish activities in our countries and in our churches and in our communities.

There is an interesting story about the experience of a missionary that went to the First Nations to preach and what happened will give us guidance in our spiritual life. We wish that we had that same understanding as this new convert:

“There was an Indian chief in his meetings. He was ministering among the Indians. And as he was speaking about Jesus Christ, the chief stood up, walked forward, laid his tomahawk down at the missionary's feet, and said, “Indian chief gives his tomahawk to Jesus Christ”. He sat down and the missionary continued telling more of the love of God in Jesus Christ, and later rising a second time he walked forward, took his blanket off his shoulder and put it down and said, “Indian chief gives his blanket to Jesus Christ”. He had his pony over by the side of the meeting and in a few moments he got up, went over and took the bridle on his pony and brought it over and said, “Indian chief gives his pony to Jesus Christ”. And the preacher by that time, had reached the story of the cross. And as he was telling the story of the cross, so it is said, some big tears began to flow down the bronzed face of the Indian chief, and finally he walked forward to the preacher and knelt down before him and said, “Indian chief gives himself to Jesus Christ”. Well, that's really what our Lord wants. He doesn't want our things. He wants us”.



If we remember the story, we will forsake corruption. We cannot deny that we are surrounded by it. But we are to walk away from it and walk humbly and circumspectly with God.

***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.***

What we know we are to walk as the apostle Paul said circumspectly.

