

What Does God Require?

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[0 : 00] Let's put a short time from back to the reading we had in Micah chapter 6. Micah chapter 6. We're just carrying on our series through the book of Micah.

This week we're in chapter 6 and we're focusing especially on the first 13 verses of the chapter.

Really the first eight we can say. Micah 6 verses 1 down to verse 8.

For the sake of a text we can take verses 7 and verse 8. Micah 6 verses 7 and 8. Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil, shall I give my first born with my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

He has told you, O man, what is good, what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.

I wonder how far we have gone perhaps to try and impress somebody, wherever that is at work, thinking back to our school days, perhaps even to try and woo someone.

[1 : 21] How far have we gone to try and impress them? How far have we gone to try and show them that we know what we're supposed to be doing, we know what we're supposed to be saying? Even now we try and impress people over time. For honest we do it over time without even realising.

What does that person want me to say? What does that person really ask me to be like? And the question, if we're honest, comes to our mind, what does God want of me?

What does God actually want? What does God require of me? What kind of person do I have to be for God to love me?

What do I have to do to impress God enough for him to care at all about me? What do I have to do to do anything to make God notice me, to make God care about me?

What do I have to do to be saved by this Jesus I hear so much about? This chapter answers our question here for us, what does God require?

[2 : 33] Remember last week in chapter 5 we were looking at the great promise that one day a ruler was to come, but one day someone was to be born in Bethlehem, a king was to be born in Bethlehem. The same prophecy we find in Isaiah chapter 2, word for word. Distant future, distant future, but he is coming, one day a king will be born in Bethlehem and he will save his people. And we saw the glorious reality that is our Savior Jesus, how he fulfilled every one of the requirements that this chapter talked about and Isaiah. Here in chapter 6 we're back again in the here and now of Micah's day.

We're saying that this book of Micah, it was written, this prophecy of Micah was given to Micah by God to preach against his people, to preach against the people in his nation. They had gone against God time and time again. So Micah and Isaiah were contemporaries, Micah to one nation, Isaiah to the other, north and south. But either way Micah again and again in this book is preaching against his people. And here in chapter 6 we're back into this cycle again. Here in chapter 6 we are, if we like with respect, we are in a court scene in chapter 6. God is bringing the case again against his people. We see that from the first few words of the first verse, hear what the Lord says. And then we think this is an amazing phrase, arise, speaking to the people, arise and plead your case before the mountains. Let the hills hear your voice. Going back in history mountains are often the symbol of things enduring. It's an obvious symbol, it's one that's used in scripture quite often.

Every time God gave a covenant, the covenant was sworn on heaven and on earth. It was sworn in reality, quite literally on the mountains of earth. The idea that as long as all this endures, as long as creation endures, as long as the earth endures, God will keep his promises.

And God in here is now the image as God is now calling on the earth, calling on the mountains, saying, did I not say all this? Did I not give you my covenant, my promise? And he's telling a people,

go tell the mountains.

The Lord has indictment against his people. The terrifying thing to read in verse two, the Lord has indictment against his people.

[5 : 26] And he will contend with Israel. But what's even more incredible is that yes, his people, Israel have done so much wrong against him. They have sinned again and again.

They've worshiped our gods. They've sacrificed to our gods. They have done the worst things you can imagine to try and appease the other gods. They've cut themselves and burnt themselves. There's evidence they gave their children over as sacrifice to their gods. And all this is going on and yet God is saying here, what is saying to them? How's he talking to them? My people.

It's important for us to see that in verse two and in verse three. He's bringing this against in verse two, his people. And the sad plea in verse three and verse five, we see this opening up of God saying, this is a word of God, oh my people, verse five, oh my people. You can just hear that the toll has been written in. That is pleading of his people. What have you done?

We can really look at the section in two different ways. This first section of verses one down down to verse five, we can see what has God done for his people. And then verses six to eight, what he requires from his people. What has God done for his people? What does he require from his people? What's the first thing we see here? God has done for his people. He has made them his people. He calls them his people, even whilst they're rebelling against him, even whilst he calls them into judgment. He still says, you are my people. Even in their rebellion, they are still his. God is a covenant God. We've seen this again and again every week in Micah, even in the permittings, we've been seeing that in Psalm 84 and last week, Psalm two actually, we see again and again that God is a covenant keeping God.

[7 : 51] God is a covenant God. God makes promises with his people and he keeps his promises. Despite how often his people break their promises, how often we break our side of a deal of the like, how often the people of Israel broke their side, God never breaks his side of the covenant.

There's even more than that. Look at the name of God being used in verse one and in verse two. So this last week, what's the name of God being used here? Capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D.

Hear what Yahweh says. God is using his personal name. He's reminding these people here, I am your God. I am the God who has saved you out of Israel. I am the God who saved you out of Israel. I am the God who saved us in verse four, the God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, the God who redeemed you, who rescued you from the house of slavery, and the God who gave you leaders in Moses and Aaron and in Miriam, and the God who delivered your people after that in verse five.

I am the God who knows you, who has rescued you time and time and time again. And yet we see this awful, awful plea in verse three where God is saying, oh my people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Answer me. He's done all this for them and more. He's rescued them time and time again. He's given them a nation. He's given the people Israel life. He's rescued them in slavery. And yet we're still not happy. Yet we're still doing anything and everything they can to worship other gods. And that plea should break our hearts even as we read it here tonight in carol. Oh my people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Answer me.

We might be saying, well that's fair and well. That was a few thousand years ago, miles away. What's the point? Sad for them, but what's that going to do with us here tonight in carol? Why should I care about this taking place? Why should I care about this plea from God in verse three? Well that plea in verse three could apply to us just the same this evening. Maybe you're here saying, well I'm not a Christian so it doesn't apply to me. But it does. We've said this before, Jesus is your king whether you worship him or not. Jesus is king whether you believe in him or not. Makes no difference to us to his kingship. And verse three applies generally as much as it does specifically. What has God done for me and for you this evening? At a very base level, what has God done for us?

[10 : 56] Fact you're here living and breathing. A fact I am here living and breathing is testimony as to what God has done for us. God has given us life the chance to live, the chance to experience life, a chance to to work and to perhaps have families and have loved ones, chance to enjoy His creation, to enjoy the time He has given us and so on and so on and so on. Everything we have, every good gift we see in scripture comes from God. For the Christians here this evening, the answer is so much more incredible. What has God done for us? He has given us life but also given

us new life.

He has rescued us from the grave. We were dead and gone and He gave us new life. What has God done for us is a question we might be asking. What has God done for us that we may deserve or worship Him? We should stop to think of all the things God has done for us. We should be blown away as we try and think about all the wonderful ways God has looked after us, God has kept us, God has done all this for us. Again, for Christians here this evening, we should be even more thankful. Not only that God has done this for us but God keeps with us. God does not abandon us. This afternoon in the story we were looking at John 10 of Jesus being the Good Shepherd. A wonderful reminder that Jesus is the Shepherd who never leaves the sheep. Jesus the Shepherd who never forgets his sheep, never abandons his sheep. In verses 1 to 6 we see the case being opened against these people. As God says to them, as God requires an answer from them, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? You go off after ever God's why. You worship our God's why. You have not given your whole life to me why. But yet he still calls them his precious covenant people. In verse 6 we see a change in tone, we could say. Verse 6 we see the people speaking we could say. What the question being asked, with what shall I come before the Lord? I'm bowing myself for God on high. What does God want? What do I bring to God to make him happy with me again? How do I, with respect, impress God again? How do I get him back on my side of things?

Do I bring him burnt offerings? With calves a year old, that being the real prime sacrifice. A year old calf, they're talking the best of the best here.

[14:21] Or maybe not with the Lord in fact be pleased with thousands of rams, ten thousands of river of oil. The best produce I can find, the best produce I can offer him.

Oh that please God, will that get God back on my side? Will that make God love me? It's a strange question they then ask. An interesting hint as to where we've been doing and what we've been up to. Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression the fruit of my body, for the sin of my soul? See the pagan gods require children. We know that from Scripture, we know that from history. The pagan gods required child sacrifice and the Israelites were more than happy to do that. We see that reflected here. How do I impress God? They've gone so far away, I think even offering God their firstborn children might do their job.

There's almost a pause there, almost a pause before verse 8 then just hits us. And we see that by the way it's worded. He has told you, oh man. He has told you, oh man, what is good. He's told you what he requires from you.

What does the word require? He requires we do justice, love kindness and to walk humbly with him. See in verse 7 we see our nature being displayed fully. Verse 7, verse 6 and verse 7 we see our human nature displayed. How do I impress God's question? How do I impress him? How do I keep God happy? Well the answer must be something I can do. So I will sacrifice animals, I will burn some incense, I will find the best of the best, give them the best of the best and Micah is actually mocking his people here really, he's mocking them saying he's being dramatic. Thousands of rams and 10 thousands of rivers of oil. That's the first thing that people think about.

[16:59] That God needs to be impressed somehow by me and here's how I'll do it. That God requires something off me and instead of actually seeing what he requires I'll assume it's something I can do.

And if we're honest this evening nothing has changed from thousands of years ago, thousands of miles away to us here in Carly this evening. I think if we were to ask the average person on the street and storm away how do you impress God? What does God require off you?

What answer would you get? Probably the standard answer. Be a good person. I try hard, a nice family I guess. I do my best in the village, I do my best in town, I work hard, I try and be nice to people, I give a charity, maybe even more advanced answers. I've read a Bible all my life, I know the Bible off by heart, I know my cataclysm's off by heart.

I went to Sunday school, my parents are Christians, my grandkids and grandad's are Christians. Brothers and sisters are Christians, I grew up in a Christian household and from an island that still has Christian beliefs. I go to church. The question hangs over us, the question still hangs over us. With what shall I come before the Lord? And these answers fall desperately, desperately short. In verse eight, the first few words of verse eight, he's told you, you're doing all this, you're trying all this, stop because he's told you. He has told you, oh man, what is good.

He's told you what he requires. What are these things? What does God require from us?

[19 : 10] To do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God.

If we read this first of all, we're saying, well, he's just saying perhaps, God's just saying, well, it's what he's saying, just now he's not. Be good, be nice, be, okay, you go to church and take the boxes of reading a Bible and everything else. So it says, isn't it, do justice, love kindness, walk humbly for God, do good things, be a nice person, go to church, read your Bible.

Of course, we know that's what we're saying, it's not what's saying here. To do justice, quite literally, your life is a life of justice. Not just saying that you like the idea of justice, but you strive in every situation, you find yourself in to be just, to be right in everything.

In a good way, I mean, by that phrase. For everything you do is right, everything you do is perfect, everything you do is faultless. God says, I want you to do justice and all that you do, you are to do justice. Begin to see that the wheels come off a little bit here, I'm sure for us.

What else has he asked us to do? To love kindness. This is not just saying, be nice and be kind, it's to love kindness. So to be kind and to be nice is one thing, we can all do that, we all manage that quite well, but to love kindness, for kindness to be something that is part of our deepest souls, for kindness to be part of something that we do naturally.

[21 : 11] And again, I think we're see ourselves if we're honest, falling behind a wee bit and the requirements God is giving here. And to walk humbly with your God. There's two parts here, first of all, to walk humbly. Is that common joke, isn't it? I'm so humble and let me tell you how.

If we're honest with ourselves, we can look humble, we can act, we can be humble quite often, but is humility part of who and what we are naturally? I for one, I could say it's not.

We strive after it, we look for it, we try and be that way. If we're honest, it's not who or what we are. So what does God require? He requires that we do justice, unflinching justice, unflinching justice that we are right in all that we say and do and think. But all our actions, we are to show a true love of kindness. But all that we do, all what we say, we're to be humble at everything that we are.

Somewhere and he's free. And if we're honest in all of these three, we all fall miserably, miserably short.

And the last one is the most important of all. All this is done with your God to walk humbly with your God. Do these things, even if you could do these things well, if you could love perfectly and show perfect kindness and show perfect justice and everything else and be the most humble person around. If you do all these things but still don't know God and know God as a personal God, then it all means absolutely nothing. Absolutely nothing. All this relies on all this being to your God, a personal thing. And if we're honest just now and honest this evening, we're saying, we should be sitting here thinking, well, what hope do I have? I fail in all these things again and again and again.

God requires all this off me, yet I fail him and I fail him. Even just now we're singing in Psalm 15. What's required of the person who comes before God? Who must walk a blameless path, act in righteousness, always sincere, never cast a slur, never does his neighbour wrong, has no spite, never slanders, keeps all his oaths, as honest as he does. We should sing that

[24 : 21] Psalm and think this is not me because the wonderful truth is it's not you, it's not me. Who's that Psalm talking about? Who's that Psalm looking forward to? It's looking forward to the perfect man, our Saviour. The one who Micah is looking forward to again and again in his book.

See chapter 6 and chapter 5 are not disconnected. Chapter 5 we saw that one is coming who will be a ruler, one is coming who will be the perfect king, who will be the perfect Israelite, who will do all the things you have failed to do. And now in chapter 6 we're saying what are the things we're doing, what are the things we're called to do and we're reminded again that you failed them again and again and again. Chapter 5 and 6 go together as does the rest of the book together.

We cannot do verse 8, we cannot be verse 8. If we're not these things then how can we do what God requires of us? And the question, the answer is in and of ourselves we can't.

And if this were ended tonight, if we didn't have any more of a New Testament then we are without hope this evening. No hope, no chance. God wants all of this and I can't do any of it so I'm here and he's there and that's it. This question is asked again in Scripture. The question of what does God require from me. It's asked in the book of John. If you have your Bibles please turn to John chapter 6. I'm sorry I didn't get on the screen, it's my fault completely. John chapter 6, John chapter 6 and verse 28 and 29. John 6, 28, 29. Then make the disciples and the followers say to Jesus, what must we do to be doing the works of God? What does God require of us? What does God require of me? If I am to love God properly what must I do? And Jesus answered them, this is the work of God.

What does he say? Does he say that you must be perfect in all you do? You must try your hardest to be kind, you must try your hardest to be a good person, a nice person. No, what does Jesus say? [26 : 57] He says this is the work of God that you believe in him whom he has sent. This is the work of God that you believe in him whom he has sent.

Chapter 5 in Micah promised a saviour, promised a Messiah, promised a king, promised one who would come and be a perfect ruler. Chapter 6 we're reminded here that we cannot be this person. So who is this person? Who's the person that Sam 15 talks of it?

It's Jesus, it's Jesus. How do we love God? What does God require of us this evening?

If nothing else, remember this, what does God require of us? You cannot impress God, you can't twist his arm, you can't make him love you. What can you do?

Jesus says you believe in me, believe in him whom God has sent. How do you show your love of God?

[28 : 17] What does God require of you? It is to believe in his Son. Like we said this morning, the prophets of old from Micah and look around him, this was there but it was veiled and shadows, they couldn't quite see it properly but today this evening we have it for us given in all its complexity, given to us in all its completeness. There's no more mystery.

How do I show my love to God? What does God require of me? How does God love me? How do I receive the love of God? How do I receive the favour of God? How do I become someone God says you are mine? The answer is found in this verse.

You must believe in Jesus and I know we love to find things, something else, we love to find complications. That's why we have so many cults and sects going around us now. So many weird people believing strange things about God, adding things on because we want to think there's more than this.

We have to do this or do that, certain rituals, certain performances. Like we said this morning, there's no incense here, there's no fancy dances, there's nothing required, there's no special handshake, there's nothing here. What does God require of you this evening and of me this evening?

It's to believe in the one he has sent, to believe in Jesus. If we do that, if we honestly believe in Jesus, even then believe in who he is and believe in what he has done for us, then the glorious thing is that Micah 6, these requirements that we couldn't fulfil, he has fulfilled them on our behalf, he has fulfilled them for us and we believe in him, he covers us as aware of his righteousness.

[30 : 25] When God looks in the Christian here this evening, what does he see? He sees the Christian as the Bible tells us, clothed in the righteousness, clothed in the perfection of his Son.

Does he see Don Macleod who has messed up so many times in so many different ways this week and even this day? Don Macleod who has sinned in so many times, in so many ways this week or this day, he sees his Son, he sees the Christians who have clothed in the perfection of his Son. Jesus was the perfect fulfilment of Micah 6. Jesus fulfilled with Psalm 15, he was that perfect man that God required and because he lived that perfect life and died that necessary death, because he rose again in the power of God, we can trust in him this evening, we can trust in what he says to be true. When he says in answer to the question of what does God require of me, God requires that we believe in Jesus. It's as simple as that.

And we love to add things and to change things and to make it more complicated. That can't be it. Surely there's more to be a Christian than that. There's not. Do you know Jesus? Do you love Jesus? Is he your Lord? If he is, then you are his. If you do not, then you're not his. Time is short, so short for us.

We've had the great privilege of having God's Word in front of us and all its fullness, privilege that the believers of Micah's Day did not have. We have it. We are without excuse this evening. This is not the first time you've heard the Gospel. We've all heard this time and time and time again. When will your excuses run out? Come and believe in the Jesus, the one who has fulfilled all the requirements. Stop running and press God. You will never do it. The only way you can do what God requires of you is to believe in Jesus. Trust in him and to love him.

[32 : 54] If this is in your mind, don't let tonight pass you by. Come talk to myself, talk to the elders, talk to a Christian you know. I'm in the man's room. One more week. The door should be open.

Most of the time is a come and say hello. Have a chat. Don't let this day, this week pass you by without seeing and thinking. There must be more to this. Without seeing and thinking that you need

to know this Savior. That is our prayer here this evening. You come to know him. You come part of his people even here this evening. Let's bow our heads in that and a word of prayer. Lord God, we come before you and we humble ourselves before you. We thank you for your word. We thank you that in your word we see such wonderful truth. In your word we see such wonderful glorious things. We see Lord that we are so, so pure. We are doing anything required from this. But we fall far short from your requirements. We give you praise that we have a perfect Savior who has completed and fulfilled every one of the demands of righteousness. In no way did he fail you. In no way did he fail to be the perfect man. The perfect Savior. We do pray for any here this evening who has of yet don't know this perfect Savior. Lord, you would not give them rest this night or this week until they come to know you. Until they come to worship you. Pray for your people here this evening. Lord, thank you for your word. We thank you for that encouragement, that reminder. Lord, what do you require from us is to love your Son, to love our Savior, to serve our Savior. That is what's required of us this evening and this week and the rest of our lives. These things in our minds help us to praise you and to worship you. [34 : 37] It's got all these things in and through and for how precious you are.