

# Angus Macdonald: Micah 7

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Preacher: Guest Preacher

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, if we turn together to the chapter which we read in the Old Testament prophet Micah, not always the easiest books to read, these minor prophets, there's a cluster often coming to the end of the Old Testament book.

But the prophet Micah has much to say to us, which can be of great encouragement to us in this day in which we live.

In verse 10, there is the challenge or the question as asked, where is the Lord your God? There is the mockery, very similar to the day in which we live.

And that is why it's good for us to visit these minor prophets because there is similarities in this day and age in which we live, which confronted the prophet.

And it will be a great help to us to see how the prophet dealt with his problem in his day because, you see, man hasn't changed.

[ 1 : 16 ] No more can you change the spots on a leopard than you can change the heart of man. Man remains the same. What the prophet here is in chapter 7, he laments.

He laments and he begins with the word woe, he says. Woe is me. The word woe directs the attention to himself.

He speaks of a state of mind he is at this particular time. And I'm sure from time to time we also can say woe is me.

I should direct your thoughts to yourself. And he is looking to the degeneration of the nation and the spiritual state of the people at this particular time.

We might use this as a prophet in the singular or you might look at it as the church, in the plural, the church collectively as individuals or as a body of God's people.

[ 2 : 31 ] And what it comes across here is that he's aware of the scarcity of God's fear. And I'm sure this is a cause for lamenting for many of God's people as they consider the fewness of the number which is following the Lord.

And that in itself brings a sense of lamenting on our part because nothing would please us more than to see great numbers following the Lord.

But if the words of Christ be of any comfort to us this morning is that he said to us fear not, he says, little flock, little flock.

He didn't speak about multitudes following him. He was prophetic when he spoke these words. And it begins here with a lament, woe is his, is me.

Because he speaks of the good man, he says, being perished out of the way. There were very few good men or women with which he could converse with.

[ 3 : 45 ] And he begins by using an illustration of the vintage. It was common for them when they harvested the harvest of the grapes from the vintage that they would leave so many grapes on the branches for weary travelers passing through because of the heat and the thirst.

And it was common practice to leave so much grapes on the vine tree. And for travelers to pass by and they would pluck just enough to quench their thirst and to see them through.

And he likens this cluster of grapes as my soul, he says, desires the first fruit or how I would love to have the refreshing fruit of good men to share with me on the way.

That's how he begins. And in verse 2 he speaks of much enmity. Whether it should be love and unity, there was so much enmity.

He was aware of all that. And there was brother against brother as if they had cast a net that no one would escape.

[ 5 : 21 ] He knows it's always good to catch everything in a net. Rather than with a hook if you want to catch as much as possible.

And he was also lamenting the corruption in verse 3 in high places amongst the judges and the rulers. There was so much corruption.

You can see now the similarities in our own day and age. There were laws passed which were detrimental to God's laws where evil was called good and good was called evil.

And he likes the verse 4 to briars and thorns. These things were cutting through to him and pushing him and hurting him.

The Lord's people, they are hurt often when they see these things that are being passed laws which are so detrimental to God's laws.

[ 6 : 27 ] And again in verse 5 he speaks about you couldn't trust anyone. You couldn't even trust your friends.

And in verse 6 he goes as far as you couldn't even trust your very known and undearest that is your own wife or husband or family.

You say well we really have never experienced such a time as this. Well let me remind you dear friends.

I wanted to do a study of communism some years ago. I wanted to see how the church, how the church managed to survive in the dark days of Stalin.

And the first book I read was a book called The Whispers. And I'm a reader, I read a lot of books. I don't think I've ever read a book that's saddened my heart so much as the book called The Whispers.

[ 7 : 31 ] And it's so similar to the first six verses of Manchu's chapter 7. And during Stalin's era people were disappearing in their tens of thousands and in their millions.

The reckon that over 20 million people disappeared. And knocking the door at midnight and the man of the house would be taken away and never been seen again.

So people began to whisper. They were afraid to speak aloud in case they were heard even the walls they said had ears.

And no one would trust anyone. I'll give you one incident in the book. There was this woman she was married to at Mass. But for 40 years before we go any further the idea of communism is that it owns your soul.

Your soul becomes the property of the state. And people's minds were channelled that their souls were actually state owned.

[ 8 : 44 ] This woman was married for 40 years to this man, a good man. And when they came to fetch him at midnight and disappeared, you know what she said?

I never knew that he was a traitor. These are the sad things that come out when the nations degenerate to such a state that one is afraid even to speak.

But all was to whisper. We have in our workplaces in Britain today where you can only whisper. We have people losing their jobs because they speak of the Lord.

So there was the history of the iron curtain. So what we have here is religion at a low ebb. As low as you could go, but invest seven.

Here is the prophet. As he speaks, directs attention to himself. He says, but ask for me.

[ 9 : 56 ] Ask for me, he says. Regardless of the state of the nation, we see the confidence and the trust and the faith of this man of God.

We think that the only hope for the church is in seasons of brightness and seasons of joy and seasons which he can actually express himself.

But you see the school of learning is often in seasons of darkness. And that's where many, many people learn lessons that we've never learned before.

And we learn from the prophet here how the church or how you and I can, how we react in times of woe as we direct the woe to ourselves.

And three things in particular characterize this person. And that is, first of all, we find the resolution of faith.

[ 11 : 06 ] And then again we have the resolution of patience. And we have the resolution of hope. All these things, three things which characterize this man of God.

There is the looking and the waiting and the hearing. He says, first of all, I will trust in the Lord. And then he considers the mark in your thee enemy. And then we have the confession and his confidence.

In verse 7, he's trust in the Lord. In spite of all the darkness surrounding me, and in spite of the linness of my own soul, I, he says, will look to the Lord.

Where else could he look to? But to the Lord. Now faith's eyes, the eye of faith can be done.

[12:12] At times, focus in trying to focus to see bright three things more brighter and more persuasive to one's soul.

But there's one thing that faith never ceases to do. It never ceases to look. Never. I will, he says, look to the Lord.

And here we have the resolution of faith. And when God implants the seed of faith in the soul, that is the beginning of the saint's perseverance.

And he never ceases to look. Regardless of how dim and how clustered everything seems to be, he's always looking, always.

I will look, he says. And you see, this man's faith and all our faith, it is firmly established in God's mercy.

[13:24] That's where it has a firm hold. That's how a faith cannot slip out of the hole in which God have planted him on his own mercy.

And that is how faith never ceases to look, regardless of how awful the times are or how dark it is. You see, this man here, he is speaking of how few believers there are. He is considered in the joy of fellowship.

All for having good men to speak to. It's like the cluster of fruit, he says, that I would pluck from the branch to quench my thirst.

You can see the thirst is all longing, longing, longing for companionship. And there is none. There is none.

[14:30] So what does he do? Well, it reminds us how much we can encourage one another. But when there is no one to help us and to encourage us, I, he says, will look to the Lord.

For faith is he looks where nothing changes to the unchangeable God in our changing world. Faith looks and pushes through the clouds to where he is, where nothing changes.

And then he reminds us of the solution of patience. I will wait, he says, for the God of my salvation.

Now look at the assurance that comes across here. I will wait for the God of my salvation.

My salvation is not something that started temporary. It wasn't something that began in my life like a passing light, like a shooting star.

[15:40] No, no, no. My salvation is something permanent. My salvation is secure.

My salvation is secure. And if you ask him, in whom, in my God, in my God, because you see faith and the confidence of this man comes across as he sees God as his deliverer.

And though despondency, you could say, should be the mark of this man, yet faith refuses, if I say the woman, can only hold on to the hem of his garment, I shall be made whole.

And that's what faith is. Faith is the hand that grasps. But better still, friends, faith is not something that we generate ourselves.

Faith is gifted to us, that he who loved us, he has his hold on us. He will not let us go.

[17:05] And that is why faith can direct its own confidence in my God, my God.

You see, salvation is a theme of both the books of the Old and New Testament. That's the theme. If you have someone to share, what is the actual theme of the Old and the New Testament, which you Christians hold so dear?

Salvation, salvation, salvation. That is the theme of the book. And in calamitous times, and surrounded by enemies, no one to converse with, no fruit to glass from the tree, I will wait, he says, for the God of my salvation.

There would have been lean times in the soul of this man. You see, to the prophet, salvation one s, kathological, it was what we call the doctrine of future things.

Suteriology, the doctrine of salvation. All in the hands of the Unipotent God. And it's a constant reminder to us of God's ability to save to the uttermost.

[18:34] So that's what faith believes in. Though sometimes when we're looking for the evidence of faith, we degenerate when we look into ourselves.

And we take our eyes of him who loved us and gave himself for us. We can look too much into self for feelings and words we can put together so nicely, like a neat package to God.

Friends, we have no words. We have a person. We have a person. So here we have a man that is looking to the deliverance because you see, their faith was so rooted in God's bringing them out of

Egypt, the ex, the exodus, the deliverer.

And then the resolution of hope. My God, he says, will hear me. My God, he will hear me.

Now friends, it's a wonderful thing, hope. Without hope, the people perish. And you see, hope is not based on my knowledge, but on the faithfulness of God.

[ 20 : 04 ] My God will hear my cry. Oh, from the depths to the eye, cry. My God will hear my cry because it's to him I cry.

And you see, hope is based on the faithfulness of God. Not on us being so successful in our Christian walk.

Every one of us in here, friends, are reeling and staggering, like one drunk. You see, it's the faithfulness of God that keeps the church on an even keel.

And that's what we have in this chapter here. This was a man of prayer. And you see, to the church, what can we look to?

But what is ultimate as regards to our vision? And that is a resurrection. The resurrection of who?

[ 21 : 11 ] Well, the prophet's vision was dim in comparison with ours. The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is what we base our faith and hope and confidence on this morning. And yet, with the prophet's limited knowledge, it's wonderful to see how his faith is unwavering.

Isn't that encouraging to us, this morning, friends? Because when we consider the mocking of the enemy, he's aware of that.

And so are you and I, aware of these things. And he says, as he turns to the enemy, rejoice not against me, O my enemy, because the enemy has been mocking in less than 10, where is now your God?

When he sees perhaps the church in a weakened state, isn't that the best place for the church to be? Weak?

[ 22 : 23 ] For when I am weak, says the apostle, then I'm a strong. The enemy noticed the sad state of the church because the enemy was getting stronger, and he could really mock.

And the prophet's directs his thoughts to him, more or less, in the silence of his own heart. Perhaps he might have confronted one. He says, rejoice not against me, O my enemy.

And then he says something which we can consider as being helpful to us, because we can all fall into the same state, when I fall, he says, when I fall.

It is possible for all of us friends to fall. And that is why we should always consider each other's weakness, fall when I fall.

In my low condition, in my deepest distress, he is saying, I shall not always lie in the fall, because faith says, I will arise.

[ 23 : 47 ] I will not lie as a man, trodden down, like salt that clustered savor, and to be cast out, and to be trodden under feet of men, in my fall, which can be probably sore and painful.

I will arise. I will arise. And you see, faith is speaking in all situations.

Faith is that grace that is given to the church, that regardless of how low the person can be, he never loses sight of his God.

And the brightest and the most diligent and the most knowledgeable man can fall, because you and I, friend, all of us, we carry in our bodies sin, and we carry in our bodies death.

And there's not a soul on this earth that is not liable to fall. And if we were to measure ourselves on the plumb bob of God's law, we could say, oh, my God, I've fallen.

[ 25 : 14 ] If we are to measure ourselves on the straightness of his measuring rod, and you see, God allows it for our good, you see, he's a wise God.

Awake and sometimes be foolish. The Medevals, they call them, the Medevals were, when we refer to the Medevals, we refer to that time in the church's history, in these centuries which seem to be sort of, more or less, we don't know much about the history of the church in the fifth, sixth, seventh, although yes, we do in the historians.

But they used to call the dark night of the soul. There's a wee booklet written called The Dark Night of the Soul.

Because you see, there are times when the Lord's people experience spiritual darkness, when I sit in darkness, then shall the Lord be a light unto me.

When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. There are times when there is spiritual darkness that comes upon the soul like a cloud and blots out the light.

[ 26 : 41 ] Blots out the light. And all believers experience it. I was feeding one of Dr. Lloyd-Jones when he was plunged into terrible, terrible darkness.

And as I called the set the Medevals, the experiences, and all the saints, they will experience deep darkness.

And that's to remind us that when we come to the darkness, that we may say it is common to God's church to be in the darkness.

I was down in England a couple of years ago when my wife comes home and we visit the graveside, where the parents are buried.

And there was a gravestone just along from the gravestones. And there was a text on it. And there was only one person on the gravestone, the other part was blank.

[ 27 : 53 ] And the widow was still alive. But what caught my attention, the man was only 50. I never forgot it. Born in 1944, died in 1994.

My eyes just was fashioned on the gravestone because the text came from 2 Samuel 22, 29. And it's very unusual to see a text friends in modern graveyards today.

But one coming from the Old Testament was more unusual still. For they were my lambo Lord, unusual light in my darkness.

That was the text that was on the gravestone. You know something? It was like a light shining amongst the dead. For they were my lambo Lord.

And the Lord would lighten my darkness. That was the text in the darkness amongst the dead. For they were my lambo Lord.

[ 28 : 54 ] You see darkness friends is not deadness. This man is aware of his condition. And it wasn't abandonment either.

For they were my Lord, O God. And it's not the darkness of unbelief either. And it wasn't not the darkness of a man will he also go away when the Lord saw them leaving him.

You see, there is what you might call God working in the darkness sharpening the graces of the spirit.

Like we would take the tools to the stone and we sharpen them. And God uses means to sharpen the graces of the spirit in the darkness, in the loneliness, in the fear, in the trembling.

And then he turns to the cause of his lament. And he speaks of divine indignation.

[ 30 : 06 ] He says, I will bear. I will bear, he says, the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against him.

He directs the problem not to the surrounding enemies and the darkness around him, not to the corruption of the church, not to the lack of the vintage and the grapes, but to his own sin, his fall or his lapse, his fall.

You see, it doesn't matter how bright we are in the faith. There can always be error, we're not free from error.

And error, as John Calvin says, can also mingle with faith. I have sinned. I have sinned and you say, what sin did you sin?

Well, in verse chapter 6, verse 8, he has shown thee, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of thee?

[ 31 : 25 ] But to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly before thy God. Well, I'm sure when we consider and measure ourselves against that demand, we could say, Lord, I come short.

To love mercy is my faith, which is rooted in the mercy of God. Do I show mercy in my judgment of others?

Am I considerate as to other people's weakness? Have I sinned against the royal law of love?

When the Lord speaks of love, it's not just love, but fervent love among yourselves.

When he speaks of making their calling sure, he says, give all diligence. You see, in all these areas, we could say, I have fallen.

[ 32 : 47 ] Do I delight in showing mercy? And do I walk humbly before my God? And then faith, you see, looks to his God all the time.

You see, when God permits a fall, when we consider Peter's fall, now that was sore. But God permits a fall in order to cure us.

He allows sin to cure sin. And when Peter fell, when the artist is strengthened, you'll be able to strengthen your brethren when you've converted Peter.

The Peter that went into the fall was an entirely different Peter which came out of the fall. It was a Peter who was able to minister to the church and still ministers.

So here we have the apostle looking to God until he pleads my cause. The Lord will bring me out of my situation.

[ 34 : 13 ] His timing however long until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me.

We must never forget that we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is the one who will plead our cause. Because you and I, friends, regardless of our thing, how much we are in obedient to his revealed will, our shortcomings are so obvious.

If we measure ourselves before his holy law, he will not plead my cause if I continue in disobedience.

Because it's required of us a much less liar than this to be obedient to his revealed will. And he will execute judgment for me.

The enemy you can mark, enemy. You've got no advocate, not anyone to stand for you. You can mark me, you can ridicule me, and you can laugh at me.

[ 35 : 27 ] But I have won. I have won. He will plead my cause and execute judgment for me.

And do you know something else? In the darkness, he will bring me forth unto the light. I shall emerge.

Faith is speaking in confidence. I will emerge out of the darkness, into the light of the glorious knowledge of Christ Himself.

He is my guide. He led me into the darkness, and he will lead me out of the darkness. For when I was in the darkness, I was never out of the light.

Never. I was never out of his presence. I shall behold his righteousness in the authorized fashion, or in this new version of his vindication, his righteous judgment.

[ 36 : 31 ] I shall then behold the Lord in a different way. I shall see him as a just God and Savior.

I shall see and admire him for his persevering love and his long suffering. I shall admire his holiness, and I shall treasure him more and more.

And these are thoughts we can glean from the prophet, and in his day, and so also in our day.

When we behold the unchanging love, his sovereign grace, God reigns. The only reason that you and I have caused you to be glad this morning, dear friends, is God is sovereign.

He is sovereign. His indignation was for my correction, and he is a just and holy God.

[ 37 : 37 ] And I will admire more of his holiness and of his grace. Amen. Oh.