

The Invincible Triumph of the Victorious Faith in the Kingdom of God Micah 7:7-20

I was startled a couple of months ago as I came across this ad. I just read the title: After the Rapture Pet Care. Someone has found another way to make money off the end times. For just \$9.99 U.S a month, you can have someone take care of your pet after you are gone. What innovation! This is either a spoof or the person offering this service does not believe in the Rapture. What a world we live in! Micah could probably use this as an illustration to describe how crazy Israel society had become.

In the Khmer language of Cambodia, I was told, the words for “eat like an animal,” and “money,” are combined to make the word for corruption. What a thought-provoking combination. This is probably something Micah would say as he was describing the people of his time.

Another Cambodia story. “It is local elections soon. One of the staff is getting copies of all their official documents made for free, because the local leaders are being very nice. They are processing documents and not requiring bribes for these things...in exchange for their vote.” Micah could probably share a story like this about the corruption of leaders he saw.

Society was so bad in Micah’s time, that Micah declared, “Woe, what misery is mine!” (7:1) But then he later declared, (**verse 7:7**) “But as for me, I keep watch in hope for the Lord. I wait for God my Savior. My God will hear me.” He is speaking for the remnant who still had faith.

Micah does not succumb to despair or lethargy as he watches for the Almighty. The word “watch” here means to look or wait expectantly. It is the same word used in verse 4 of this chapter, of the watchmen who do not do a good job watching. But here it means the godly person will look at every shadow, every sound and sign, to notice how Yahweh is working.

In Israel’s sin-immersed culture, there were few people to offer confidence, compassion, or hope. So people could only look to the LORD. Micah models for us how the faithful look to the Lord. Micah was not able to change this situation. Only God can change a wicked nation. So he will look to the Lord. He will wait for the Lord. He will watch for God to answer his prayer about the horrible wickedness in the nation. His hope is in God. This is such an important reminder for us when the culture, nation, and people around us fall deeper into wickedness.

As followers of Jesus, our hope and help is not in a leader, an ideology or philosophy, a political party, a group, a movement, or any god – small g. Our call goes out to the Lord Yahweh of the Bible, to be our hope, help, vision and salvation.

Israel Will Rise – verses 8-13

It is possible that our scripture today was added to Micah after Israel was in exile. But I am not sure about that. We have seen how Micah kept laying out God’s vision, despite his pessimism and deep disappointment. He was one of the few who kept the faith despite the corruption & evil.

And if this section was added – it actually seems the statements here are more powerful. Because to keep the faith in exile, in despair, is either real stupidity or, it is deep faith that God’s Kingdom would come and be victorious. It is the belief that prayers will be answered, even if delayed.

It is likely that many Israelites blamed God for forsaking them and causing their terrible punishment. Probably many exiles became atheists or adopted one of the religions of Mesopotamia.

The remnant speaks in **verse 8**. They say, “they will one day receive their rightful inheritance, despite being subjected to difficult experiences.” Note the contrast between the people of God sitting in darkness with the guarantee the Lord will be their light. Israel had fallen but will rise.

So the remnant's enemies are warned – “Do not gloat over me.” Why? We must ask.

Verse 9 offers the answer. “God will bring me, bring us, out into the light.” Even though life is dark now – light is coming. Why? Because Micah and *the people confess their sins*. They know they are sinners. They own their sin and do not make any excuses. *They sustain God's wrath*. But then, *God himself, pleads their case*. Yahweh *upholds their cause*. He does the work of raising them up, into righteousness.

Micah is certain that after confessing and a time of discipline, God Himself will bring the people into the light. Micah was certain of this because of the righteousness, the character of Yahweh. He believed in a cart before the horse God. The only God of redeeming love.

We could title verses 7-10, *The Godly Person's attitude in the Midst of Discouragement*. Plus, once again, this word “but” is a word we need to sit up and notice. Micah and the minority remnant cast their lot with the Creator Almighty God – despite their situation. They declared they retain their faith, even if in exile.

One commentator shared: Verses 7-9 are like 3 bouncing's of a ball. At the beginning of each verse – it is down, but at the end of each verse there is a bounce up, a rebound of faith. I am in a bad situation, *but* I watch and wait for the Lord will hear me. Do not gloat over me my enemy, though I sit in darkness, *but* the Lord will be my light. I have sinned against him, and will receive the Lord's wrath, *but* the Lord will bring me out into the light, and I will see his righteousness. What awesome trust and faith!

In **verse 10** Micah announces, “The remnant will be exalted and the hostile nations of the world will be covered with shame and trampled like mud.” This seems to be a direct response to the Babylonians who often made fun of the Israelites by asking, “Where is your God?” Just like those who mocked Jesus – “the people, priest and the elders mock Jesus, and shout at him while he is hanging on the cross: ‘He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ,

the chosen of God.’” (Matthew 27:42) Here Micah gives an answer as he predicts the earthly power who took Israel into exile, and leveled Jerusalem, will have her own capital city, leveled and torn down. She would receive the same kind of treatment they gave out.

Micah is modeling a faith & trust that is endured: first – patiently;
second – and we must not overlook this –
repentantly, regretfully, contritely,
penitently, remorsefully, & sorrowfully;
third - with real hope for the day God ends Israel's punishment.

It is seeing beyond what we can physically see right now. It is choosing to be hopeful and not be bitter and believe there is no purpose in the current events we are in. As more than one person in bad circumstances, and more than one person with ill health has witnessed to me, “I had to choose to not be bitter about my situation.”

This gives room for the kind of penitence, praise, thanks, faith, and trust, that we see in Micah and many followers of Jesus. In the midst of bad circumstances, discouragement and hopeless situations, we need to choose faith and trust. We must not choose bitterness and hopelessness as we wait for prayers to be answered.

In verses 11-13 we see *Victory described as the extension of the Kingdom of God*. Notice each section of verses from here on, speak of victory.

Verse 11 offers the vision that Jerusalem will be rebuilt, and it will be bigger – the boundary extended. It is not just restoring the city – it is having trust that it will be better and bigger and boundless. This is a specific vision.

Verse 12 describes the anticipated triumphal return of the dispersed Jews from all countries to which they had fled or were carried as exiles. This verse goes beyond the typical two ways of repeating, saying something in Hebrew. Here we have four parallel expressions, that move from specific places to the whole wide world,

that give multiple emphasis to the belief the dispersed of Israel shall return from all lands.

“In that day people will come to you from

- (1) Assyria and the cities of Egypt,
- (2) even from Egypt to the Euphrates
- (3) and from sea to sea
- (4) and from mountain to mountain.”

The future nation, confessing her sin, cleansed of her sin, and ruled by the Deliverer King from Bethlehem, will have a greatly increased population, because the Bible says, Gentiles, are included. As Micah 4:1-4 tells us, Israel will have a prominent role as the nations walk up the Mountain of the Lord. This does not sound like the current church age, but instead it is the Kingdom age.

Amos 9:11-12 prophecies, “In that day I will restore David’s fallen shelter (Jerusalem) - I will repair its broken walls and restore its ruins - and will rebuild it as it used to be, so that they may possess the remnant of Edom (who were former enemies) and all the nations that bear my name,” declares the LORD, who will do these things.

It is worth reminding us of Abraham’s call in Genesis, chapter 12. Verse 3 has the Creator saying to Abraham, “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” Micah is reminding his listeners of God’s promise that Yahweh’s nation, the Kingdom of God, is much greater than just Israel.

In Genesis 22: verse 17, God promises Abraham, “I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies.” This is not a small vision and minor prediction. It is bigger than we can imagine, especially back then, and I would say today. Micah is counting on the fulfillment of this promise by Yahweh. It is for all people – the whole world of Gentiles in both the church age and the Kingdom to come.

Then in **verse 13**, Micah has to bring us back from star gazing, dreaming, back to reality. The judgement of God will fall on a sinful world. Like Isaiah, Micah saw a judgement of the earth in the Kingdom age. But out of that decaying and crumbling society, he saw the emergence of the Kingdom of God. The prophet was optimistic, and also a realist. He knew his place was not with current society but with the Almighty God.

It is clear that Micah loved his vision. He keeps giving us wonderful advice & beautiful pictures of what could be and what will be – one day. But he was not intoxicated with his vision. He did not lose the relevance of the people’s and nation’s current situation. Their misdeeds, evil, corruption and false worship. This verse, again, draws us back to what is going on right now. Without change – God’s whirlwind will come.

My Bible titles verses 14 to 20, **Prayer and Praise**. It is a great way to end this important powerful prophetic book of the Bible. Just like much of Hebrew poetry we find in the Psalms.

And **verses 14** and **15** can be titled, *Victory assured because of God’s leadership*.

Verse 14. In contrast with the desolation of the nations, verse 13, here we read, the remnant will triumph because of their relationship with Yahweh. God is invited to come and take possession of his inheritance and rule over Israel.

Notice we have the idea of the good shepherd being asked to bring his staff with him. Living this way conveys the idea that God’s flock will be unmolested – safe. Taken away from sin. We get the sense that the land will be really fertile. This is a nostalgic idealization of Israel’s past glory, that will soon be immeasurably surpassed. This sounds wonderful. It is a request that the blessings and best of Israel’s past be restored, by her Good Shepherd King – and even more so.

Then **verse 15** caps off this section about God’s leadership and the people’s future dreams. “As in the days of long ago, as you came out of

Egypt,” is a wonderful word picture of God’s benevolence. The “days of old” is mentioned in verse 14 also. This key event in Israel’s history will occur again, in some way. What a wonderful promise! It is a good memory. It is some thing the people can understand. The Exodus was the central event in Israel’s theology and prophecy. This event could be repeated in the prophets thinking but in new and greater ways. It reveals Yahweh’s God’s attributes and character.

We know that we hype the good old days as being good, way too much. We could focus on that. But here the emphasis is on how merciful God was and will be again! It is a reminder that this is who God is. It is an answer to the question in verse 18. God will gather the remnant in, but will do it not with a Red Sea parting, but in the Creator’s own unique way. It is a reminder to watch out for signs & wonders – not necessarily mimicking the great miracles of the past.

For us the days of old are Jesus, the empty tomb, and the church spreading around the world. It is the wonderful testimonies of God at work among you and I, and all over the world. This phrase is a reassurance that God’s power and glory, is still going on today. So, let’s remember and celebrate the days of old. But may we expect God to do some new things for us and His Kingdom today.

Verses 16 to the end of the book can be titled, **A Psalm of Hope**. This ties in with the themes of prayer, praise, and victory. These titles help us understand what is being shared with us.

Verses 16 and 17 assures us of ***Victory over the nations***. They will become fearful of Almighty God. These verses restate some of the main emphasis of Micah.

Verse 16. First, Israel will become a powerful nation again.
Second, those nations that mistreated her will be humbled and ashamed.

Third, God in his mercy and greatness will forgive Israel when the judgment on her has been fulfilled.

Fourth, in that day Yahweh will fulfill the greatest promises.

Verse 17. The vindication of God and his remnant in the world is pictured in extremely descriptive terms. The nations are pictured as animals crawling from their dens and trembling in fear and dread before the Almighty Lord. It is not a pretty picture. It depicts defeat and death. Plus, I think the mention of a snake is a reminder of the power of Satan’s evilness in the world that Israel did not resist, but we must. It also is a word picture of God’s power over Satan.

Verses 18 to 20 caps off the book of Micah with the question – **Who is a God like You?** Despite all the condemnation and depictions of the people of Israel we have heard in Micah, they still can trust in this God. So can you and I.

Micah tell us, ***Victory is assured because of God’s nature***. These verses imply no other deity is comparable to the God of Israel. This God is unique. Why? The focus is not on power or pomp or wealth or circumstance, or wisdom, or anything – but forgiveness of sin and the mercy that comes with it. Pardon for the undeserving remnant is declared! People who say there is a lack of grace in the Old Testament – simply have not read Micah, or the other prophets. I find it fascinating that all Micah says, comes down to faithfulness & undeserving merciful forgiveness.

Verse 19. Then we have compassion and two great familiar word pictures. Our Creator will tread our sins underfoot. The Almighty will hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. These verses offer hope beyond our imaginations. They make the point that this is God’s doing – not ours. God and Micah have not resolved the conflicting judgments and hostile attitudes that Micah has stated by argument or persuasion. But we receive the simple, clear, statement of faith in the ultimate justice and goodness of Yahweh.

Verse 20 tells us the Creator's anger toward our sins, does not go on forever. The remnant's humiliation and sadness will come to an end. Micah reminds us of the Almighty's promise to Abraham and reaffirmed to Jacob. The remnant's optimism, hope, and praise is rooted in this promise. This vow by our Savior is applicable to the follower of Jesus, in the new covenant of a spiritual people, not a national identity.

I Peter 2:4-5 promises us, "As you come to him, the living Stone, Jesus, rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him - you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

That is what Micah was trying to get through to people – before Jesus was born. The return from exile for the remnant vindicates the faithfulness of God in fulfilling his promises to Abraham and Jacob and to all peoples.

We are urged to be true to Jacob and Abraham and God will be true to us. The truth that Yahweh bound himself to us - is mercy. These final words of Micah do not give us the usual formulas for success in this life. Success, from God's standpoint, is achieving the forgiveness of sins because of God's character of lovingkind-ness. The cart before the horse God. The God who invites us to join in with His story.

Sin is our main concern at any given point in our lives. To be forgiven of a violation of God's will is to obtain the greatest blessing we can ever experience. The Almighty makes us holy and blameless in God's sight. Those who fail to grasp this most important aspect of our lives will forever feel the pain of failure. The church today shares the same hope offered to Israel in the Old Testament. We have the same God who wants to show mercy – even when we do not deserve it.

One way to summarize Micah is the words of Daniel Webster. "If we abide by the principles

taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper, but if we and our posterity neglect its instruction and authority, no one can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury our glory in profound obscurity."

Notice that the Book of Micah begins with a display of the wrath of the Lord God coming down from heaven in fury, and it concludes with the display of the mercy of God. The question Micah asks, "Who is a God like you?," is answered by, "he will overcome our iniquities."

So we come to the end of Micah. I hope it has been informative and even more, strengthened your faith. God is so eager to show mercy that he redeems us and sent Jesus to us. Hallelujah!

We need a dose of Micah's humility in our world today. We need a blatant recognition that our sins stand under the wrath of God, even under a wrath tempered by the cross. But also, we need to look past the present darkness, our souls anchored in the promises of God, promises of righteousness, promises of light that will never fade, life that will never die, and a Saviour that always delights in mercy.

Take that with you and let it be your life's work to share with others, as it was Micah's, and I hope has been and will be mine.

One last thought. I can't help but share this quote from C. S. Lewis, that has been revolving around my mind the last few months. "If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world."

Micah is urging people to want something more, to live differently than they were, more than anything this world can offer. That something is Jesus.