

Fret Not Because of Evil Doers

Micah 7:8-10; Psalm 37:1-9

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In the cause of Christ it is very tempting to judge the progress and victory of Christ's kingdom by comparing it to the apparent success of Satan's kingdom. We are tempted to compare the increase of unfaithful churches with the increase of faithful churches and to fret ourselves that we have been forsaken by God, or that we are in the wrong camp, or that we have invested our lives into a losing cause, or that we have no hope of victory against such mighty adversaries to the cause of Christ this side of heaven. Of course, we can always count on giving way in fear to such temptations when our eyes are more focused on the seeming advance of the enemy than upon the promised victory of Christ. For the Lord does appear to allow His enemies to make great strides in seeing their wicked designs realized, but God brings this to pass so as to teach us to look not in fear at the enemy, but rather to look with confidence to Christ (as Elisha did in 2 Kings 6:15-18). The Lord also amasses the enemy against His little flock so as to make the fall of the enemy that more conspicuous for all to see (as was true of Pharaoh in Romans 9:17). Dear ones, the Lord calls us this day not to fret ourselves because of the success of evil doers, but rather to rejoice in the Lord of hosts for our victory is certain (Psalm 37:1-9). There are three truths from our text that the faithful remnant of Israel is called to believe and profess when it appears they have been overwhelmed by their enemy: (1) I Shall Arise (Micah 7:8); (2) I Will Bear the Indignation of the LORD (Micah 7:9); (3) He Will Plead My Cause (Micah 7:9-10).

I. I Shall Arise (Micah 7:8).

A. You will recall the cry of the faithful remnant of Israel in Micah 7:2: "The good man is perished out of the earth" (i.e. the faithful remnant of God's people are so out-numbered by those who are unfaithful that it is difficult to find one who seeks to follow the Lord with all his heart). Dear ones, it is easy to follow the multitude to do evil when the unfaithful are so numerous, but in such times, the Lord calls His remnant to look to Him and to follow Him even when loved ones are among those who have strayed from the paths of faithfulness and truth.

B. Beginning in Micah 7:8, the prophet begins his concluding remarks to the faithful of Israel. This final section of the prophecy of Micah is filled with much consolation and with promises of restoration and victory for God's people.

C. The prophet speaks on behalf of the faithful remnant within Israel and directly to the various enemies of the Lord—both outside Israel (like the Assyrians and the Babylonians, and all the hostile civil governments of the world who hate the kingdom of Christ and seek to suppress it and destroy it) and to those enemies who work from within Israel (like the unfaithful of Israel who by their hypocrisy, toleration of sin and error, backsliding from the truth in doctrine, worship, and practice brought God's judgment upon themselves). The faithful of Israel declare with confidence in the Lord, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy." In other words, the faithful remnant of the Lord are taught herein to declare, "Those of you who have taunted, maligned, hindered, oppressed, or persecuted the faithful in standing for the cause of the Lord, it is not time to throw a party when under the hand of the Lord the remnant are reduced in size and when their testimony for the truth appears silenced." Dear ones, when the Lord brings His discipline upon us and allows our enemies to overtake us for a time (whether our enemy be a besetting sin, unfaithful shepherds, defection from our covenanted obligations, division and schism within Christ's body, toleration of sin and error, or tyrannical civil magistrates), we are at such times tempted to throw up our arms in defeat (if you can't beat them, join them); we are tempted to murmur against the Lord (the Lord has been unfaithful to His promise to

provide for us and to protect us from our enemy); we are tempted to declare that the truth requires too much of a sacrifice from us. But Micah, God's prophet, gives to us His this first truth to cling to with all of our heart and to profess with our mouths.

1. "When I fall, I shall arise" (Micah 7:8). Here is the confidence we have in Christ.

Although you may fall before your enemies and even appear to be dead never to rise again, yet the Lord who not only can lift up those fallen, but also raise up those who are dead, will by His grace and power cause you to triumph over His and your enemies as you patiently wait upon Him and trust Him. To the same effect are the words that follow in Micah 7:8: "when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me." What a blessed joy in the Lord is ours. What a peace that passes all understanding is ours when we know and confidently rest in the promise that although the faithful remnant may fall and decrease in numbers to almost nothing, nevertheless, they will rise again in God's good time. Dear ones, the cause of Jesus Christ which we promote and defend cannot lose! Although the faithful and biblical covenants of our forefathers be buried and trampled upon today, yet will they be raised as a banner to assemble His people together in unity. Consider the following illustrations of this biblical principle.

a. The faithful remnant of Israel appeared to fall never to rise again when they were led into captivity by the Assyrians and the Babylonians, but the Lord caused them to rise again and sent them forth from captivity back into the land of Israel to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple of the Lord.

b. The faithful remnant of Israel again appeared to fall when their numbers were so depleted that the vast majority of Israel fell away from their God and even approved of Christ's crucifixion and persecuted the apostles of Christ, yet the Apostle Paul tells us that the faithful remnant of Israel will become a mighty host when all of Israel is saved at the outset of the millennium (Romans 11:11-12).

c. The faithful remnant of the church could hardly be seen when swallowed up within the captivity of the Church of Rome, but by the grace and power of Christ the Protestant Reformers of the First and Second Reformations arose from the ashes to continue the battle against all antichristian oppression in church and state.

d. The faithful remnant (which are identified as two witnesses in Revelation 11 bare testimony against the corruption and tyranny in the church and state for 1,260 prophetic days (or 1,260 actual years) and are slain and lie in that condition for 3 1/2 prophetic days (or 3 1/2 actual years). This speaks of a severe suppression of the faithful remnant which is yet to come. A time when the faithful testimony for the truth of Christ will become so hated that the world will seek to silence that testimony once and for all. There will even be a worldwide celebration rejoicing over the fall of the faithful remnant, but the Lord omnipotent will raise His faithful remnant from the dust of the grave by putting their testimony for the truth into the hearts and mouths of a new generation of faithful witnesses by whose testimony to the truth Israel and the nations of the world will arise and stand up for the crown rights of Jesus Christ.

2. Therefore, dear ones, when you appear to have fallen before your enemy, remember the promise of the Lord (Proverbs 24:16; Psalm 37:23-24). Yes, we will fall at times into certain sins, but the Lord will by His grace raise us up to renew our faith in Christ, to sorrow and grieve over our sin, and to rejoice in the faithfulness of our Savior. Are you in that fallen condition today? Are you overwhelmed by the enemies of your soul—the world, the flesh, and the devil? Take hold of this promise from Christ today, "I SHALL ARISE." Even as the enemy could not keep Christ under the power of death, so the enemy cannot keep you who trust in Christ with your whole heart under the power of sin, for He will deliver you. But, dear ones, if you would know victory in your life over the enemies of your soul, you must be willing to forsake all those means by which you are tempted and drawn into those sins. You must learn to hate not only the sin, but the temptation as well. You must avoid that which leads you into temptation. For you are never really serious about victory over sin until you are serious about forsaking the temptations which lead you to sin (e.g. if we would cease from profaning the Sabbath we must not only avoid lawful recreations, but must avoid thinking and talking about lawful recreations—we must not only avoid unnecessary work, but must avoid thinking and talking

about unnecessary work—we must train ourselves to enjoy the Lord and display His mercy on His Sabbath).

II. I Will Bear the Indignation of the LORD (Micah 7:9).

A. Dear ones, when we are brought low by some besetting sin, by some physical trial in our body, by some financial setback, by some division in our family, by some division in the Church of Christ, or by the loss of a loved one, it is a time for sincere humiliation before the Lord. It is not a time for self-righteousness wherein we see no fault nor cause at all for discipline in our lives (as if we were sinless). It is not a time for hopelessness and self-pity as if we were utterly abandoned by the Lord. It is not a time for murmuring and complaining against the rod of God's discipline. It is not a time to allow bitterness and resentment to destroy our lives. Rather it is a time to proclaim the righteousness of the Lord in all that He does. It is a time to kiss the loving rod of God's discipline. It is a time to grieve and sorrow over our own sins and errors. It is a time to renew our covenant with the Lord. It is a time for prayer and fasting, a time to be thankful for the many mercies of the Lord that we have enjoyed in the past, that we presently enjoy, and that we shall yet enjoy. And it is a time to look to Christ alone as our only hope of salvation, joy, peace, and contentment.

B. Here we see in Micah 7:9 that the faithful remnant of Israel is called to patiently endure the time of God's just indignation brought upon them. Why? "Because I have sinned against him" (i.e. against the Lord). Even the faithful remnant of Israel for whom Micah the prophet here speaks must sincerely confess that they too have sinned against the Lord in various ways so that His discipline upon them is just.

C. Consider the prayer of Daniel, as he is one of the faithful remnant of Israel, yet he includes himself amongst those who have sinned against the Lord and in various ways (even if to a lesser degree) has been unfaithful to the Lord (Daniel 9:3,4). There is no self-righteousness in this prayer. There is no murmuring against the Lord. There is no resentment or bitterness. There is no self-pity. No, this prayer is filled with true humiliation. There is no true humiliation, where there is yet self-justification before God.

D. Let me also note before moving on to our last point, that God's discipline does not always fall upon us by taking some material or physical blessing from us. But God's chastening may also fall upon us by giving us the desires of our heart. This form of discipline upon God's people or judgment upon God's enemies is in many ways a more severe act of discipline or judgment than the former method. For when God disciplines His people or pours forth His judgment upon His enemies by granting them continued material or physical prosperity although yet continuing in their sin and error, a hardness of heart develops in which they justify themselves in their sin and error by pointing to their material or physical prosperity (Romans 1:24,26,28). Thus, dear ones, we must not judge the rightness of our cause merely upon the presence of material prosperity, or merely upon the presence of numerical gain; for it is possible to be deceived by such outward evidences (consider the outward success of Rome, Islam, the cults, unfaithful denominations, feminism, humanism etc.). Let us endure whatever the Lord brings our way (whether poverty or prosperity) pouring contempt always upon our own unworthiness and exalting always Christ's worthiness alone.

III. He Will Plead My Cause (Micah 7:9-10).

A. In these words of the prophet and the faithful remnant, we hear the final truth that we are to believe and profess when we are overwhelmed by our enemies. The Lord will Himself take up the cause of the faithful remnant (which is really the Lord's cause), and He will vindicate them from all the unjust accusations brought against them. He will bring forth the faithful out of darkness and into the light of the noon day sun for all to see the righteousness and faithfulness of the Lord in defending His people and granting them victory before their enemies.

B. Micah 7:10 tells us how the Lord will accomplish this. Those who have been adversaries to the

faithful remnant will see with a clear understanding that the Lord defends and takes up the cause of His little flock of faithful ones (in history and at the final judgment). Those adversaries that do not turn to the Lord and take up the same cause for which the faithful remnant has been willing to suffer and die, will be trodden down as the mire of the streets, Micah says.

C. What a precious truth is given to us in this last point to which to cling. As we patiently wait upon the Lord, not giving way to self-righteousness and pride, not giving way to murmuring or complaining, not giving way to bitterness or resentment, not giving way to hopelessness or self-pity, the Lord will in His own time vindicate the truthfulness of the cause of the faithful witnesses of Christ. The Lord will expose the shameful lies of the adversary, the underhanded methods of scattering the faithful remnant, or the hidden conspiracy of those who would lead the faithful astray. Ultimately, the cause for which the faithful remnant stand is not their own cause, but that of Christ their Savior and Lord. This certainty in our hearts that we are promoting and defending the cause of Christ when we stand for the *Solemn League and Covenant*, when we stand for the faithful contendings of the witnesses of Christ, when we stand for the Covenanted Reformation, when we stand for the purity of worship in singing only psalms without instruments in worship and without the use of images (like crosses or banners or holydays, like Christmas or Easter), when we stand for the pure gospel of salvation that pours contempt upon all the pride of man and exalts alone the grace and righteousness of Christ—certainty of these truths on our part makes people very unhappy with us if you have not noticed. But dear ones, this certainty comes from the conviction of God’s Word and His Holy Spirit. Certainty of truth makes people uneasy, for it condemns their own errors and practice.

D. How this truth calls us not to war using the carnal weapons of deceit, slander, misrepresentation, scheming, or plotting. Rather we must war always using truth, love, and humility. We need never fret nor worry that we shall be utterly overcome by the adversary when our confidence is sincerely and wholly in the Lord. We need never lower ourselves to engage in battle using unrighteous methods, for the Lord will bring forth our righteousness (our vindication) as the noon day for all to see (Psalm 37:6). That is what we see in the historical records of those who have faithfully contended for the truth. And ultimately, the cause for which we have suffered will be vindicated at the Judgment Seat of Christ when all that is hidden will be made known.

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