

Micah 7:1-9

Reality, Warfare, and the Cross

Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise...v.8

One of the things that makes the book of Micah so striking is the way the prophet, thousands of years ago, describes his culture in ways that are so up to date with our current culture today. Did you notice that in the verses we just read?

Mic 7:2 *The good [man] is perished out of the earth: and [there is] none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net.* What a description by and large of our culture of politics today and our culture of economics today. Those that actually manifest integrity and uprightness are slandered and marginalized and pressured to go with the flow of the things that are politically correct. ‘

Verse 3 *...the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up.* “The prince and the judge ask for a bribe” another version reads – another indication of wholesale corruption among the leaders of the nation.

This description of widespread sin leads an exhortation in v. 5 *Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom.* This is the sure and most severe indicator of a culture that has morally collapsed. You can’t trust anyone. You can’t trust those that rule over you; you can’t trust those that are even near to you. The breakdown of trust is the breakdown of an economy and the breakdown of trust is the breakdown of our social structure, the breakdown of families and the breakdown of marriages.

Verse 6 extends this breakdown even further by showing how the 5th commandment has become null and void: *For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man’s enemies are the men of his own house.*

This minor prophet would be a most discouraging book to read were it not for the fact that the prophet proposes a course of action. Look at the words of v. 7 and notice how it begins with the word *therefore*. That word connects this verse with the preceding verses that describe so vividly a people that have become thoroughly corrupted. *Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.*

The Christian does have recourse to the Lord even in such times of widespread and deep dyed corruption and sin. This is not to say that the child of God is not impacted by the corruption around him. What follows in vv. 8,9 shows that the true child of God is not exempt from sin. The situation being described in these verses is not a situation where the culture around the believer is so wicked while the believer himself is so pure and therefore the believer is so grieved.

No, listen to the direct address of the prophet to his enemy as well as his confession in vv. 8,9 *Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.*

These verses indicate to us that the prophet has been effected negatively by the wickedness around him. He has not been immune from it. It has pulled him down – it has caused him to fall – it has led him into the same sins that he laments in the previous verses. The thing that makes the prophet different, however, from the ungodly world in which he lives is his reaction to his fall and his resolution following his fall and his hope for victory in spite of his fall.

Verses 7-9, therefore, provide tremendous instruction and encouragement to every follower of Christ who struggles against sin in a world of ungodliness and deeply entrenched sin. I'd like to analyze these verses this morning in preparation for our time around the Lord's table. My analysis will come under 3 headings which taken together give a title for our study today. Micah 7:7-9 convey to us:

Reality, Warfare, and the Cross of Christ

I. The Reality of These Verses

In a sense all the points I'm making could come under this heading of reality because our warfare is also reality and the cross of Christ is also reality. But what I have in mind just now is a particular reality that I'm glad the prophet acknowledges. The reality I'm referencing just now is the reality that the believer falls into sin.

Notice again the words of v. 8 *Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.* Here is reality – the believer falls and there are periods when the believer sits in darkness. This is something I suppose that every Christian knows but hates to admit.

We don't want to admit it when we've fallen because we know better. We've seen the light of Christ. We've known the power of the gospel. We profess to be followers of Christ and this magnifies in our minds and hearts the awfulness of sin. You weren't always that way. There use to be a time when you sinned with impunity. The only thing that bothered you was your conscience that accused you and you hated the voice of your conscience and tried to suppress that voice.

That's not the case with the believer. Salvation enables a sinner to enter into an alliance with his conscience especially when his conscience is programmed by the truth of God's word. The believer hates the sin that he use to love and he loves the Savior that he use to hate. But the sad reality is that Christians fall into sin.

Think about it for a moment – do we not find this to be the case with nearly every virtuous character that we find in the Bible? Noah sinned and became drunk; Abraham sinned by concocting a plot that would allow his wife to be used by others; Moses sinned in his pride and forfeited the privilege of entering the promised land.

The example that I find most astonishing perhaps in all the Bible is King David's fall into sin. Here was a man that was the sweet singer of Israel, a man after God's own heart, a man who knew the truth of justification who would pen the Psalms that Paul would draw from in expounding that doctrine to the Romans. David was a man that knew constant and sweet communion with his Savior from the days of his youth and yet David was a man that would fall and would fall deeply and would fall more than once.

Can you picture him now as you see him in 2Sam. 11 walking upon the roof of his house. We're told in v. 2 that from that vantage point he was able to view a beautiful woman washing herself. But David's sin and David's fall would not end merely in feeding his eyes and his heart with sinful lust. He would instead pursue the deed by issuing a call to this beautiful woman and taking her to himself – showing no regard for his own wife, or wives (for he had no less than 3 by that time) and showing no regard for the lady's husband.

And in fact the lady's husband, a loyal subject and soldier in David's army would provide occasion for David to fall further still. First he would try to cover up his sin by arranging for Uriah to spend the night with his wife and when this didn't work David would conspire against this loyal subject by making him bear the very letter to Joab that called on Joab to have this man murdered in battle.

Is this really David? Is this really a man after God's own heart? Is this man even really saved? – we might be tempted to ask. And the answer to these questions is yes – he is a believer – and yes he is a man after God's own heart but he's a man, a devout believer that demonstrates to us in no uncertain terms that Christians fall and they fall grievously and they can fall deeply into heinous sin.

John teaches us in his first epistle to acknowledge this truth or what I am calling this reality. 1Jn. 1:8 *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* And two verses later in v. 10 *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

Now it may be at this point that you would be tempted to ask – if this is true – if the reality of Christianity is that Christians fall then what, at the end of the day, is the difference between the believer and the unbeliever? It would seem that we still have much in common with the ways of sinners. Doesn't Christ make a difference? Isn't the gospel the power of God unto salvation? Doesn't that power enable us to overcome sin?

And the answer is, of course, that Christ does make a difference – he makes a very big difference and the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. In order to expound and magnify the difference that Christ makes we must move forward to the next point of our analysis. We've seen the reality of the Christian's fall into sin. Consider with me next:

II. The Christian's Warfare Against Sin

That we're in the realm of warfare becomes readily evident in v. 8 when we see the prophet directly addressing his enemy: *Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.*

The Christian has enemies. This is not something that is popular to consider in a culture that calls for love and toleration of everyone and everything and most every sin. I said in my introduction that all the points of my analysis can come under the heading of reality so here is another point of reality – the Christian has enemies.

He has enemies without and he has enemies within and his enemies without and within conspire toward his downfall. We know of course that the devil is the enemy of the Christian. He stalks about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. It is his design and desire to cause the Christian to fall. It is his design to cast doubts in the Christian's mind about the truth of Christ.

If he can succeed in bringing doubts to the Christian's mind about the truth of Christ's atoning blood then he regains the leverage of guilt over that Christian's life and he can drive such a Christian under such a load of guilt into the depths of despair and he can certainly roar in that Christian's ear that he's useless on account of his sin and that he's nothing but a hypocrite on account of his sin. You're no good to anybody the devil will tell you. You might as well just surrender the very idea that you're even a Christian at all and you might as well go back to fully embracing your sin.

The devil is not the only enemy of the Christian. The world is an enemy to the Christian. And when I speak of the world I'm speaking of what I earlier described from these earlier verses in Micah 7. I'm describing the culture of sin and corruption that leads to the breakdown of trust and leaves lawlessness in its wake.

We all know this to be the case. We are bombarded with things to make us fall. You can't go anywhere in this world without seeing the provocative sights that are designed to provoke lust. They bombard you over the internet; they bombard you over television; they bombard you from billboards off the highway; they bombard you from magazine racks in the grocery store.

And what the Prophet reveals to us in the acknowledgement of his fall is that the believer is not immune from these things. The devil and the world find a ready ally in the flesh of the believer. We still have a nature within us, you see, that is vulnerable to these things and that craves fleshly pleasures. It's for this reason that Paul writes in Gal. 5:17 that *the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*

I asked a moment ago the question about the difference between the believer and the unbeliever. If sin is reality and the Christian falling into sin is reality then what's the difference? Is there any difference between the Christian and the unbeliever? The difference is to be found in the Christian's warfare.

Isn't it evident in v. 8 that though the prophet has fallen into sin he does not accept his sin and he does not accept his fall into sin. He acknowledges it, to be sure, but he also anticipates a turning of the tide. And so bold and so fervent is he in his resolution that he addresses his enemy and says *Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.*

Don't we find in these words a perfect illustration of what we've been studying in Phil. 2? Here is evidence of the Spirit of God working within a believer to will and to do of his good pleasure. And not the strength of resolution in the words of the Prophet. He doesn't see sin as a friend but as an enemy and he expresses strong determination to arise after he's fallen. And in spite of his fall and his season in darkness he nevertheless anticipates that the Lord will yet be his light.

What is it, then, that distinguishes the Christian from the unbeliever? We could wish that sinless perfection was the difference but sadly we cannot make that claim. What we can say, however, is that the response of faith to sin is to hate sin and to fight sin. You don't surrender to sin. And the believer, the true believer, does not play down sin and simply sweep it under the carpet by nonchalantly saying it's forgiven by Christ. I don't need to give it a thought because Jesus atoned for that sin too.

This was the kind of notion that the Jews were accusing Paul of promoting. *We are slanderously reported*, Paul says in Rom. 3:8 and *some affirm that we say let us do evil that good may come*. Another way this is expressed is *let's continue in sin that grace may abound*. To those that reason this way – to those that would abuse the gospel in such a way as to make it a license for sin Paul has but one word – *their damnation is just*.

The true Christian, on the other hand, will view sin as the enemy. He'll recognize the reproach that sin brings to God. He'll hate the fact that his sin defiles him and affects others and especially will he hate the fact that sin obscures the glory of Christ and gives the devil cause to rejoice and he'll work out his salvation with fear and trembling by addressing the enemy of his soul with resolute determination that though the enemy has won this time the battle is not over. *I will rise again. I will know the Lord's light and I will look to the Lord himself to plead my cause* (v. 9).

This leads to my final consideration and it is in this final consideration that we'll be led to the Lord's table. We've seen the reality of the Christian's fall as well as the truth of the Christian's warfare. Let's consider now, finally:

III. The Blessing of the Cross of Christ

We know only too well that the power of resolution in and of itself will not suffice to enable the Christian to gain victory over the forces of sin and darkness. These forces are too strong for us and they cannot be taken on in our own power.

What we can do, and must be resolved to do, is to look to Christ. Verse 7 *Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me*. Notice

also what the Prophet says in v. 9: *I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me.*

There is an indignation to be borne when we sin. God is not happy with us when we sin but this indignation is a Fatherly displeasure over sin not a Judge's condemnation of our sin. The statement in this verse that makes reference to God pleading my cause and executing judgment is a very clear pointing to the cross of Christ.

What did Christ do on Calvary's cross? He executed judgment. He executed judgment for me. Your sins, you know deserve to be judged. And just as sure as God is holy and God is just his judgment will be executed. God does not simply overlook sin. He does not simply forgive sin with no reference to his justice.

No – he executes judgment and that judgment was executed from Calvary's cross. This becomes a powerful weapon in the Christian's arsenal against sin. It is because Christ has executed judgment that you and I can say *rejoice not against me, O mine enemy*. You think you have cause to rejoice against me because I've fallen. You think that my fall is the end of the matter. You think that there's no remedy for me because of my fall but in this you are wrong, O mine enemy. I will bear the Lord's indignation because I have sorely grieved him but you should know, O my enemy that he will plead my cause and he will execute judgment for me.

And in the execution of that judgment it is the devil that is defeated and triumphed over by Christ and it is the believer that is victorious because with the execution of God's judgment on his Son while his Son was nailed to Calvary's cross God's justice has been satisfied. The end of v. 9 reads like this: *he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness*. I like the ESV rendering of this statement when it reads: *He will bring me out to the light; I shall look upon his vindication*.

This brings us to the Lord's table. As we gaze upon the bread and the cup there's a sense in which we, spiritually speaking, look upon his vindication. We are reminded that the shedding of his blood satisfied his justice. Our shorter catechism asks in Q25 How doth Christ execute the office of a priest? *Christ executeth the office of a priest, in his once offering up of himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and reconcile us to God; and in making continual intercession for us.*

Our text in Micah brings two ideas together that you often hear me point out. There's the idea of atonement – that's the idea behind God executing judgment. And there's the closely connected truth to intercession – *he will plead my cause* our text says. You do well to ask – how will he do that? How can God or Christ plead the cause of a man who has sinned against God? Your sin is inexcusable and indefensible. How can Christ plead your cause?

The answer, of course, is not that Christ will justify your sin or excuse your sin or even plead for mercy from his Father because of your sin. His plea will be his own shed blood. His plea will be the covenant of redemption through which he took to himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men and being found in fashion as a man he

humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. That will be his plea. And because his plea is based upon the judgment that he's executed you and I can confidently and with firm resolution affirm that when we fall we shall arise and when we sit in darkness the Lord shall be our light.

All of these points of analysis then come together around the Lord's table. It is here that we acknowledge the reality of our sin. *I have sinned against him* the Prophet confesses and so must we. But it is also here that we can address our enemy – the enemy of the world and the flesh and the devil and we can, as we hold up these elements to the gaze of our faith boldly say in our hearts *Rejoice not against me O mine enemy*. I think we give cause to the devil to tremble when we make such a proclamation while holding up the elements of the communion table.

If the devil thought our proclamation was without any basis other than our raw determination he would rejoice all the more. But the broken bread and the cup bring to our remembrance the basis for our confidence and the basis for our love to Christ and hatred of our sin. Our confidence is based in what grace has done on our behalf. I shall behold his righteousness or his vindication. His justice has been satisfied which means that he is the God of my salvation.

Let us, then, as a part of our spiritual warfare, confess our sins and confess our faith in the person and work of Christ. Let us in the partaking of these elements look to the Lord and wait for the God of our salvation in the confident expectation that he will hear and he will forgive and he will be our light and will bring us forth to the light.

What a blessing to know that: *if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

May the remembrance of who he is and what he's done enable us to rise and wage effective warfare against our sins even in such times when everything around us seeks to provoke us to sin.