



## Christ Reformed Community Church

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### “Prophetic Prostitution” Micah 3:5–8

Well, I want you to take your Bibles this evening. Our reading of Scripture will come from our sermon text, Micah 3:5–8, and then after we read that text, we’re going to flip over to Acts chapter 3, and we’re going to read verses 17 through 26. So, go ahead and turn over to Acts chapter 3. We’ll read from Micah chapter 3 to begin with. Let’s stand in honor of the reading of God’s Word, and I want to remind you that this is the living Word of our God, Micah chapter 3. Micah writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

*Thus says the LORD concerning the prophets  
who lead my people astray,  
who cry “Peace”  
when they have something to eat,  
but declare war against him  
who puts nothing into their mouths.  
Therefore it shall be night to you, without vision,  
and darkness to you, without divination.  
The sun shall go down on the prophets,  
and the day shall be black over them;  
the seers shall be disgraced,  
and the diviners put to shame;  
they shall all cover their lips,  
for there is no answer from God.  
But as for me, I am filled with power,  
with the Spirit of the LORD,  
and with justice and might,  
to declare to Jacob his transgression  
and to Israel his sin.*

And then over in Acts chapter 3 beginning in verse 17:

*And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. Moses said, “THE LORD GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME*

*FROM YOUR BRETHREN; TO HIM YOU SHALL GIVE HEED to everything He says to you And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people” And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, “And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.”*

This is the Word of our God. You may be seated and let us bow for a brief word of prayer.

Our Father, we have read Your Word and we believe that Your Word is true. We believe that from cover to cover, Genesis to Revelation, the Old Testament and the New Testament, that it is all true, and it is all for our souls. We are to fill our souls with the food of Your Word. We ask, Father, that Your Spirit might be with us in the preaching of Your Word. Help us even when we come to texts like Micah—Old Testament texts that are often neglected—help us, Lord, in our weak faith to believe that there is something here for us, because this is Your inspired Word. Help us to believe this, and Father help us, Lord, to be attentive to Your truth as You teach us by Your Holy Spirit. We pray and ask all of these things in the blessed name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

One of the glorious benefits of Bible study is understanding that the Holy Spirit-inspired use of metaphors is a very important thing to recognize any time that we are studying Scripture. If one fails to understand, or worse, refuses even to recognize the Bible’s use of metaphors, that person will be incompetent in his or her interpretation of the Scriptures. We could put it this way; fumbling a biblical metaphor can result in a hermeneutical turnover and interpretative defeat. In fact, an acknowledgement of biblical metaphors, I would make the argument, reveals that you have an exalted view of the Scriptures themselves. Steve Lawson said one time, and I quote:

The Bible is like a beautiful diamond that has many different cuts, and when you hold it up to the light, each beauty is refracting the light of each different side, and no one symbol of the Bible can communicate the whole. So, it requires many different metaphors, many different analogies, to even begin to try to put its arm around the totality of the invincible power of the inerrant Word.

And really what Lawson is saying there is two things; one thing directly and one thing indirectly. First, he’s implying that the Bible itself is full of metaphors, and more to the point, he is saying that the Scriptures under divine authorship describes itself in metaphoric language. For instance, the Bible describes itself as a sword that pierces in Hebrews chapter 4, or in James chapter 1 Scripture describes itself as a mirror that reveals one’s true character. The Bible reveals itself as milk that nourishes the believer for spiritual growth in 1 Peter chapter 2, or a lamp that shines to the path for our feet in Psalm 119, or a fire that is stored up in the bones of a prophet that once it is unleashed it consumes, Jeremiah 23:29, and in that same verse, Jeremiah 23:29, it describes God’s Word as a hammer that shatters a rock. But perhaps the most familiar metaphor in all of the Bible presents God’s Word as a seed that produces fruit. And you’re familiar with this. In the Gospels, Jesus tells us that the sowing of the seed, picturing really the preaching of the Word, or specifically the Word of the kingdom, as he calls it in Matthew 13:19, upon which four types of ground represent different responses to the gospel. And Jesus says only one type of soul soil actually receives the seed of the Word. Jesus says, “*For what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He, indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a*

*hundredfold, and another sixty, and another thirty.*” Well, Jesus’ message was being built off the Old Testament, specifically the prophet Isaiah, who predicted that the Son of God would pay the price of salvation for His people, and then as a Prophet He would declare, and as a King He would make an announcement where He would call the nations to Himself, and Isaiah uses the same metaphorical language. In Isaiah 55, Isaiah says:

*For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

God’s Word is described as something that produces a spiritual harvest, but what happens when there is a metaphorical spiritual feminine? Well, Amos the prophet predicts such a thing in Amos chapter 8. He says: *“Behold the days are coming, declares the Lord God, when I will send a famine on the land—not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.”* And Amos says, *“They shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north to the east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it.”* Why? Because there is a feminine in the land. By the way, Amos preceded Micah, and he warns the Northern Kingdom regarding the impending judgment of God coming upon that nation for their sins, and the judgment was a famine of the hearing of the words of God. And how did this come about? Well, they would no longer hear from the prophets. That was God’s judgment upon them. They would no longer hear anyone declare the truth and explain the truth. That was part of God’s judgment, as shocking as that may sound, and the immediate result of any famine is first spiritual malnourishment, and then secondly, eternal death.

Well, in Micah chapter 3, something similar, although we could argue far worse, is occurring. In verses 5 through 8 of Micah chapter 3, Micah doesn’t complain that the prophets in the Southern Kingdom were silent. There wasn’t a famine for the hearing of the words of God. The prophets were preaching, and some of what they were preaching was true. They were lacing their messages with aspects of truth, but they were also using their office to lead God’s people astray. At the end of chapter 2 and the beginning of chapter 3, Micah refers to God’s people as sheep—sheep without shepherds, sheep that were following the voices of false shepherd prophets, who were leading them to ruin. The false prophets of Micah’s day were prostituting God’s Word for filthy lucre, and we already saw this in chapter 2, verses 6 through 11. There were puppet preachers who crafted their message to curry the favor of the wealthy elite, who were paying them to only give a positive message and to lie to God’s people saying that His judgment would not come. And in our own day, it would be wrong to think on the one hand that God wouldn’t or that God couldn’t send a famine of the hearing of the Word of God as judgment on a specific nation or a specific people just like He did at Amos’s day. And on the other hand, it would also be wrong not to recognize that Isaiah’s prophecy that I read earlier is being fulfilled.

Prior to Jesus’s ascension, He told the Christians standing next to Him that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to Him, and then He says, *“Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations.”* That little phrase, *“on earth,”* is important, because it tells us that the Spirit of God was sent by the Lord Jesus Christ to indwell His church and that the church on the earth was to be a mouthpiece of God. Jesus, in effect, was giving seed to the sower and the bread of the gospel to

the eater, so that when the Word of God went out of the doors of the church, it ultimately was a word that was coming from God. And when that gospel was declared, it would not return to Him empty, but it would accomplish all the purposes for which He sent it; namely, which is the salvation of all of His elect people. And in the same vein, we would be wrong to conclude that what occurred during Micah’s day isn’t possible in our own day. We still live in a fallen world. We live in a fallen world that is governed by our King in heaven, but it is nonetheless a fallen world. And though Satan’s deception of the nations is not what it was in the Old Testament, not what it was now that Christ has been resurrected and now that Christ has ascended and now that Christ has been enthroned, there still is the presence of peddling prophets who prostitute God’s Word for filthy lucre.

Indeed, until the kingdom is fully consummated, there will always be false teachers. There will always be liars in society. There will always be those who declare falsehoods in governments and in other kingdoms, but the powerful message of the gospel and what the Word of God tells us is that God has armed His church with this powerful message, and the enemy in the end will be conquered. He will be defeated. The battle rages on, but the King marches ahead, and what we read in Micah’s prophecy is a foretaste of this very thing. God tells His people through the prophet Micah that the false teachers of his day will be defeated, and they will be silenced. Such is a foretaste of the messianic kingdom. And so, as we read these verses tonight and as we study these verses tonight, we must believe with the eyes of faith that Christ will vanquish every one of His foes. We must believe that the gospel will prevail, that truth will prevail, that true preaching will eat up false teaching, that God will judge those who pervert and peddle and prostitute His Word. We aren’t to worry about that. On the other hand, we are to be concerned about protecting the faith once-for-all handed down to the saints. We are to be those who place ourselves under the pure preaching and teaching of the Word of God. We are to pursue truth in all of its purest forms. Because God takes His word seriously, so should we.

Now, last time we saw in verses 1 through 4 of chapter 3 that Micah ushers us into the courtroom of God where God judges the judges of the nation. They’re arraigned before the bar of God’s justice due to their corruption. They’re guilty of injustice. They were cheating the people through their sophisticated court system. As we have said over and over and over again, they were stealing land from the people for their own gain. The leaders loved evil, but they hated good, as verse 2 of chapter 3 says and as we’ve already looked at. But as bad as that is, what we see in verses 5 through 8 is a worse injustice. The false prophets are now arraigned, and the charges are leveled against them of preaching lies in exchange for money so that the clergy system ends up being just as corrupt as the judiciary system. This nation was corrupt from top to bottom, from the highest levels of leadership all the way into the very courts of the temple and to the prophets themselves, and therefore what you had was a nation that was being led by liars, and they were self-deceived, and they were not repenting of their sin, and so, God would send His judgment.

Now, though this occurs in the context of ancient Israel, I want you to know that Micah’s words about these false prophets in verses 5 through 8 apply to any epoch of redemptive history because what Micah does is he reveals to God’s people something very simple—the difference between false prophets and true prophets. That’s all he does in these verses. Really, there are two highlights of the case brought against the false prophets by the prophet, Micah. The first highlight is found in verses 5 through 7 where we see false prophets characterized, and that’s where we’re going to

spend the bulk of our time, and then my second point is verse 8, the true prophets contrasted, and when we come to the end, we’ll look briefly at verse 8. But as I said, what we see here in Micah’s day is true about any day. There are always false prophets and they’re always marked by the same things, and there are always true prophets. We are never to think that God is incompetent in raising those who faithfully declare the truth—even if that number is small. So, we ought to be encouraged. We live on this side of the old covenant. We are now in the new covenant. We live on this side of Calvary, this side of the resurrection, this side of Christ’s glorious enthronement. He is building His church, and His gospel is marching forth and He will defeat all of His foes through the preaching of the truth, no matter how many lies might be going on in our very world today.

So, let’s look at these two points: false prophets characterized, followed by true prophets contrasted, and I want you to know, first of all, the false prophets characterized. Here in verses 5 through 7, Micah characterizes these false prophets by pointing out two characteristics about them. First, their decided ploy; that is, their plan of attack, and then secondly, their deserved punishment. Notice first, their decided ploy. First, he tells us that their ploy was rooted in a purposeful deception. I can’t imagine anything worse than this, but verse 5 Micah begins, “*Thus says the LORD concerning the prophets,*” notice this, “*who lead my people astray,*” Now, Micah says “*thus says the LORD*” because he wants to show that what he’s doing here is contrasting. He is a true prophet. What he says comes from the Lord, but not with the false prophets. They, concerning the prophets—this is God’s view—they had a purposeful deception about them. They were purposely leading God’s people astray, as verse 5 says there. They knew what they were doing. Proverbs 29:18 says, “*Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.*” Well, the only thing worse than no vision is having a false vision; and what these false prophets were doing was laying before the people of God a mirage. They were not leading God’s people, God’s sheep, in lush pastures. They were leading them in a dry desert with no truth, except they gave the illusion that they were preaching truth, because they were, in fact, prophets called by God. But they were not preaching against the sin of the nation. They were not preaching against the nation’s idolatry. They were not preaching against the nation’s materialism, and so they were lulling them to sleep in their own sin.

The prophets were deceptive, and the people were now deceiving themselves, and what were their motives? Well, what began with a purposeful deception was rooted—notice the rest of verse 5—in a profitable manipulation. There is always a reason for why false teachers do and say what they do. He says, Micah does, they “*cry ‘Peace’ when they have something to eat, but declare war against him who puts nothing into their mouths.*” The cry of peace, the cry of *shalom* from the prophets was a message which said essentially that all would be well so long as the people put food in the mouths of the prophets, gave them something to eat. In other words, the prophets gave the people what they wanted to hear in exchange for money. This was manipulation at its finest. Why? Well, because there was no peace. In fact, the exact opposite was true, wasn’t it? Destruction was headed their way because of sin, but these false prophets preached peace. The people wanted to hear the pleasant and positive messages of these prophets, and the prophets were more than willing to give that sort of message in order for temporary gain; that is, money. And so, on the one hand, the judiciary system stole from the people through unjust judging, but on the other hand the clergy system stole from the people through unjust preaching, not telling the truth. Or perhaps we could say in a deeper conspiracy—and this is what I really think was going on—the prophets were

paid by the leaders of the nation to preach a positive message instead of one of judgment, and of course the people had no problem with that.

The political leadership was controlling the prophets, and no one had an issue with it because it was a positive message that made people feel good. and the same thing was occurring in Jeremiah’s day. We need to understand our timeline. Micah prophesied close to a hundred years before Jeremiah, close to a hundred years before the destruction of Jerusalem actually happens, and so there is a reprieve of God’s judgment because God’s people actually ended up repenting during Micah’s day under King Hezekiah. But then 586 comes, and during Jeremiah the prophet’s days of preaching, we read this in Jeremiah 6. The false prophets were still preaching *“Peace, peace,”* Jeremiah says, *“when there is no peace.”* This is profitable manipulation. And on the other hand, not only, as verse 5 says, did they *“cry ‘Peace’ when they have something to eat,”* but on the other hand these same prophets would, notice your Bibles, *“declare war against him who puts nothing into their mouths.”* So, you get the picture. Those who refused to pay them, were met with a holy war of words by the prophets who said God’s going to wage war against you, because you’re not supporting our ministry. God is going to fight you. The irony of that; God was already fighting His people. God had already said He was going to destroy His people, but the lies just continued.

Indeed, what Micah said back in chapter 2, if you notice, back in verse 11: *“If a man walking in the Spirit and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people,”* Micah says. You remember the word *preach* there in the Hebrew means “drip” or “drop.” And again, understanding biblical metaphors are critical, because what Micah is saying is that instead of drinking from the wine of the Holy Spirit, a word from God which should govern their senses and govern their hearts and lead to repentance, no, it was the alcohol of mistruths and half-truths, and no-truths from the false prophets that they drank from those false prophets’ mouths; and therefore, the people were numbed into drunken oblivion. They could not walk straight enough to see the truth due to the manipulative messages of the prophets, which was rooted in purposeful deception and profitable manipulation because it increased the bank accounts of the prophets. Now, I want you to understand tonight that the prostitution of one’s prophetic gift was common throughout all of the Old Testament. In fact, it was so common that during Micah’s day, perhaps the only other faithful prophet was Isaiah. But these two men were preaching the truth in a world of lies, in a world that rejected their message from God.

Another thing I want to point out is that Micah doesn’t deny that these false prophets were gifted and that these false prophets were persuasive; nor does he say, as Amos did, that there were no words in the land. There was enough truth sprinkled into their messages to work like bait to reel the people in in their deception. But the problem wasn’t that God hadn’t called them; it’s that they reneged on their mission. They were traitors to truth. They didn’t lack human gifting; they lacked moral integrity and conviction. Such in my opinion is far worse than the temporal injustice of the court system. This is eternal injustice because these preachers willingly and knowingly led people to their own destruction, people that needed to be saved from destruction through repentance, but there was no preaching on repentance. They said everything was okay, no judgment was coming. Now, before we move on, I want you to know that this still happens in our own world today. What does Paul tell Timothy in 2 Timothy 4? *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”* The problem in

Micah’s day is the problem of our own day because sometimes money talks louder than God, and when it does the message will always be changed or tweaked or altered or manipulated for personal gain. This is one reason why Paul says in 1 Timothy 3 that one of the most important qualifications for an elder, not just a pastor but an elder, is that he not be a lover of money. And at the end of that book—not addressing just preachers and elders but all of the people of God—we find the reason why such is such a serious thing, because in 1 Timothy 6:10 we read, *“For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.”* We would say that what must be true of all elders should also be true of all of God’s people. God’s people should not be lovers of money. A love of money blinds one from serving the Lord. The temptation for preachers is in principle. The same thing as the temptation for parishioners. For example, if a parishioner misuses his money to hear what he wants to hear from a preacher, which happens all of the time, then he or she is no better than a preacher who misuses his mouth to receive what he wants from a parishioner. Both are sinful, both are condemned, and the answer and the reason is because God’s message is pure, and God wants His message to remain pure. And this is not something that just happens in the health/wealth gospel community, this is something that happens in large denominations who operate like corporations where favors are handed out. This is a great injustice in our land.

I will tell you tonight that the greatest injustice in our country is not racial injustice or so-called racial injustice. It is not civil injustice in the courts, and I think the Department of Justice was guilty three years ago of doing unjust things, including the former President, but the greatest injustice is the injustice that occurs behind the pulpits of this nation when men of God who say they have been called of God refuse to preach the truth of God’s Word. And they’re doing it for personal favors, and they’re doing it for the applause of man, and they’re doing it because it’s the politically correct thing to do. And what God says in terms of how serious He takes that in the Old Testament still applies in New Testament times. As I said in my introduction, Jesus sent His Spirit to indwell the Christian church to make disciples, and a disciple is made when the church is a mouth-house of truth. That’s how disciples are made. Jesus said, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,”* Jesus says, *“teaching them to observe all that I have commended you.”* So to the degree that a church teaches all God has commanded us to teach is to the degree that the Holy Spirit is behind the church. And to the degree that a church compromises and doesn’t teach all that God has commanded and all that is God’s Word is to the degree the Holy Spirit is not behind that church or that preacher or that denomination.

Going back to Proverbs 29:18: *“Where there is no prophetic vision,”* we should not be surprised when *“the people cast off restraint.”* Why are we shocked when there is lawlessness and wickedness in our nation when there are people looting and rioting, when they’ve turned justice upside down? Such is the result of a consistent lack of having a diet of truth, and the culpability lies with churches and preachers and Christians. And when truth is mixed with error, God will often judge a society with more error.

We’re looking at false prophets characterized. They are characterized, number one, by their decided ploy, which involves purposeful deception, profitable manipulation, but Micah also marks them, not only by their decided ploy, but also their deserved punishment, verses 6 and 7. In a move of judgment, God will take away the very source of their impure profiteering. God silences and

shames their mouths. He takes their gift away from them, sidelining them. He, in effect, retires their voices, first by silencing their mouths, and then by shaming their mouths. Notice verse 6, their mouths silenced. Since they prophesied falsely, when destruction on the city comes, the prophets will look to God for an answer, but He won't speak to them. Micah says in verse 6, *“Therefore, it shall be night to you [prophets], without vision, and darkness to you, without divination. The sun shall go down on the prophets, and the day shall be black over them.”* Now, it is widely believed that since dreams and vision were sent by God to the prophets at night, that is why we have this language in verse 6, that it shall be night to the false prophets, and that at that nighttime they will be without a vision. It will be literal darkness. What he means is that their nighttime prophetic routine of seeking an answer from God to preach to the people will be disrupted. There will be no light when they go to God for answers. There will be no message from Him, and in the second half of verse 6 when it says—notice your Bibles—*“The sun shall go down on the prophets, and the day shall be black over them,”* this is more figurative, speaking about the literal blackness of the night is only darkened more by the reality that God will no longer speak to them. He will render their mouths silent.

The sun will go down on these prophets. Their job is done. They're going to hang it up, because for too long they made false prophecies. If you remember last week, we saw in verse 4 that God was going to hide His face from the leadership of Israel. Well, He hid His face from them in verse 4. That was silence, but now the silence moves to darkness. The leadership will neither see God nor hear God. That's judgment. That's judgment. And the prophets will be without divination. No word from God. Now, this is similar to Amos's day, isn't it? A famine of the hearing from the Lord, a mark of judgment. And by the way, this came true in Jeremiah's day. We read in Jeremiah 14, the Lord said to Jeremiah;

*“The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds. Therefore, thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who prophesy in my name although I did not send them, and who say ‘Sword and famine shall not come upon this land’: [God says] By sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed.”*

What's the lesson? The lesson is God will always judge teachers when they do not teach truth to God's people. They will never get away with their falsehoods, and the truth will win out in the end. But their deserved punishment not only involved their mouths silenced, verse 6, but also their mouths shamed, verse 7. Notice this. It says, *“the seers shall be disgraced and the diviners put to shame; they shall all cover their lips, for there is no answer from God.”* You know, God doesn't keep this thing a secret between Himself and the false prophets, and by the way He never does. When public teachers of the church, whether in ancient Israel or a Christian church influence others with deception, God will find a way to expose them. It happens all the time. And so, Micah promises the seers—notice your Bibles—they'll be disgraced, and the diviners will be put to shame. So their prophetic sham now becomes a public shame. The silence from God results in silence from the prophets. Not only will their mouths empty of words, but now their banks will be empty of money because they'll be out of a job.

Seers, diviners, prophets—these are all synonyms. A seer is a prophet. A diviner is a prophet, except that I think Micah is using this title *diviner* in verse 7 because it carries with it a negative



meaning, reminding Micah’s original audience of the pagan diviners who sought—listen to this—“false deities to secure information by checking omens.” These false prophets, Micah is implying, weren’t getting their prophecies from God. They were like pagan prophets. They had made-up messages rooted in a made-up source of made-up omens. Now their mouths are empty. Their messages were empty of truth because they came from an empty source, and now their mouths will be empty. They’ll be disgraced. That’s the word that Micah uses here. They will be put to shame publicly.

By the way, the Bible forbids divination. Deuteronomy 18:14: *“These nations, which you are about to dispossess, listen to fortune-tellers and to diviners. But as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you to do this.”* This is a shameful thing, and then notice the end of verse 7. Micah says, *“they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God.”* He means this quite literally, by the way. God is going to expose their character. They put a mask of hypocrisy on their faces. God is going to remove that mask and He’s going to put a mask of His own on their face where they have to cover their upper lip. This is exactly what lepers did. In Leviticus 13:45, *“The leprous person who has the disease,”* the Bible says, *“shall...cover his upper lip and cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean.’”* Prophets who were declared as false prophets and who were exposed had to walk around with a mask over their lips. Lepers covered their mouths so as to not spread their physical germs, but prophets covered their mouths so as not to spread their spiritual germs and infect God’s people. God wasn’t giving them a message anymore. They had nothing to say. They had lying lips, and if they opened those lips they might say more lies, and so for the rest of their days they would walk around covering their mouths, symbolizing God’s prevention of false teaching, a contagion that spreads through lies. So that we even read in Lamentations chapter 4, the prophet Jeremiah, he describes these prophets as contagious. He says, *“They wandered, blind, through the streets; they were so defiled with blood,”* Jeremiah says, *“that no one was able to touch their garments. ‘Away! Unclean!’ people cried at them. ‘Away! Away! Do not touch!’ So,”* Jeremiah says, *“they became fugitives and wanderers; people said among the nations, ‘They shall stay with us no longer.’”* Completely removed from the camp of God.

It shouldn’t escape our notice the way to expose a prophet. The way to expose a prophet is to test his message, right? Well, instructions were given for that. If turn back with me to Deuteronomy chapter 18, we see this, a very familiar portion of Scripture, and a very important portion of Scripture. Deuteronomy chapter 18, and look with me at verse 21: *“And if you say in your heart, ‘How may we know the word that the Lord has not spoken?’”* In other words, how do we know that a prophet is actually giving a true message? Verse 22: *“when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.”* That was the standard. So, if the prophesy came true, it was a true prophesy. If it didn’t come true, it was false and that prophet was false and he was a liar, and he was to be treated as a leper in the camp.

What’s the standard for our own day? Well, let’s skip back up to verse 15. This is Moses speaking. Deuteronomy 18:15: And Moses says, *“The Lord your God will raise up for you,”* watch this, *“a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen.”* Who is Moses referring to? Well, we know when we read the New Testament in Acts chapter 3—I read it for us earlier—that Moses is predicting the coming of the Messiah; that is, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is Christ’s standard, which is *the* standard. It is the standard of the gospel, which is the truth. To

quote the words of Psalm 2—this is appropriate isn’t it?—“*Why do the nations rage.*” Well, he gives the answer in Psalm 2. He says, “*The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his anointed.*” But the Psalmist says this is done in vain because God says, “*I have set,*” listen to this, “*I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.*” And then the warning: “*Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.*” Psalm 2 was beginning to be fulfilled at the resurrection, the ascension, and the enthronement of Christ. He is the only King in this world. So, any message that doesn’t match the message of the king is a false message; and by the way, that message will be defeated. Whether it’s a message that is preached from a pulpit or whether it’s a message that is a speech given by a politician, all lies will be defeated, because the King of Kings and Lord of Lords is Jesus Christ, and He is on His throne reigning. His kingdom will not be destroyed. His kingdom will not come to an end, and the church now stands as His body. We submit to His headship. He directs the body. We declare His truths, His way, with no accommodation and no compromise, no matter how powerful someone is who tells us to give some other message.

These prophets in Micah’s day were judged because their priorities were mixed up. They were focused on their fees instead of the faith once-for-all handed down. They were obsessed with the idol of money instead of the importance of the message. They were obsessed with the comfort of living over the conviction of preaching truth. What a warning to all of God’s people. If you love money, you cannot love the truth. If you love money, you will not love Jesus. You will not submit to Jesus, and what a stern warning to the preachers of any nation, any denomination, any church who preaches falsehood knowingly or unknowingly. The New Testament warns teachers, doesn’t it? James 3:1: “*Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.*” And Paul describes false teachers in his day with that same selfish pleasure accompanied with shame and reproach. He says it this way in Philippians 3: “*Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and their glory is in their shame. Their minds are set on earthly things.*” That is an attitude that is set on the kingdoms of this world, the earthly things of this world, the applause of man, the politically correct things to say, the acceptable things to say. Such is a prophetic sham, and it is a public shame, and God will judge every prophet and every preacher and every Christina who loves the things of this world over truth. That’s why when you look through history and you see all the great martyrs, it strengthens your faith. They are a testimony to the reality of the truth that they believe in. They really believed in the truth, or they wouldn’t have been willing to suffer for what they suffered for. False prophets, false Christians are never willing to suffer, and they always love the things of this world over truth.

Well, that’s false prophets characterized. Their decided ploy—it involved purposeful deception, profitable manipulation; and their deserved punishment—their mouths were silenced, their mouths were shamed. Now, we move from false prophets characterized, secondly, to true prophets contrasted. I told you I just wanted to spend a few minutes here on verse 8, and what Micah does is he gives two characteristics of true prophets. He says that they have a God-sent power, and they have a God-sent proclamation. They yield themselves to the anointing of the Spirit, so they have a God-sent power. Notice the fuel, pointing to himself as a prototype of true prophets, Micah says, “*But as for me...*” Here is my fuel. Here’s what keeps me going: “*I am filled with power.*” Not human power. Notice it, “*with the Spirit of the Lord.*” Now, the word *but* in the Hebrew is a strong

adversative, so he’s contrasting. “Here’s what false prophets are, but…” There’s a strong distinction here. Micah is saying, “I’m not interested in preaching mystical omens or personal opinions, I’m interested in preaching the message that comes by God because that message always comes with power because it’s infused with the fuel of the Spirit of the Lord.”

Now, what is true about Micah is true for all preachers and all prophets. Remember, Jesus said authority was given to Him in heaven and on earth? And that authoritative power was then given to the church, the power of the gospel, which is a stumbling block to some. Others despise it, but it nevertheless is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe. Well, the church has this power—not a politician, not a king, not a country, not a body politic. We have the very power of the only King, the Lord Jesus Christ, and that power comes in the pure preaching of the gospel, specifically, and generally, the preaching of the Word. The fuel of true preachers is not sensuality but the Spirit. It’s not carnality, but it’s conviction. It’s not the man behind the pulpit, but it’s God behind the man in the pulpit, as he simply, faithfully preaches the truth of God’s Word. And when he does that in the Spirit of the Lord, the promise of Jesus will come true. The seed of the gospel will grow and flourish and there will be a harvest, and God’s kingdom will grow, and souls will be saved. But this is always the test of every generation of every period of church history. Do you believe in the powerful kingdoms of this world and what they say, or do you believe in the simplicity and the purity and the preaching of the gospel?

Well, this is the God-sent power that Micah had. It’s the God-sent power that every preacher has. It’s the fuel of the Holy Spirit, and this fuel produces a fruit. Notice it. Micah says in verse 8: “*But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord.*” And notice the fruit, the result of this: “*and with justice and might.*” Justice just refers to truth, speaking the truth. When you’re empowered by the Spirit of God, you preach the truth of God; and to speak with might simply means to speak with courage. So, who is sufficient to preach truth in a culture of lies? I’ll be the first one to tell you, not me. In and of myself, not me. God chooses the foolish things of this world to despise the wise. The fruit of conviction and courage is always the result of knowing that what you are preaching is the truth. And when you preach the truth, it always results in conviction and courage. The truth comes out, justice comes out, strength comes out, might comes out. This is what marks true prophets, true preachers of God.

So, we have seen false prophets characterized. Their decided ploy—it involves purposeful deception, profitable manipulation, their deserved punishment. Their mouths are silenced, their mouths are shamed. Now we’re looking at true prophets contrasted. They have a God-sent power, don’t they? They have a fuel, and they have the production of this fruit of conviction, but they also have a God-sent proclamation. Notice the nature of this proclamation. In order to be faithful, the end of verse 8, Micah says, I have been given the power of the Spirit of God to preach with justice and with might. Notice this, “*to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.*” That is always what’ll mark a true prophet and a true preacher. How willing are they to tell God’s people what sin is? How willing are they to do that? If it’s all a positive message with smiles, they’re probably not preaching the truth. It’s impossible to be a faithful preacher and not preach against sin. It’s impossible to be a faithful prophet of God and not preach God’s judgment, and yet that is what marks most pulpits today. Why is that? Well, because if you don’t give people what they want to hear, you won’t have a church, you won’t have a budget, you won’t have a building, you won’t be successful in the world’s eyes.

There is nothing new under the sun. The same thing that was happening in Micah’s day happens in our own day by some people that you would be shocked that they would even participate in that. You cannot be a faithful preacher without preaching transgression and sin. What does Paul tell Timothy? 2 Timothy 4: *“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus,”* listen to this language, *“who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom.”* He bases his motivation to Timothy upon the fact that God is a God of judgment. Why should you preach, Timothy? Because God is going to judge the living and the dead! This is your commission. And then listen what he says. He says, *“Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season.”* And what does it say? *“Reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.”* That last part means you persevere. You have the patience to persevere unto the end. You meet people where they are, but you point out the error of their ways. If you don’t do that, they won’t see their sin, and if they don’t see their sin, they can’t repent from their sin that they don’t see, and they can’t be saved.

Churches are weak today, but it’s not because Christ is weak. He’s ruling and He is reigning. He’s building His kingdom. The growth doesn’t happen overnight, but the church today needs to fortify themselves, and the way they fortify themselves is by strengthening the pulpit. The power of God’s kingdom comes in the preaching of God’s gospel; something that is despise, something that people hate. People are all about dialogue today. They don’t want a sermon. If you don’t want a sermon, you can’t have the gospel. And I go back to Proverbs 29:18: *“Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.”* It’s not that our day has no preachers. There are plenty of preachers. It’s not that they have no vision. It’s just that their vision often times doesn’t come from God. The problem is that preachers have become professionals at perverting and peddling and prostituting God’s message to such a degree that it’s hard for God’s people to tell the truth because of all of the teargas of false teaching. And what I want to suggest is that teargas is actually the judgment of God. Such blindness to truth is in exact proportion to man’s craving for lies. Man says, *“I don’t want to hear the truth,”* and God says, *“You don’t want to hear the truth? Then I will give you lies. I will allow you to be medicated with wine, and beer, and strong drink,”* Micah 2:11. This is the type of prophet for this type of people.

And yet in all of this, are we to lose hope? God forbid. What do we do? We preach the truth unashamedly because we know that the power comes in the preaching of this gospel, and that Jesus has promised that He will call from every tribe and tongue and people and nation every one of His elect people, and He doesn’t need a government to do it. What He needs is a ragtag group of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who will declare the gospel faithfully. He will glorify His name through that, and He will shame all the liars of this fallen world. We need to pray His kingdom will come. And we need to pray that His will be done, but we dare not pray that unless we are willing to pay the price for preaching the truth at all costs, and God has promised He will be with us. To Him be the glory. Let us pray.

Lord, Your Word is truth, and we are so very grateful for it, because, Lord, we sense the power of Your Word. We sense the power of truth. It’s convicting power. It’s encouraging power for our hearts, for our souls. Lord, we know that You don’t need us. You have chosen to use Your church as an instrument in the world, a mouth-house of truth that declares the gospel. You have chosen certain men, who are called preachers to declare this truth. But, Father, You do it through weak

men. You do it, at least at the beginning, through a small group of people that will grow incrementally until the whole earth is full of Your kingdom. Lord, we don't know when You will return. We don't know when Your kingdom will be consummated, but what we do know—even with all the depravity we see in this wretched fallen world—we know that You will make it new again someday. We know the gospel will prevail. We know that we will see You face to face, and those of us that know Christ, we will forever be in Your eternal kingdom where justice, true justice will prevail. Father, we long for that day, and yet we know You have given us a task to do, a task unfinished. Help us to be faithful until the end, to declare the hope that lies within us to a lost world. Help us to do it with perseverance for the glory of Your namesake, for the sake of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray these things in His blessed and holy name. Amen.