NEW FOCUS

Woe Is Me - No Wait

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Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grapegleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the firstripe fruit.

Micah 7:1

It is always encouraging to discover we are not alone when we face a problem or have to struggle with a challenge in life. For believers in Christ the scriptures provide practical examples of men and women who have travelled the pilgrim's way before us, learning and experiencing what it is to be a stranger in a strange land.

When Micah said "Woe is me" at the beginning of chapter seven in his little prophecy he was declaring effectively, "What a miserable man I am. How wearisome my life has become."

It might seem strange to hear a gospel preacher make such a statement. After all, are not preachers the ones charged with comforting and encouraging the church? If they are depressed, what hope for the rest of us!

It is interesting to note what causes Micah to lament. What is it has provoked this man of God to so much grief? Simply this, he cannot find a spiritual man with whom to fellowship; an upright man, a kindred spirit, with whom to worship God!

Perhaps knowing this we might feel a little more sympathetic towards this lonely soul. Do we imagine the church in the Old Testament was strong and vibrant and faithful? Certainly, there were moments, periods when it seems a widespread recognition of the work of God in the nation Israel did occur, yet mostly it seems the Lord's true people, the spiritual people, were only ever a remnant, widely scattered, frequently isolated, often downcast.

In many ways Micah is like us, or we like him. If we are blessed with the companionship of gospel believers, we are blessed indeed. The company of men and women redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and holy before God by imputed righteousness, is precious. We should treasure such fellowship and the holy moments shared with the Lord's little ones. They are a precious gift from the Holy Spirit.

Yet many of us struggle to find such fellowship. Perhaps because there is

no gospel church near enough for us to attend, perhaps because age and illness have restricted our movement. So we learn to make do with personal reading or substitute listening to sermons second hand in the privacy of our homes rather than sharing lively, spiritual communion with the church of Christ.

Micah felt alone. He felt bereft of fellowship. But more, he felt withered on the inside, like the bruised, crushed and wilted grapes left behind on the vine after the harvest had been gathered. He felt rejected. He felt abandoned. He felt vulnerable and defenceless. He felt miserable.

Now some will say to Micah, "Buck up. Things are not that bad." Or advise him to make lemonade of lemons and enjoy a half full glass. But shall we mock the prophet? Shall we diminish his words or prescribe some pills with our kitchen table wisdom to pep him up? The Holy Spirit has left us Micah's testimony for a reason and his message is "Woe is me".

And yet, Micah has left us with more than complaints. He has left us with a personal testimony of faith and hope. In the midst of his trial and in the absence of comfort from fellow saints the prophet throws himself upon the promises of God and His faithfulness. I like that. Here are five encouraging words to comfort the downcast in every age. From the lonely deserts of iron-age Israel to the cul-de-sacs of our modern hectic life, Micah still speaks to our deepest needs.

1. My God Will Hear Me

Despite the godlessness of his day Micah has faith. He writes, 'Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me' (Micah 7:7).

This is an candid testimony from a tried and tested soul. Troubled believers do not, cannot abandon their faith. They cling to it in the midst of the storm. Beaten down children of God do not fall from grace. They fall back upon it. Like Peter they say to their Lord, 'Where else shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.' Troubled one, what are you going to do? 'I will look to the Lord', says Micah. Weary one, where are you going to turn? 'I will wait for the Lord', says the prophet. He is the God of my salvation, I have reason to believe He will hear me.

Let us say this another way. Let us take Micah's words and give them a New Testament context. I will look to Jesus, 'the author and finisher of my faith' (Hebrews 12:2). I will wait upon Him the 'Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come' (1 Thessalonians 1:10). I will trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, the God of my salvation, my Sovereign King.

When all others desert me, when my own strength fails, when I feel alone and adrift, Christ is my Rock, Christ is my anchor, Christ is my all in all. I

will commit all my cares, concerns and weariness to Christ. I will turn to Him for all my need, wait on His kindness, mercy and love, and I will prove Him faithful. Can you say this? Do you have Micah's faith to trust God, to trust He hears you?

2. My Lord Shall Be A Light To Me

Weary saint, do you feel your enemy is winning? Do you fear the devil's deviousness? Do you struggle with the world's temptation and despise the weakness of your own flesh? Hear the prophet again. He speaks to your case, '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' (Micah 7:8).

I admire the prophet's honesty. He writes not, if I fall but when I fall. He writes not of perpetual glory-days like some modern 'prayer warrior' constantly advancing with a trail of spiritual victories in his wake. He says 'when I sit in darkness'. Then, in the darkness, as I sit, the LORD shall be a light to me. Fallen, darkened soul it is to you the Lord comes as an uplifting Light, perceived more brightly and gloriously for the darkness He dispels.

3. My Lord Shall Bring Me Forth

Trials can be bitter, complicated, and protracted. Their origin and their consequences may tax our patience and understanding but the Lord's people know there will be an end. The Lord has promised to bring us forth to the light and someday we will see all our trouble in the light of His sovereign and providential purpose. Micah declares, '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' (Micah 7:9).

Micah speaks of feelings of guilt and troubled conscience. The reason for our trials may be legion. But the man rejoices, too, to see redemption and taste victory from the Lord. How Satan, our enemy, rejoiced to see the church of Christ fallen, darkened, consumed with sin. But Christ has pleaded our cause, interceded in our case, carried our judgment, satisfied justice, proved Himself a worthy Saviour and Redeemer and provided Himself as the Lord our Righteousness.

4. My Lord Will Feed The Flock Of His Heritage

And, if for a time it appears the enemies of Christ are winning, do not despair, the Lord will feed His people. He will sustain, nourish, and provide for them, and prosper His purpose for your good and His glory.

'Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage' says Micah. Christ's people are His sheep, His flock. He inherited them from His Father in covenant agreement. They shall be fed. The rod is the preacher, minister

and administer of gospel truth to their hearts. By the rod marvellous things are revealed for the Lord declares to us "I will shew unto him marvellous things". Marvellous gospel truths of atonement, substitution, and propitiation. Marvellous accomplishments of redemption, reconciliation, and divine peace.

He will cause His people to marvel at sin removed, iniquity pardoned, holiness bestowed, salvation granted, glory promised, and heaven opened for an everlasting habitation. In our gatherings and church services we shall encounter marvellous truths, truths to confound the nations and princes of this world but thrill the people of God. The miraculous deliverance of Israel from Egypt is our evidence. ‘According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvellous things’ (Micah 7:15). He who has brought us out of bondage will bring us into perfect rest.

5. The Lord Has Supplied Every Need

Brothers and sisters, consider our incomparable God. Micah began this chapter bewailing his condition and lamenting his loneliness. But as he progresses his mood changes, he concludes his assessment of our blessed Lord and Saviour by declaring, ‘who is a God like unto thee?’

It is fitting for us to ask ourselves this very question when the trials of our lives bring us low. Every objective consideration of our Saviour’s mighty accomplishments and gracious blessings is guaranteed to comfort the soul of the weary and heavy-ladened, and encourage the downcast. Our God is a Saviour who pardons iniquity, delights in mercy, and sinks our sins in the depth of the sea.

The ‘remnant of his heritage’ is a beautiful description for the chosen of God. The elect, the anointed, the blessed of the Lord, are His little flock. Though insignificant to the world we are precious to our Beloved. Dear Micah, tried, tested and lonely Micah, is sustained in his recollections of God’s faithful promises, and so shall we be. He is built up by the gospel of free, sovereign grace, and so shall we be.

Whenever we encounter a verse like verse 20 the covenant love, covenant purpose and covenant grace of God is being referenced. ‘Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.’

Hear the promise, observe the fulfilment, of these promises in the death of Christ. Here you will discover the truth and mercy of God to the church. Meditate upon the application of truth and mercy in the power of grace in your own personal experience. This promise is yours, child of God!

Micah said, "Woe is me", but He ends upon a triumphant note of mercy, redemption, deliverance and the unfailing faithfulness of God. This revelation thrilled and blessed him.

He learned what Moses learned, ‘And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee (Genesis 17:7).

He felt what Isaiah felt, ‘Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness’ (Isaiah 41:10).

And He believed what Paul believed, ‘For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him’ (2 Corinthians 5:21).

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