

Spurgeon's Exposition - Micah

Micah 4

Mic 4:1. But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

God's cause and kingdom shall not be hidden away in a corner: "the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains," an Alp upon other Alps, higher than all the other hills. The day is coming when the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be the most conspicuous thing in the whole world, "and people shall flow unto it." The heathen, the people who knew nothing about it, shall flow to it like a great river.

Mic 4:2. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths:

That is the way the grace of God works in us; he teaches, and then we not only learn, but we obey.

Mic 4:2-3. For the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off;

The kingdom of Christ, the Son of David, shall attract people and nations that were far off from the holy city where he lived and died.

Mic 4:3. And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

They shall give up the study of the art of war. Their spirit shall be softened, in many cases renewed by grace and then they shall take to the useful arts; they shall not throw away their swords, but shall beat them into ploughshares, they shall not hurl their spears into the earth, but shall bend them into scythes or pruning-hooks. Oh, that the day were come when the wealth and ingenuity and power of nations were used in the pursuits of peace instead of in the arts of war! This is the tendency of the kingdom of Christ, for wherever he comes, he makes peace. Nothing is more opposed to the spirit of Christianity than war; and when men are Christians, not in name only, but in deed and in truth, wars must cease.

Mic 4:4. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree: and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it.

The best evidence that this will be the case is that the Lord of hosts, who has all power at his disposal, has said that it shall be so.

Mic 4:5. For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever.

When we learn to know God in truth, we do not give him up, but we walk in his name for ever and ever. God's covenant with us is an everlasting covenant, reaching beyond time, and enduring throughout eternity. Some nations have discarded their idol gods; but those who really know and love the Lord will walk in his name for ever and ever.

Mic 4:6. In that day, saith the LORD will I assemble her that halteth, —

God will bring to himself you that limp, that hesitate, that tremble, that fear: "I will assemble her that halteth," —

Mic 4:6. And I will gather her that is driven out —

Hunted by Satan, and harassed by care, frightened by depression of spirit, "I will gather her that is driven out," —

Mic 4:6. And her that I have afflicted;

If God has laid his hand upon one of you so that you have a special affliction from himself, you have this gracious promise that he will gather you to himself.

Mic 4:7. And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever.

Little scattered communities, churches which have been weak and feeble shall have the strengthening of God, and they shall be, through his sovereign grace, a remnant saved by grace to his praise and glory. Note how everything here is done by God; you keep

on reading, “I will,” “I will, “I will.” Oh, those blessed “I wills” of God! Our wills are often defeated and disappointed, but God’s “I wills” stand fast for ever.

Mic 4:8. And thou, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.

So it did. “Beginning at Jerusalem,” was Christ’s order concerning the preaching of the gospel after his resurrection. The first servants of Christ were of that ancient people who might be called the “tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion.” Oh, that Christ would soon return in mercy to the —

“Chosen seed of Israel’s race,

A remnant weak and small,” —

and gather them to himself, for that would be the fullness of the Gentiles also!

Mic 4:9. Now why dost thou cry out aloud? is there no king in thee? is thy Counselor perished?

Sometimes, our prayers may be the utterance of our fears rather than of our faith, and then the question comes, “Is there no king in thee? Is thy Counselor perished?” Can we not trust to him whose name is “Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace”?

Mic 4:10. For pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail.

They are sharp pangs, but they lead to life, and therefore they are blessed pangs after all.

Mic 4:10. Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon: there shalt thou be delivered; there the LORD shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies.

It looks more like a threat than a promise that God would send his people to Babylon, but there they were to be delivered; and it oftentimes happens with us that we must be brought into captivity before we are set free, we must feel the weight of the iron bondage of sin and Satan before we are brought out into the glorious liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free.

Mic 4:11. Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion.

All the enemies of Israel came together, hoping to destroy her, they saw that God had left her for a while in their hands, so they maliciously sought her destruction.

Mic 4:12. But they know not the thoughts of the LORD, —

They had their own thoughts, and they thought that the Lord meant what they meant, — the entire destruction of the chosen race. So the prophet says, “But they know not the thoughts of the Lord,” —

Mic 4:12. Neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor.

God let them come together, great hosts of them, like the sheaves of wheat upon the threshing-floor. Then see what the Lord says: —

Mic 4:13. Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass; and thou shalt beat in pieces many people:

She was to be like the ox that treadeth out the corn, and she was to have horns of iron and hoofs of brass with which to break in pieces those that had oppressed her.

Mic 4:13. And I will consecrate their gain unto the LORD, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.

So that, when they expected to destroy her, she destroyed them, and there may come a day when all the great men and the wise men and the proud men of the world will come together to destroy the Church of Christ, but, oh, how mistaken they will be! For when their pride is at its height, then will the poor weak Church of Christ be suddenly strengthened by the Most High, and she shall tread them under her foot, and they shall be utterly defeated, to the praise of the glory of the God of Zion who liveth for ever and ever.

Mic 6:1. Hear ye now what the LORD saith;

And yet some doubt the infallible inspiration of Scripture. I would commence every reading of the Scripture with such a word of admonition as this: "Hear ye now what the Lord saith." That is what the prophet said; but God spake by the prophet: "Hear ye now what the Lord saith."

Mic 6:1. Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice.

As men were hardened, and turned away their ears, the prophet was bidden to speak to the mountains, those mountains which had been disfigured with the shrines of idols, with altars on every high hill, or, perhaps, those higher hills that were never cultivated, and that remained untouched by the defiling hand of men. God makes an appeal to these ancient things.

Mic 6:2. Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD'S controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD hath, a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel.

It was wonderful condescension on God's part that he should deign to come as a defendant before the august court of the mountains, and in the presence of the deep foundations of the earth. It is a noble conception, in poetry most excellent; in grandeur, worthy of God. He made his appeal to the ancient hills to hear his pleading while he condescended to argue and ask his people why they had rejected their God, and turned aside to idols. Then he pleaded with Israel.

Mic 6:3. O my people, what have I done unto thee?

"What but good, what but mercy, have I done unto thee?"

Mic 6:3. And wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.

He asks them to give any reason whatever why they had turned away from him. Beloved friends, have any of you, who are the people of God, grown cold in your love to him? Are you neglecting the service of the Most High? Are you beginning to trust in an arm of flesh? Are you seeking your pleasures in the world? Have you lost the love of your espousal, your first love to your blessed Lord? Then hear him plead with you. Be not as Israel was, but let the Lord speak to you rather than to the hills: "What have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me." O Lord, we have nothing to testify against thee! We have very much to testify for thee; and we blush to think that we have not done so oftener. Oh, that we had felt more love to thee, and had borne a bolder and more consistent testimony to thy love, thy grace, thy faithfulness!

Mic 6:4. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

God constantly refers to Israel's coming out of Egypt; on every great occasion he begins, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." And to his people the Lord still says, "I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of slavery." Is it not so? Do we not still delight in his redeeming work, in the sprinkling of the blood of the Paschal Lamb, and in the high hand and outstretched arm with which the Lord delivered us from the bondage of our sin? Remember that thou also wast a bondman; forget not who bought thee, and with what price; remember who delivered thee, and led thee out, and with what mighty power. Remember this, and let thy cold love burn up again, and let thine indifference turn to enthusiasm. O Lord, revive thy people! The Lord further says to his people, "I sent before thee Moses (the lawgiver), Aaron (the priest), and Miriam (the prophetess);" one to teach thee, another to plead for thee, and to sacrifice for thee, and the third to sing for thee, to sing thy song of gladness at the Red Sea. God has given to his people many ministries in divers forms; and they are all concentrated in his Son, who is everything to us. Oh, by the greatness of his gifts to us, let us come back to our former love to him, and to something more than that!

Mic 6:5. O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD.

Balak endeavored to get Balaam to curse the people of God; but they could not be overcome by human power. He sought to destroy them by superhuman agency; but Balaam's curses turned to blessings. God would not permit the false prophet to curse Israel; and he has in our case turned the curse of the great adversary into a blessing. He has delivered us, and our trials have strengthened us, and taught us more of God. Will we not remember this? Shittim was the last encampment on the further side of Jordan, Gilgal the first in the promised land; therefore they are united here with God's righteousnesses to his people, for the word is in the plural. It is a remarkable idiom: "That ye may know the righteousnesses of the Lord." He is righteous always, in every way, towards everything, and under every aspect. I wish we knew this, for sometimes we begin to think that he deals harshly with us. When we are severely tried, we begin to doubt the righteousness of the Lord. Remember all that he has done to you from the first day to the last, "that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord." Now the plaintiff takes up the case, but he, too, turns defendant, and asks what he can do

to bring about a reconciliation.

Mic 6:6-7. Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

The people will give God everything but what he wants. They begin, you see, by saying that they will bring burnt offerings; they are ready to do that. The axe shall fall upon the head of numberless young bullocks, such as God demanded under the law. The people are ready enough for that sacrifice; and as for rams, they will shed their blood by thousands. If oil is wanted for the meat offering, rivers of it shall flow. When they have offered what God would have, they offer what he would not have, what God abhorred and loathed, for they offered to give their firstborn for their transgressions. They insulted Jehovah with the sacrifices of Moloch, with human slaughter, offering their children to obtain atonement for their sins. They were willing to go even that length, and to do anything but what God wants; and men will still give to God anything but what he asks for; majestic edifices, gorgeous services, ecstatic music, gold and silver; anything but what the Lord demands. Here is God's answer:

Mic 6:8. He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

It was a spiritual worship that the Lord required; not externals, not outward gifts, but the heart. If thou wilt bring an offering, bring thyself; there is no other gift that the Lord so much desires. The prophet mentions three things that the Lord required of his people: "To do justly:" here are the equities of life. "To love mercy here are the kindnesses of life, which are to be rendered cheerfully. The prophet does not say, "to do mercy," but to "love" it, to take a delight in it, to find great pleasure in the forgiveness of injuries, in the helping of the poor, in the cheering of the sick, in the teaching of the ignorant, in the winning back of sinners to the ways of God. "And to walk humbly with thy God." These are the things which please him; and when we are in Christ, and he becomes our righteousness, these are the sacrifices with which God is well pleased; they make an offering of a sweet smell, a holy incense which we may present before him. Talk no more of your outward ordinances, your will-worship, with abundance of music, or human eloquence and learning, and what not. These things delight not the Lord; no offering is acceptable unless the outward conduct shows that the heart is right with him.

Mic 6:9. The LORD'S voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.

God's voice to his people is often uttered by means of their affliction Hear ye the rod." He wishes us to understand that judgments and calamities are his voice crying to the city. Oh, that we were men of wisdom, that we would hear what God has to say! Alas! Israel did not hear, and Judah would not listen, even to God's own voice!

Mic 6:10. Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable?

Here he comes to practical details. In Micah's day, men had grown rich by oppression, by a want of justice; they had wronged their fellow men, and God asked them whether they expected to be pleasing to him when their houses were full of treasure which they had virtually stolen by giving scant measure and short weight. God condescends even to point out these minute particulars of moral conduct, and so should his servants do. It is not for us, his ministers, to be soaring into the clouds, to astonish you with the grandeur of our thoughts and words; but to come to your shops, to look at your bushel-measures and your pecks, your yard-sticks and your weights.

Mic 6:11-12. Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.

They were, I suppose, very much what Orientals are still; you cannot trade with them without having need of more than two eyes. Their price has to be beaten down; their quantities must be counted. God would not have his people like this. He says nothing about the Moabites or the Babylonians doing this, but for his people to do it was very grievous to him.

Mic 6:13. Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins.

They lied, and they cheated; so God would give them a sorry tongue, betokening their ill-health. He would make their present distress to get worse and worse, till they should be sick through their wounds.

Mic 6:14. Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied;

The satisfaction that comes to us through eating is of his mercy, and when he wills, he can say, "Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied."

Mic 6:14. And thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee;

"Thou shalt feel an inward sinking; even when thou hast eaten, thou shalt be faint, as a man who has eaten nothing."

Mic 6:14. And thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and that which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword.

So that in every project they would be disappointed; in every design they would be frustrated, because God would be against them.

Mic 6:15. Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine.

God can let men have every form of outward prosperity, and yet make nothing of it. I fear that some, perhaps some present, have every outward religious blessing; yet nothing comes of it. You hear sermons, you come to meetings, you tread the olives, but you are not anointed with the oil. The grapes are in the wine-vat; but you drink not the wine. God save us from that sad condition!

Mic 6:16. For the statutes of Omri are kept,

They would not keep the statutes of God; but they could keep the foul statutes of Omri, which appear to have been specially objectionable to God.

Mic 6:16. And all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels;

He was an arch rebel against God. Remember his murder of Naboth to get his vineyard; and these people followed his evil example.

Mic 6:16. That I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.

Very hard was it to bear that reproach, when there would be none of the comforts of the Spirit to go with it. There are some professors who bear the reproach of Christ, but will never share his crown; that is a fearful state of things. Gladly enough would we take up that reproach that we may be truly his; but if we profess to be God's people, and act inconsistently, we shall bear all the reproach, but have nothing to sustain us under it. O Lord, of thy mercy, save us from this!

Micah 7

The prophet begins in a sorrowful strain, and there is much that is said in the chapter, yet there is also much of holy confidence in God.

Mic 7:1. Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the first ripe fruit.

It is a terrible thing for a good man to find good men growing very scarce, and to see wicked men becoming more wicked than ever. It makes him feel his loneliness very keenly, and joy seems to be banished from his heart.

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.

Those were sad times in which Micah lived; and yet, under some aspects, one might be willing and even glad to live in such times, for, if ever one could be useful to one's fellows, surely it would be then. God had need of a voice like that of the prophet Micah in the days when his worship was forsaken, and the true faith had almost died out among men. Unless God had left a Micah here and there, the land would have been as Sodom, and have been made like unto Gomorrah. So the more unpleasant the age was to the good man, the more necessary and profitable was he to that age.

Mic 7:3. That they may do evil with both hands earnestly,

I wish the professed followers of Christ did good with both hands, that is, with every faculty, with every capacity, in every way, and at every opportunity, just as wicked men "do evil with both hands earnestly."

Mic 7:3. The prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up.

Honesty seemed to have died out of the nation; the highest people in the land, who ought to have been beyond the power of bribery, sold the administration of justice to the highest bidder. Ah, those were ill times indeed.

Mic 7:4. The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge: the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation

cometh; now shall be their perplexity.

Sin brings sorrow in its train; and, as nations will have no future as nations, God deals with national sin here upon earth, and visits it with national punishments. Now that sin had become so rampant in Israel, it would be the time of their perplexity, and when sins, like chickens, come home to roost, then will be the time of the sinner's perplexity. He lets his sins fly abroad, and thinks that, like the wandering birds of the air, they will soon be gone, and he shall never see them again, but they will all come home to him, and he shall be made bitterly to rue the day in which he thought that he could make a profit by transgressing the righteous law of the Lord.

Mic 7:5. 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.

So saturated with dishonesty had the nation become that the evil had penetrated even into domestic life, so that, where all should have been in a state of mutual happy confidence, the prophet felt bound to tell them that each confidence could not exist between those who appeared to be friends, or even between husbands and wives.

Mic 7:6. 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.

And this is true in a measure still, for, without the fear of God, you will find that even the nearest and dearest relationships will not keep the unconverted from being the enemies of the godly. In that respect, a gracious man cannot trust her that lieth in his bosom, if she be not a true child of God.

Now mark the grandeur of faith. Set this white spot right in the middle of the black darkness of which we have been reading:-

Mic 7:7. Therefore I will look unto the LORD;-

There was nowhere else for the prophet to look. According to what he tells us, all men had become false; "therefore," says he, "I will look unto Jehovah;"-

Mic 7:7-8. I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me. 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.

And this is all the light that God's people need. Even if it be the darkness of a black Egyptian night into which our spirit has fallen, yet, if God shall but appear to us, there shall soon be light for us. Dr. Watts truly sang,-

"In darkest shades, if he appear,
My dawning is begun;
He is my soul's sweet morning star,
And he my rising sun."

Mic 7:9. I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness.

Listen to this testimony of the prophet, tried child of God; even when in your own household you find enemies, put your trust in God, for he will yet appear to deliver you. Let this be your joy. Sit still in humble patience, and "bear the indignation of the Lord," for, even though trouble is laid upon you, it is not so heavy as it might have been, and it is not so severe as it would have been if the Lord had dealt with you in strict justice. Therefore in patience possess your soul, and wait quietly before your God. Be not without hope, expect that he will plead your cause and that he will execute judgment for you; watch for his light, which will most surely come, and in which you shall behold, not your own righteousness, but his.

Mic 7:10. Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the LORD thy God? mine eyes shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets.

This verse relates to the nation which, at that time, was oppressing Israel. She should have her turn of suffering for she should be crushed beneath Jehovah's foot as the mire is trodden in the streets.

Mic 7:11-12. In the day that thy walls are to be built, in that day shall the decree be far removed. In that day also he shall come even to thee from Assyria, and from the fortified cities, and from the fortress even to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain.

This is what was to befall those who had sinned against God, and oppressed his people; he would let loose the oppressors upon them, and they should find foes in every quarter.

Mic 7:13. Notwithstanding the land shall be desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.

That is a wonderful expression, “the fruit of their doings.” All doings bear fruit of one kind or another, and sinful doings bear bitter and deadly fruit. Woe to the man who is made to eat the fruit of his own doings! That which men eat on earth they may have to digest in hell, and there shall they lie for ever digesting the terrible morsels which they ate with so much gusto here below.

Mic 7:14. Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old.

Sometimes, there are pastures in the very center of woods, and God’s people in Micah’s day were like a little flock of sheep hidden away from their enemies in the midst of a wood, but God will bring them out by-and-by to far larger liberty. They shall yet have Bashan and Gilead to be their pasture, “ as in the days of old; “ and so the little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a great nation, and they that were hidden away because of their many enemies shall have such liberty that everywhere they shall worship and praise the Lord their God.

Mic 7:15-17. According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvelous things. The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf: They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear because of thee.

The day will come when there shall be such a fear of the people of God upon those who formerly persecuted them that they shall tremble before the Lord, and be afraid of the very people whom once they derided and oppressed.

Mic 7:18. Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

He never delights in anger, especially in anger against his own people. That is but temporary anger, and is, after all, only another form of love, for the parental anger which hates sin in a dear child is but love on fire. May God never permit us to sin without being thus angry with us! We might almost beseech him never to tolerate sin in us, but to smite us with the rod rather than suffer us to be happy in the midst of evil. Perhaps the worst of horrors is peace in the midst of iniquity, happiness while yet sin is all round about us.

Mic 7:19. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us, he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

We read about their sins in the earlier part of the chapter; and what a horrible catalogue of evils it was, yet here we read, “ Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth inquiry?” Even those mountainous sins of which the prophet writes, the Lord will tear up by their roots, and cast them into the depths of the sea.

Mic 7:20. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

There is our comfort, our God is the covenant-keeping God who will perform every promise that he has made. Even “if we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.” Blessed be his holy name.