

Micah 2:1-13

“Devastation & Restoration”

In Ch 1, God exposed the sins of His people against Himself. (Idolatry, spiritual adultery, harlotry, willful rebellion against His ways & His Word.) In Ch 2, He exposes & denounces the sins of His people against one another. It's the natural (albeit tragic) progression. If a person isn't right w/God, then he/she won't be right w/others. If the vertical relationship is off, then the horizontal relationships will be off as well. It may vary in severity or depravity, but the one necessarily leads to the other. If I'm not right w/God, then I can't be right w/you...

Of course, being right w/God doesn't necessarily mean that I will always choose to be right w/you (which can then adversely affect my being right w/God), but when you're not right w/God, you won't be right w/other people. Notice.

Vs 1-2

Now, we're going to talk about this for a few minutes, but I want you to see the problem at its root, & its subsequent fruit. The root is in Vs 2. Did you see it there? 2 words, “They covet”. What does it mean to “covet”? The word speaks of an inward insatiable desire, a lust or strong want for something that doesn't belong to you.

& This is the sin that nailed the apostle Paul to the wall, it helped him understand that the law was aimed inward at the heart rather than outward at performance. That the law was spiritual not physical. He could survey his life & say, “I've never committed adultery, I've never murdered anyone, I've never stolen.” & When he measured his outward performance, he felt really good about himself. But when the words, “You shall not covet” finally came home for him. He realized that there was no outward way to measure covetousness, covetousness is found in the intent of the *heart*... It's in Romans Ch 7 where he writes, “For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, ‘You shall not covet.’ But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire.”¹ That's covetousness, “all manner of evil desire”. It's not right, it's not mine, but I want it. It could be someone's spouse, or as we read here, someone's property...

In short, the flesh is never satisfied. Covetousness is the opposite of contentment. True satisfaction is always just out of reach. If you just had Elon's money, if you just had that guy's car, that person's house, if only *he* could be *your* husband, if *she* were your wife... then you'd be happy... Be careful. It's been said that when covetousness enters your heart, compassion exits.

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ro 7:7-8). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The idea being that when covetousness gets its hooks in you, there's no limit to what you'll do to obtain what it is that you want to apprehend.

That's what we're seeing here. The root is covetousness. The *fruit* is found in phrases like, "they take", "they oppress" they "devise iniquity" & "work out evil on their beds."

Now, can we agree that all sin is bad? I mean there you are, some kind of temptation comes up, you never saw it coming, you failed, you've fallen, you've sinned... It's not good!

Sin is bad! But *some sin is worse than other sin. When someone falls into sin, that's bad. But when someone plans, plots & premeditates sin... that's worse. That's what we have here. Sin that is being "devised" & deliberately/intentionally acted upon.*

Question: what do you think about when you lay down at night? It's a common thing that we as people do. The day is done, you're lying there, if you're married you've said goodnight, you're no longer talking & you're just lying there thinking... *Maybe you're thinking about a business opportunity, perhaps you're thinking about a relationship issue, maybe thinking through vacation plans, how to solve a particular problem... it could be any # of things.* – As believers maybe you're thinking a bit about your relationship w/God, your desire to see someone saved. David said, *"My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips. When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches."*²

& I know it comes as no surprise, but these kinds of thoughts are not the case w/everyone. As to where most people may think about the day behind them, the day ahead of them, a time w/family or friends, perhaps a hobby or what have you... *Some people "devise iniquity" & "work out evil" on their beds. – They lay awake at night scheming & plotting on how they can rip people off. They contemplate crime, wickedness in the sight of God.*

In this case, because of greed, they were thinking of ways they could seize people's property, take their fields & their homes... & notice (Vs 2) they take them "by violence". Of course, if you're familiar w/Ahab & Jezebel, you know that this is *exactly* what they did in devising a wicked plan to have Naboth murdered through wrongful accusation & they seized his vineyard, his property (1 Kings 21).

& We're given a little clue here as to the nature of these schemes where we read, "At morning light they practice it."

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ps 63:5-6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Remember last week when I told you that God was indicting the *rulers* of the people? Those who sat in the seat of government. In the ancient world, the law courts opened at 1st light. You see, most people who practice sin, do so *under the covering of night*. These people *devised* their sin at night & *practiced* it at morning light. What we're seeing here is corruption in the courts. Might making right. Notice: how is it that they were able to take advantage, oppress & seize the property of the people around them? (Vs 2) "Because it is in the power of their hand."

Where people should be able to come & expect justice, they're being ripped off & taken for all that they had. Because the wealth & the power was in the hands of the ungodly... Now, if you'll allow me to circle back. – Isaiah, (who was contemporary to Micah) said this, "*Woe to those who join house to house; They add field to field, Till there is no place Where they may dwell alone in the midst of the land!*"³ Land grabbing, prospering themselves, while impoverishing others... But when is it enough? The flesh is never satisfied. I shared this w/you last week, "*Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.*"⁴ Jesus also said, "*For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*"⁵ How far are you willing to go to lay hold of the things of this world? What will a man give in exchange for his soul?

Power in the hands of the ungodly will bring a nation under judgment. That's what's happening here. & They're able to get away with it (notice) because it's in the power of their hands. & Isn't that the real test of integrity? Listen, there are some sins we never commit because we are never put in a place whereby we *can* commit them! I can thank God that I've never illegally done any deep-sea fishing. But I've never been on a boat out in the open ocean & had someone hand me a line & a pole & drop down for something out of season either... I've never done 150mph in a Lamborghini. But I've never been put behind the wheel of a Lambo on an open stretch of road w/a high end radar detector either 😊.

You can apply that to your own life in whatever way, but the point remains. When it's in the power of your hands to sin, do you remain faithful to God/fair w/others? Or do you take advantage of the situation, sin against God and rip others off (or do something unjust, illegal, you get the idea). Today we see big tech, big pharma, big corporations swallowing up the little independent businesses... that would be a similar modern-day illustration.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Is 5:8). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Lk 12:15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 16:26). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Doing what you do to increase profit margin is sometimes a euphemism for feeding covetousness.

Vs 3-5

If you've studied the scripture for any amount of time, you've come to realize that God appreciates poetic justice. To the family of crooks & criminals, those people who've devised iniquity, God says, "Against you, I'm devising disaster..." You've devastated others, I'm bringing disaster on you. As Hosea (another contemporary of Micah) said, *"They sow the wind, And reap the whirlwind."*⁶ He's going to bring on them (in a quantified manner) what they've brought upon others. Total ruin, disaster, destruction. Prov 26 says, *"Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, And he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him."*⁷ To bring disaster upon others is to provoke the Lord to bring disaster upon you... He has this way of giving people a taste of their own medicine.

Last week I drew to your attention the fact that there comes a time when God's Spirit will no longer strive or plead w/man. Vs 9 of Ch 1 informed us that their wounds were incurable (meaning the certainty of judgment was coming). Here Micah underscores the inescapable reality of what's to come upon them by pointing out that this disaster is something from which they cannot remove their necks. Think of an iron yoke around their neck from which they cannot escape. "Nor shall you walk haughtily..." The oppressors would become the oppressed, their pride would be brought low, they would suffer the same feeling of helplessness that they had brought upon others... & it would be "an evil" time... a prolonged period of disaster.

& When he speaks of having changed the heritage of my people, that He's removed it & given it to a turncoat (or an apostate, an ungodly people), he's pointing to the fact that the Assyrians will overtake them, lead them off into captivity & seize their land...

Vs 6-9

On the one hand this seems sort of shocking to us. But on the other hand, it's far too typical. Notice (Vs 6) how they respond to the warning of the Word of God. The man of God is faithful to warn the people of the certainty of the judgment of God, so what do they do? Do they receive God's word, repent & return to Him? No. They reject the rebuke, seek to silence the prophet & turn a deaf ear to the Word of God.

Is it really any different today? Not really. People don't want to hear it!

⁶ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ho 8:7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.
⁷ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Pr 26:27). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

They say, “Do not prattle...” “Don’t preach or prophecy to us!” It can even mean, quit dripping... The idea is that the words of the man of God are annoying to the people. “Quit blasting us w/all this negative nonsense!” is their thinking. “We’re prospering here, what you’re saying (destruction, ruin, judgment) it’s never going to happen!” – People can gravitate toward a mentality of, “Don’t confuse me w/the facts, my mind is made up.”

The Jews of the ancient world clung to God’s promise to Ab like it was their ticket to general amnesty. They could do *whatever*, live *however* & God would never discipline them. Kind of that “once saved always saved” mindset (not that I want to argue the semantics of that theology right now) that can start to allow people to live however & do whatever because they were baptized, or prayed a prayer so now it’s all good... **It’s crazy how people can arrive at a place where they don’t feel the need to honor God, but they’re confident that God will honor them. “Be holy, for the Lord your God is holy.” If the Lord be in us, then who He is will shine increasingly through us...**

Just going through religious motions is far from worshiping God “in spirit & in truth” (Jn 4:23). It doesn’t take much to join the crowd, go to church or be a part of some religious experience. But that’s a far cry from devotion to God, time in prayer w/God, obedience & submission to God, leading a life of reverence & godly fear before the Lord.

& It’s not uncommon to find that the majority is generally wrong. Certainly there was a remnant who (along w/Micah) wanted to honor God, but the majority of the nation didn’t want anything to do w/it.

In Vs 7 we read, “Is the Spirit of the Lord restricted? Are these *His* doings?” The idea is that anything that was going to be brought upon them, they were blaming God for! Essentially Micah says, “Is it God’s fault!” A real indicator of our relationship w/God is how we respond to His word. When Jesus was rebuking the religious leaders of His day, He said, “*He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.*”⁸ If you just don’t wanna hear it, that’s a witness against you.

But it’s interesting how we begin to reap the ramifications of our ways, but then we want to blame God for the things that are entering the equation of our lives! “Is the Spirit of the Lord restricted? Are these *His* doings?” God isn’t restricting *us*, we restrict *Him*! There’s no restriction on the part of the Spirit of God...

“Do not My words do good to him who walks uprightly?” What does it mean to “walk uprightly”?

⁸ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 8:47]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

It means you're living your life in such a way as to honor the Lord, you're in stride, in step w/His word. If you're honoring the word of God, the word of God is good to you! If you're not, you don't want to hear it!

If you're leading an upright life, you kind of like to see the police patrolling your neighborhood. There's an added measure of safety/security, it does you good! But if you're a criminal, if you're not upright in the sight of the law, you don't want a policeman anywhere around. You feel threatened by him, paranoid when you see the car...

If you're walking uprightly you're actually doing "right things". The Psalmist said it like this, *"Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper."*⁹

We like that last phrase, "whatever he does shall prosper". But ladies & gentlemen, to get to that verse, there are certain *conditions* that apply. **We have to walk (or move forward) not in ungodly/sinful or scornful ways & we need to be someone who *does* delight in the word & ways of God...** Circling all the way back to last week's study, if we want God's word to *do good* to us, we need to be *doers* of God's word. (Write it down so you can read it later, Ps 19:7-11)

But far from honoring God, loving God & loving others, they were ripping others off, abusing their brothers & sisters. Enriching themselves while impoverishing others... He says, "You're pulling off the robe w/the garment." The robe was the part of their clothing that they would lay down upon or cover up w/at night. **What he's saying is that as people obviously pass by (or enter into the equation of your life) you're stealing their very bed out from under them! You're displacing widows & children, taking their homes from them... The Spirit of God moves us toward kindness, compassion, not covetousness.**

Vs 10-11

God is holding them accountable on 2 counts. #1 Covetousness, #2 Giving ear to false prophets. They don't want to hear what Micah has to say, but these guys who tell them what they want to hear, prosperity ahead, partying to come! This is the message they seek to rest in, but Micah tells them it'll destroy them w/utter destruction...

⁹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ps 1:1-3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

God's word does good, the words of the false prophets will bring destruction... But people wanna hear what they wanna hear. "If a man should walk in a false spirit..." More literally, a "lie wind". Great swelling words of emptiness, they're just full of hot air. "And speak a lie, prophesying of partying & prosperity... he would be the prattler, the dripping annoyance to the people."

These prophets were filling them full of nonsense & the people were loving it. It's interesting how people will seek out someone to tell them what they *want* to hear rather than what they *need* to hear. "God is a God of love, of mercy & forgiveness, you can live however you want, God will forgive you & we all go to heaven in the end..." Paul wrote, *"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."*¹⁰ Things aren't always going to be "happy go lucky". But it's what people like to hear. "Approve of my sin preacher... remind me again of God's grace." But Jesus said, *"If you love Me, keep My commandments."*¹¹

Sometimes we need to hear, "Repent & return to the Lord. Repeat your 1st works..." When you tell someone what they want to hear Vs what they *need* to hear, you're in essence opening the door that leads to their captivity, because you're not warning them of reality.

But even for all this, God promises that restoration will come to His people. Notice. Vs 12-13

In brief, what we have here is a prophecy of the coming Millennial Kingdom of Christ. When Jesus (the One who breaks open) will go before them. He's will lead them into green pastures, blaze the trail before them, break new ground for them (if you will). Eventually, ultimately the Lord will be at their head. [Close]

What's the take home for you & me? That for all their sin, grace was available. Where sin abounds, grace abounds still more. God must deal w/sin, God will deal w/sin, God *has* dealt w/sin through the cross of J.C. – & Through the blood of Jesus, there's no sin that's so great that God can't forgive you, that God won't restore/renew you if you'll but turn to Him (or perhaps *return* to Him). The conviction of the Holy Spirit is good for us, but so is the hope of reconciliation through the Person of J.C.

¹⁰ *The New King James Version*, (1982). [2 Ti 4:3-4]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹¹ *The New King James Version*, (1982). [Jn 14:15]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

We need to deal w/our sin... covetousness, selfishness, the desire to hear what we want instead of what we need. & Let's respond to God's word, walk uprightly that our lives might bring Him glory...

Prayer Points:

Father we thank You for Your faithfulness. That you minister to our need rather than our want because you love us & have a heart to restore & renew us. Search us & know our heart, try us & know our anxieties, see if there be any wicked way in us & lead us in the way everlasting.

What a word of conviction & hope today. How that we should heed God's word, not look for what we want to hear, shutting our ears to what we *need* to hear, but that we would heed the word of God, turn from our sin & believe on the Lord J.C. If you've not surrendered your life to the Lord, do so today. Thank God that He loves you enough to be honest w/you, because He wants to save you from the penalty of your own ways having made a way through the cross of J.C.