

**The Emerging Message of the Prophets**  
**Micah – Part 3**  
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...Part 3 tonight, and what I want to do is kind of step back from the text a little bit and ask the question, “Really, what’s the emerging message of the prophets?” It’s good to do this. When you’re looking at scripture and you’re trying to observe it carefully, there are times where you step into the trees, and you look at the verses, and you look at the particulars, and it’s like Luther said:

*You shake the limb, then you shake the branch, then you shake the twig, then you shake the leaf.*

Well, sometimes you’re back to the trunk and you’re shaking the trunk too, of a smaller tree, you can shake the trunk too. There’s benefit in all of that and meaning. So I want us to do that kind of with Micah, and one of the things we noted last time, I don’t have a handout for you tonight so I’m using the board. Can you guys see that much? How is that working? I’m trying to take the light over there. Is that better like this? Can you see it? Those of you under 40 can still see it, those of you over 40 like me, unless you have great vision, it’s always the blur, right?

‘The Emerging Message of the Prophets’ is what my title would be for tonight, and what we noted last time was that Micah, in the outline of the book you see three emerging parts of the book. Remember we talked about how each one starts with a ‘Here now’, or ‘Here’, and you have three parts: A recounting of the sins of the people mixed together with judgments. So you could say two parts, and this is one, or you could say three parts. Maybe it’s better, a little cleaner to think of it in three parts. God indicts the sins of His people, the prophet announces judgment that is coming, impending judgment in the most plain and clear terms, vivid terms. This is what we see in the prophets, Isaiah, the Major Prophets, through Daniel, and then the 12 Minor Prophets. You see basically this is the same pattern. You’ll see an indictment of sin, a pronouncement of impending judgment, and then you will see oracles of salvation as well. That is in the midst of the ashes of the judgment that come, there’s going to be hope and promises. It cycles through three times. Chapter 1:1, Chapter 1:2, starts the first cycle. It goes all the way through Chapter 2. Chapter 2 ends up, what you have is sin, judgment, and the end of Chapter 2, Verses 11 and 12, or 12 and 13. I forget the verses they end with, salvation. God’s gathering His people and He uses the image of like sheep being gathered. Then

Chapter 3 starts over. Look at the sins of the people. Look how bad things are. Look how evil things are. God is going to deal with it. Then judgment is pronounced. Then in Chapter 4, he turns the corner to oracles of salvation. We see there is kind of side-by-side, you'll have the statement of impending doom, and then hope, right beside each other like a stark contrast. Black, black darkness, coming bright light.

So the pattern, it cycles through three times like this, kind of a circle. If you think of centrifugal, centripetal is force going toward the center, centrifuge, or centrifugal force is going out. Both circular, right? But one is spinning out. In a sense, what happens is in Chapter 1, after he begins, Micah from Moresheth, who is writing during the reigns of Jotham Ahaz, Hezekiah, to Judah in Israel. Then what he does is he starts about the sins of the people. He lists the sins of the people. Then he says, "Judgment is coming." See this? This is our first line we're on. Chapter 1, judgment is coming, all the way to Chapter 2:11, and then 12 and 13. Thank you, brother. Then you have a promise of salvation. Then you start right back into Chapter 3, the sins of the people, and incoming judgment, and then the promise of salvation. Then you go back into the sins of the people, incoming judgment, and you end on the promise of salvation. What really happens in a sense, is the way he ends Chapter 7 is really with a picture of the cross. It's this sin, judgment, coming salvation. Sin, judgment, coming salvation. Sin, judgment, coming salvation. Look what God's going to do. So that the people are indicted for their sin, they're told God is coming. Remember the imagery we looked at? The imagery of theophany where the mountains are melting? When God comes, the day of the Lord, just like we saw with Amos when he says, "Prepare to meet your God." A key verse in Amos 4. That is 'judgment is coming'.

Now what message is emerging from the prophets? Because this is the pattern you're going to see in all the other prophetic books, some variation of this theme. The sin of the people, judgment, salvation. It says if the prophet is looking at the people of the nation, and he's got the Word of God in his hands, and he's indicting them, and he's announcing this message. This is the message every time. It doesn't fail. So that the prophets all, this part of the canon, is devoted to that message. From Isaiah to Malachi, essentially, and there's a lot of stuff that's enriched as we go through each book. We'll see parts of this, but this is the basic melody as it were, of the prophets. Okay?

Now remember in the big picture again, of Scripture, as we looked at the unfolding of God's Word, and the purpose of the Bible is to bring sinners back into the presence of a holy God. We've seen that the Lord is prattling with us in Genesis,

and telling us about covenant, and what relationship means, how you have a relationship with God, justification by faith. There are these streams that start flowing from Genesis through Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers. We saw that Exodus was about how to get into God's land. You have to be delivered from the kingdom of darkness. Part of this is a picture that God's doing. Why did the nation go into Egypt in the first place? To be in bondage so that God could show that to be delivered into His Kingdom you have to be delivered from something. You have to be brought out of Egypt, and there's a picture in that of salvation.

This picture gets more and more clarity going on. We talked about how in the land, once they go in in Joshua. The Book of Judges is about how can we dwell in God's land? Remember, we need God's King. That's the message of judges. We need a King, we need God's King. 2 Samuel, 1 Samuel, basically we don't just need any king, we need the king like David, but a king greater than David. Then Kings tells us we need the Word of God if we're going to dwell in the land. Finally, the message of the prophets is: We can't dwell in God's land. For us to dwell in God's land, the only way we can really dwell in God's land, and the transition is happening from Israel more clearly, always in God's view has been the land is a type of Heaven. How can we dwell in God's land with Him forever? This is what Abraham even understood when he's walking through the land of Canaan. Remember, Abraham was looking for the city whose builder and maker is God. He wasn't looking for an earthly city, therefore God's not ashamed to be called his God.

So the point is becoming clear in the prophets that this whole thing with the earthly nation of Israel is not the end. It's not the purpose, it's a type. So what's happening is, all of the law that was given of the earthly kings, the earthly priests, the earthly prophets have failed, and what happens is, sin is going to bring judgment, and they're expelled from the land. The message of the prophets is: You are about to be vomited out of the land. That's what Micah is saying. He's giving that message to both kingdoms. He's prophesying around 740, well in 722 B.C. Remember in B.C. we count down. 18 years later, the northern kingdom is vomited out of the land because they have such ungodliness, the Lord sends the Assyrians in and He plucks them out of the land. Then 120 years later, 606 B.C., the Babylonians come knocking at the door, and take out Daniel and the first fruits of the exile, and pluck them out of the land. The land vomits out the southern kingdom. Over a 20 year period, from 606 to 586, that expulsion of the people becomes complete, and the temple is destroyed. So the prophets are saying, "Because of sin, we cannot dwell in God's land. God must send judgment, but we must not miss this. That's not the ultimate aim of what God is doing. The ultimate aim is to prepare for salvation."

This is why these three themes are woven so tightly together in this spiraling message. Your sin is so great that it requires judgment before you can have salvation. This is essentially the message that's coming up.

Now I want you to look at this. Let me see. Let's do another picture. There are some great pictures going here, right? For me this really is kind of a step up. You should be praising the Lord for His grace tonight. My pictures are usually so helpful. Anyway, what you have the Lord doing too, is He's basically teaching us something and that is that to bring salvation, judgment must come hand-in-hand. Judgment and salvation, this is the nature of what it means, how bad sin is. For you and me to dwell with God, judgment and salvation must come like two sides of a coin. You can't have one without the other. We cannot be saved apart from the decisive judgment act of God.

Now think about it, the people you have, if we say the prophet is basically standing here, and he's looking at the future, okay? He says, "Judgment is imminent." He's telling the kingdom, the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom, "Judgment is imminent." What he's saying is, "There is this valley coming." It's a deep valley, and we might think of this as the Kingdom of Israel, and this is the Kingdom of Judah, because there's really, as you read through it, there is no distinguishing between these two events. So they're 120 years apart when the northern kingdom is judged, and the southern kingdom. There is no distinguishing it in the eyes of the prophet. He sees it as one event, okay? Or it seems as he does. As you read it, looking through his eyes, it looks like one event. So we can think of it as like a giant valley, and you might think that is a lightning bolt. Impressionistic art here. That's a lightning bolt. This is God's judgment. The prophet sees this coming. So this is what God is going to do. But connected to this, is a mountain of blessing. This is the picture of salvation. So you can think of the hand of God dripping grace and salvation, like the rain of God's grace falling down. What you have is your sin is going to lead to this, but then salvation is going to happen. This is the way it flows. Let me show how this happens in the text. Let's look at this for a little bit.

First of all, the sins of the people, let me just give you a little bit of a sketch of that. Chapter 1:5:

***Micah 1:5 ~ All this is for the rebellion of Jacob And for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the rebellion of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? What is the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem?***

Sin, rebellion, that's why God is coming. Right before that He said He's coming down and He's going to melt the Earth. The mountains will melt under Him. So God is coming, His judgment is coming because of your sin. You see this? He talks about idolatry, He talks about social injustice, greed, oppression. He deals with specific sins that are going on in the land, among the people of God, and he says, "These things are wicked and God is going to deal with them." Remember we talked about last time, he points out that the leadership is corrupt? We saw in Chapter 3 that the rulers are corrupt, Verses 1-4, Chapter 3:5. The prophets are corrupt. Chapter 3:11, the priests are corrupt. All the leadership is corrupt. He's talking about the leadership in Judah at this point, and therefore he says the cause of that is the sin. Now that's the sin element. Look what he says in Chapter 3:12:

***Micah 3:12 ~ Therefore, on account of you Zion will be plowed as a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins, And the mountain of the temple will become high places of a forest.***

Jerusalem, which is pictured so often in the Psalms, and so often in earlier Scripture as the pinnacle of God's glory, the place of God's dwelling. It's going to become plowed up like a field. It's going to be a heap of ruins. That's what he's talking about right here, okay? The prophet says, "This is going to happen."

Now, but on the other side of that, look at how this hinge happens. Remember I was saying these two things come together? You can't have blessing without judgment. Look with me at Verse 12 of Chapter 3. ...***Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins, And the mountain of the temple will become high places of a forest.***

***Micah 4:1-2 ~ And it will come about in the last days That the mountain of the house of the Lord Will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, And the peoples will stream to it. 2 Many nations will come and say, "Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord And to the house of the God of Jacob,...***

Do you see how black the darkness was, and then bright the light right beside it? Judgment, judgment, it's awful, look at God's glory. It's awful, look at God's glory. What you have, it's almost as if it's like this. Now it's separated by time, it's like the judgment has to come together with the blessing. You can't have the blessing of God without judgment of some kind. Forget this part here. So basically, this is talking about the return to the land. You'll see this throughout the prophets. There are things that talk about, "God will gather you from the nations that He's

taken you. He'll bring you back into the land." Speaking of after the Babylonian captivity, remember when, in 536 is Zerubbabel, and Yeshua. The high priest, Zerubbabel. The governor leads a large number of Israelites back to Jerusalem. Then remember the story of Ezra, Nehemiah? This is like Zerubbabel would be right here, and the mountain would go all the way to Nehemiah. 536 to 445 B.C., basically is the Lord pouring out His blessing on them. They rebuild the walls. So the prophet, as he's looking ahead, he sees this judgment and this blessing. But what he also sees is he sees other valleys, and other mountains. Remember what we saw last week, Micah 5, same book, Micah 5:2? Remember it's one of the most important verses in the Old Testament?

***Micah 5:2 ~ "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity."***

And He will shepherd His people in the strength of Yahweh. The Pharisees and the rulers of the priests and the rulers of the Jews knew. Remember when the wise men showed up? "Hey, we've seen a star in the east." They came to Jerusalem, they came to worship Him. "The King of the Jews has been born. We saw a star in the east." Jerusalem is troubled, and Herod is troubled, and all of Jerusalem with him. He inquires of the chief priest, "Where is the Messiah to come from? What do they say?" Micah 5:2 says, "Bethlehem". So the wise men go on to Bethlehem and they find the child there. So in this prophecy, what you see is he's looking ahead, and in his mind the prophet has some sense of what God is doing, but 1 Peter 1:10-12 tells us that the prophets, when they were looking off into the future, that they were foretelling the sufferings Christ and the glory that should follow, but they couldn't see clearly. But we see clearly. So they were looking off and they couldn't make sense out of all of it, but they're seeing these images. God is revealing these things for them. It's kind of like, if you think about this, he's looking and he sees this valley, and then he sees that valley behind it. And he sees this mountain, and he sees this mountain behind it. This mountain is the first coming, the first advent of Jesus Christ, and it should be bigger.

He's looking, "You're going to be judged, God is going to spew you out of the land, He's going to bring you back, He's going to make you, He's going to restore you to the land, He's going to send His Messiah." And he's seeing all of these things together. The prophet can't really make out the difference. In fact, if you think of it this way, it's kind of like he's looking at three mountains that are separated by, here this one, if this is the return to the land, a 450 year gap from this mountain to the first coming of Christ. From the first coming of Christ to the

second coming of Christ, 2,000 plus, right? If you were walking to those mountains, you walk to one, and you walk a long way to the second one, and you're walking an even farther way to the third one. But if you were standing where the prophet is standing, looking across this water of time, this is what he sees. Do you see three mountains? But they look like they are side-by-side to him. If you're standing a long way from a mountain range, you can't tell that one mountain is separated from the other by 200 miles. You see these giant peaks towering. This is the view of the prophet. Does that make sense? He sees this and he can't distinguish and so he says, he's talking about this, and in God's providence this is the way He wanted this, His Word to come across to us. He sees this, and he sees all of this, and he talks about all of it. But what he's really seeing is these three events of blessing, but each event has associated with it a curse. That's what I want you to see now, back to this picture.

The first, this is the exile, the return to the land. That's what the prophet sees nearest to him. The coming exile because of the sin of the people, and God bringing His people back into the land, but right behind that he sees the coming of Christ, and yet he also sees the destruction of Jerusalem in a greater way. Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 by Nebuchadnezzar, and it was destroyed again in 70 A.D. by Titus, the Roman general. Then it was taken even worse in 135 by Hadrian, the Roman emperor, where he raised it to the ground again. It was at that point that he built a temple for Jupiter, on the temple mount, and a temple for another Roman god on Golgotha. Desecrated Jerusalem, okay? And so the prophet is seeing these mountains in one sense, that are lined up against each other, and in another sense it's like he's also seeing, this is now water. Hey, this is an inspiring week, you're going to see this. Look at this. You're looking at a lake and you can see the reflection of the mountain in the water. This is exactly what the prophet is seeing. He's seeing judgment. One artist to another, I appreciate the fellowship we're having here. He's seeing... It's hard to get back from that, isn't it? No, not your fault. It's my fault. I'm going a little beyond, I'm beyond the headlights here in what I'm able to do. But the point is, he sees all of this and all of this weighs on him with such gravity because it's a message of despair, and yet it's a message that though these deep valleys are there, look at God's glory. Look at the hope that is coming, so that the prophet rightly understood, is really that's the defining note, and really the point is you cannot get to the mountain without the valley coming first. Such is the nature of sin. We cannot come back to God unless there is a decisive act of judgment upon us, and that's what's happening.

I mentioned the second mountain is the first advent, and then this time, the valley comes afterwards, in a sense. It's 70 A.D. and Jerusalem is destroyed. Now, in a

real sense, I think actually with the first advent of Christ, is a valley that runs the deepest, because what happened to Jesus Christ on the cross was the greatest act of judgment that has ever, or ever will strike the world. That was the low of the low points. No low point approaches that, because Jesus Christ bore the sins of everyone who would ever believe. The wrath of God was poured out on Him. It was the hour of darkness, and you see how that is judgment and it's blessing at the same time. Through His death, He brings life.

The same thing is going to happen with the return of Christ. That which for the world is utter judgment. That which for the world is the coming of Christ on the clouds of glory so that people will hide and say, "Hide me in the rocks from the wrath of the Lamb," because the Lamb of God has come in judgment to destroy the world, and people who hate Him, now see their end is drawing near, and yet for the righteous it's the imagery of Malachi here again, the last of the prophets. What does he say? "When the sun rises, who can endure the day of the Lord? It's like a fire raging, and yet, When the sun of righteousness rises with healing in its wings then the believers will come forth like calves from the stall."

You see this decisive judgment is also the momentous blessing that we've all longed for, and so it's always like the curse and the blessing come together. That's the purpose. This is the emerging message of the prophets. They're saying, "You can't have one without the other. They come together," so that the only way that we can be saved is for someone to bear the wrath, and that's the cross. It all converges, these different strands. There's the sacrificial system, and yet being a part of God's covenant people. He will make an everlasting covenant with us, and yet this day of the Lord is coming, and yet the day of the Lord fell upon Christ. All of that is to say that that's the only way you can be saved.

Now also, it's personal, though. It's not just that He had to die for my sins, but when you come to Christ, if you're to come to Christ in truth, you must come through the fire. There must be death to come to Christ. This is what Jesus is saying when He says, "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me." For salvation to come to our hearts, there has to be – in the same way the prophets have been saying – remember, their message is that you can't dwell in God's land, not unless He does an act of judgment and mercy. You can't dwell in God's land, but you can if He does His act of judgment and mercy and it comes near to you. I mean, look at the climax, this centrifugal force spinning out glory and healing.

Look with me at Chapter 7. You have in the first part of Chapter 7, the judgment.



***Micah 7:1 ~ Woe is me! For I am  
Like the fruit pickers, like the grape gatherers.  
There is not a cluster of grapes to eat,  
Or a first-ripe fig which I crave.  
2 The godly person has perished from the land,...***

“I can’t find anything to eat. We’re hungry. There’s misery.” Look on down at Verse 3:

***Micah7:3 ~ Concerning evil, both hands do it well. The prince asks, also  
the judge, for a bribe,...***

Look how bad it is. Both hands do evil well. The prince is asking the judge for a bribe. It’s so bad the officials are bribing one another. There’s all this wickedness. Look at Verse 6, the verse that we talked about last week that Jesus quotes:

***Micah 7:6 ~ For son treats father contemptuously, Daughter rises up  
against her mother, Daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; A man’s  
enemies are the men of his own household.***

Black, black, black. Go to Verse 7:

***Micah 7:7 ~ But as for me, I will watch expectantly for the LORD; I will  
wait for the God of my salvation. ...***

Do you see it? There it is. Right beside the valley, there’s this glorious light.

***...My God will hear me. 8 Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy. Though I  
fall I will rise; Though I dwell in darkness, the LORD is a light for me.***

You see, you have to actually dwell in the darkness for you to come to the light. When we see this, how can you be saved unless you know you’re lost? That’s why Paul says to the Romans, “I want to tell you about my Gospel,” and he gives the fullest picture of his Gospel in all of his letters to the church at Rome. The beauty of that is that in God’s providence, that was the one church he had never been to that he wrote to. He started all the other churches. They had his Gospel, so he’s reminding them in Corinthians, Galatians, and Ephesians, but in Romans, he’s telling them of his Gospel, and he gives them the whole picture. He says in Verse 16:

***Romans 1:16 ~ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.***

Now, then he says, “Here’s my Gospel. Here’s the Good News. I want to tell you my Good News:

***Romans 1:18 ~ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,...***

“Although they know about God, and He’s made Himself known to them, they turn away from Him, and their foolish hearts are darkened. They worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed forever. They turned to unnatural lust, to perversion of homosexuality, to become so depraved that they call evil good and good evil. And though they know these things, though they know that judgment is coming upon them, they not only approve themselves but approve others who do what they do. They are just despicable.”

And then he says, “Let me tell you about the legalists,” in Chapter 2. And they also, though they have an outward morality, are just as evil and wicked as the guys I was talking about, the Gentile pagans.” And so then in Chapter 3, he says:

***Romans 3:10 ~ as it is written, “THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;***

***ROMANS 3:12 ~ ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME CORRUPT; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.”***

***Romans 3:13 ~ ...“THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS”;***

***Romans 3:17 ~ AND THE WAY OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN.”***

***Romans 3:18 ~ “THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES.”***

Altogether, all men, all flesh stands under the judgment of God. You cannot be saved without that message. But now apart from the law, God has revealed His salvation, and its come through the propitiation that is in Jesus’ blood. Through that, making Him the wrath-bearer, now salvation is there. So this is exactly what’s happening here. He’s saying the only way salvation comes is through judgment, and so when you believe, you have to first of all become poor in your spirit before you can receive Christ. You cannot receive Christ if you think you’re okay. If you

think you're okay, you're being foolish and delusional. The message of this Book is you and I cannot come to God without being judged. The wonder of it is Jesus takes our judgment, and all we have to do in coming to Him, though, is remember, Jesus said, "If any man would come after Me, let Him deny Himself, take up His cross, and follow Me." You've got to disown yourself. You've got to humble yourself and say, "I am nothing. I don't deserve salvation. I have nothing to commend myself before God."

Really, it's standing with God, and standing with Him as He stands in judgment of us. It's me standing beside Him, and saying, "Yes, Ty Blackburn is a filthy person deserving of all of Your wrath. I agree. I want nothing to do with who I am." And this is why it talks about when we trust Christ, we died in Him. There's this sense of death that happens when you really come to Christ. You die to yourself. Jesus said, "Deny yourself. Take up your cross." That's not just a burden that you carry. That is an instrument of brutality and death, and we have to die to live. That's why He also said, "If any man would lose his life for My sake, he will find it. Whoever saves his life will lose it." If you want to hold on to your dignity and hold on to what you want, then you will lose it, but if you lay it down, you will find it. That's the way of salvation, and the prophets are telling this over and over.

"How can you dwell in God's land? God is going to have to do something so..." And when you read the imagery of that, when you read through the prophets, and so much of it's troubling, but as you start into Isaiah (which we're going to go to next), man, he just goes oracle, woe, after woe, after woe. "Woe upon this city. Woe upon that city. Woe upon this city. Woe upon that city." When you read that, make a determination, "Lord, but for the grace of God, there I am, and that's where I deserve to be is under Your wrath, and I want to stay under it as I read this and allow You to help me have a right view of myself, so that I can have a right view of the glory of Christ." That's what the prophets are doing, and what's amazing is this principle continues to be the way that we continue to be saved.

Past tense salvation is when we repent, and believe, and we're saved. We talked about the three tenses of salvation, remember? We talked about this before. The past tense is to be saved from the penalty of sin. When you believe and you're justified, you're saved from the penalty of sin. The wrath of God is removed from you. And it is. It's taken as far as the east is from the west. Let me go on back to Micah 7. I don't want to forget these verses I wanted to read. Look at this. He says:

***Micah 7:8 ~ ...Though I dwell in darkness, the LORD is a light for me. 9 I will bear the indignation of the LORD Because I have sinned against Him,***

*until He pleads my case and executes justice for me. He will bring me out to the light, and I will see His righteousness. 10 Then my enemy will see, and shame will cover her who said to me, "Where is the LORD your God?" My eyes will look on her; at that time she will be trampled down like mire of the streets.*

One of the beautiful things is Micah's name. Remember what it means? "Who is like the Lord?" So here he is, saying, "Where is the Lord? Who is like God? You've been saying this to me. Look at what the Lord has done for me." And then if you read on down, actually that was Verse 18. I knew I was getting ahead of myself. Look at Verse 18:

*Micah 7:18 ~ Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in unchanging love. 19 He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot.*

He's going to tread our iniquities under foot. Do you see that imagery? That's Jesus on the cross. That's even a picture of the first prophecy of the Gospel back in Genesis 3:15. "You'll bruise his heel. He will bruise your head." Jesus is going to tread on Satan and He's going to tread on our iniquities. He did it in the cross.

*...Yes, You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. 20 You will give truth to Jacob and unchanging love to Abraham, which You swore to our forefathers from the days of old.*

You see that centrifugal motion. By the end of this letter we see hope in God. Bear the indignation that's coming. Things may get worse before they get better. When they're terrible, when things are bad, whenever we get that, we're only getting what we would really deserve apart from Christ anyway. Why would we complain? It just reminds us this is what I deserve a million times over, but I know that my God who loves me has put my sins away from me, and I'm waiting on His salvation.

One of the beautiful things, too, about suffering in this life is it sure makes you anticipate Heaven. And if things get worse, if America's economy collapses, who wants that to happen? Nobody does. I'm not asking for that. I'm not praying for

that. I'm praying against that, but if it does, it'll sure make us anticipate Heaven more. And if it happens, when we wake up that morning and find out that it's happened, "Glory to God. I'm so glad that I'm not living for this kingdom. My treasure is in heaven. It's not in this world." Who wants to live for this, where moth and rust corrupt and thieves break in and steal even in the good times? I'm living for Heaven.

The past tense of salvation is that we're saved from the penalty of sin. The present tense of salvation is that we are being saved from the power of sin. In the future tense, we'll be saved from the presence of sin, right? There are three tenses of salvation. The Bible sees salvation as embracing all three, three parts of one reality. Salvation means all three. If you receive one, you've got all three, okay? You don't get one and then have to get the other two later. You get all three. To be being saved from the presence of sin, to be sanctified on a daily basis, this reality continues to be there.

We talked a few weeks ago about how suffering is such an essential part of growing in grace. He who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin. Our lives are... things just don't work. I've got a situation at home. I've been in my house for nine years, and there's a leak underneath our bathroom, and it's now showing up in the ceiling. When we take showers, it like leaks down, and I'm thinking, "It's only been nine years." We talked about this the other day. I was telling Patty. I said, "Well, it's a reminder that this world is not worth living for." This is a place where moth and rust corrupt, and thieves break in and steal. Stuff's going to break. This is a reminder not to feel too at home in this world. We've got a better country we're living for.

Well, suffering continues to be. It's that you cannot have more of God without experiencing the war with sin, without fighting, and the fight is fierce til the day we die. In some seasons it's tougher than other seasons. You cannot experience the moments of greatest glory – where you really see God for who He is and you worship Him for all that He is, are moments when you've been shaken, and perplexity overtakes you, and you wonder, "Why are You doing this?" And yet, then you see a glimpse of it. "Oh Lord, I see. It's marvelous in my eyes." In those moments, we would not have God change anything about Himself. There are moments when we think, "I think You should do it differently," but when we see rightly, "No, don't do anything differently." But it's that blending together. It's always this act of judgment that must come with grace. It's like the two-edged sword. The Lord cuts and He heals at the same time. This is the way of the walk of faith.

So people that act like it's just onward and upward, the name it and claim it stuff, it's nonsense. It's completely unbiblical, completely inconsistent with the flow and tenor of Scripture. It is going to be onward and upward, but in this life, it's downward and upward, downward and upward. It's these valleys and these moments like this. This is the way God does it. You cannot change it. Why would we want to? We should just glorify Him that He's done it the best way. He's done it in a way that can keep us alive. We don't have to bear any wrath. Jesus bore all of our wrath. There remains no more condemnation for you if you're in Christ Jesus. No matter what you've done, no matter how heinous your sins are, when you look back at your life and the things that you've done, the things that you regret, Jesus, if you're in Him, has born it all. There remains no more wrath. There remains no more anger. Only favor. That's what He did, but because we still dwell in a body that has sin in us, it has to keep dying. We have to keep giving ourselves over to death for Jesus' sake. That's why we suffer.

Remember in Romans 8, Paul says, "Shall famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword, shall these separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus? For it is written, 'Like sheep, we're all being led to the slaughter.'" This is the way. But then he goes on to say, "No, I'm persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord. Nothing." So as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, He is with us, and don't be surprised at the fiery trials that come. This is the way it has to happen.

I read this awhile back, and I just want to close with this tonight. It's worth reading again. Actually, I'm going to read two things.

### *The Valley of Vision*

*Let me learn by paradox  
that the way down is the way up,  
that to be low is to be high,  
that the broken heart is the healed heart,  
that the contrite spirit is the rejoicing spirit,  
that the repenting soul is the victorious soul,  
that to have nothing is to possess all,  
that to bear the cross is to wear the crown,*

*that to give is to receive,  
that the valley is the place of vision.*

That's the way of God. It's the only way that you and I, people who still have sin in us warring in our members, can see more of God. I want to close with this last hymn called 'God Moves in a Mysterious Way', by William Cowper, a man who suffered with incredible depression in his life, bouts of depression, and he wrote these words:

*God Moves in a Mysterious Way*

*God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants His footsteps in the sea  
And rides upon the storm.*

*Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never failing skill  
He treasures up His bright designs  
And works His sovereign will.*

*You fearful saints, fresh courage take;  
The clouds you so much dread  
Are big with mercy and shall break  
In blessings on your head.*

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His grace;  
Behind a frowning providence  
He hides a smiling face.*

*His purposes will ripen fast,  
Unfolding every hour;  
The bud may have a bitter taste,  
But sweet will be the flower.*

*Blind unbelief is sure to err  
And scan His work in vain;  
God is His own interpreter,  
And He will make it plain.*

Our Lord is glorious and worthy of our praise and trust. Let's pray to Him right now...

*Father, we rejoice before You, for You are good, Your ways are perfect and right, and everything You do is excellent. You've never made a mistake. You've never been late on anything or early. You've never done something too severely. You've done everything perfectly. Lord, we confess how quick we are in our amazing audacity, to stand in judgment of Your actions. We complain about things as insignificant as the weather, to the trials that come into our lives, or the trials that come into other people's lives that we love. Forgive us, Lord. Have mercy on us, for we are but of yesterday, and we know nothing. We rejoice, Lord, that You know what You're doing. Every purpose in Your heart is good. It's to bless Your redeemed. It's to shower us with kindness, to make us able to abide in Your unfailing love. So continue to hollow us out, that You might fill us, and may You be glorified in an increasingly content, faithful, and joyful people. We pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.*

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