

Micah The Rebel

Revival

By Tom Hill

Bible Text: Judges 17:1-5

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Over the last several weeks we have looked at the book of Judges, the seventh book of the Bible. It describes for us the record of an extremely depressive time in the history of Israel. They had just come out of Egypt not many years previously under the great display of God's power in releasing them from the cruel Pharaoh. Came out with great abundance, gold, silver, herds. God brought them through the wilderness, displayed his power and presence to them over 40 years. He had promised them the Promised Land. He provided for them a great leader, Joshua, to take them in. And he did. He took them across the Jordan into the Promised Land and under his great commanding and leadership brought them the Promised Land, defeated enemies, conquered foes, distributed land to each of the tribes of Israel so that each had their own little block of land. And then he died. They had no leader to take his place.

That starts the book of Judges. Joshua dies. The people gather together. "What are we going to do now? We don't have a leader." They cried out to God, "What do we do?"

God gave them direction. "The tribe of Judah will lead you. Follow them."

And they began to follow the tribe of Judah. And we saw in chapter one how they destroyed 10 enemies under the leadership of Judah. But in the midst of those 10 victories we also saw one partial victory, because they failed to fully trust God. They let the nation down in the plain that had the chariots of iron. They left them alone.

"Oh, we can't defeat them."

Even though Joshua had specifically told them, "Don't fear those down in the plain that have chariots of iron, because God will enable you to defeat even them."

They failed to believe God. And as a consequences of that seemingly small time and occasion of unbelief, there followed seven losses in a row. They could not conquer their enemies. And we read in chapter two the summary and the prediction, if you will, of the years that would follow as a consequence of their unbelief, a continual cycle, sin of unbelief, turning aside from God, worshipping idols, the oppression of enemies, God in

his mercy sending them a judge who would lead them in victory over their enemies. Upon the death of the judge a return back to sin. A cycle.

And we came to the last of the judges, Samson. And then we began to read some individual accounts provided at the end of the book of Judges not because they occurred after Samson, but as a particular emphasis by the writer of Judges who show not only was this sin pervasive and all of the land of Israel, but it affected individuals. And the writer of Judges describes some individuals and we discover that it began in Judges chapter one. For we read in Judges chapter one verse number 29—and it is on your sheet—that one of the seven losses occurred to the family of Ephraim. They did not drive the Canaanites out of their territory. Even though Joshua had defeated the king of Gezer. Under his leadership they still did not drive them out.

We look at one family within the families of Ephraim, a man by the name of Micah. We find his story beginning in Judges chapter 17 verses one through five. I will read those and you can follow on the verses I have printed out for you.

There was a man of the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Micah. And he said to his mother, “The 1,100 pieces of silver that were taken from you, about which you uttered a curse, and also spoke it in my ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it.” And his mother said, “Blessed be my son by the LORD.” And he restored the 1,100 pieces of silver to his mother. And his mother said, “I dedicate the silver to the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a carved image and a metal image. Now therefore I will restore it to you.” So when he restored the money to his mother, his mother took 200 pieces of silver and gave it to the silversmith, who made it into a carved image and a metal image.¹

Now if you have ever wondered the definition of an oxymoron, there is an example of an oxymoron. You cannot dedicate an idol to God. You can't do it. He is the only true and living God. There is none beside him. And so here is Micah's mother on the one hand voicing praise unto God, but using a cursed means by which she attempted to do it, providing two idols to her son.

I digress. We will go back.

“Now therefore I will restore it to you.” [He said] So when he restored the money to his mother, his mother took 200 pieces of silver and gave it to the silversmith, who made it into a carved image and a metal image. And it was in the house of Micah. And the man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and household gods, and ordained one of his sons, who became his priest.²

¹ Judges 17:1-4.

² Judges 17:3-5.

Not only do we see in the nation of Israel the evidence and proof of infidelity, of failure to trust and believe God and at the same time to believe that which is false, idols, we see it depicted for us very clearly in the life of Micah and his family. He failed to trust God and he chose to believe that which was false, to worship an idol.

As we examine this brief account from the life of Micah, we observe that infidelity leads to something. It doesn't stand isolated. We have this notion that we have an awareness of a particular sin in our life, but we relegate it just to that part of our life. It is only over there. It really doesn't have any impact upon the rest of my life. The rest of my life is ok. It is just that one little part and we will just, you know, just kind of put it in the closet every now and then as though we put it aside as if it doesn't have any effect upon our lives. But we see described for us very clearly from the life of Micah and his mother and his family it had implications upon them. And the implications became dire. He rebelled against God. He disobeyed him, just flat out disobeyed him.

You say, "Well, how did he disobey him?"

Let's look at the Scriptures and we will see how Micah, as well as the children of Israel, but we have zeroed in on Micah to see him personally. We read in Deuteronomy chapter seven one through five, which you will find near the bottom of your sheet that I provided for you, Moses talking to the children of Israel before they came into the Promised Land, giving them a warning, preparing them ahead of time how they should respond when they come into the Promised Land.

When the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and mightier than yourselves, and when the LORD your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them. You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly. But thus shall you deal with them: you shall break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and chop down their Asherim and burn their carved images with fire.³

Micah did none of those things. He did not defeat the Canaanites. He did not utterly destroy them as God said that they should. He left the peoples there within the city and within the territory of Ephraim including them as one with their nation and worshipped their idols. He violated every one of those things that God instructed through Moses for the children of Israel to do when they got into the Promised Land. And, in fact, we read the description in Judges chapter two verses 10 through 15. We have read that several

³ Deuteronomy 7:1-5.

times so we won't take the time to read it again this morning. But it says there just flat out they didn't even know God. They had no personal intimacy. They had no fellowship with God. They did not know him. They may have known about him. They may have heard stories from their families and neighbors of what God had done, but they didn't know God. There was no personal intimacy in their understanding and their fellowship and their relationship with God. And it says, furthermore, in that passage, that they abandoned him. They left him. They departed right away from him, had nothing to do with him. All of it coming at the culminating of their unbelief in God and their belief in the false gods about them turning their hearts away from God in disobedience.

That is a description of Micah. And he in a small way describes the whole nation of Israel what they had done as well.

Now as we contemplate this description of Micah, what does it tell us about his character? He had nothing to do with God. In fact, as you read that passage, other than the superficial comments by his mother which carried no true meaning to them, she just spouted phrases, like all too often we tend to do, don't we? She just spouted phrases about God, but she didn't really know God, because she made idols. And anyone who really knew God would know you don't worship him with idols. So Micah really didn't know God, had no intimacy with him, had no understanding of him and, worst of all, didn't care. He didn't care. He readily accepted the idols from his mother and he built a shrine in his house and he had other idols within his shrine demonstrating for us, fully, a heart and a mind and a will opposed to God, wanting nothing to do with him.

Now then what does it tell us about God and his character? What can we understand about God from this description of these events? God doesn't cooperate with sin. God didn't look down upon Micah and just kind of pat him on the head and said, "Oh, that is... oh, oh, poor Micah. You know, he is a poor boy," like we are prone to do with our children and grandchildren and others we ... we tend to kind of pat them on the head and say, "Oh, that is all right. He is really basically a good boy. She is basically a good woman."

God doesn't do that. God had told them, "If you reject me, I will turn against you and become your enemy." We read that in Judges chapter two verses 10 through 15 as we read those verses as a prelude into the whole book of Judges. And we have seen judge after judge after judge having to come to the rescue of the children of Israel. Why? Because God had become their enemy and he stirred up the enemies of Israel to come against them and to oppress them. And we find that as a consequence of their sin and rebellion and disobedience against God that God withdrew his presence. They no longer knew his presence. He had withdrawn it and had actually become their enemy instead of their defender.

We also see displayed for us here God's longsuffering. He suffers long with us and all too often we have a tendency to think that because God doesn't smack us dead at the first white lie that we tell that somehow God doesn't care. Oh, God suffers long. He is patient, enduring our foolishness all the while absent from us. He lets time pass and time

pass for us to turn and to repent and to trust. And we see in the life of Micah and, as we progress through his further story, we will see God's continuing long suffering. But the Scriptures also tell us—and I would remind you and I would be remiss not to remind you—that God says, “My Spirit will not always strive with man.” There comes a day when he withdraws fully and completely never to return. That is why the Scriptures remind us and they reminded them today is the day. Don't wait until tomorrow. We don't have a promise of tomorrow. We only have today.

So we see God as merciful, longsuffering in Micah even though he has rejected God. God has give him time to turn from his sinful ways and to come to him.

So why would God prompt Samuel—the one that scholars believe wrote this record—why would God prompt Samuel to write this record? That confounds many people in our day to see such descriptions in the holy book the Bible. How is it that your holy book can contain such vile things? If God doesn't believe in idols, how can he have a story in there about a man named Micah and his mother worshipping idols? How can he do that? Why would God permit such a record in his book and preserve it?

Well, initially God provided it for the children of Israel, of their instruction, for their enlightenment to come to a knowledge of their true condition. Sometimes we have a hard time with the truth, don't we? We like to flower it up a little bit and make it appear a little bit better than what it really is. And we don't always like to face the unvarnished truth right there in front of us and conclude the realities of life. And God provides this record through his prophet Samuel to help them see the reality and the depravity of their wickedness and their sin. God doesn't smile at idolatry and rebellion and unbelief.

Consequences come from those sins and they are described here in full bloom, the consequences of sin, oppression, blindness, bondage, defeat, the absence of God's presence. He also provides it as a warning. Here is what happens when you fail to believe me and don't trust me and don't obey me. Here is what happens.

God provides us record for his people to instruct them, to warn them, to remind them of their need of a Savior. And then he provides little failures, judges who came and provided some of the acts of a Savior delivering them from their enemies, oh, but with great frailties included and great physical weakness. It was only for a short time, as long as that judge lived. But yet using them as examples for the people to say that, oh, yes, God did promise that and here is an example.

How do these events connect to God's plan of redemption? Because they do. They fit in. There is a place for them. When God created the wonderful earth that we see—and, by the way, I would remind you. This is a creation that is under sin. This isn't the perfect creation that God made in the garden. This is a creation that groans the Bible tells us. But he created it originally beautiful, perfect. Adam and Eve, sinless, holy, righteous. They had the ability to know and to understand God and the ability to obey him and they did obey him. And they did believe him and trust him. And they experienced that intimacy of

fellowship. But a day came when the serpent came, caught them perhaps by surprise, tempted them, lied to them about the nature of God.

“You know, God is withholding on you. You think he has given you good. Oh, no, he has not. He is not giving you good things. He is withholding from you. And if you will listen to me you will find the things that he is withholding from you and how good they are.”

And they fell for the temptation and they sinned against God. They didn't believe him. They didn't believe God. And we see in the beginning of the cycle of sin that we find repeated throughout the book of Judges: unbelief, rebellion, belief of error, disobedience, the need of a Savior. God came to them and began his plan of redemption in the garden in Eden when he promised to Adam and Eve a champion, a Savior, the seed of the woman who will come and who will defeat and crush the head of the serpent. And God throughout the ages of history has provided great examples and stories preparing us for that Savior that he promised. And this story of the account of Micah is part of that progression, showing the people they need a Savior and to show them the depravity of their hearts without God and that this Savior needed to be more than just a human Savior. They saw those. They saw the judges, but they had failures about them and failings in their lives and they could only provide a very temporary relief all picturing to the children of Israel the kind of Savior they really needed. They needed a Savior who not only can crush the head of the serpent, but who can give us a different nature entirely so that we don't pursue after those things that God says to reject.

So it fits right in to God's plan. We know, because we live centuries after Micah, that God fulfilled his promise. He provided a Savior, just as he said he would, his Son Jesus who fulfilled every prediction throughout all the Old Testament history that God said to prepare the people so that they could identify that Savior when he came. He fulfilled every one. And he came and he provided in his life, in his death, his resurrection, his ascension all the totality of salvation that we sinners need. The Savior, the promised one.

So this story not only had importance for the children of Israel, but it has value for you and me as well, because don't we find ourselves in Micah? Don't we find Micah reproduced in our every day life about us? Don't we see hundreds and thousands of Micahs talk about God, use his name perhaps even in attempted reverence and yet failing to obey him and to worship him truly as he said?

Oh, too often it might even describe you and me. Does it describe you and me? I can't see your heart so I can't say, yeah, that is you and not you, but, yeah, you. No, I can't... I don't have that ability. But God knows. You can't fool him. He may suffer long with you and you may think everything is ok until one day the Spirit of God says, “You know, that is not ok. That is not right. You are just like Micah.”

Learn from him. Turn and believe.

Because you and I and the Church of Jesus Christ in our day follows in so many ways the example of Micah and we see in the world about us repeated the example of Micah, we

need to heed the enlightenment and the warning that God provides through this narrative, this record. And we must turn from our sinful ways to trust the Savior whom God has provided for us, for people like you and like me.

Some of us need to turn to him as Redeemer, as Savior, to reconcile us back to God. To some of us who have come to faith and trust in Christ we, too, need Jesus. We, too, need to turn to him and to trust him to restore us every day, to revive us, to encourage us, to reproduce in us his very life by the mysterious work of his Holy Spirit which he promised he would do.

A couple of questions for you to think about today. Where has the Spirit of God identified in your life today how you emulate Micah and where you have failed to trust God and where you have believed an untruth and where you have rebelled against God and where you have failed to believe and to trust him and you set him aside? How will you respond to that? Will you just reject it and set it aside and refuse it and say, "I don't want it"? Will you set it aside until tomorrow?

I would remind you, as I said a few moments ago, you aren't promised tomorrow. Will you come to grips with it today and face the reality of your condition before God and listen to his voice and heed his call to you today? What changes will that require in your life? Turn, trust. Jesus made it simple. He said, "I came. The Father sent me. Whosoever believes in me shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

When he began to proclaim the kingdom it says that he told the people, "Repent and believe." It is very simple. I call upon you this morning. Repent and believe.

And you say, "Well, I have done that."

Is there an area in your life where you need to repent and obey, turn and believe, trust Christ today for a new working in your life? Don't wait until tomorrow. You may not see tomorrow.

Let's close with a word of prayer, shall we?