

## Micah 7:1-10

### The Fallen Christian's Recovery

...*when I fall, I shall arise* – v. 8

This chapter in the book of Micah demonstrates to us the pervasive effects of sin. *The good man is perished out of the earth, and there is none upright among men* the prophet complains in v. 2. Sin had permeated the entire nation making a good man so rare as to be non-existent. The prince, in v. 3 as well as the judge *asketh for a reward* – in other words they could be bribed.

So pervasive was this corruption that the prophet says in v. 5 *Trust not in a friend, put not confidence in a guide*. Where sin abounds trust can't exist. If I was an economics major I would love to do research and write a paper on how trust is the bottom-line criterion for an economy to be able to function. Where trust fails so will a nation's economy eventually.

But the prophet goes further in this chapter and shows how the pervasive effects of sin made its way into households and effected families. So we read in verse 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 at last the prophet must boil the whole matter down to an individual level and admit that he too has not been unaffected by the sin all around him. So we read his confession in v. 9 *I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him*.

Verses 8 & 9 show us 3 spiritual realities that pertain to the Christian. The first reality is the one I've just mentioned and that is that the Christian falls. The second spiritual reality is that the Christian has a spiritual enemy. *Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy* Micah says in v. 8. And who would deny that the devil's greatest delight comes in the fall of the Lord's people? That's something we would do well to keep in mind and hopefully utilize as a force of restraint against our own sins – the knowledge that when we sin we bring great joy and delight to the devil.

But the third and perhaps the most important spiritual reality found in these verses is the reality that when the Christian falls he also arises. When he goes through a period of darkness he eventually sees the light of the Lord again. And so again in v. 8 we read: *when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me*.

There is no such thing, you see, as a Christian who falls and remains fallen. There's no such thing as a Christian who experiences darkness but remains in darkness. And the reason a Christian cannot remain in a darkened and fallen state is two-fold. The Lord simply will not allow it. *The Lord will plead my cause* is the implication of the words in v. 9. And *He will execute judgment for me* – v. 9. And *He will bring me forth to the light* – v. 9.

If I could, then, summarize the spiritual realities that are revealed in this text and express that summary as a theme for our study this morning in preparation for the Lord's table – I would express that summary or my theme this way: In Micah 7:8,9 we find revealed:

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And this is what I want to analyze this morning – the fallen Christian's recovery. Would you think with me first of all on:

### I. The Inevitability of the Christian's Fall

*When I fall* Micah says in v. 8. He is either making reference to his present experience or he's speaking in terms of what he can surely anticipate. In either case the inevitability of falling is plainly set before us. Notice that he says *when I fall not if I fall*. In a fallen world, and in a corrupted society the Christian will fall. His love will grow cold. The world will allure him and the world will find a ready ally in his flesh. Add to this the fact that he faces a spiritual enemy in the devil who is devoted to his fall, who stalks the world as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. Even as Christians we have fallen, we do fall and unfortunately we will fall so we might as well be clothed enough with humility to acknowledge the truth rather than cater to pride of self-deception which will deny the truth.

Contrary to the notions of some who are either self-deceived or are puffed up in pride – there is no such thing as perfection in our present state. Paul writes in Ga. 5:17 that *the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would*. And in Romans 7 we find Paul describing Christian experience when he writes in v. 15 *For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I*.

You may take it as evidence of grace in your life that you have the very desire to pursue the things that are pleasing to God and are in keeping with holiness. But we're still gripped by a tension within us between the Spirit and the flesh which leads us to an inability to do the things that we would do. We like to think, at times, that we're making progress in our sanctification. And there are certainly times when by the Lord's grace we do gain victory over the world and the flesh and the devil and in those times we enjoy close communion with Christ.

But as often as not we find ourselves having to acknowledge that *all we like sheep have gone astray we turn each one to his own way*. And in our turning to our own way we lose our joy – we lose our peace – we lose our strength and our spiritual vitality. Think about it for a minute – how many of the great men of the Bible avoided falling? I love the fact that our Bibles record for us the great deeds and the tremendous exploits of the characters of the Bible but I love it even more that the Bible also reveals their sins.

I'm glad I can read of Abraham trying to manipulate the promises of God that were given to him – that we find him and his wife thinking they have to take matters into their own

hands by Sarah giving her handmaid to Abraham in order to have children by her. I'm glad that's revealed because that kind of fallen reasoning is something I can relate to.

And I'm glad to read of the exploits of David but I'm also glad that God did not spare the revelation of David's sins. Here was a man after God's own heart who nevertheless fell into sin, into very serious sin. You and I could never aspire to be like David if we only had the accounts of his victory over Goliath or his many victories over the Philistines. David was a man who also knew what it was to fall and to abide in a condition of darkness that lasted some times for years.

I'm glad we have the account of Peter walking on the water but that the account includes how he sank. I'm glad we have the accounts of the disciples arguing over who would be the greatest and we have the account of their inability to watch with Christ in prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. And we have the account of their boastings which proved to be empty boasts when they all forsook the Lord. I'm glad we have the account of Peter's denials of Christ. How else could I find hope for restoration following my own practical denials apart from such accounts?

These are the things, you see, that bring the Bible to our level. These are the things that enable us to relate to what's written. This is why I can confess that the Bible or that God, through the Bible, reaches me where I really am. It doesn't simply place before me an impossible ideal. In a sense it does do that because it does reveal that God's standards are very high standards. But if that's all the Bible did then it wouldn't be a book that would interest me much. Why would I bother spending time in a book that only magnified my sins and failures?

So facing the inevitability of our many falls enables us to prepare for those falls. We learn to see into them but also to see beyond them. We find instruction as to what we must do in those falls. The worst thing in the world for a Christian to do is to deny those falls or ignore those falls. So John writes in his first epistle 1:8 *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* This kind of self-deception is what will keep the Christian from recovering or at the very least it will unnecessarily delay his recovery.

So we see the inevitability of the Christian's falls – *When I fall* Micah says. The inevitability of such falls becomes all the more plain when we consider in the second place:

## II. The Cause and Condition of the Christian's Fall

The cause is very simple and must be faced. *I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him* the prophet says in v. 9. Our falls are inevitable because there abides in every Christian, still, an old and carnal nature. So in Rom. 7:14 Paul writes *For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.* Two verses later he goes on to say: *If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*

He says it again in v. 20 *sin dwelleth in me*. And then he says the same thing again in the next verse but in slightly different terms when he writes *I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me*. Sin dwells in me – v. 16; Sin dwells in me – v. 20; I find a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me – v. 21.

And when this happens our spiritual condition becomes one of darkness. *I sit in the darkness* the prophet says back in our text in Micah 7:8. And what does that darkness amount to but the loss of spiritual vision. A Christian in this condition, you see, no longer sees Christ. You no longer enjoy Christ. Your religion, what little there may be of it, becomes forced. You leave off time in prayer and time in the word. You still may go to church because that's something that's expected of you. You might leave off doing that too were it not for the fact that if you left off doing that others would take notice and someone, out of concern for you might actually deal with you and call you to account.

So you continue in church but you have no heart for it. It's a forced compliance. Some grownups view it the same way young and immature children view it. It's something you have to do but not something you want to do. And when you're in darkness and you're not meeting with Christ the thing that you notice more than anything else may be the faults of others – the things that you take to be wrong with the church, and wrong with the preacher, and wrong with other families in the church.

And would you notice from the text that the Christian is planted in this darkness. It's not something he quickly goes through but it says, rather, that he sits in darkness. Verse 9 shows us very clearly that the Lord is not indifferent to the Christian in such a condition. Notice what it says *I will bear the indignation of the LORD because I have sinned against him*. This is not the wrath of the Lord that springs from the principle of judgment. It is, rather, the Fatherly displeasure of the Lord that springs from Fatherly concern. Fathers and Mothers get angry with their children. Their anger springs from their love.

Listen to the opening verses of Psalm 85. These verses will show you what I mean by a Fatherly displeasure. *LORD, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob. 2 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Selah. 3 Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger. 4 Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease. 5 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations? 6 Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?*

Do you see what I mean? *Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger* – v. 3; That's propitiation. That's the fire of judgment being spent on the sacrifice instead of on the person. But then there follows in v. 5 the question *Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?* Here is that Fatherly displeasure which in the Psalmist's view seems to go on indefinitely.

This is the indignation of the Lord that is referred to in v. 9. And so the condition of the Christian in his fallen condition is now plainly set before us and if we're honest with ourselves I think we have to acknowledge that we know all too well what Micah is talking about. And the fact that the Christian's falls are inevitable and that he needs many times to be turned back to the Lord convinces me this morning that there are those here this morning under the sound of my voice that are sitting in darkness and you've lost the joy of salvation. You've lost any sense of peace or joy or spiritual vitality. You know what those things are. You can recall times in the past that you've known such things but they seem to be things of the past and are rarely if ever things of the present.

The fact that there would be Christians here this morning in this kind of condition is not really a surprising thing but what I do get concerned about is when a Christian comes to accept this kind of condition as the norm of his experience. In other words – all you know and all you've come to ever expect is that your religion is and will ever be nothing more than a source of guilt and bondage and deadness.

Dear believer in Christ – you should not accept that. You should not allow yourself to come to such a settled pessimistic outlook about your walk with the Lord. The prophet sets a better example for us than that and this is what leads to my final point of analysis about the fallen Christian's recovery. Would you note with me:

### III. The Aim and Action of Faith in the Christian's Fall

I've been up to this point placing a strong emphasis on the inevitability of the Christian's fall. I'm now ready to assert that there is a certain and equal inevitability to the Christian's recovery. *When I fall, I shall arise, v. 8; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.*

Would you notice with me that while the prophet acknowledges the inevitability of his fall, he doesn't accept it as final. He does not suggest that his fall leads to a new norm where all he knows and all he ever expects to know is spiritual darkness and the indignation of the Lord. He knows that the light of Christ will break in at last. There may be and indeed there is a period of indignation to bear but he knows that this indignation is not the end.

This is what faith must affirm – *when I fall I shall arise and when I sit in darkness the LORD shall be a light unto me.* And for those of you that find yourselves sitting in the darkness this morning bearing the Lord's indignation you need to confess that you will bear that indignation especially since you've sinned against Christ but you should also affirm that you will arise and you will see the light of Christ's love and grace and favor again.

Don't accept the darkness, therefore. Don't resign yourself to a permanent loss of joy and peace and spiritual vitality. But anticipate, rather, that you will arise and that the Lord's indignation will, in the end, bring forth the peaceable fruit of righteousness in your life. There is good grounds in our text for affirming this to be the case.

Notice again in v. 9 these words *I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me*: We have the advantage in our day of being on the other side of the cross of Christ than the prophet found himself. Micah looked forward to the cross of Christ – you and I are able to look back on the cross of Christ.

And we are enabled to affirm today that Christ does plead our cause. Pleading our cause, you see, amounts to the intercession of Christ for you and for me. Rom. 8:34 *Who [is] he that condemneth? [It is] Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

And what's more, his intercession is grounded in the execution of his judgment. Notice from Micah 7:9 that the prophet says that the Lord would plead his cause and execute judgment for me. It doesn't say that he would execute judgment upon him but for him. And this is what Christ has done in his atoning death. He has executed our judgment. He has borne the wrath that his Father's justice demanded.

He has purchased you to himself. He has loved you with an everlasting love. He has brought you into his family. He has reconciled you to himself. He has redeemed your soul from hell and will, therefore, never forget you and never forsake you. These are the things that the elements of the Lord's table preach to us this morning. Let the bread and the cup say to you – Christ pleads my cause and has executed judgment for me.

And in the confidence of the cross, not in the confidence of your own weak and flimsy resolve but in the confidence of the cross affirm today, dear believer, that when you fall you shall arise and when you sit in the darkness the light of Christ's love will break in to your heart again and you will regain a lost joy and a lost vitality. Your heart will know again the blessed reality of Christ's love for you and Christ's concern for you and Christ's interest for the things that are on your heart.

So let's set the matter straight this morning before we approach this table. Your loss of joy and peace and vitality is traceable to your own sin. A part of this sacrament observance this morning is the acknowledgement of that. *I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him.* Your darkness is due to your sin.

But Christ pleads your cause and Christ has executed your judgment. You mean too much to him, therefore, for him to leave you in the darkness and leave you in a fallen condition. If you belong to him – if you believe in him – if you have any affection toward him because you know in some measure the exceeding greatness of his affection toward you, then you can fully expect that when you fall you will arise and when you sit in darkness, his light will break in upon your heart at last. May this time around his table serve to bring that light to souls that have sat too long in darkness and may it serve to bring us all to a renewed sense of his love and grace and mercy.