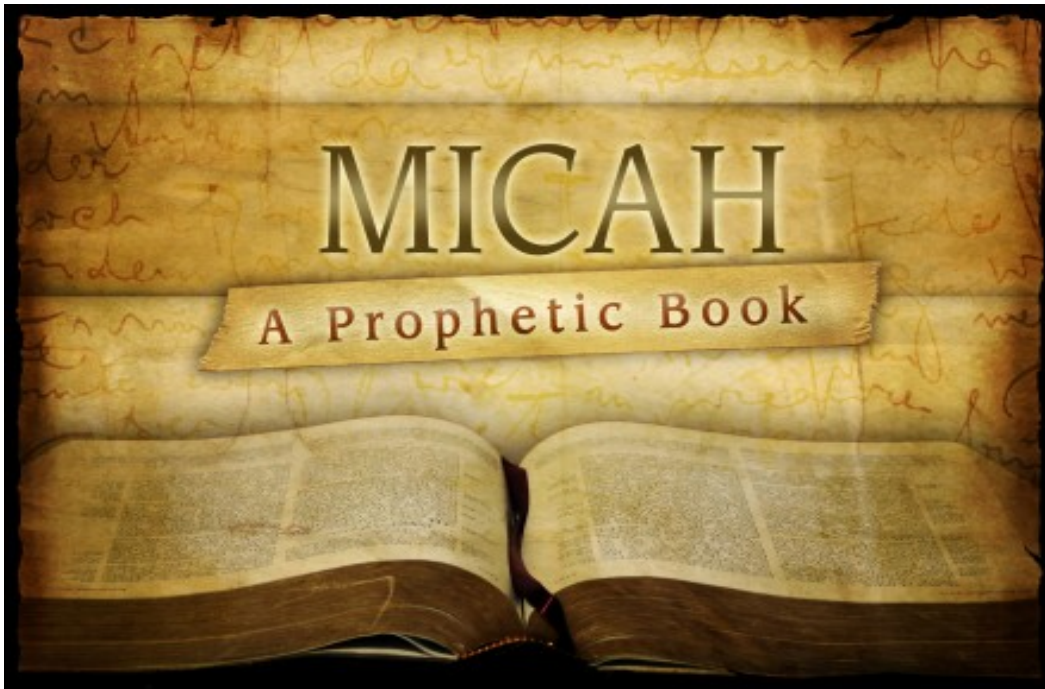


THE CASE AGAINST  
GOD'S PEOPLE  
MICAH 6



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## Micah 6: Introduction

We have been looking at the promises of God for the last days, when the Shepherd King will come to gather His people and send them into all the nations as agents of refreshing grace.

Now Micah brings us back to his present, and to the impending judgment of God. God has a case against His people. They were ungrateful for His grace and unfaithful to His Law. They embraced the false gods and immoral practices of their neighbors, and now God was about to bring them to desolation.

Israel would be carried away to Assyria. Judah would be made captive in Babylon. And all because of their rebellion and sin against God.

But judgment was not the end of the story for the people God chose for Himself.

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We hope you find this study of Ecclesiastes a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

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## 1 The Court of Creation

*Opening Prayer: Psalm 33.1-5*

Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous!  
For praise from the upright is beautiful.  
Praise the LORD with the harp;  
Make melody to Him with an instrument of ten strings.  
Sing to Him a new song;  
Play skillfully with a shout of joy.  
For the word of the LORD *is* right,  
And all His work *is done* in truth.  
He loves righteousness and justice;  
The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.

*Sing Psalm 33.1-5*

*(Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns!)*

Sing with rejoicing in the Lord, for praise becomes His righteous ones!  
With harps and songs raise grateful words, and let new songs of praise be sung!

Joyfully shout! His Word is true; He does His work in faithfulness.  
His love prevails the whole world through; the Lord loves truth and righteousness.

*Read Micah 6.1, 2*

*Preparation*

1. To what was Micah calling the people of his day?
2. Why was he doing this?

*Meditation*

God “has a complaint against His people” (v. 2). We see this frequently with the prophets. God has a **רִיב**, *reeve*, or case to bring to His people, and the purpose of this is to convict them of their sin and to vindicate His righteous judgment.

Micah presents a summons to court, as it were. He calls the people of Israel and Judah to plead the case for their rebellion, idolatry, and wickedness before the creation (v. 1). We see this same idea elsewhere in Scripture as well, for example, in Psalm 50 and in Job 38-41. God insists that His people justify their wickedness in the open court of His good creation. While they may have thought the high places, where they worshiped their false gods, would justify their ways, they would be sorely disappointed. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord (Ps. 33.5). The creation will expose the wickedness of God’s people.

But it will do so as it hears God’s side of the *reeve* (v. 2). The case God presents will be full of grace, goodness, kindness, bounty, and wisdom – just the like the creation. God’s case will resonate with what the people see in creation around them, while their own case will be exposed as the very antipathy of God’s good intentions. Both the Word and creation of God speak of the wisdom, goodness, justice, bounty, and kindness of His ways.

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

“God insists that His people justify their wickedness in the open court of His good creation. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.” But the earth is not the Lord and is not to be sought for

justification.

God says to the people of Micah's day: "Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice" (Mic. 6.1) The psalmist speaks in the same way: "I will lift up my eyes to the hills – from whence *comes* my help? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth" (Ps.121.1, 2). We can look to the mountains to speak of the LORD in His grandeur and majesty, but the mountains are not the answer. The LORD is; and He is the maker of all that is in the heaven and the earth.

We see this same situation with Elijah and the prophets of Baal when he says to them: "Call on the name of your god..." "But *there was* no voice; no one answered...there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention" (1 Kgs. 18.25, 26, 29). Only God hears our requests; only God can forgive our sins. Only He will contend with us.

As Jeremiah wrote: "Truly, in vain is *salvation hoped for* from the hills, *and from* the multitude of mountains; truly, in the LORD our God *is* the salvation of Israel" (Jer. 3.23).

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork" (Ps. 19. 1). The court of creation shouts to us of the power and justice of God. God convicts us of sin. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1.8, 9).

#### *Reflection*

1. Why did God have a case with the people of Micah's day? Does He ever have a case against you?
2. Why should we expect the *world* of God to clarify, support, illustrate, and otherwise sustain the *Word* of God?
3. How can meditating on the goodness of God in all the earth help us to walk more consistently in the ways of His Word?

*The meaning then is that when the Prophet had spent much labor on the people and derived no fruit, he is at length bidden to call the mountains and the hills to bear their testimony to God; and thus before the elements is made known and proved the ungodliness and the obstinacy of the people.* John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Micah 6.1*

#### *Closing Prayer: Psalm 33.13-22*

Thank the Lord that He watches you always, and that His faithfulness and salvation never fail. Wait on the Lord in prayer, as He shows you how to prepare to trust and serve Him for the day ahead.

#### *Psalm 33.13-22*

(Truro: *Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns!*)

God from His throne looks down on men; He knows our works and made our hearts.  
Let not Your Church, let none depend on strength or skill or human arts.

God watches those who fear His Name, who hope upon His grace and love;  
He keeps their souls from death and shame who trust in Him Who reigns above.

God is our Helper and our Shield; upon us let Your grace descend!  
We hope in You; to You we yield; we trust in Jesus to the end.

## 2 Remember God's Grace

*Opening Prayer: Psalm 105.1-5*

Oh, give thanks to the LORD!  
Call upon His name;  
Make known His deeds among the peoples!  
Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him;  
Talk of all His wondrous works!  
Glory in His holy name;  
Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the LORD!  
Seek the LORD and His strength;  
Seek His face evermore!  
Remember His marvelous works which He has done,  
His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth...

*Sing Psalm 105.1-5*

(Warrington: [\*Give to Our God Immortal Praise\*](#))

Give thanks unto the Lord Most High; call on His Name, before Him cry!  
Make known His deeds in every land; sing praise for all the works of His hand.

Glory in God, rejoice in heart, all you who seek His holy part.  
Him and His strength and Presence seek; His works proclaim, His judgments speak.

*Read Micah 6.3-5*

*Preparation*

1. What will happen from Bethlehem of Judah in the last days?
2. When was this One appointed for His rule?

*Meditation*

The court is convened, and it's time for opening arguments. God sets before His people and all creation the undeniable greatness of His grace. He redeemed them from Egypt, gave them able and faithful leaders, brought through the desert and the machinations of hostile kings, and settled them in the land. And why? That they might know – understand and experience – the righteousness of the Lord.

Did Israel find this graciousness wearisome (v. 3)? Had they forgotten their history in the faithfulness and provision of the Lord (v. 5)?

There could be no denying all the ways God had showed Himself gracious and faithful to Israel. What excuse would they proffer in defense of their rebellion against Him?

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Is it possible that we can hear ourselves saying some of these same words to our own beloved children? We observe them going away from the Lord and His promises; and from us as well. We are grieved and concerned and we pour out our hearts before them: O my children, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Please tell me. I have loved you and cared for you and taught you God's ways, "that you may know the righteousness of the LORD" (Mic. 6.3-5).

Can we also hear God saying these words to us?  
Do we forget about God's grace toward us?  
Could it be that we act as if God has wearied us by demanding that we obey His commands?  
He has brought us out of sin and redeemed us from the bondage we had to it.  
We dare not testify against Him. As God said to Job, "Shall the one who contends with the Almighty correct *Him*? He who rebukes God, let him answer it" (Job 40.2). No thanks.

We need to say to the LORD the same words Job spoke: "I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of *Yours* can be withheld from You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42.2, 5, 6).

Then we remember God's grace. Grace that is greater than all our sin! "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us..." (Eph. 1. 7, 8). "For by grace you have been saved..." (Eph. 2.8).

That we may know the righteousness of the LORD!

*Reflection*

1. Why is it a good idea to remind ourselves of the grace and faithfulness of God?
2. How can believers encourage one another to keep focused on the grace of God?
3. What can happen when we lose sight of God's grace, or fail to acknowledge His faithfulness?

*Sin causes the controversy between God and man. God reasons with us, to teach us to reason with ourselves. Let them remember God's many favors to them and their fathers, and compare with them their unworthy, ungrateful conduct toward him. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Micah 6.3-5*

*Closing Prayer: Psalm 105.6-11, 44, 45*

Thank God for His great faithfulness, both to Israel of old and to us His people today.

*Sing Psalm 105.6-11, 44, 45*

(Warrington: [\*Give to Our God Immortal Praise\*](#))

You holy children of Abraham, you chosen ones of Jacob, stand!  
He is our Lord, of wondrous worth; His judgments are in all the earth.

He will His covenant faithfully guard – His oath, the promise of His Word.  
That which He to our fathers swore, He will perform forevermore!

To them He granted the promised land, the portion of His gracious hand.  
Though they were few, and wandered far, He kept them close within His heart.

So let us all in our Savior confide, and in His holy Law abide.  
Let us observe His glorious Word, and praise our sovereign, faithful Lord!

### 3 What God Requires

*Opening Prayer: Psalm 50.1-4*

The Mighty One, God the LORD,  
Has spoken and called the earth  
From the rising of the sun to its going down.  
Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,  
God will shine forth.  
Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent;  
A fire shall devour before Him,  
And it shall be very tempestuous all around Him.  
He shall call to the heavens from above,  
And to the earth, that He may judge His people...

*Sing Psalm 50.1-4*

(Austrian Hymn: [\*Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken\*](#))

God, the Lord, the mighty Savior, summons all from east to west:  
Out of Zion, rich with favor, shines He, of all things the best.  
Come, O God, and keep not silence; fire devours before Your way!  
He His Church, steeped in defiance, comes to judge this awful day.

*Read Micah 6.6-8*

*Preparation*

1. What did the people think was most important in coming before the Lord?
2. What did God expect of them?

*Meditation*

We do not worship or serve God merely with the formalities of public worship. That's what God was saying to His people through Asaph in Psalm 50, and it's what Micah was reminding them of here.

The people of Israel and Judah were fairly careful about observing the outward details of worship. Even after they fell into idolatry, they continued "worshipping" God according to the prescriptions of His Law (v. 6). But the more they mixed in pagan ceremonies and practices, the more their hearts strayed from the Lord into a form of self-serving religion that even saw them sacrificing their children (v. 7).

That's not what God had shown them. What God required is that they should fear Him, obey, serve, and love Him (Deut. 10.12, 13), and live justly and uprightly in love for Him and their neighbors (v. 8). Once they adopted pagan practices in worship, living pagan morality and embracing pagan values was not far behind. Their continuing "worship" of God meant nothing, either to them or Him. Indeed, it became the focal point of His wrath and judgment.

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

God, in His grace, gave the people a choice. Micah wrote them a list of really bad ideas, and then a list of good ones. We can either "worship" Him hypocritically or truly. As Paul penned for us in 1 Corinthians 13:

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding

brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing” (1 Cor. 13.1-3). Surely that would be a Christian with star-power. In some people’s eyes. But not in God’s.

As Micah and Paul both wrote, God wants a person who loves Him and others. That’s it. That’s all. These other things are nice additions, but not essentials. In fact, God has shown us what is good; and what He requires of us. Here it is:

1. Behave justly.
2. Love mercy.
3. Walk humbly with God.

God has shown us, in Jesus, what this life looks like in action.

And Jesus has told us: “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (Jn. 14.15).

“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love” (Jn. 15.10).

“For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings” (Hos. 6.6).

Jesus quoted this same Scripture when He excoriated the Pharisees: “But go and learn what *this* means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matt. 9.13).

Let us take to heart what God requires of us; and rejoice that He is not expecting eloquence, prophetic visions, outstanding knowledge, extreme faith, overwhelming generosity, or martyrdom. If we only do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with Him, we will be pleasing in His sight.

#### *Reflection*

1. How can we know when our worship of God is being mixed with pagan or unbelieving ways or practices?
2. How would you define each of these terms: justice, mercy, humility?
3. Why do God’s people so often become distracted from what He requires to offer Him what we think He’d like? How can we resist this tendency?

*Forget about burnt offerings, countless sacrifices and oblations of firstborn, he is saying. If you are concerned to appease the divinity, practice what God ordered you in the beginning through Moses.* Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428), *Commentary on Micah 6.6-8*

#### *Closing Prayer: Psalm 50.5-23*

Give thanks to God for His many benefits. Praise Him for His greatness. Seek His Presence to go with you for righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit for the day ahead.

#### *Sing Psalm 50.5-23*

(Austrian Hymn: [\*Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken\*](#))

“Gather now My children holy, those bound close to Me by blood.”

Let the heav’ns declare His glory, for the Lord Himself is Judge:

“Hear, My people, I will charge you; I alone am God, your God!

I will bring a solemn charge to gain you to Me for your good.

“Not for rituals I accuse you – let your worship to Me rise.  
Naught to Me is any use, Who dwells in glory in the skies.  
All is mine throughout creation; I your help do not require.  
Offer Me no vain oblation: hear what I from you desire:

“Sacrifice of thanks now render; pay to God your solemn vows;  
Let the troubled, each offender, seek Him in the midst of woes.  
In the day of strife draw near Him; He will hear, and He will save.  
Honor God, rejoice, and fear Him, give to Him your grateful praise.

“All of you My Word despising, who are you to claim My grace?  
Praise may from your lips be rising, but you scorn Me to My face.  
You approve of all transgressions, scheme against your mother's son!  
I will crush your vain aggressions and destroy what you have done.

“Reckon this, My sinful people, lest My wrath consume you whole:  
None shall thwart Me when I seek to crush and break your sin-stiff soul.  
He who thanks to Me addressing, follows after what is good,  
He shall know the way of blessing coming from the hand of God.”

## 4 Violence and Lies Judged

*Opening Prayer: Psalm 77.7-10*

Will the Lord cast off forever?

And will He be favorable no more?

Has His mercy ceased forever?

Has *His* promise failed forevermore?

Has God forgotten to be gracious?

Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? *Selah*

And I said, "This *is* my anguish;

*But I will remember* the years of the right hand of the Most High."

*Psalm 77.7-10*

(Leoni: [\*The God of Abraham Praise\*](#))

O Lord, will You reject Your people without end?

Has favor ceased, are You no more our heav'nly Friend?

Your promise and Your love in anger are obscured;

my sin has turned Your hand away, Your beauty blurred.

*Read Micah 6.9-12*

*Preparation*

1. Why is God coming to judge His people?
2. Of what are God's people guilty before Him?

*Meditation*

God never leaves His people in doubt about why He is judging them. Micah said that God had appointed a rod for the backs of His people (v. 9) because of their wickedness and abominations (v. 10). But what were these?

Here the prophet mentions three transgressions. The people were deceitful, using "wicked scales" and "deceitful weights" (v. 11). The use of such contrivances, designed to deceive merchants and others, was strictly forbidden by God's Law (cf. Lev. 19.36). These were surely in use in Israel and Judah, but they may also be serving here to symbolize a general air of deceit and advantage-taking among the people.

Second, the rich were oppressing the poor and thus doing violence to them by keeping them in poverty (v. 12). They loved themselves but hated their neighbors.

Finally, everyone was trafficking in lies (v. 12; cf. Ps. 12). People lied to one another, stretched the truth, made flimsy excuses, misled their neighbors, and thus scorned the ninth commandment. No way God would allow this to continue among those who bore His Name upon them.

They who are wise would see how God judges the sinfulness of His people, and they would learn from Israel's foolishness (v. 9). The second part of verse 9 is better translated, "they who have wisdom will see Your Name" – that is God's work of judgment – and, presumably, learn what is necessary to steer clear of His wrath. Micah issues a call here for us to be wise and turn from the wicked ways of those who fall under the judgment of the Lord – the very thing God's people were

not doing.

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

“God never leaves His people in doubt about why He is judging them.” And He never allows us to wonder about what causes Him to judge us. He has given us His Word to lead us and guide us into all truth and good behavior.

“The LORD’s voice cries to the city...” about things He has told them before. They were being deceitful in work and words. And He had addressed these sins multiple times. “You shall have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure...” (Deut. 25.15). “You shall do no injustice in judgment, in measurement of length, weight, or volume. You shall have honest scales, honest weights...” (Lev. 19.35, 36). “Dishonest scales *are* an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight *is* His delight” (Prov. 11.1). “Diverse weights *are* an abomination to the LORD, and dishonest scales *are* not good” (Prov. 20.23).

It’s pretty clear how God feels about that subject.

Now lying: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (Ex. 20.16). “Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds...” (Col. 3.9).

Again, clear.

“Micah issues a call here for us to be wise and turn from the wicked ways of those who fall under the judgment of the Lord”, and we would be wise to do it. Keeping the Law not only pleases God but is a testimony to the world of our belief in Him.

“Those who forsake the law praise the wicked, but such as keep the law contend with them” (Prov. 28.20).

“Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do *it*, to him it is sin.”

“...happy is he who keeps the law” (James 4. 17; Prov. 29. 18).

*Reflection*

1. What are we supposed to learn from God’s judgment against Israel and Judah (Rom. 15.4)?
2. Why is it so important that we be well-grounded in the Ten Commandments (Matt. 5.17-19; 24.12)?
3. Why do you suppose lying, deceit, and oppression are so abominable to the Lord?

*The Prophet shows here by implication, that understanding was a rare thing among that people; for few hearkened to the voice of God. And thus we see what his object was; for he wished to touch the Jews to the quick, that they might acknowledge that they were without mind and understanding, because they had hardened themselves against God, so that his voice did not reach their hearts. John Calvin (1506-1564), Commentary on Micah 6.9*

*Closing Prayer: Psalm 77.11-20*

Recall God’s grace to you in Jesus Christ. Thank Him for your salvation. Wait in silence for Him to convict you of any sin. Devote yourself afresh to following Him.

*Psalm 77.11-20*

(Leoni: [\*The God of Abraham Praise\*](#))

Now let us call to mind Your deeds and wonders, Lord,  
and meditate on all Your works and praise Your Word.  
Full holy is Your way, great God of earth and heav'n,  
to You, O God of strength and pow'r all praise be giv'n!

The waters and the deeps all tremble 'neath Your hand.  
The clouds give forth, the sky resounds across the land.  
Your lightning flashes forth and lights the earth around;  
we feel beneath our feet the trembling of the ground.

Your way leads through the sea; Your path the water parts.  
Your footprints are to us deep mysteries in our hearts.  
As then by Moses' hand and Aaron's law-filled voice,  
You led Your sheep, lead us that we may all rejoice!

## 5 Judgment

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,  
You who lead Joseph like a flock;  
You who dwell between the cherubim, shine forth!  
Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,  
Stir up Your strength,  
And come and save us!  
Restore us, O God;  
Cause Your face to shine,  
And we shall be saved!

*Sing Psalm 80.1-3, 17, 19*

(St. Theodulph: [\*All Glory, Laud, and Honor\*](#))

O God of grace, restore us, and shine on us Your face!

O save us, Lord, work for us; renew us by Your grace!

*vv. 1, 2*

Give ear, O gracious Savior, Who leads us as Your flock:

Stir up Your pow'r and favor, our King and Lord and Rock!

*Read Micah 6.13-15*

*Preparation*

1. What form will God's judgment take against His people?

2. What will be the result of this? Why does God intend to do it?

*Meditation*

God's judgment is coming to desolate His people because of their sins (v. 13). Their crops will fail, and what they do manage to harvest either won't satisfy their hunger or will be taken from them by the sword (v. 14). They will work to put in a crop, but it won't produce for them (v. 15). Their perpetual olive trees and grapevines will yield, but others will realize the benefits (v. 15).

God is sovereign over His people and all nations. He is also sovereign over weather, the earth, and the plants of the earth. The creation in all its aspects serves the purposes of God (Ps. 119.89-91), and He can turn the creation – as well as nations and powers – to bring judgment against His people when they have rebelled against Him.

In view of the grace and power of God, we are well advised (v. 9) to cling to Him and His Word and to resist every inclination of our heart to worship or serve other gods, including the gods of self-interest and things. God is as sovereign today as He was in Micah's day, and He exercises His wrath and judgment against all who deny or resist Him (Rom. 1.18-32). *Caveat auditor.*

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Instead of being sick, hungry, and dead, with bad gardens, no oil, and no wine, we can be healthy, well-fed, alive, fruitful, and well cared-for with oil and wine to spare. But it is a serious choice we have to make to experience the one and not the other.

Moses said to the forebears of these people: "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep

His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess.” “...therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He *is* your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them” (Deut. 30.15, 16, 19, 20).

The same holds true for us. Judgment or blessing.

Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (Jn. 10.10). But He also said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (Jn. 14.15), and, “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you” (Jn. 15.14).

“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 Jn. 5.3).

*Reflection*

1. Why did Jesus invest so much importance in keeping the commandments of God? Can keeping the Law save us? But why must we keep it?
2. Is God still sovereign today? What are the implications of that for when He decides to bring His judgment against someone?
3. How can believers encourage one another to walk in the ways of God's commandments?

*Sin is a root of bitterness, soon planted, but not soon plucked up again. Their being the people of God in name and profession, while they kept themselves in his love, was an honor to them; but now, being backsliders, their having been once the people of God turns to their reproach.* Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Micah 6.9-16*

*Closing Prayer: Psalm 80.4-7, 12-19*

Pray that God will give us repentance from our sins, and that He will make our sins known to us, revive us, and renew our mission to proclaim Jesus and His Kingdom to the world.

*Sing Psalm 80.4-7, 12-19*

(St. Theodulph: [\*All Glory, Laud, and Honor\*](#))

How long will You ignore all Your people's fervent prayer?

Shall bitter tears fall ever? O Lord, renew Your care!

*vv. 6, 7*

Our neighbors mock and scorn us, they laugh at our distress;  
renew, O Lord, and turn us, look down on us and bless!

Now You in wrath have spoken and bruised Your chosen vine.  
We languish, Lord, are broken by wrath, deserved, divine.

*vv. 14, 15*

Once more, Lord, hear our pleading: return and heal this vine!  
Look down on us, so needy, and show Your love divine!

Though we be burned and perish because of Your command,  
revive us, Lord, and cherish this son of Your right hand.

*vv. 18, 19*

Then let us not return to our sinful, selfish ways  
but call on You and learn to surround You with our praise.

## 6      Captive

*Opening Prayer: Psalm 83.1-3*

Do not keep silent, O God!  
Do not hold Your peace,  
And do not be still, O God!  
For behold, Your enemies make a tumult;  
And those who hate You have lifted up their head.  
They have taken crafty counsel against Your people,  
And consulted together against Your sheltered ones.

*Psalm 83.1-3*

(St. Chrysostom: [\*We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought\*](#))

O God, do not be quiet now; do not be silent, nor be still!  
See how Your foes erupt in a row and those who hate You chafe at Your will.  
Shrewdly they plan, conspiring as one, against Your daughters and Your sons.

*Read Micah 6.16*

*Preparation*

1. Who were Omri and Ahab?
2. What would be the result of their “counsels”?

*Meditation*

Omri was the worst king of the northern kingdom of Israel. Until, that is, his son Ahab came along (cf. 1 Kgs. 16.25, 26, 30). What each of them had in common was the sin of idolatry. They deliberately and consistently led the people of Israel away from the worship and service of God into the worship of Baal. They continued using the language of Biblical worship, and invoking the Name of God, but their real loyalties lay elsewhere. And this rebellion and idolatry were the cause of all the distress that came upon the northern kingdom, culminating in its destruction and the deportation of the people to Assyria.

The same fate was lining up with the southern kingdom of Judah in Micah's day. Though Judah lasted a bit longer than Israel, their capitulation to idolatry and all the attendant sins thereof ultimately led to desolation – the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and the carrying away of God's people in captivity to Babylon.

Israel's captivity in Assyria and Judah's in Babylon were real and terrible. They were also symbolic, because long before that physical captivity was imposed on them, these two nations had made themselves captive to the lies, culture, and morality of the false religions of unbelieving nations. Their spiritual captivity was the cause of their physical captivity under the judgment of God against their idolatry.

Many would say that the Church in our country today has become captive to unbelieving ways. How we worship, what we understand by salvation and discipleship, how we live our Christian lives is shaped more by the unbelieving world around us than the clear and unchanging teaching of God's Word. Will our spiritual captivity result in some physical captivity of our own? Let us pray and repent, that it may not be so.

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Antithetical obedience. That's what they were doing. They were being obedient to everything opposed to God. "For the statutes of Omri are kept; all the works of Ahab's house are done; and you walk in their counsels" (Mic. 6.16). And they felt good about it? So proud of themselves. Look at what we've done!

However, God looks, and He sees, and He is appalled.

Could it be that God looks at us today and sees the same thing?  
And we are looking at ourselves and thinking we are doing a great job?  
Is it possible that we will soon be in for a rude awakening?

The psalmist wrote:

"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" (Ps. 1.1-3).

That is seen as true obedience. An obedience that keeps us captive to Christ and not to idolatry. The Omris and Ahabs are plentiful in our world, and from them we must turn away. And when we do turn away, and repent of our sins of idolatry, we are assured of our forgiveness. There is no other way.

"*There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8.1). Captive.

*Reflection*

1. To what kinds of ideas and lifestyles can believers become captive in our day?
2. What are the effects of following these ideas and lifestyles?
3. How can we protect ourselves from being taken captive by the unbelieving world?

*True religion as yet prevailed in the tribe of Judah, though the kingdom of Israel was become corrupt, and filthy superstitions had gained the ascendancy: but in course of time the Jews became also implicated in similar superstitions. Of this sin the Prophet now accuses them; that is, that they made themselves associates with the Israelites...* John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Micah 6.16*

*Closing Prayer: Psalm 83.4-18*

Pray that God will reveal any ways you might be captive to the temper of the times rather than the Spirit of Christ. Repent of any sins, and call on the Lord to stay His hand of judgment from falling upon His captive people.

*Psalm 83.4-18*

(St. Chrysostom: [\*We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought\*](#))

“Come, let us wipe them out,” they say. “Let Israel’s name no more be heard!”  
Bold they conspire to do us away, and covenant against You, O Lord.  
Peoples and nations cast in their lot for this ambitious, wicked plot.

Deal with them, Lord, and bring them down, as You against old foes prevailed,  
when You Midian cast to the ground and all her kings and princes assailed –  
all who Your pastures sought to possess You brought to ruin and deep distress.

Make them like whirling dust, O God! Scatter them like the windblown chaff!  
Rage like a fire consuming a wood, like flames that burn a mountain pass!  
Blow like a tempest, bring them to harm, and terrify them with Your storm!

Fill with dishonor every face that they may seek Your Name, O Lord.  
Bring them to shame, dismay, and disgrace, and let them perish under Your Word,  
that they may learn Your infinite worth, O God Most High of all the earth!

## 7 Case Closed

*Opening Prayer: Psalm 48.1-3*

Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised  
In the city of our God,  
*In* His holy mountain.  
Beautiful in elevation,  
The joy of the whole earth,  
*Is* Mount Zion *on* the sides of the north,  
The city of the great King.  
God *is* in her palaces;  
He is known as her refuge.

*Sing Psalm 48.1-3*

(Cwm Rhondda: [\*Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah\*](#))

Great is God, now greatly praise Him in the city of the Lord.  
Holy she, His lovely mountain, great and glorious by His Word!  
God her King is great within her, He, her Stronghold ever sure!  
He, her Stronghold ever sure!

*Read Micah 6; meditate on verse 9*

*Preparation*

1. Who will see the Name of the Lord?
2. What had God appointed for His people?

*Meditation*

Micah 6 reads like a court hearing. God has a complaint against His people, a court case, which He will briefly unfold (vv. 1, 2). First, He marshals the evidence of His lovingkindness and goodness. He saved His people, gave them loving shepherds, brought them through the wilderness, and overthrew the pagan kings of Canaan, that they might enjoy the land He promised to their fathers (vv. 3-5). Thus the people could see and know the righteousness of the Lord (v. 5).

How should the people have responded to this? Micah, speaking on behalf of the nation, declares that merely offering outward obeisance through offerings is not what God was seeking, much less to offer their children, following the practices of pagan nations, as sacrifices to Him (vv. 6, 7). God required of His people true fellowship with Him, issuing in goodness, justice, and mercy (v. 8). And this, under the influence of pagan religion and ways, was what the people of Israel and Judah sorely lacked.

Verse 9 begins the verdict: Anyone with a lick of wisdom would be able to see the justice of God's case. Now the rod of judgment must fall on the backs of His people.

For their wickedness – deceit, lying, violence, and more – God will bring His people to desolation, blighting their economy (vv. 13-15) and bringing them to ruin and captivity (v. 14) because they preferred the statutes and works of wickedness to the good, just, and loving Law of the Lord (v. 16).

The pagan world would confirm the justice of God's case against His people by hissing at them as they were borne away captive to Assyria and Babylon. Case closed.

*Treasure Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

In God's mercy, cases are begun, closed, and reopened. Here the LORD cries to the city.

In Proverbs 8 we read of wisdom crying out and understanding lifting up her voice. (Prov. 8.1)

Matthew 9.13 tells us that God calls sinners to repentance.

Peter tells us in Acts 2.39 that "the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

And Jesus cried out "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Matt. 23.37)

And for all of us, how often did the case seem closed but God in His mercy opened our hearts to Himself? How thankful we all should be that what seemed finished was reopened with a call and a cry from Him.

"O for the wonderful love He has promised,  
Promised for you and for me!  
Though we have sinned, He has mercy and pardon,  
Pardon for you and for me.  
Come home, come home,  
Ye who are weary, come home;  
Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,  
Calling, O sinner, come home!"

--Will Thompson, 1880

#### *Reflection*

1. Why did God have a "case" against His people? How had they offended against Him?
2. Meditate on Hebrews 12.3-11. How does God "chasten" His people today?
3. How would you know if God was crying out against you? How should you respond?

*The voice of Jehovah cries to arouse or awaken; that is though the people are torpid, and as it were overpowered with sleep, for they indulged themselves in their sins; yet the voice of God ought to be sufficient to arouse them all: however sleepy they might have been, there was yet power enough in the doctrine of the Law, which the Prophet daily proclaimed. But still this voice, by which the whole people ought to have been awakened, was not heard! John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Micah 6.9**

#### *Closing Prayer: Psalm 48.9-14*

Praise God that, in His lovingkindness, He has given Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins, and has made Him the Chief Cornerstone of the Church. Pray for yourself and your church, that you might grow to become more like Jesus.

#### *Sing Psalm 48.9-14*

(Cwm Rhondda: [\*Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah\*](#))

For Your grace and lovingkindness we proclaim Your matchless worth!  
As Your Name is, great and boundless, let Your praise fill all the earth.

Let Your people sing rejoicing for the judgment of Your truth;  
for the judgment of Your truth.

Walk about the blessed city, see her beauty, see her power.  
Count her ramparts, filled with glory, look on ev'ry mighty tower.  
Tell her glory to the nations: God will guide her evermore;  
God will guide her evermore!

*Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

1. Summarize God's "case" against His people. With what did He charge them?
2. What did God expect from His people in return for His grace?
3. Instead of inward obedience, the people of Israel and Judah settled for outward forms of religion, thinking that would satisfy God. Did it? Why not?
4. What should we today learn from the judgment God brought to bear against His people (Rom. 15.4)?
5. What's the most important lesson you have learned from Micah 6? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

*For Prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

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