



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Micah 2:12-13

"Promises of Protection and Liberation"

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we turn again to Thee with appreciation for the Scriptures which have been put into our hands by Thy wonderful grace. And we thank Thee for the teaching that they give us concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the wonderful way in which no matter where we turn his face shines forth from them. We thank Thee that the grace of God manifested to the saints of the Old Testament is the same grace manifested to us, richer and fuller perhaps in its breath and depth by virtue of that which Jesus Christ has done. But we thank Thee for the oneness that we have with the saints of God. We thank Thee too for the hope that we have and we pray tonight as we consider again another section of the prophecy of one of the prophets of the Old Testament that our thoughts may be superintended by the Holy Spirit of God. May we again learn to think Thy thoughts after Thee. Give us a deepening love for Thy word and for him of whom it speaks. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] For those of you who may not have been here in some of our previous studies, we are studying the prophecy of Micah in the Old Testament. And we're turning tonight to chapter 2 and verse 12 and our subject is "Promises of Protection and Liberation."

These two verses that we are looking at tonight are the final verses of chapter 2. And the prophet Micah has written them in such a way that they round off the first section of the book. But they round off the first section of the book on an entirely different note.

If you happened to have been here during our previous three or four studies, you will notice that the note that characterizes these two verses is the note of deliverance, the note of safety and the note of victory. But in the previous section of chapter 1 and chapter 2, what we have had is the prophet accusing Israel of disobedience to the Lord God. What we have had is an instance of a very, very bold and fearless prophet, who though of course it would have cost him considerably, nevertheless he's made some very, very strong, accurate and truthful accusations of the nation, both Samaria and Judah.

We have in the past few days seen an instance of one of our "prophets" who has made his way toward the east and has gone near the Kremlin. And one gains the impression that the boldness and the fearlessness with which our "prophet" has expressed himself is of a slightly different character from the fearlessness of the prophets of the Old Testament.

Now I have great respect for Billy Graham. I know him personally. He's a man of integrity, but I must confess that I've been a little disappointed in some of the things that he has said over the past few days. And I could not help but think as I read through Micah and pondered again some of the things that he said, that one of the reasons that the prophets of the Old Testament were so bold and so fearless is that they did not have any vested interests that they felt they must protect. They were individuals who felt that their responsibility was solely to the Lord. They didn't have any salaries paid them because they were preaching in one particular place. They were men who often carried on their own work and furthermore they were individuals who did not feel obligated to anyone by virtue of some good turns that had been given them or extended toward them. They were men who were servants of God. And there is a great deal to be said today for

the same kind of preacher of the word of God, one who is responsible entirely to the Lord God and whose ministry is carried on in that spirit.

Many years ago when I was going through seminary here in Dallas we had a young man with whom I used to meet on Sunday morning in the Lord's Supper service at Dallas Theological Seminary. It may have been forgotten by some, but in the earlier days of the seminary every Sunday morning at 7:00 or 7:30, I've forgotten the exact time, there was a communion service very similar to the communion service that we have here in Believers Chapel on Sunday night. And Dr. Chafer attended that service every Sunday morning when he was in town. We would gather in what was the old chapel, a very small part of the old seminary buildings there now which would probably seat about seventy-five people if it were filled. But we would gather, and we would gather in a circle, and we had the elements before us. And it was through that, partially, that I came to ponder what the New Testament had to say about the church.

Well, some of the men who gathered around that table every Sunday morning and observed the Lord's Supper were individuals who fellowshiped with those known as the "Brethren", and through our friendships I became acquainted with some of them. And I remember one young man particularly. He's been preaching for about fifty years and he's still preaching, preaching in Africa at the present time so far as I know. Perhaps he's gone down to the West Indies, I've forgotten. He has changed his place of ministry several times in recent years.

But we were talking one time about this, and I asked him something about how he was going to support himself in the Lord's work. He said, Well, I just look to the Lord. And he said I know that may seem to have some disadvantages to others, but one great advantage it does have is that I am responsible to him and I'm not responsible to any other person. And therefore, I can feel absolute freedom in saying what I do feel that the Scriptures say to me and what God seems to be telling me to say. I get the impression that the prophets of the Old Testament were men like that.

And while there are no prophets today, that's why a moment ago I said "quote prophet unquote," because there are no biblical prophets today. Prophets gave revelation. Men today give teaching; they give instruction. It may be comforting or it may be predictive, but they are teachers. We don't have any prophets who are giving us moral teaching, that is, revelation nor any predictive messages that are revelation.

We do have preachers and teachers, however, and it is helpful to realize that our responsibility is to the Lord. Micah was a man like that. And he didn't hesitate to say things that I'm sure were taken very negatively by the leaders in Samaria and the leaders of the city Jerusalem.

Three areas of truth are before us in these two verses. And there is meaning and two significances. A few years back a man by the name of E.D. Hirsch wrote a book called *Validity in Interpretation*; it's been very popular in our theological seminaries, particularly our evangelical seminaries. Essentially Professor Hirsch, who has taught at the University of Virginia in the English department, contends that when we look at an ancient text, or anyone's text for that matter, we look first of all for the meaning of the text. And the meaning of the text is the meaning that the author intended that his words should have.

Now any significance that we may see in it, we may have a right to see in it, but the interpreter is interested in the meaning of the passage. Significance may correspond to what we say when we say application. So a text has a meaning, a grammatical historical meaning. But it may have certain applications.

I suggest to you that this text we are going to look at, the two verses, has meaning. It meant something to those who received it. But it also has some applications that pertain to us over two thousand years afterwards.

If one were to ask, What is the meaning of these two verses? Well, we would say that what Micah is talking about is deliverance from the Assyrian threat or perhaps from the Babylonian captivity. For example, when we read here about God gathering the

people and assembling the people we are to think first of all of assembly of the people and deliverance of the people from the threat of Assyria which was a very present threat to the prophet Micah.

Now, there are some significances and applications that we might make of this passage. We might for example apply this promise of re-gathering to the further re-gatherings of the children of Israel that shall take place in the future, national problems and the encouragement that one may gain for them by a text such as this. And also, these texts have some relationship to our own personal problems because many of the problems that we have in life are different because we live in a different age, but in essence the same kind of thing troubles us in our experience.

Now, let's read the two verses of Micah chapter 2, verse 12 and verse 13. And then I want to make a comment on some of the themes that are seen here and say a word or two about the two verses. Micah writes.

Now remember, he has been writing words of strong accusation and condemnation of Samaria and Judea because of their disobedience and rebellion against the Lord. And suddenly the tone changes, and he says, "I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel. I will put them together like sheep in the fold; Like a flock in the midst of its pasture They will be noisy with men.

Now let me just say a word about that. I'm not going to say anything further later on. But this expression: "They will be noisy with men" may be taken in two ways. It may be taken in the sense of noisy because they are troubled and disturbed as animals do when they become disturbed. But it's likely that the New American Standard Bible has translated this correctly. I looked again this afternoon for some time at the Hebrew text of this particular clause, and in the light of the context, I think the New American Standard Bible is correct in rendering it something like this: They will be noisy with men. In other words, the remnant is to be re-gathered and there will be, because of the re-gathering, the

noise of people who are meeting and have come together as a result of God's assembling of them.

Verse 13 continues, "The breaker goes up before them; They break out, pass through the gate and go out by it. So their king goes on before them, And the Lord at their head."

I want you to notice as you look at these two verses how much is contained in it by way of themes and notes. For example, with reference to the Lord, he's looked at as the shepherd. "I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel. I will put them together like sheep in the fold; Like a flock in the midst of its pasture." And so the Lord is represented here as a shepherd. One of the great notes of Old Testament teaching, Jehovah, the shepherd of his people Israel.

Then also we read in verse 13, "The breaker goes up before them; They break out, pass through the gate and go out by it." Now the breaker is the one who makes it possible for the others to leave the city when it has been under siege. And so here the reference again is to the Lord, but he's looked at as something of a captain of the Lord's hosts. "So their king goes on before them." So, he's not only the captain of the Lord's hosts but he is their king who rules and reigns over them.

And then the final note and the greatest note of all, "And the Lord at their head" or Yahweh at their head. Now remember Yahweh is the covenant name for the God of Israel. This is the name by which he was known to them as the God who promised to bring them salvation.

Now the Yahweh of the Old Testament is very often, we know from the use of the Old Testament and the New Testament, our Lord Jesus Christ, the one who is the covenant head of his people. So those are some beautiful themes: shepherd, a captain, a king, and the Lord or Yahweh our covenant God.

Now as far as the people are concerned, notice these notes. They are to be re-gathered. But it is re-gathering for a remnant, in other words, there is a distinction made

between the people as a whole and those who are faithful. That is always true. There is a distinction between those who are the covenant people and those who, while a member of the group, are not part of the covenant people. As we read in the New Testament, Paul citing the Old Testament passage, "In Isaac shall Thy seed be called." It wasn't enough to be an Israelite, because as Paul said, "Not all who are of Israel are Israel."

So when we think of Israel, we are to realize that a great number of the people were disobedient and were not comprehended within the promises of God. Just as in the New Testament in the professing church of the Lord Jesus Christ, there are great masses of people in our western world but many of them are not true believers in the Lord Jesus. So there's the thought of the remnant.

And then of course the thought of safety, because they're gathered together by the Lord and he is now their captain and king and stands at their head protecting and keeping them.

Let's turn then to verse 12 where we have the prophet speaking about the protection of Israel. This oracle, these last two verses, is in two parts. In verse 12 we have the pledge of protection, and then in verse 13, the manner of the protection. And notice the stress in these two parts of the oracle. The stress rests on Yahweh's initiative and leadership. Did you notice that? You have to learn to read the Bible very carefully.

Notice he says, "I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel. I will put them together like sheep in the fold; Like a flock in the midst of the pasture They will be noisy with men." And then he talks about the breaker going before them and the breaker is the king, the captain, the Lord of hosts. So great stress rests upon the divine initiative and leadership in the things that are transpiring.

Now this is very, very striking in the light of the previous context because in the previous context, remember, he's been talking about judgment and catastrophe and condemnation. You would think that he would say, 'And I'm going to judge all of you.'

Well, he's been saying that over and over again. But now he says, "I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel."

Now in discussing the protection that he is going to provide for them, he talks first about his aim. He's going to assemble them. He's going to gather them. He's going to put them together like sheep in a fold. They're going to be like a flock in the midst of its pasture. And there're going to be so many of them gathered together that they're going to be noisy like men or with men.

In other words, disaster is not the last word that God has for his people. I think it's interesting here that he talks about the gate, too, because that little expression "the gate" has already been used back in chapter 1 and verse 13. There we read, "Harness the chariot to the team of horses." It's verse 12, I'm sorry.

"For the inhabitant of Maroth Becomes weak waiting for good, Because a calamity has come down from the Lord To the gate of Jerusalem." So the gate that he's talking about here in verse 13 is the gate of the city of Jerusalem. So what Micah has said in effect is that in the midst of this storm cloud, this thunder cloud of divine judgment, there is a silver lining.

And isn't it interesting too that the people, all of them, are reduced to a remnant? Notice he says, "I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel." Now you know, by parallelism you can tell what the prophet means when he says, "All of you, Jacob." He's referring to the remnant. He's going to gather all of the remnant of Israel or all of the remnant of Jacob. And they're going to be gathered like sheep and he's going to be the shepherd.

Now that's one of the notes of the Old Testament. And I'm going to ask you if you will just to turn to two or three passages and we'll see that this is really one of the important things that the Old Testament has to say about the work of the Lord.

Let's turn first to Psalm 78, verse 52 and verse 53. This is a psalm in which the psalmist goes back over the guidance that the Lord had exercised over the people in the

past in order to encourage them. And we read in verse 52 of Psalm 78, "But He led forth His own people like sheep And guided them in the wilderness like a flock; and He led them safely, so that they did not fear; But the sea engulfed their enemies."

Now you can see what he's thinking about. He's thinking about the exodus and how the Lord God gathered his people together, took them out and took them through the sea, protected and kept them, and brought them into the land. But their enemies, Pharaoh and his hosts, were drowned in the sea.

Turn to Psalm 80, just a few pages on. This is one of the great messianic psalms that is so often neglected by expositors of the Bible and in a sense neglected by the New Testament apostles because it's not cited in some of its most significant references to the Messiah. Notice how it begins, Psalm 80, "Oh, give ear, Shepherd of Israel, Thou who dost lead Joseph like a flock; Thou who art enthroned among the cherubim, shine forth!"

"Oh, give ear, Shepherd of Israel." That's one of the great names for the Lord in the Old Testament. And of course we know most of all Psalm 23 with "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."

So, in Micah chapter 2 then, in verse 12 he is talking about his gathering of Jacob and the remnant of Israel and putting them in together like sheep in a flock, and he's the shepherd.

What does a shepherd do for the people of God? Well, we have shepherds in Believers Chapel. They are our elders. What do they do? Ideally, and ours do a pretty good job of this, ideally they are responsible for the food of the flock. They themselves are to be men who are apt to teach. That doesn't mean that they all are able to stand behind a pulpit and hold one's attention for fifty minutes Sunday after Sunday. It means that they're able to instruct others in the fundamentals of the faith. They are responsible also for the securing of food for the flock. They are responsible for shepherding the flock in the sense that they are responsible for the food of the flock.

But they're also responsible for the guidance of the flock, that is, as a flock. They, looking to the Lord seeking guidance for the flock, express their mind for us as the sheep, and they are those who shepherd us in that they give us guidance. Just like a shepherd guides his flock, so they guide us.

Also, shepherds protect the flock. They guard the flock from danger. That's why the shepherds of the Old Testament had occasionally to contend with the lions and the other fierce animals that sought to prey on the flock. There're always people who want to prey on the flock. Who can tell, there may be someone here tonight who wants to prey on the flock. It's the responsibility of the elders to protect the flock.

Now Paul has some very significant words about this in Titus chapter 1. He talks about the responsibility of the elders to see that false doctrine is refuted. In fact, some of Paul's strongest words are found there. He says such men who teach false doctrines are to be silenced. They are to be stopped. Their mouths are to be stopped. Very strong words because it's very important what the saints of God are taught for our actions reflect the things that we think in our minds.

Now the Lord is our ultimate shepherd. It is he who is responsible for our food. It is he who is responsible for our protection. It is he who through the Holy Spirit is responsible for our guidance.

Now that's what he says that he's going to do in that last statement of verse 12. "They will be noisy with men." We have the accomplishment of the intent of the Lord. One of the commentators, one of the more recent of the technical commentators, said that this clause meant 'bleeding in the fear of men.' But I think, "They will be noisy with men" of the New American Standard Bible is better. Also some recent commentators on the Hebrew text have taken that tack. And I 'm happy with it.

But notice, the stress rests upon the accomplishment of his intention. I will gather them. I will put them together. And they will be noisy with men. In other words, he's going to secure his aim. The sovereignty of our Lord secures the safety of his people.

That is a very important principle. It's very important in the doctrine of the atonement to remember that the sovereign God secures his purposes. He does not attempt to do something and fail to do it because the power of man is greater.

In the final analysis, I don't want to get off on this, but in the final analysis one of the primary issues involved in the controversy over particular and effectual redemption is not 'For whom did Christ die alone?' but 'Who died?' And if it is true that our Lord is the Son of God, if it is true he is the eternal second person of the Trinity possessed of all of the attributes of deity, then he accomplishes his purpose. And so whatever he intended to do, he accomplishes. It is a question not so much of 'For whom did he die only?' but 'Who died?' Because if he is the Son of God, he secures his purposes. That's very important.

It also is important for all of the other promises of the Bible. I know that's a very emotional issue and people get very excited over it. Well, alright, get excited over it and go study the Bible. That's a good thing itself.

But all of the promises of God ultimately depend upon the sovereign power of God. And when he says he does something for us, he will accomplish it. And he is going to accomplish all of his purposes to the glorification of his name.

Now I find that of great comfort, because when he says he is giving eternal life to those who believe in Jesus Christ, I can rest secure in the possession of that eternal life. I know that something is not going to come up to wrench that life from me if he has promised it to me. If he has said that he would give the Holy Spirit to all who believe in Christ, all who believe in him do have the Holy Spirit. If he has promised me guidance, all of us have guidance. All of the promises of God depend upon the person who gave them. Now that's important for me. I hope it's important for you too.

The 13th verse has to do with the liberation of Israel. Now here, the picture is slightly different. It's not the picture of re-gathering or re-assembling, but it's the picture of liberation of people who are refugees in the city who are besieged by an enemy force

and are unable to make their way out. And what this text promises is that though men like Sennacherib with the Assyrian army might come down to the city of Jerusalem and besiege Hezekiah the king with the people who are within the city, still he's going to make it possible for them to break out in freedom because their king goes before them and Yahweh is at their head.

You remember Sennacherib's boast. We made reference to that in one of the first studies. Sennacherib boasted, and we have a record of this in the ancient materials, that he shut up Hezekiah inside Jerusalem his royal city like a bird in a cage. That's the way the heathen king boasted. He had Hezekiah the king within the city, but here is a promise through Micah that the time is coming when the Lord shall go out and they shall be liberated from the Assyrian threat.

Perhaps the reference is also to the Babylonian threat as well and a reference to the return after that captivity. But nevertheless, it has local reference probably to the Assyrian threat first.

Now he describes the liberator in verse 13. He says, "The breaker goes out before them; they break out, pass through the gate (Now that's the gate of Jerusalem, he's identified it in verse 12 in chapter 1) and go out by it." So Yahweh is the breaker. The God of the exodus is the one who is standing at the head of the people will give them freedom. He's identified in verse 13 in the last two lines. "So their king goes on before them, And the Lord is at their head." So he's the covenant king. He's the one who is promising deliverance. He's the one who will deliver them from the siege.

Incidentally, Jerusalem is called in the Old Testament the city of the great king. Yahweh is the great king. You can tell from this that the God that Micah speaks about is no grandfatherly God who doesn't do anything but good. But he is a God who keeps his word. He is a God who punishes when punishment is needed. He is a God who chastises when chastisement is needed. And he is a God who delivers in his wonderful grace.

Now let's stop for a moment and ask ourselves: What is the significance of this section? Now I think that I want to repeat again just this, that when we think of the meaning of a passage we're thinking about what it means in its context, that is, its grammatical historical theological context. And we have said in the beginning that Micah was a prophet who ministered in the days of Hezekiah. He describes his times in the opening verse of the first chapter, "The word of the Lord which came to Micah the Moreshethite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem." So historically this is evidently a promise that God would give them deliverance from Hezekiah.

Of course, we know that that did take place and for some time Jerusalem did have deliverance. But now when we think about what this means, what this signifies for us, what application it has, well there are two things that come to my mind. I'm not sure of the sense in which we can say this, whether we can say this is what was directly taught or what is taught indirectly, but it appears to me that these verses are verses that probably go beyond the re-gathering of the individuals who had been scattered a bit by the attacks on the land and probably go on to the future and the great prophecies of the re-gathering of the nation Israel then. So it would appear to me that these words anticipate the great future of the presently troubled nation of Israel. These are promises to which they can look and expect a deliverance. "I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel.

If this is not directly a reference to Israel of the future, it may be a typical reference to them. But I rather think that included here is the promise that is given to the nation Israel of re-gathering.

Now what I'd like for you to do since we have a few minutes is to turn to Isaiah chapter 59, and let's just read a few verses that describe the great future that the nation Israel has. These are some of the greatest of the promises of the Old Testament and they are promises that are directed to the nation Israel.

Listen to what the prophet Isaiah writes in chapter 59, verse 20 and 21.

Incidentally Paul read these verses because he cites them in Romans chapter 11. Isaiah chapter 59 in verse 20 and 21.

" "And a Redeemer will come to Zion, And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob," declares the Lord. "As for Me, this is My covenant with them," says the Lord: "My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring," says the Lord, "from now and forever." (Let's go on and read verse 60) Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth And deep darkness the peoples; But the Lord will rise upon you And His glory will appear upon you. And nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes round about and see; They all gather together, they come to you. Your sons will come from afar, And your daughters will be carried in the arms. Then you will see and be radiant, And your heart will thrill and rejoice; Because the abundance of the sea will be turned to you, The wealth of the nations will come to you. A multitude of camels will cover you, The young camels of Midian and Ephah; All those from Sheba will come; They will bring gold and frankincense, And will bear good news of the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar will be gathered together to you, The rams of Nebaioth will minister to you; They will go up with acceptance on My altar, And I shall glorify My glorious house. Who are these who fly like a cloud And like the doves to their lattices? Surely the coastlands will wait for Me; And the ships of Tarshish will come first, To bring your sons from afar, (Notice, to bring your sons from afar) Their silver and their gold with them, For the name of the Lord your God, And for the Holy One of Israel because He has glorified you. And foreigners will build up your walls, And their kings will minister to you; (Let's notice verse 14) And the sons of those who afflicted you will come bowing to you, And all those who despised

you will bow themselves at the soles of your feet; And they will call you the city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas you have been forsaken and hated With no one passing through, I will make you an everlasting pride, A joy from generation to generation. You also will suck the milk of nations And will suck the breast of kings; Then you will know that I, the Lord, am your Savior And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. (Verse 19) No longer will you have the sun for light by day, Nor for brightness will the moon give you light; But you will have the Lord for an everlasting light, And your God for your glory. Your sun will set no more, Neither will your moon wane; For you will have the Lord for an everlasting light, And the days of your mourning will be finished. Then all your people will be righteous; They will possess the land forever, The branch of My planting, The work of My hands, That I may be glorified."

Now you know in chapter 61, the Lord cites Isaiah chapter 61, verse 1 and 2 when he began his ministry in the city of Nazareth signifying that he was that Messiah referred to there. In chapter 62 he talks about the glory of Zion and Zion's new name. So, the promises that are referred to here are probably the promises given to the nation Israel guaranteeing them a tremendous future. So I think these verses have reference to that.

But I believe also finally, we can say that these verses are verses that have an application for us. When we read the prophets of the Old Testament, do we really read them and make the proper application to ourselves? Do we read the Old Testament and say, Now, what did this mean in the historical context? And then do we ask ourselves, What does this mean for me in the sense that we look within it for the great principles by which God dealt with the nation Israel? Because you see the same God that Israel had is the God that we have. And he always acts according to his unchangeable principles.

He is the immutable God. I am the Lord. I am Yahweh. I change not. So he always acts according to the principles, the attributes, the perfections of his nature and being. Therefore, the way in which he has dealt with the nation Israel is the way that he

will deal with us. That's why so many of the great themes of the Old Testament are the themes of the New Testament. We read in the Old Testament he is the shepherd of Israel. We read in the New Testament that the Lord Jesus Christ is the great shepherd of the sheep of the church of the Lord Jesus. So those texts of the Old Testament are to be read for their contextual meaning. But then we're to ask ourselves: What are the principles revealed here? And how do those principles affect us?

Now you can see that we have a tremendous promise here of divine blessing. We have a promise in which God says, in spite of the fact that Israel is condemned, Israel is going to experience judgment, there is a great future for the remnant, for those who are the believing ones within that great company of people. And it is they who are the recipients of the blessing of the Lord. He will be a shepherd to them and he will be a shepherd to us.

We appropriate some of these promises that are familiar to us. Every Christian that I know of in the church of Jesus Christ loves to appropriate to himself the truth, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." And properly so, even though that was written for the nation Israel, because they recognize that the same shepherd of Israel is our shepherd.

Furthermore, we appropriate the truth that he is our king. And we appropriate the truth that he is our great covenant head. And the reason we do that is because the Lord Jesus when he was observing the last Passover and instituting the Lord's Supper said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for many for the remission of sins." And in so doing he confirmed and inaugurated the new covenant promised by Jeremiah the prophet which is the covenant through which all of us have the forgiveness of sins.

There is a beautiful unity in the people of God who have received redemption through the Lord Jesus Christ. So when we read the Bible then, we read it to find Christ.

This past week I received again some printed material from my friend in Florida, the young Baptist preacher there who is on the same radio station that we are on, and

who also is a believer in the doctrine of the grace of God. In some of the material that he sent me, there is an interesting account of a story which illustrates the fact that we should find Christ everywhere.

This account begins with, "The best sermon is that which is fullest of Christ." A Welsh minister when preaching at the chapel of Jonathan George was saying that Christ was the sum and substance of the gospel and then in the course of preaching that he broke out into this story.

A young man who had been preaching in the presence of a venerable old preacher after he had finished foolishly went up to the old minister (Now I can make an application of that to me, couldn't I?) the old minister and he inquired, What do you think of my sermon, sir? A very poor sermon indeed, said he.

A poor sermon? said the young man, It took me a long time to study it.

Well the older man said, Aye, no doubt about it. It did take you a long time to prepare it, but it was still a poor sermon.

He said, Why then, did you not think that my explanation of the text was accurate?

Oh, yes, said the old preacher, it was quite correct.

Well then, why do you say it's a poor sermon? Didn't you think that the metaphors were appropriate and the argument rather conclusive?

Well yes, they were very good as far as that goes, but still it was a very poor sermon.

Will you tell me why you think it was a poor sermon? the younger preacher said.

Because, he said, there was no Christ in it.

Well, said the young man, Christ was not in the text. We're not preaching Christ always, we must preach what is in the text.

The old preacher said, Don't you know, young man, that from every town and every village and every hamlet in England there is a road that goes to London?

Yes, said the young man.

Aye, said the old preacher, and so from every text in Scripture there is a road to the metropolis of the Scriptures that is Christ. And my dear brother, your business is when you go to a text to say: Now what is the road to Christ? And then preach a sermon running along the road toward the great metropolis, Christ. And he said, I have never yet found a text that had not a plain and direct road to Christ in it. And if I ever should find one that had no such road, I'd make a road. I'd run over the hedge and ditch but I would get at my master. For a sermon is neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill unless there is a savor of Christ in it.

I think that's what our Lord meant when he was speaking in Luke chapter 24 and saying to the disciples on the Emmaus road, Don't you realize that in all of the Old Testament we have teaching concerning Christ? And beginning at Moses and the prophets, he spoke unto them in all things of himself. Later on in that chapter, the psalms are mentioned as well. So that all of the Old Testament is one vast testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ and ultimately it is difficult to find any text in the Bible that will not ultimately bring you to Jesus Christ. He was right. And if we miss that, we do miss something that is very important.

Mr. Spurgeon said that whenever he opened up a text, he always went straight across country to Jesus Christ. That was the way he preached. It's proper of course to give the grammatical historical meaning of a text. No one wants to skip that. I surely don't want to skip that. But also, I want to be sure that what I am going to say about a text is ultimately going to have to do with him who makes all text meaningful for us, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Vance Havner has been a well-known preacher and evangelist, Bible teacher, humorist of the Christian church for a considerable period of time. I think Mr. Havner went home to be the Lord not too long ago; I believe someone told me that. He used to say that if the rich young ruler were to appear in our congregations, why he would be received instantly and perhaps made treasurer of our churches with no questions asked.

But our Lord was not in such a hurry. He was after disciples, not mere joiners. Joiners are a dime a dozen today and Americans would die if they couldn't join something. Give them a button and a certificate and they'll join anything. Our churches are too filled with that kind of thing and we do not have enough of devotion to the word of God and to Christ in the Scriptures.

I read also a story, or some words of Mr. Spurgeon who was commenting on the fact that we here as the saints of God are the children of God. And of course we are to manifest the moral characteristics of the children of God. But the Bible also says that we have been adopted as sons. And he refers to the Roman practice in which a man might adopt a child and keep it private for a lengthy period of time until the time came, something like a Bar Mitzvah, when the young adopted son was given the proper toga. The toga was taken off that signified that he was not a young man and had not come to his maturity, and there was put upon him the toga virilis which was the toga of a young man. And he was brought into the family councils and was able to sit with the men.

Mr. Spurgeon went on to say that we are like that today. We have been adopted into the family of God, but the time is coming when that adoption is going to be completed. And we shall appear among the first born who belong the church of Jesus Christ. And he said, I long for the day when I'm going to be publicly adopted into the family of God. Well, I long for that too. And I know that many of you also in this audience as well do.

Well this then is a great promise for us because the Lord Jesus Christ our great Yahweh is our shepherd. He's our king. He's our covenant Lord. He has accomplished the sacrifice by which we have the forgiveness of sins. He has consummated the new covenant and we can be sure that those promises shall be ours. May the Lord help us to appreciate what we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This afternoon I was reading a commentary on Micah by Hans Walter Wolff, a German scholar who has, since he wrote this book, retired as professor of Old Testament

at the University of Heidelberg. And he was in his commentary on Micah which is both a collection of exegetical comments and a collection of bits of messages that he has given at various places, this one from which these comments were taken was a message that he gave at the Church of the Holy Spirit in Heidelberg to a group of young people at a communion service on December 1 about six years ago.

In the course of it, Professor Wolff said that what we see today is something very similar to the days of the prophet Micah. And looking out over the German church, I'm sure he was thinking about the fact that when we think of our western world today, our so-called Christian lands, we are thinking about a situation in which there has been such a great defection from the faith that the true believers are nothing more than a remnant in the midst of the Christian church. An amazing thing for one of our leading Old Testament scholars to say about conditions in his own land of Germany and also of the western world. But it is true.

What we have today is a situation that is very similar to the situation in Micah's day in which the whole of Samaria and the whole of Judah were supposedly worshipers of Yahweh but actually there was only a remnant that was true to the words of the Lord. We are living in days like that. And therefore, the application of the prophet's teaching to us is particularly significant. Professor Wolff spoke of the fact that we are, what we have seen is an individualization of the church of Jesus Christ, and the true saints are individuals who appear here and there in the midst of the great company of professing believers.

May the Lord help us to be encouraged by these promises and also to give testimony to the grace of God in our day recognizing the situation in which we find ourselves. Let's bow together in a closing word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are thankful to Thee for these ancient promises, words of exhortation and admonition, condemnation even, that have come from the man of God.

And Lord, give us something of the same spirit of Micah, a faithfulness to Thee, a faithfulness with courage to Thee. Help us to remember that Thou art our shepherd. And therefore, in all of the trials and difficulties and troubles of our daily life we can look to Thee and know that Thou wilt accomplish all of Thy purposes for us. When we are sick, we have a good shepherd. When we are well, we have a good shepherd. When we have problems and trials, we have a good shepherd. When we are faced with important decisions, we have a good shepherd who wishes to guide his saints. Lord, teach us to lean upon Thee as our shepherd, our captain, our king, our Yahweh, our covenant God. For Jesus' sake. Amen.