



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Micah 7:1-7

"Lament Over a Decadent Society"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Tonight we are trying to the last chapter of the Prophecy of Micah. But we are not attempting to finish it tonight. Our subject is "Lament over a Decadent Society." In the 7th chapter and verse 1 through 7 particularly, the prophet, bewailing the evil times in which he found himself writes what has been called a lament. In other words, he feels the burden of a decadent contemporary society and responds to it. I know that in reading the Psalms you've probably noticed that many of the Psalms have this characteristic. They are laments. In fact students of the Psalms have made the point that about a third of the Psalms are in the form of laments.

Two things are accomplished by the individual who writes a lament. In the first place, a lament has the function of a prayer, because the one who writes the lament unfolds his own heart's burden in his role as a mediator, and in the case of Micah here we have a prophet who unfolds his burden. And it's a burden of despair over the land, its leadership, the men and women of the land. And yet at the same time it is an expression of his trust, for he concludes in the 7th verse by saying, after he has given us his disappointment and despair over the conditions of things. "Therefore I will look unto the

LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me." That's the first thing that is accomplished by a lament.

The second thing is the function of making plain the divine view of their corruption. And so, this is probably the thing that comes home to us most definitely. Micah, in chapter 7, verse 1 through verse 6 lets us know what God thinks about the condition of the land, and it's not good. So the prophet is giving us a lament, and he also points us indirectly to the divine viewpoint of watching and waiting for him. Isn't it interesting, at least I find it interesting, to see the Old Testament saints watching and waiting for the great saving events of the Lord. And that's the precise position that we, too, have before the Lord. We watch and we wait for the great saving events of the future. So the attitude of Micah in verse 7, "I will wait for the God of my salvation," is the kind of attitude that we have in the age in which we live. And in that sense the Old Testament is very much like the New Testament. And in that sense the Old Testament is a kind of book that should encourage us, and should give us some hints about how we should look into the future in the light of the present in which we find ourselves.

First of all, Micah writes about the moral degeneration of the public society in verse 1 through verse 4. Let's read these verses, and again I want you to know I'm reading from the Authorized Version, because I have an Authorized Version with a little big print, and so I'm reading from the Authorized Version. I will try to make a few corrections here and there when the Hebrew text is basically out of line. But verse 1 begins, in the King James Version,

"Woe is me! For I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the firstripe fruit. The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net. That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the

great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up. The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge: the day of thy watchmen (Now remember, the prophets were watchmen.) The day of thy watchmen, (that is the day the watchmen warned about) the day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity."

When you look at verse 1 of chapter 7 and read the words, "Woe as me for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits," you want to ask yourself this question at the beginning, about whom is the prophet writing? Now, he's been writing about the city in the preceding context. He's been talking about the city and probably Jerusalem is in mind. He said, for example, in verse 9, "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city." And so we are likely to have here a representation of the city. "Woe is me! For I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits." So I think that he probably pictures the city as the speaker here. Society has so degenerated that it has become a struggling mass of hostile individualists. Now one, I think, also needs to remember this as he reads the prophets. Occasionally we forget that the prophets spoke to a theocratic society. That is, they spoke to a society that had been created by God with the Law of Moses as its guide. The moral, the civil law, the ceremonial law, everything was governed by the Law of Moses, the Ten Commandments we know as the moral law, but sometimes we forget that the everyday life of Israelites was also proscribed by the word of God. And then, of course, the ceremonial law pictured the redemption that the Lord Jesus would accomplish ultimately, and it was designed to instruct them in spiritual things, some simple things like the necessity of the shedding of blood for redemption. And other things that pointed forward to the coming of Christ.

Sometimes we take statements that have to do with a theocratic society and seek to apply them to the society of the United States of America or of France or of Italy or Germany or India, or whatever it may be. And we forget that the society in which we live

is not a theocratic society. And so therefore, the application of the word of God in the Old Testament is more remote to our society. It's much more directly applicable to the society of the church of Jesus Christ. For just as Israel was an elect company of believers who form the people of God, so the church of Jesus Christ is an elect company of people who form the one body called the church. So the things, the great principles by which God dealt with the nation Israel are principles that apply more directly to life in the church of Jesus Christ. They do have some application to the society about us, because they certainly tell us the kind of society by which God is pleased, but we should not forget that the United States is not a theocratic society. Israel was a theocratic society, an elect people and they had a world mission. We, the church of Jesus Christ, is an elect people, and we, too, have a world mission. We live in a society that is not a theocratic society. It is a society under the dominion of the prince of this world or of Satan.

Now, the prophet speaks by metaphor in verse 1, and he expresses his frustration. "Woe is me!" Speaking as the city, "Woe is me! For I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage." You see, it was the custom for individuals to come when the time of the harvest was come. After the harvest had been taken it was customary for individuals to come out into the field and to gather the gleanings, the things that the professional had left behind. So he describes himself and in this sense describes the city as an individual, who having come to the fields, and expecting to find some grapes and some other fruits that had been left by those who were the professional harvesters, so to speak. And when he comes, he doesn't find anything. "I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the firstripe fruit." So he pictures then the city like an individual who comes expecting grapes, expecting fruit, and not finding it. In other words, the city is in anguish over the situation. He speaks of the city in metaphor yearning for the fruit of righteousness.

Now, of course, this is designed to represent what God is looking for. He's looking for fruit. He's looking for the fruit of righteousness. Now the prophet Micah, remember, prophesied in the same days that the Prophet Isaiah did. Isaiah speaks about some of the things that God wanted with reference to the nation Israel, and particularly Judah. He writes in the 5th chapter of his prophecy, and in verse 7 after he's described his well-beloved as a vineyard. He says in verse 7, "For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he," that is the Lord, "looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry." There's a great play on words there in the Hebrew text, and it expresses the fact that thing that God was looking for he did not get. He was looking for justice, and he found oppression. He was looking for righteousness, but instead of that, the cry of people who have been wronged.

Now, Micah speaks similarly, "There is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the firstripe fruit." You know, in the ministry of the Lord Jesus there is an instance in which our Lord expresses something of the same thing but under a different kind of figure. Remember when he came into the city near the end of his earthly ministry, he found a fig tree. In Mark chapter 11 we have one of the accounts, in Mark chapter 11, verse 12 we read, "And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was hungry: And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet. And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard it." Now, look at verse 20, "And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursest is withered away. And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God."

Now, I don't know whether you've grown a fig tree. You know that I have because I've spoken about it several times in the past year. The characteristic thing about

a fig tree is it has some early figs and then the general harvest comes later. For example, in Texas if you have the right kind of fig tree you'll have a few figs in June. Sometimes they're nice, big juicy figs or not so few. But nevertheless it's a small harvest of figs. The main harvest of the figs will come in August. Now, the Lord Jesus, evidently as he came into the city was looking for something to eat. Now, Mark says the time of the figs was not yet. What he meant by that was that the time of the harvest that would come later was not yet. But seeing the leaves, our Lord expected to find fruit, because remember, characteristic of a fig tree is that the figs appear at the same time as the leaves. I've never looked at that carefully. I think some even contend they precede the leaves. The leaves come right after the figs begin. So when you see a fig tree with leaves, you would expect to find fruit.

Now, what he was thinking about, of course, and why he cursed the tree was simply this, the fig tree represents Israel. Israel was full of leaves. All of the outward evidences of spirituality was there. They had the priests. They had the offerings. They had all of the other things that make for religion. But there was no fruit, and when he came to the tree and found no fruit, simply leaves, he said as he cursed it, "You shall not bear fruit." The next day it had withered away. What he came looking for was fruit. Now, of course he was trying to get over his spiritual principle. That is, when the Lord Jesus came he came looking for spiritual fruit in the nation Israel, in that generation. But he did not find it. And as a result, that generation abode under the curse of God, and as you know, passed out into eternity without the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Judgment fell upon the nation, they were scattered to the four corners of the earth. It is something like that that Micah speaks about here when he says, "There is no cluster to eat: my soul." God, picturing himself as the city of Jerusalem, the capital of the spiritual land, "My soul desired the firstripe fruit."

Now, in the second verse the prophet moves from the metaphor, the illustration, to the theme for which the metaphor stands. He says, "The good man is perished out of

the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net." Fruit is the moral and social concern that issues from piety that is from a right relationship with the Lord God. Now, he did not find it, because Israel at the time, Judah particularly, abode under divine judgment, and therefore, or shall I put it this way, because they had departed from the Lord, they abode under the disciplinary judgment of the Lord. The prophet describes the times. He says, "The good man is perished out of the earth." Now, that term is a term that means something like "the merciful man," because it's the same word in root as the word found over in verse 8 of chapter 6, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy," love mercy, lovingkindness, "and to walk humbly with thy God?" This is the merciful man, heceth [ph 17:23] is loyal love. This is hacethe; that was the name, the good man. So the good is perished out of the earth.

And as far as the honest man is concerned, that next one translated upright is a word that means something like "straight," that's very up-to-date isn't it? He's straight. Well, the straight man was the honest man, the upright man, and the good man, the merciful man, the man who meets the requirements of the things that the Lord required, and the straight man, they don't exist in this society. By the way, this lets us know that hermits never can do the will of God. Isolation never would produce moral and social concern in fruit. So the hermit is a kind of picture of a spiritual man that the Bible condemns. The Bible expects a spiritual man not to be a man of isolation, but a man of biblical separation. That is a holy man in the midst of unholy people doing the will of God, such as our Lord. Hermits, therefore, are individuals who cannot, by virtue of their very manner of life, cannot please the Lord.

We see a lot of that, of course, we see a lot of that in the east. We see a lot of that in religions, but it is something that the New Testament and the Old Testament do not provide for. Notice the description that the prophet gives of the men of his day.

"They hunt every man his brother with a net. They all lie in wait for blood." Hostility, treachery, internecine strife, notice it's the brother. You see, Israel is looked at as a community of people who are related to one another, because they're related to the same God who beget them as a nation. So hostility, and treachery, and internecine strife in the covenant community; war, brigandage, hunting, I wonder how that applies to us. Of course, we live in societies like this, but this is the theocratic society. Do you think the church is ever like this? Well, if you know much about the Christian church, and if you know something about the evangelical church, there is much application of this.

Many warnings the evangelical church might take from a passage like this. The evangelical church is characterized by proliferating church splits, constantly. Ever since I've been in the Lord's work, church splits have been with us constantly. I was involved in one many years ago. It's not a very pleasant thing. They continue constantly. Some of them are really terrible things, occur over the most, well the smallest, most insignificant little matters. Yesterday a man called me from Illinois to tell me that he wanted to cancel some meetings that he arranged with me to have in his church. Of course, I was very happy to cancel the meetings, but the reason for the cancellation was very interesting. He said, "It seems that because of the tapes of a certain Bible teacher, who has been advocating that women who are married should never work, that we have such a situation in our church that we could not possibly have a good series of meetings."

Now, of course it's an interesting question. Should a woman work who is married, or should she not? Well, it's an interesting question, but it's not a question over which to have a split in the church. It's ridiculous, and I commiserated with him a little bit, and I said, "Well, I'm sorry that you have this difficulty. It's too bad, but legalists are like that." He said, "Well, this is not the legalists. We can take care of the legalists, because I came out of a very legalistic background. But these are the mystical people." I said, "Mystical, what do you mean by mystical?" I wanted his definition of it. Historically, of course, the mystics represented a certain kind of people who believed in addition to



revelation through the word, revelation apart from the word as well. Historically the mystics were of that type.

He said, "No, these are the spiritual people. That is, spiritual in their minds. They are the ones who think that they have the guidance of the Lord and no one else does." And when you go to them and say, "Now what is the biblical basis for your guidance?" They don't have anything to say other than that "the Lord told me." And they expect the church to conform to what the Lord told them without support from the Bible. Well, it's a sad thing, but nevertheless that is the kind of thing that takes place in our churches.

I remember a few years ago a church split in a city in the state of Texas. It really was a very severe split. Some men were so anxious to keep a certain line of teaching, which the pastor believed in from taking place in the church, that they were not only willing to split the church, but after they had gotten rid of the pastor, they disbanded the church. That's interesting isn't it? That tells you the level of spirituality that exists in many of our supposedly evangelical churches. That was a "Bible" church. All over this land in the churches that are evangelical there are splits taking place right at the present time. Some splits are necessary. I want to be sure to say that. Some splits are necessary. It is absolutely essential that men stand for truth that is plain and clearly taught in the word of God and apostasy, error in significant doctrines should, of course, be avoided and eliminated from the local church testimony. But proliferating church splits over minor matters, well I rather think that that's the same kind of thing that Micah was speaking about when he said, "The merciful man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net." One thing characteristic of church splits is that the individuals involved in them almost always use language concerning the other party that they are embarrassed about afterwards. They become very, very harsh in the midst of them. Micah's words, I think, are of great significance for us.

Now, in the third verse he says that they may do evil with both hands earnestly. Now, most you, I imagine, have the American Standard Bible and you know that that reads a little bit differently. It reads something like, "Their hands are good at doing evil." That is the way the Hebrew text may be rendered here. "Their hands are good at doing evil." In other words, the thing they really do well is evil. They don't do the other things well, but they can really do this. Now, they may do evil with both hands earnestly, and then he specifies. "The prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward; and the great man, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up." The one thing that they can really do well is evil. They are versatile, resourceful clever, positively brilliant at doing evil.

Our society is like that, conflicts of interest. We have fellows like Robert Vesco. My goodness, if you take a man like Vesco, turn him around, and use his cleverness and brilliance at thinking up schemes to evade the laws of the land, he would be magnificent. There are men in our country that do nothing but think up ways in which they may avoid the law of the land. They are brilliant, resourceful, versatile, clever, but clever and evil. The thing they're really good at is evil. Billy Sol Estes, Abscam let's us know a great deal about him, and I want to tell you this, that some of the cleverest of all are men who are in spiritual work and spiritual activities.

I remember one particularly politician speaking to me in Nashville, Tennessee that he had been in politics for a long time. Later on in life he got interested in spiritual things, and he got involved in a particular denomination in which they were having some difficulties. And they began to fight and scrap a bit among one another, which eventually led to a split in the denomination. And he said, "If I had known the things that I have learned about politics from this church split, I would have been a great politician." [Laughter] The best politicians are in the church. Well, I like that last expression, "So they wrap it up." That is, it's a fate a compli, the Hebrew word means to twist or weave. It's a statement that refers to the intricate manipulations that characterize the evil men. If you

would like some illustrations of this, all you have to do is read the financial sections of the newspaper, for example. Or even read the other sections of the paper, the paper is full of it.

You know, preachers like to find illustrations. They love to have illustrations. One thing you can be sure of. If you want an illustration of wickedness and evil, you don't have to do any research. You don't even have to do it ahead of time. You can just open the paper on the day you are going to preach, and there will be plenty of illustrations. No need to file them away and save them if it has to do with evil.

In verse 4 he says, "The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge." Thorns, briars, they are the bull nettles of our society. Now, the prophet makes a forecast in the last part of verse 4. He says, "The day of thy watchmen and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity." Thorns and briars make good fuel; by the way, very strikingly do they burn. And I wonder if perhaps the prophet has that in his mind. That is, when he says here, "The best of them is of a brier and the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge." He means not only are they wicked and evil, and they are good at it. But they also are going to burn very well when the time of judgment comes. "The day of thy watchmen," that is the day that the watchmen the prophets have prophesied of, "and thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity." So he moves from diagnosis to prognosis and tells us about the future. He's talking about the fact that the time is coming when judgment is to come.

One of the reasons that the prophets had to do this is because people did not like to hear what the prophets say. Remember how Isaiah describes the reaction of the people to the prophets? We don't like prophets to speak to us. We don't like it because prophets, if they are biblical prophets, if they are Yahweh's prophets, or the Lord's prophets, they speak truth to us so we don't like it. Remember what Isaiah said? "Which say to the seers, see not. And to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits." That's what people really like. We wouldn't

dare say that. You wouldn't say to a preacher, "Don't preach to me the truth." Preach to me something that I appreciate. But there has been many in evangelical church that in effect did that, when their minister was faithful to the word of God, and preached things that were convicting. "Don't prophesy unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things." Prophecy deceits. Stop seeing, you seers. Stop prophesying right things, you prophets. Well, Micah says the day that those prophets warned you about, it is going to come.

Now, having spoken about that, the prophet turns to private society, the life of the family, verse 5 and verse 6, moral degeneration of the private society. So he moves from the public sphere to the private sphere, and he talks about friends and best friends and also of the relationship of husband and wife. Listen. Let's read verses 5 and 6, "Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. 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." Isn't it strange for the prophet to give an admonition against trusting your best friend, your acquaintances, and even your wife or your husband? Listen to what he says, that's what he says, "Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom." Do you notice how he moves from structures of intimacy to increasing intimacy? He talks about a friend, he talks about a guide, someone like a best friend, and then he talks about your bosom companion, your wife or your husband.

What is he in effect told? Well, the man who is the good man, the merciful man, is told in effect to go against his social nature and to retire within himself. This is a, I think, a startling picture of the society of Micah's day, so bad that a husband is told to not tell his wife the things of his heart. And the wife not to tell her husband, if she is a godly woman, of the things in her heart. One of the things that lies back of it is the Hebrew family solidarity. Hebrew families were very authoritarily established. The father was the pater familias, that is he was the authoritative head of the family, and everything

gathered around him and those that were in his family. The daughters-in-law left their family to become a member of the family into which they had married. The fifth commandment was very important, "Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the earth."

One of the things, evidently, that was happening in the society of Micah's day was the same thing that has happened in our society. People were leaving the farms, the outlying territories where their families were. And they were moving into the cities and the ties with their families were therefore not as strong as they had been, many times broken. Anyone who knows anything about California and life in California knows exactly what I'm speaking about. Many Californians who are Christians will tell you that. That, as they look at the society in California, California historically is a society of people who have left the eastern part of the United States and who have moved out there. And they have moved many, many miles away from their background, their home, the places in which they were brought up. And those old ties no longer exist, the family ties that kept an individual from the kind of activity that would have been embarrassing back in his own small community or even in his city where he had relatives and close friends among whom he had grown up, that led to the barriers falling. And in the California the kind of life that has in the past characterized California is the life of freedom from the barriers and restraints, many of which were good.

I know when I first started preaching in California, people used to explain to me the situation out there as they talked about their difficulties as Christians of testifying to the grace of God in Christ in that society. Evidently something of that had taken place here, and the result was that the society had lost its moorings; its family structured society was being shattered. And even in verse 6 we read, "For the son dishonoureth the father." And in the Hebrew text, that's a word that could be translated "calls his father a fool," because it's a verb built on the same root that Nabal, the fool's name, means. So that Nabal means fool, this is the verb and the form here, nabel is a form that means not

simply to dishonor but to call ones father a fool. It could be translated that way. Now, remember a fool in the Bible is not simply a person who is silly or does not use his mind. We say he's a fool, because he made a foolish decision. But a fool in the Scripture was a person who was morally depraved. And so here, the son dishonors the father. The daughter rises up against her mother. The daughter-in-law, a member of the family, against her mother-in-law, and a man's enemies are the men of his own house.

The 6th verse is the substantiation of the statements that are made in verse 5. And it's a classic picture of the dissolution of family ties. Ann Landers would have had many, many letters in this day, too. One reads Ann Landers and that's the characteristic thing. You know, I never have read Ann Landers much until about six months ago. I started reading, and I got fascinated by the kinds of letters that people write in, religious letters, letters about everything. But the characteristic letter is the letter that has to do with family relationships of one way or another. And here is a society that is just like that, one in which the family ties are being dissolved. I don't know whether you remember or not, but this text that closes verse 6, "A man's enemies are the men of his own house." And then also the preceding clauses are statements that are reflected in the New Testament and are actually uttered by the Lord Jesus Christ in different contexts.

Do you remember, the Lord himself says a man's enemies shall be those of his own household? He talks about sons who are hating their fathers, and daughters-in-law who rise up against their mothers-in-law, and so on. And the reason for that is that this text became popular in the apocalyptic literature of the intertestamental period, after Malachi and then before the gospels were written, these sentiments here were often sited in some of the books that were written during that period of time, and shortly after the beginning of New Testament times. Books like Fourth Ezdras, probably none of you have, or not many of you at least have read that book. First Enoch, Second Enoch, Jubilees, in those books certain scriptural passages were used in connection with eschatology. And coming into the New Testament the same associations are made by our

Lord. I'm not suggesting, by the way, that he learned that from them, because these principles are principles that are going to characterize the society before our Lord's second coming.

One of the things that he stresses, not only in the Olivet discourse, but also in the Book of Revelation, is that characteristic of the last days will be a society in which a man's enemies will be those of his own household. This is the source of that. Now, we've seen some evidence of that in our society. A man, for example, in Russia cannot speak his peace. He cannot speak his peace even to his own family, because a member of his own family might be associated with the secret police. We saw this particularly in World War II and in Hitler's Germany, in which members of the family could not express themselves with reference to Adolph, because if they did they might be thrown into prison by some member of their own family who was part of the secret police. Well, this is the kind of society about which he's speaking. "A man's enemies shall be those of his own household," and in that case, what do you do? Well, you keep quiet, and that means even to your wife or husband, Micah said. So the society is so bad, so dissolute that this is the advice of the prophet. He's looking, of course, at his own time, but those principles are principles that one will expect to find in the future in the Messianic days.

Well, we conclude with verse 7, in which the prophet gives his own personal affirmation after this lament. He says in verse 7, "Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me." You notice the tone changes from pessimism to optimism. In the world there is no trust. One cannot trust his friend, one cannot trust his best friend, one cannot even trust his wife or her husband. But there is one in whom we may trust, and that's the Lord God. So Micah says, "Therefore I will look unto the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me." One thing we can be sure of, even in a world of no trust, he is there. That's encouraging. Some of you look like you're still shocked that your own husband might be an enemy, or that your own wife might be an enemy. Well, fortunately we are not in

Messianic society, and in Believers Chapel I imagine that that's not true of any of us. At least I don't know of anyone that would be true of. But there is a society like that in Micah's day, and there is one to come.

Micah has some significant conviction, and I'd like for you just to notice exactly what he says. He says, "Therefore I will look unto the Yahweh," and he says then, "I will wait for the God of my salvation." So characteristic of the prophet then is the way of the good man, the merciful man. In other words, there is no merciful man about, it would seem, but the prophet takes for himself the place of the merciful man, and says, the merciful man, the heceth is a man who looks to Yahweh and who waits for the God of his salvation. Watching and waiting was the attitude that characterized the Hebrews as they looked into the future. So Micah, in the same way, takes the place of a man who watches and waits and looks into the future.

Now, what kind of God was Yahweh? Well, he was the God of the covenant. So to look into the future and watch is to watch with great confidence, for the God for whom we watch is the God of the covenant, the God who has entered into covenant with us. And that, of course, the Lord Jesus has done by shedding of his precious blood. And furthermore, he is a Savior God. "I will wait for the God of my salvation." So Micah says, regardless of how society may be falling apart, regardless of how it is characterized by the fact that men do one thing good and that is evil, at which they are versatile, clever, and brilliant, and even though a person cannot trust his best friends, or even his bosom companion. There is one in whom we can trust, our great covenant God, our great Savior God. "I will look and watch for him." And he has great confidence. He says, "My God will hear me."

Now, he was "my God" to Micah in two senses. He was his God, because he was the prophet. He was officially the God of Micah. But he was also Micah's God personally as well. Can you really say that? Can you say Yahweh is my God, and regardless of the circumstances of life into which we may fall, we can look for him, watch for him? I think



that Micah probably had in mind the great Messianic things about which he has written his book, which is in our Bible. Remember, in chapter 4 he said,

"But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."

These are the things for which Micah was watching. And then in chapter 5 he talks about Bethlehem Ephrathah. He talks about how the Assyrian is going to come, and he talks about how the Messiah is going to stand and feed in the strength of the Lord and in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And those who look to him shall abide, for his name shall be great unto the ends of the earth. And this man's going to be our peace when the anti-Christ comes into the land. I think that's what he was talking about when he said here, "I will wait for the God of my salvation." He looked for the coming of the Lord Jesus and the kingdom that he would bring in. He did not understand, as we understand, the difference evidently between the first coming and the second coming. That was unfolded in time. But our hope is similar. We look for the completion of the great prophecies of the word of God, and our hope and our trust is ultimately in him.

I think if I may conclude by saying this, that one thing that characterized this section of Micah is its modernity. It is just as up-to-date as 1982. Today is a day of repudiation of authority. It's a day of anarchy characterized by demonstrations and riots and legal suits. This is the age of the lawyer. The lawyers are the only people who ought to be happy; they have more business than they know what to do with, because all of our society seems to gather around that kind of thing. If you go into the store and

somebody gives you the wrong change, all you have to say is, "I'm going to sue you."  
Everybody sues everybody else for no matter what it may be. We are living in days of  
repudiation of authority and anarchy.

One of the leading Christians, not long ago, wrote a book in which he suggested  
that maybe that's what we ought to do in our society. If the government does not do the  
things that we ought to do, then we ought to get in with the rest of the people and  
disobey civility. How ridiculous can we get, and how far from the word of God? Well,  
the prophet's position, I say, is ours. We are to watch and we are to wait, as Paul told the  
Thessalonians, we are to look for him and his coming from heaven. In the mean time, we  
are to shine as lights in the midst of this crooked and perverse world in which we find  
ourselves. Micah believes in the election of Israel. He believes in the loyalty of God to  
his promises, and we are to place our confidence in the election that has brought us  
within the family of God through Jesus Christ's sacrifice. And we are to watch and wait  
for him. I like that expression in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, and verse 10, in which the  
apostle writing to them, speaking of the kind of attitude that they were to have he said,  
"You have turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his  
Son from heaven whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus which delivered us from the  
wrath to come." That's what we do. We wait for the Son from heaven. And it certainly  
would be a great thing if he were to come soon. Let's close in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for these words from the prophet, and for the  
exhibition of the trust that he manifested in very difficult days, days very similar to ours,  
with wickedness, corruption, brilliant wickedness. His heart rested upon the promises of  
God, and upon the greatness of Yahweh, the covenant God. Enable us, Lord, likewise to  
live our lives in trust...

**[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]**

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