

In the Teeth of Mercy

Micah 7:17-18

Introduction – Micah ends with a song of victory and praise over the mercy of God. Too often, we think of mercy as a passive, resistable offer from God. But mercy is a characteristic of God, and He will have mercy on whom He will. That is why He is able to say that He will have mercy on Abraham (and all his descendants).

Micah has described a nation of prophets, priests and kings all full of sin – and a people who love it as long as the corruption favors them. What should we expect from God? But God delights in mercy.

Incomparable Mercy – “Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?” (v18a) –

Micah – is a shortened form of this question “who is like God”. It is possible that the word-play emphasizes the closing of the book with this capstone of truth.

Who Pardons Iniquities Like This? – Plenty of ‘gods’ pardon sins, but always at a cost from the one seeking the pardon – which isn’t really a pardon, but a wage-earned. Only in Christ can we have the One who is just and at the same time justifies (Rom 3:26). His pardon is all of grace; it is free to us; we do nothing (Eph 2:1-10).

A Source of Delight – “He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy.” (v18b) – His anger does not go away because over time, He gets over it. It doesn’t end because you finally pay up enough in penance. It goes away because He delights in mercy. And in this merciful forgiveness –

There is No Guilt – We do not deserve any of this. But at the same time, we do not have to hang our heads in embarrassment, for it is all to the praise of the glory of His grace.

There is No Condemnation – Because all sin is washed away (past, present and future), there is nothing left to condemn (Rom 8:1-2). My constant battle with present sin does not rattle my assurance when I fall upon His mercy.

There is No Alienation – God hasn’t invited you in to His home, but set you off in the corner a bit ashamed to have you in His place. Because He delights in mercy, He delights over you with singing (Zeph 3:17), for by His grace, you have called upon His salvation (Mic 7:7).

Mercy in His Name – When God allows His glory to pass by Moses, mercy is His name (Ex 34:6-7). As we have seen in Micah, He abounds in justice, but He delights in mercy.

The Power of Mercy – “He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea” (v19) – This song is borrowing words from another victory song (Ex 15:10-11). The promise of a glorious return from exile is given in Micah’s day, pointing back to the exodus and pointing forward to the wonders of the Messiah.

Subduing our Iniquities – We too, were slaves, and we too, have been set free (Rom 6:5-8).

Casting All our Sins – How much of our sin? How far can He throw? (see also Psalm 103:8-12).

The Promise of Mercy – “You will give truth to Jacob and mercy to Abraham, which You have sworn to our fathers from days of old” (v20) – Upon these promises, God acknowledged the groaning of the Israelites in their bondage to Egypt (Ex 2:24). The same promises are held in Christ in Mary’s song (Luke 3:50, 54-55), and all who are in Christ are there according to the same promises (Eph 2:11-13, Gal 3:29).

In the Teeth of Mercy – As God pours out the mercy He delights in, He keeps full control over who receives it and He will chastise those who misuse it.

Electing Love – God gave His Son out of His mercy towards us. He did not simply offer this precious mercy. He determined before time who were to be the recipients, “who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began” (1 Tim 1:9).

Don’t Harden Your Hearts – Today, if you hear of this mercy, in refusing it, you are asking the Lord to harden your heart (Psalm 95:8-11). And once your heart is hardened, what makes you think you will ever turn to His mercy later? God is not merciful so that

you may trifle with your sin now.

He is not Tight-Fisted with His Mercy – He has promised His mercy to Abraham and Jacob and their seed. He has promised them that through them all nations shall be blessed. The outpouring of this mercy is not like squeezing blood from a turnip. It is more like an ocean where you can never find the end or the bottom. And it is His delight.

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