

Who's Fault is it for America's Condition Today?

Micah 3:1-12

"And I said: "Hear now, O heads of Jacob, And you rulers of the house of Israel: Is it not for you to know justice? 2 You who hate good and love evil; Who strip the skin from My people, And the flesh from their bones; 3 Who also eat the flesh of My people, Flay their skin from them, Break their bones, And chop them in pieces Like meat for the pot, Like flesh in the caldron."

4 Then they will cry to the Lord, But He will not hear them; He will even hide His face from them at that time, Because they have been evil in their deeds.

5 Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets Who make my people stray; Who chant "Peace" While they chew with their teeth, But who prepare war against him Who puts nothing into their mouths: 6 "Therefore you shall have night without vision, and you shall have darkness without divination; The sun shall go down on the prophets, and the day shall be dark for them. 7 So the seers shall be ashamed, and the diviners abashed; Indeed they shall all cover their lips; For there is no answer from God."

8 But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, And of justice and might, To declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin. 9 Now hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and pervert all equity, 10 Who build up Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with iniquity: 11 Her heads judge for a bribe, Her priests teach for pay, and her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the Lord, and say, "Is not the Lord among us? No harm can come upon us." 12 Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, And the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest."

I love America, and make no apology for doing so. I enjoy her freedoms, especially in being free to worship the true and living God. I would like to continue living here if at all possible. I still believe the United States is the greatest country on the face of the earth in terms of God's blessing upon it. But I reserve the right to change my mind about the matter, just as our God does. I love America, but I don't have to like the direction she is heading in. Our country might actually be facing God's judgment for its offenses against him? If so, who is at fault?

I believe terrorism is a great threat to the USA. **But it is not our greatest threat.** I know we have powerful enemies around the world, but the most powerful are much closer by. Yes, evil exists and is growing rampantly. But it may not be concentrated in the part of the world we think it is. I believe America's greatest threat is not from without but from within.

We are our enemy and I am convinced that God is generally displeased with us as a nation. He is assigning blame for sin and we must answer.

In Micah 3, the prophet is concerned about something. He wants his nation to know that the God they serve is not only a God of love, mercy, and grace, but also a God of judgment...and though God would rather bless and demonstrate love, and continue to extend His grace and mercy, that there does indeed come a time when, because of sin and rebellion, God's patience is exhausted.

Eventually God will give a nation [or an individual] what they are demanding. It happened in the pre-diluvian world of Noah's time, and again at Sodom and Gomorrah. It even happened to God's people, Israel. Will He make an exception for our nation?

Micah speaks by the Spirit of God and points a bony finger at three distinct groups of people and says, "It's Your Fault!":

- 1. Corrupt Politicians**
- 2. Compromising Preachers**
- 3. Complacent People**

Micah desperately wants the people to understand that the God who loves sinners still hates sin. And sin must always be judged. His holiness demands that. Praise God that if you're saved you will never be judged for your sin; they were judged 2,000 years ago on Calvary's cross! But that does not mean we can live a careless, haphazard Christian life. The same Bible which teaches that we will not be judged for our sins also tells us that we will indeed be judged for how faithful we have been. All individuals will one day be judged, and there is such a thing as the judgment of a nation.

Micah 3:12 talks about a nation being "plowed like a field," a metaphor for judgment. No nation was as pure in its inception as the nation Israel— by God Himself in Genesis 12. And yet even Israel went corrupt, and the vast majority of the people were ignorant or indifferent concerning that corruption. For this reason the prophets of judgment came along, like Micah, calling the people to repentance, and making the people aware that the God who would rather bless will blast if his hand is forced.

I'm optimistic about our nation's possibilities for the future, but I think we should be realistic. And part of loving America is wanting to save it from a corruption that most people are seemingly ignorant of...or at least indifferent to.

Fault Line #1 - Corrupt Politicians

Micah 3:1-3: "And I said: "Hear now, O heads of Jacob, And you rulers of the house of Israel: Is it not for you to know justice? 2 You who hate good and love evil; Who strip the skin from My people, And the flesh from their bones; 3 Who also eat the flesh of My people, Flay their skin from them, Break their bones, And chop them in pieces Like meat for the pot, Like flesh in the caldron."

Reading these verses is like watching the nightly news. NBC's Tom Brokaw used to do a weekly segment called "The Fleecing of America." It highlighted the price Americans pay at the hands of leadership gone awry. I think you could have put these three verses into his teleprompter and no one would have known the difference!

Here are six requirements God recommends for government leaders:

[From Proverbs]

1. Righteousness

"When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; But when a wicked man rules, the people groan." (Proverbs 29:2)

"It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness, For a throne is established by righteousness." (Proverbs 16:12)

Why is it that today we just look for skills and credentials, and not look to morality?

2. Wisdom

"I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, And find out knowledge *and* discretion.¹³ The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.¹⁴ Counsel *is* mine, and sound wisdom; I *am* understanding, I have strength.¹⁵ By me kings reign, And rulers decree justice.¹⁶ By me princes rule, and nobles, All the judges of the earth." (Proverbs 8:12-16)

3. Absolute Honesty

"Excellent speech is not becoming to a fool, Much less lying lips to a prince." (Proverbs 17:7)

Leaders and liars are not supposed to be the same thing!

4. Separation from bad influences

"Take away the dross (impurities) from silver, and it will go to the silversmith for jewelry. 5 Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne will be established in righteousness. (Proverbs 25:4-5)

A leader must focus on what is right, not just public opinion or lobbying pressures.

5. Personal Purity

"Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral." (Hebrews 13:4)

If a man will not honor his marriage vows, what's he going to do with those "piddly little vows" of public trust?

6. Protection of the weak and the defenseless

"Open your mouth for the speechless, In the cause of all who are appointed to die.
9 Open your mouth, judge righteously, And plead the cause of the poor and needy..
(Proverbs 31:8-9)

A leader is to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves, and defend those who cannot defend themselves.

A Biblical leader should stand tall on behalf of the unborn. Some would say, "Abortion is legal. And a leader is supposed to uphold the law!" Certainly being legally right doesn't make something morally right.

Shall the throne of iniquity, which devises evil by law, Have fellowship with You?
(Psalm 94:20)

And I should add those who stand for the unborn but turn a blind eye to the poor offend God as well.

When Micah warns the people that God is about to judge, he points first at the corrupt politicians, and says, "It's your fault." And until we own our faults there is no hope for a change.

Fault Line #2 - Compromising Preachers

"Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets Who make my people stray; Who chant "Peace" While they chew with their teeth, But who prepare war against him Who puts nothing into their mouths" (Micah 3:5)

Should they be preaching peace when judgment is coming? Should they preach to the offering plates, altering their message so as not to offend? And do we today really need to drag Jesus down to a lower level in an attempt to make Him more palatable? Did not Jesus Himself say, "Come to Me"? When a preacher invites someone to Jesus, he must present Jesus and all he is without compromise.

We must preach the truth at all times and no matter the cost. And it is vital that we practice what we preach. As people of God, we must, at times, look inside ourselves with humility. I must confess I have spent several hours in reflection since I wrote the last sentence, and though I am young and inexperienced, I feel led of God to share something from my heart:

Concerning ministers such as myself, I believe the Lord is not as concerned about where we are as where we are headed. Which way are we facing? Are we going forward for him or regressing? In short, our present is more pertinent than our past. This principle applies not only to those of us in the ministry but our church members as well. It applies even further to our nation. But, in keeping with our point, what does this mean for me?

To use a crude but potent illustration, this means that there have been times that God has been more pleased with a drug addict than with me. I know he has seen something in a wife beater that he wished he could see in me. He has hoped I would learn something from someone who has had many extramarital affairs. "How could this be true?" you may ask. It IS true, because all of those mentioned got saved in a church just like this one and began allowing God to conform them to His image. They were improving, and meanwhile I was only going backward down Satan's subtle slope of sin.

Oh sure, if I were counting our crimes or stacking our respective sins on a scale then I may (or may not!) come out ahead. But that's not what God is looking at. He's not comparing me to them; he's comparing my today with my yesterday.

When Micah warns the people that God is about to judge, he points at not only the corrupt politicians, but also the compromising preachers and says, "It's your fault." And we must own our faults before God.

Fault Line #3 - Complacent People

"Her heads judge for a bribe, Her priests teach for pay, and her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the Lord, and say, "Is not the Lord among us? No harm can come upon us." (Micah 3:11)

The word "they" is where the complacent people appear.

The people of Israel said, "We know the politicians are corrupt, we know the preachers are compromisers, but it will be ok, because we're ok. The economy is strong, we're happy, and it's alright. Is not the Lord among us? No evil can touch us." And many ignorant Americans make a similar claim: "Our nation has a Christian heritage. We have Godly roots." So did Israel! And so did many other nations which God has judged, or wiped out completely. We must pursue hard after God or destruction will certainly overtake us as well.

Where do we go from here?

We should do our part to elect leaders that seek to fulfill God's righteous requirements. And what do we do if and when corrupt politicians come to power? We may not be able to absolutely control such a situation, but we certainly can focus on ourselves and

make sure we aren't compromising preachers, and we can do our job in proclaiming the truth to complacent people in our pews, remembering the promise of II Chronicles 7:14: "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

It is true: I think our nation is in trouble. But I also know that Jesus Christ is the hope of our nation and the world. He stands as a light for us to follow. His arms of mercy are open to those who will turn from selfishness and evil to him. Certainly he extends his own righteousness to us as a free gift. But our acceptance of that righteousness will certainly be evidenced by a life marked by that righteousness. My prayer is that my preaching—and yours—be marked by the righteousness, justice, and mercy embodied by Christ himself.

Ultimately, the hope of America is not found in the White House or the State House, nor in the Courthouse. The hope of America is found in God's House, and your house, and my house!