

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## MICAH 4-7

The book of Micah is a series of three sermons...

They start in *1:2, 3:1, and 6:1*... Each sermon follows a similar pattern. It starts with a **condemnation of the nation's sin**. It ends with **an affirmation of God's love**.

It reminds me of one night, years ago, at the Adams' house. I had to spank my son, Nick. I know it comes as a shock, but the boy had been defiant... As I pulled off my belt, my little guy looks up at me, and says, *"Dad, after you spank me will you give me a great big hug?"*

This sounds like a Micah sermon. In Chapter 3 God's people get spanked. In Chapter 4 they get a big hug.

Micah looks to the distant future and foresees an age when the Lord will reign from the hills of Jerusalem.

Chapter 4 begins, **"Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it."**

One day Jerusalem and the Temple Mount will be the centerpiece of the world's attention. *From the holy city and the rebuilt Temple* Messiah will reign over all.

On our tours to Israel, I think the most awesome and majestic moment is to stand on the Temple Mount and imagine *what will be*. Much of our tour is preoccupied with the past - with history. But on the Temple Mount your imagination takes you into the future. To stand in the spot where Jesus

will one day rule the universe is a spine-tingling experience that's really hard describe.

The phrase "*mountain of the Lord's house... on top of the mountains...*" may be a description of the city's future topography. Zechariah 14 describes how the Mount of Olives will split in two when Messiah comes.

Perhaps He'll build a Temple on the mountain tops.

And notice Micah tells us all this happens "*in the latter days...*" In Scripture that term is synonymous with the period when this current age comes to an end, and God ushers in His physical Kingdom. It begins with the rapture and ends with a 1000 years of Christ's rule.

During that time Jerusalem will be the hot, vacation destination. Micah says, "*people shall flow to it.*"

He writes in verse 2, "*Many nations shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.'*" For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Zechariah 14:16 echoes this truth, "*It shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came up against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts*" Specifically, "*to keep the feast of Tabernacles.*"

The busiest travel season will be late September.

People from every corner of the globe will celebrate with Jews in Jerusalem the fall Feast of Tabernacles.

And they'll hear Messiah teach of God's ways and will... What a time that'll be! *Flights will be overbooked.*

And in addition, verse 3, “He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off...”

Psalm 2 tells us, in that day Messiah will rule the nations. The World Court and the United Nations Security Council will be replaced by **the court of Christ**.

All people, even strong nations, will bow before Him.

And “they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.” When Jesus reigns peace will finally come.

Imagine, the day when nations will stop developing weapons systems, and stockpiling ammunition - and invest in feeding people, and in the welfare of society.

It’s interesting, the last half of Verse 3 appears today carved into a stone wall across from the United Nations headquarters in NYC. Ironically, the engraving was a gift from the godless, atheistic former Soviet Union.

Knowing its origin explains why the inscription is missing the first half of the verse. It reads, “they shall beat their swords into plowshares...” but it leaves out what enables that to happen, “He shall judge between many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off...”

There is no lasting peace, until *the Prince of Peace* is on the throne, and the world bows to His authority.

Verse 4, “But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of

the Lord of hosts has spoken.” When Jesus reigns there’ll be no need to lock your doors at night. We’ll carry out our daily lives without fear.

“For all people walk each in the name of his god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever.” Micah is comparing the way things were in his day, to the way things will be in the latter days.

In the end, there’ll be no god, but the one true God.

Verse 6, “In that day,” says the Lord, “I will assemble the lame, I will gather the outcast and those whom I have afflicted; I will make the lame a remnant, and the outcast a strong nation; so the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on, even forever.”

In the latter days, God will be *the God of the underdog* - the lame and the outcast. Micah is probably referring to the Jews. For 2000 years Jewish people have been “*the outcast.*” But in the latter days they’ll be regathered to their land and made “*a strong nation.*”

“And you, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, to you shall it come, even the former dominion shall come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.” A sheepfold would often have a tower. An elevated perch from which danger could be spotted.

Here the “*tower of the flock*” is probably a reference to the Messiah. The Lord will lookout for His flock.

It reminds us of Proverbs 18:10, “the name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.” Jesus is our refuge - “*the tower of the flock.*”

The last half of chapter 4 compresses thousands of years. Micah ties his prophecy to Jewish history. The Jews are compared to a woman in labor - intense pain.

Verse 9, “Now why do you cry aloud? Is there no king in your midst? Has your counselor perished? For pangs have seized you like a woman in labor.” And here is the source of her great pain - *she has no king*.

It’s interesting, since 586 BC the Jews have had no ruler. Today, Israel has a parliamentary government, not a monarchy. Yet the Jews long for a king - like David they hope for a benevolent ruler to lead them.

“Be in pain, and labor to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in birth pangs. For now you shall go forth from the city, you shall dwell in the field, and to Babylon you shall go. There you shall be delivered; there the Lord will redeem you from the hand of your enemies.” Remember, Micah was writing in the late 8th century BC, in the days of the Assyrian dynasty. And his observation here is fascinating. It’s prophetic...

Assyria never conquered Jerusalem. God sent a warrior Angel to deliver King Hezekiah and the Jews.

God gave Judah a 120 year reprieve hoping they would turn from their evil ways. But they didn’t. In 586 BC God raised up the Babylonians to destroy the city and take the Jews captive. Here, Micah mentions “*Babylon*” by name, some sixty years before they even began to show signs of their potential prominence.

Verse 11, “Now also many nations have gathered against you, who say, “Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion.” Throughout the last 2000 years of history “*many nations*” have been against the Jews. In the last days a coalition of nations will attack Israel.

“But they do not know the thoughts of the Lord, nor do they understand His counsel; for He will gather them like sheaves to the threshing floor. “Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion; for I will make your horn iron, and I will make your hooves bronze; you shall beat in pieces many peoples; I will consecrate their gain to the Lord, and their substance to the Lord of the whole earth.” Notice the Lord will use Israel as bait.

The nations will think they’re attacking the Jews, but God is leading them to His threshing floor. A threshing floor is where ancient farmers beat the stalks and separated the grain from the chaff. And God will use Israel in the last days to trample the nations to pieces.

In verse 10, even while in Babylon, the Jews were promised, “*the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies.*” In the end God will fulfill His promise.

Chapter 5, “Now gather yourself in troops, O daughter of troops; He has laid siege against us; they will strike the judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek.”

This is Jewish history in a nutshell. God has laid siege against His own people because of their sin. They’ve been struck. It forced them to gather in troops.

But in the end God will come to their defense.



And this is where the prophecy of Micah turns amazing. The Prophet is pondering Israel's plight over generations - her ups and downs throughout history.

Hebrew history is like a yo-yo - at times the yo-yo hesitates and Israel is down - but then they pop back up. Micah is thinking, what will it take to keep us on top forever. *His mind now focuses on an ultimate Ruler.*

In 5:2 Micah predicts, "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." Remember, the Prophet Micah lived 730 years before the birth of Jesus, yet here he foresees the Savior, and predicts the place of His birth.

In Matthew 2:5 when the wise men from the east arrive in Jerusalem they asked the location of Messiah's birth. The priests searched and scoured the Scriptures, and they found this verse, Micah 5:2.

Here is definitive proof of Jesus' Messianic claims.

Seven centuries in advance, God pinpointed the exact coordinates of the Messiah's birthplace.

"*Bethlehem, Ephrathah*" is the equivalent jargon of how we would describe, "Atlanta, Georgia." *Bethlehem* is the city. *Ephrathah* is the larger region or district.

And Micah is amazed that such a small, insignificant place would be chosen by God to host Messiah's birth.

This is why at Christmas we sing, “O, little town of Bethlehem.” As cities go, Bethlehem was “little among thousands.” Far from the seats of worldly power, God chose a tiny village - *humble beginnings* - for the child who Micah calls “the One to be Ruler in Israel.”

Yet the location of Jesus’ birth is not the most impressive part of Micah’s prophecy. What really boggles the brain is *His birth was not His beginning*.

Micah says of Jesus, “whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.” The Hebrew term translated “*everlasting*” means “from eternity onward.” It speaks of an immeasurable duration. As the Toy Story hero, Buzz Lightyear, would say, “to infinity and beyond.”

Go back in time as far as your mind can imagine: 5000 years - 50,000 years - 500,000 years - 5 billion years - 50 trillion, quintillion years... *and there’s Jesus*.

Someone translated the term “*everlasting*,” “beyond the vanishing point.” When time fades into eternity there is Jesus. *And the implications are provocative...*

This means the *Eternal God* and the *Baby of Bethlehem* are one in the same. The *Ancient of Days* became a *child of time*. The *Infinite* became an *Infant*.

Jesus is the Alpha and Omega - first and last. He has no beginning, and He’ll have no end. Jesus is God.

Verse 3, “Therefore He shall give them up...” God is speaking of His people, Judah. He’ll give them up!



God will turn them over to their rebellion, “until the time that she who is in labor has given birth; then the remnant of His brethren shall return to the children of Israel. And He shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God; and they shall abide, for now He shall be great to the ends of the earth; and **this One shall be peace.**” “*This One*” is the baby born in Bethlehem - the Ruler who is to come. Jesus will stand and feed His people. He’ll be great in all the Earth, and bring peace.

“When the Assyrian comes into our land, and when he treads in our palaces, then we will raise against him **seven shepherds and eight princely men.**” I believe here, Micah jumps in time from Jesus’ birth to His 2nd coming. Jesus didn’t bring peace at His first visit.

These prophecies may speak of His future return.

And if that’s so, “*the Assyrian*” may be another name for the Antichrist. Many scholars interpret this as such. The future Antichrist will be as ruthless as Assyria of old. He’ll be Israel’s archenemy and attack them in their ancient home. When He comes, Jesus will defend His flock with ***seven shepherds and eight princely men.***

Remember the challenge in unraveling OT prophecy. Often events occur thousands of years apart that appear in the same text. Here, Christ is born and goes to battle in the same passage. Two events are spoken of back-to-back that happen thousands of years apart.

Verse 6, “They shall waste with the sword the land of Assyria, and the land of Nimrod at its entrances; thus He shall deliver us from the Assyrian, when he comes into our land and when he treads within our borders.

Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples, like dew from the Lord, like showers on the grass, that tarry for no man nor wait for the sons of men. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among flocks of sheep, who, if he passes through, both treads down and tears in pieces, and none can deliver.

Your hand shall be lifted against your adversaries, and all your enemies shall be cut off.” When Jesus returns, His people, Israel, will be among the nations, like a lion among sheep. He’ll make them strong!

“And it shall be in that day,” says the Lord, “that I will cut off your horses from your midst and destroy your chariots. I will cut off the cities of your land and throw down all your strongholds. I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no soothsayers.”

He’s speaking of all the nations who oppose Israel.

Your carved images I will also cut off, and your sacred pillars from your midst; you shall no more worship the work of your hands; I will pluck your wooden images from your midst; thus I will destroy your cities. And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury on the nations that have not heard.”

Chapter 6 begins Micah's final sermon. "Hear now what the Lord says: "Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, O you mountains, the Lord's complaint, and you strong foundations of the earth; for the Lord has a complaint against His people, and He will contend with Israel."

Suddenly the world is turned into a courtroom. God is the prosecutor. Israel is the defendant. But the jury is very unusual - it's made up of the mountains and hills.

Recently, I read of a San Francisco defense attorney who tried to call a parrot to the witness stand in hopes of getting the pet to name the man who killed its owner.

In Pittsburg, a police dog took the witness stand to prove that the dog, not the accused was the aggressor.

Here, in this trial we don't find animals, but God does call on nature - *mountains and hills* - to render a verdict. Poetically speaking, they were the only ones who witnessed God's mercy and faithfulness to Israel.

Verse 3, "O My people, what have I done to you? And how have I wearied you? Testify against Me."

God asks His people, "*how have I let you down? If I've failed to love you, say so? Voice your complaint.*"

"For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, I redeemed you from the house of bondage; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O My people, remember now what Balak king of Moab counseled, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, from Acacia Grove to Gilgal, that you may know the righteousness of the Lord." God recounts their

exodus from Egypt, and journey through the wilderness - even the incident with Balaam - and God was always faithful.

He even turned Balaam's curses into blessings!

“With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” Throughout their history, the Jews had valued sacrifice as their preferred response to God's mercy.

But they'd misunderstood. Sacrifice was important, but it was a sign of something greater - **obedience**.

God said to Samuel (15:22), “to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.” Often it's easier to give God what I want to give Him, than it is to do what God wants done. Sacrifice is often a way to buy God off, instead of me surrendering to His will.

Sacrifice for sacrifice sake is of little value. I'm leery of people who take pride in their great sacrifices. In reality, what God wants from us is simple obedience.

Here's the question, *how can I please God? 1000 sacrifices? 10,000 rivers of oil?* Verse 8 answers the question, “He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”

Some of you worry that you might not get the right gifts for the people on your Christmas shopping list. The wife and children can be pretty picky at times.

But not so with God... He's not hard to please!

Pleasing God is surprisingly simple. He makes just three requests: *“do justly, love mercy, walk humbly.”*

**“Do justly”** - just do the right thing every time. Never be satisfied with the excuse, *“that's just the way it is.”* Treat people fairly - have integrity. Here's a saying I live by, *“You never go wrong by doing what's right.”*

And **“Love mercy”** - don't wait until people deserve love to give love. Some people withhold their love until it's earned - and they never end up loving. Be gracious. When it comes to spreading love *you* take the initiative.

And **“walk humbly”** - don't make everything about you. *How petty have you become?* The other night I was watching the news when they cut in for one of the President-elect's speeches. The commentator says, *“Tonight, Donald Trump is going to talk about what he always talks about, Donald Trump.”* *Is that what you want folks to say about you?* I hope not. *Walk humbly.*

Here's how to please God: *do the right thing - love with no strings attached - never think you're all that.*

Verse 9, **“The Lord's voice cries to the city - wisdom shall see Your name: “Hear the rod! Who has appointed it?”** Most of us live in the suburbs, but don't forget the needs of the inner cities, they are many.

Here we're told, *“The Lord's voice cries to the city...”*

Remember, Micah was from the country. But God uses him to speak to the cities. God calls for wisdom.

“Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the short measure that is an abomination?”  
“*The short measure*” was a dishonest business practice. You’d pay for 3 feet and only get 2.

“Shall I count pure those with the wicked scales, and with the bag of deceitful weights?” Their scales were rigged. You’d buy 12 ounces and only get 8 ounces.

“For her rich men are full of violence, her inhabitants have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.” Honesty is needed in commercial transactions.

“Therefore I will also make you sick by striking you, by making you desolate because of your sins.

You shall eat, but not be satisfied; hunger shall be in your midst. You may carry some away, but shall not save them; and what you do rescue I will give over to the sword.” Micah is telling the crooked businessmen they’ll never enjoy the spoils of their deception.

One Bible commentator renders verse 14, “You shall eat, but get dysentery.” If you purchase food with money gained by cheating, it’ll never stick to your ribs.

“You shall sow, but not reap; you shall tread the olives, but not anoint yourselves with oil; and make sweet wine, but not drink wine.” The man who sows what he stole from others will never reap a harvest.

“For the statutes of Omri are kept; all the works of Ahab’s house are done...” Omri and Ahab were evil kings from Samaria, who ruled over the northern tribes.



And their constituencies followed in their wicked ways. “And you walk in their counsels, that I may make you a desolation, and your inhabitants a hissing. Therefore you shall bear the reproach of My people.”

In chapter 7 Micah is grieved. He looks around and assumes he’s the only righteous man left in Israel.

“Woe is me! For I am like those who gather summer fruits, like those who glean vintage grapes; there is no cluster to eat of the first-ripe fruit which my soul desires.” He’s unsatisfied. Micah is like the fellow who goes to pick grapes in the summer. He’s sure to come up empty. Fall is the harvest time, not the summer.

“The faithful man has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among men. They all lie in wait for blood; every man hunts his brother with a net.”

*Ever felt like you were the only person left who loved God and was truly committed to doing what is right?*

The Greek philosopher, Diogenes, took a lantern and each night searched the countryside for one honest man, but to no avail... The Lord told Jeremiah (5:1), “Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem; see now and know; and seek in her open places if you can find a man, if there is anyone who executes judgment, who seeks truth...” It was Ezekiel who said (22:30), “I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found no one.”

It does seem that good people are always in short supply. And this is why it doesn't take many people for God to do a work. He's skilled at using just a few.

God replenished the earth with just eight people from Noah's family... Gideon won a battle with a skeleton crew... The Philistines were defeated by a boy's courage... Jesus changed the world with just a dozen disciples... Just one... plus God... equals a majority!

Verse 3 Micah continues to describe the evil around him, "That they may successfully do evil with both hands - the prince asks for gifts, the judge seeks a bribe, and the great man utters his evil desire; so they scheme together." It's not enough to sin with one hand, they sin with both hands. They're two-handed sinners.

"The best of them is like a brier; the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge..." Trust in any human being and you'll eventually get stuck - get let down.

"The day of your watchman and your punishment comes; now shall be their perplexity. Do not trust in a friend; do not put your confidence in a companion; guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your bosom." Don't trust in a friend. Don't even tell your secrets to your spouse. They're liable to betray you.

This was the moral climate in the days of Micah.

"For son dishonors father, daughter rises against her mother, daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own household." It could be that Micah's own family had turned on him.

It's sad, when there's no one you can trust.

I've heard it said, "Friends are like shadows. When the sun shines they're right there. But when clouds form overhead they disappear..." It's like the man who was boasting about how many friends he had. He said, "I have friends I haven't even used yet." Nothing cuts deeper and hurts worse than to be *used* by a friend.

But it wasn't that Micah had nowhere to turn - no one to trust. He says, "Therefore I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me."

Even when friends and family forsake you - you can run to God. I love Proverbs 18:24, "There is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." His name is Jesus.

Verse 8, "Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; when I fall, I will arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me." Even when Micah sins himself - even when he falls - he can trust His God not to forsake him.

He doesn't allow himself to be buried under a pile of condemnation. He recalls God gives second chances.

"I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my case and executes justice for me. He will bring me forth to the light; I will see His righteousness." Micah has an intercessor - an attorney - a public defender - who's been assigned to him to plead his case before God.

This is what Paul says of Jesus in 1 Timothy 2:5 when he calls Him "the one Mediator between God and man." Micah is

confident Jesus can deal with his sin, and the indignation it causes, and negotiate a pardon.

Verse 10, “Then she who is my enemy will see, and shame will cover her who said to me, “where is the Lord your God?” My eyes will see her; now she will be trampled down like mud in the streets.” Those who mocked Micah and doubted his God, will be judged.

“In the day when your walls are to be built, in that day the decree shall go far and wide.” Recall the form of Micah’s sermons. They begin with a *condemnation of our sin* - but end with an *affirmation of God’s love*.

And one day, God will pour love on Jerusalem.

He’ll issue the decree to rebuild her broken walls. A future urban renewal will come to the city of Jerusalem.

“In that day they shall come to you from Assyria and the fortified cities, from the fortress to the River, from sea to sea, and mountain to mountain.” Jews from all over the world will return to *Eretz Israel* - *or the land of Israel*. And this regathering of Jews has already begun.

Verse 13, “Yet the land shall be desolate because of those who dwell in it, and for the fruit of their deeds.”

Because of the people’s sin the land was desolate. The soil stripped of its nutrients. The forests denuded.

And yet today, the Lord is restoring it to a garden.

“Shepherd Your people with Your staff, the flock of Your heritage, who dwell solitarily in a woodland, in the midst of Carmel; let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in days of

old.” God is returning the land of Israel to its former fruitfulness - especially the lands of northern Israel - the mountain pastures of Bashan and Gilead.

Micah is here uttering Messianic promises.

Messiah will be a shepherd to a future Israel. David cries in Psalm 23, “The LORD is my shepherd... Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me...” Here Messiah shepherds his sheep with His rod. It’s no surprise in John 10 Jesus calls Himself “the Good Shepherd.”

He says in verse 15, “As in the days when you came out of the land of Egypt, I will show them wonders.”

Imagine what it was like to be part of the Exodus...

*At the head of the camp there’s a cloud in the day and a fiery pillar at night... every morning you collected the miracle manna... you saw water gush from a rock... for some reason your shoes never wore out...*

But Micah is telling Israel that in the last days their eyes will see the same sort of wonders and miracles. God will again intervene supernaturally for His people.

“The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might; they shall put their hand over their mouth; their ears shall be deaf.” Today is “the Day of Man” - for man is getting his say, he’s having his way. But the Bible tells us that soon God will reveal “the Day of the Lord.”

It’ll be a time in history when God shuts the mouths of mortal men. God will have His say, and get His way.

“They shall lick the dust like a serpent; they shall crawl from their holes like snakes of the earth.” The day is coming when human beings will bite the dust.

They’ll slither about like snakes. “They shall be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of You.”

Remember, Micah’s name is also his theme. “*Micah*” means “*Who is like Yahweh?*” His goal in this prophecy is to prove that God has no equal. He’s already noted God’s sovereignty, God’s justice, God’s righteousness.

But there is one characteristic that sets God apart...

*God has a signature trait.* This is what Micah wants you to remember most about God. *Here’s what sets Him apart from all others?* His willingness to forgive!

Verse 18, “Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities.”

I love verse 18... There’s some amazing phrases...

“*Passing over the transgression...*” Your parents will be sure to bring up your former sins. Your spouse won’t let you forget them. But realize, God *passes over* your sins. *What’s under His blood is out of His mind.*

“*He does not retain His anger forever...*” Yes, God gets angry at sin. He sees the harm it does to both us and others. But His heart is too big to harbor grudges. He’s quick to bury the hatchet. Show the slightest inkling of repentance and God is quick to forgive.



And *“He delights in mercy...”* Extending mercy isn't God's reluctant duty. It's not just an obligation - it's a delight. Showing mercy is the part of being God that thrills Him most. He dispenses wrath with an eye-dropper, but pours His mercy from a 50 gallon drum.

As Ephesians 2:4 tells us, *“He's rich in mercy!”*

And then verse 19, *“You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.”* Not just some sins, but all sins.

*Civilized sins and barbaric sins - accidental sins and intentional sins - brazen sins and bashful sins - past sins and future sins.* Come to Jesus and He casts all your sins into the depths of the sea. Notice, the Hebrew word translated *“all...”* it actually means, *“all.”*

God hurls *all* our sin into the deepest part of the ocean - that's where no human can *explore*. Since it's so deep light doesn't reach there. It can't be exposed...

Corrie Ten Boom added to a thought to verse 18, *“God casts all our sin into the depths of the sea, and He posts a “No Fishing” sign just for good measure.”*

Micah mentions in verse 19, *“the depths of the sea.”*

The deepest part of the ocean is the Marianas Trench off the coast of Guam. There the ocean floor is over 30,000 feet below the surface. You could stack fifty Peachtree Plazas on top of each other in that depth of water and you'd see the top of the last one just under the surface. When we come to Christ, God buries all our sins at the bottom of the Marianas!

Unlike the Phoenicians, the Hebrews were land lovers, seldom did they venture out on the high seas.

We take vacations to the ocean - but not the ancient Jews. This is why we might miss the tone of this verse.

To the Jew the sea was dark, mysterious, eery. In the Hebrew Scriptures the sea is often an idiom for evil. The ocean was the last place a Jew would ever go. Thus, God puts our sin where it will never be retrieved.

Once, Penn State lost a big game because it was penalized for having a twelfth man on the field.

After the game a reporter pressed Coach Joe Paterno to name *the guilty party who caused the loss*.

Paterno replied, "It's only a game. I have no intention of ever identifying the boy. He just made a mistake."

For us, life is more than "a game." Eternity hangs in the balance... Sin is more than "a mistake." It's often deliberate and malicious... Yet, if we're in Christ, God treats us the way the coach dealt with his illegal player.

Here's what occurred this past week when I sinned...

The devil and all hell's hecklers started calling for my blood. "Hey God, Sandy sinned. The punishment for sin is death! Make him bleed. Kill him a little at a time."

But God answered, "There's been enough bleeding. There's been enough dying." He then turned to His right hand, and pointed to Jesus. "We've bled enough."

"This Sandy, he's a frail one. He keeps coming back over and over for more mercy - he has no chance without it. But I've chosen to forgive him. I've put his sin behind us. He's

*mine forever - and I'll make him better.*" And God says that every single time I sin... since I've put my faith in my defender, Jesus Christ.

On the Jewish New Year Orthodox Jews participate in a ritual known as "*Tashlich*" - the term means "*You will cast.*" And it's taken from right here, Micah 7:19.

A man goes to a river or a creek. Water flows down stream, so theoretically it all ends up in the ocean.

The man empties trash from his pockets, quotes Micah 7:18-20, and tosses his dirt into the water. He stands there and watches the current take it away. It's a reminder, God casts all our sin into the deepest sea.

In your mind, perhaps you need to toss your sin into the water. *Who is like our God? "Pardoning iniquity..."*

Once a pastor had a woman in his church who always claiming to see visions. She was always telling what God had spoken to her... Well, the pastor was a bit skeptical. *How did she get a hotline to God?*

This same pastor had committed a terrible sin earlier in his life that had haunted him throughout his years.

One day, the pastor was talking to this lady with the visions. He said, "*If God really speaks to you, then ask Him to tell you the terrible sin I committed while I was a young man, and I'll believe you're hearing from God.*"

Several weeks later he asked her, "*Has God spoken to you?*" She said, "*Yes.*" "*Did you ask him about my sin?*" She said, "*Yes.*" "*Well, if He speaks to you what was it?*" She replied, "*God said He didn't remember.*"

The Bible teaches God is omniscient, and technically it's impossible for Him to forget, but there are things He chooses not to recall. And in Jeremiah 31:34 God says one thing He doesn't remember is our sin. "I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

*And here's one more thought...* God casts our sins into the deepest part of the sea. But in Revelation 21:1 we're told in the New Jerusalem, the eternal state, there is no sea. This is amazing, for now God sinks our sins to the bottom of the ocean. Then in eternity He does away with the ocean. In God's eternal scheme, for all eternity our sins are permanently eliminated.

The book of Micah closes, verse 20, "You will give truth to Jacob and mercy to Abraham, which You have sworn to our fathers from days of old." You could say the book of Micah has two themes - *truth* and *mercy*.

And they both meet in Jesus Christ. His sacrifice satisfies *God's truth* and it imparts to us *God's mercy*.