***Responding to the Lord in the Growing Crisis (Micah 7)***

1. micah’s response to spiritual crisis: a prophetic picture (Mic. 7)

*This morning I want to spend a little bit of time talking about Micah 7. I believe that Micah 7 is a very significant passage for the end-time Church. I realize most people are not so familiar with this chapter. I believe the Holy Spirit is going to highlight it, and it is going to be established in the global conversation in the Body of Christ. I believe some years from now we will look back and find many people tracking with this chapter. So I want to highlight it and alert you to the unusual importance of this chapter.*

*At the Onething Conference I spoke on it for a few minutes, actually maybe the last ten or fifteen minutes of my message. I told this story really quickly, that for about ten days in December, just last month, I woke up every morning for about ten days, almost every morning, with this clarity about Micah 7. I thought, what is this with ideas and thoughts and inspired? I thought, huh. About the tenth day it dawned on me the Lord was wanting me to really lock hold of this. I mean He was speaking to me prophetically. So I have been struck by it ever since. I just cannot really let go of this chapter.*

*I want to encourage you, as I did at the Onething Conference, to study Micah 7 and Psalm 2 together. I am sure some of you in the room are thinking those are kind of random chapters. I believe those are two unusually important chapters. I spent about three years emphasizing Psalm 2 and wrote a book on it. A lot of you heard me talk about it a number of times. These are companion passages; they are parallel passages. If this is new to you, Psalm 2 and Micah 7 are really important prophetic information in preparing the Church for what is happening. In Psalm 2, David spoke about God’s response to the growing crisis. Micah 7 is the Body of Christ’s response to the growing crisis. So Psalm 2, God’s response, David wrote that about 1,000 years BC. Three hundred years later, 700 BC, Micah adds to it and highlights the Body of Christ’s response in Micah 7.*

*Now the growing crisis, I mean who wants to hear about crisis? It is a really unpopular subject today. You do not hear much about it in the Body of Christ. It is a very, very important subject. I remember when I began to first study these 150 chapters. I mentioned earlier there are 150 chapters of which the primary subject is God’s end-time plan. That is a staggering number of chapters, 150, about the Lord’s return and all the dynamics related, when you consider that the four Gospels are less than ninety chapters. When I began to study those 150 chapters—the thing that we are doing in this class on Wednesday nights over this three-year period, going through every one of these chapters, line by line. It is challenging but invigorating, exciting. Many pieces of information that are new to many of us—one of the things that I remember is that I was struck by the fact that there is much more about the coming crisis in those 150 chapters than the coming revival and the coming glory. When that first dawned on me some years ago, I told the Lord—and He does not mind me telling Him this. He did not, you know, agree with me—I said, “Lord, I think there ought to be more about the revival—just a thought, just consider it—than the crisis.” There is a lot more on the crisis. I was a little perplexed by that.*

*Well I have been teaching on the end-time revival from the Bible, the biblical view of it, for about forty years actually. I started in my early twenties, really gripped by the subject, very popular. More and more ministries in the last ten or twenty years are talking more and more about it. Here is an observation that I have found over forty years: the message of the end-time revival, though it excites people for a season and they say, “Wow!” yet I have found it does not often produce long-term change in people’s lives. I mean in the way they spend time and money and make life choices. I find they get excited—this is typical­; there are exceptions, of course—for two or three years, and people really get it. Man, they are praying and contending for revival. Five or ten years pass, and they say, “Well, I was really into that a couple years ago.” I found it excites people, but they get used to it and it does not really change that many. It does for some. There are exceptions.*

*The crisis is a bit different. If people actually see it, and they receive it, then it produces an urgency in them. That urgency, not always, but it is far more likely to lead to long-term change. What I mean by change is the way they spend time, the way they spend money, and the way they process decisions because the crisis alerts them. So, though we need both and the revival is always my favorite, I do not want to shy away from talking about the crisis because the Bible puts an unusual amount of information on this to alert the Church so they are not surprised and overwhelmed when the crisis increases.*

*Now of all the prophets—Old and New Testament, Apostles and Prophets—teach on the end times. Most of them were given and inspired by the Holy Spirit to highlight just a few of the details of the end-time storyline. Most of them have just a few of the details. The idea is that we have to compare Scripture with Scripture. We have to read all the prophets to get the whole story. Even Jesus talked about only a few details, then John the apostle a few details, Isaiah a few. You put them all together, comparing Scripture with Scripture, and you see the larger picture, the bigger perspective. That is good because God wants us, His people, to be a people of the Word. He really wants us to study the whole thing together.*

*Well, we will get to the handout in just a moment. I am never zealous about covering the whole handout. I typically hit a part of it, and then leave the rest of it for you to read on your own. I want to mention this before we read it that, in Micah 7, Micah highlights two specific and significant details about the end-time purposes or the end-time storyline. These are two details that are not often mentioned by other prophets. That is why Micah 7 is really important, because the significant two things he highlights most of the prophets do not highlight. A few mention it. Jesus mentions these things. Most of the prophets do not so much. So I want to draw your attention to that.*

*The first one that he highlights is how finances are going to be used to promote darkness and the agenda of darkness. Finances are going to be used in very, many, many different ways. There are many applications to this. If you read just Jeremiah or Ezekiel or Amos or Hosea, you might not see that point. Micah makes this point pretty clear. What I mean by “finances are going to be used to promote the dark’s agenda,” there will be economic benefits given to people who are willing to cooperate with the agenda of darkness, economic benefits. There will be economic penalties for the people who are unwilling to cooperate with the darkness agenda, the agenda of darkness. So there are benefits, and there are penalties.*

*Now that makes sense, but I am thinking most people are not really alerted to this being an actual reality that is going to happen. It is going touch our pocketbooks. You know the mark of the Beast in Revelation 13, how you will not be able to buy and sell. It makes the point really directly. To a lot of folks that is kind of something that happens in end-time movies and novels, and it is maybe not that real in our lives. I want to say this, that there will be economic penalties for not cooperating with the agenda of darkness. There will be benefits, many different types, so many you could talk an hour on the different ways it might work.*

*The second point that Micah 7 talks about—the economic is the first one how it is going to be used to promote darkness—the second one is that there is going to be a great increase of people mistreating one another. You might think, “Huh, that is interesting.” I mean, through human history of society we always have had plenty of people mistreating people.*

*Micah highlights, and Jesus emphasized it really strongly, that in the final years before the Lord returns—I think for some decades actually, not just a year or two—there is going to be an unusually heightened energy of people betraying and mistreating one another. It is going to get very intense. It is going to go beyond any time in history. Jesus called it the betrayal, that family members would betray one another. Now Micah touches this point that the mistreatment is going to go beyond general. The general mistreatment is always bad in society. When you get mistreated, it is not fun. It is going to touch family members and friends in a heightened way, not just a soft way, turning on each other and mistreating one another. Persecution is painful no matter what, but when persecution includes being betrayed by friends, trusted friends, and family members, that is so personal and so painful at the heart level.*

*I remember Brother Yun. Some of you know that name. His story is told in the book called, The Heavenly Man. It was quite popular in 1990s I think, or maybe the just the 2000s. It was really going around the world, about this man who had been in prison in Communist China who really suffered persecution, broken bones and beaten, many horrible things and how God supernaturally delivered him. It was a bestselling book that a lot of folks were talking about some time ago. Well, Brother Yun came and visited us for several days some years ago. He made a quite surprising statement to me. He said, “Let me tell you something, the pain of being betrayed by brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ that was more painful than my bones being broken by my persecutors.” You see, when he got out of prison different stories were told about him, some really horrible things, and some people believed it. Some did not. Millions did, and millions did not. He went on, “The pain of betrayal, being mistreated by the family of God”—and maybe even his natural family, I cannot remember—“it was really intense.” He said this with tears welling up in his eyes.*

*I said, “I don’t know. I mean, a broken bone?” You know I am picturing him with a rod breaking. He described this pretty graphically. I said, “That seems pretty intense.”*

*He said, “Yeah, it was, but nothing like the pain that happens in you when it is friends and family members.” That was interesting.*

*Well, how are these two topics in Micah 7 connected? Economics, finances are used to promote darkness, okay. Families and friends will betray one another okay, economics okay. How does that come together? Well, Jesus actually gave us insight on that. Then there are some new developments in technology just in the last year that give us some hints, not total clarity, but some hints. They are alerting to us as to how economic penalties and sanctions might be linked to personal betrayal by close friends and family members.*

*In Mark 13—and I have it on the notes, we will get to it in a few moments—Jesus actually points to Micah 7. He draws reference to it about brothers betraying one another, children and parents, etc. Jesus identified something Micah did not clarify. I do not know that Micah knew it, but Jesus knew it. He said that this betrayal is going to be related to taking a stand for Him, His leadership, and the gospel. I do not know that Micah knew too much about the Messiah. A little bit is in Micah 4-5, a little bit about the Messiah. Jesus said, as it were, “I will tell you something Micah did not tell you. It is going to be related to the people that stand for me or the people that refuse to stand.”*

*You might say, “Okay, okay, I can see that. Why would people like betray somebody because they stood for Jesus? Like, what would motivate them to betray? I can see them not liking them. I can see them telling stories about a family member, ‘My fanatical brother, he just will not stop.’ I can see that, but betrayal at a significant level? Like what would make that happen?”*

*Well, there were some new technological developments in 2018, just last year, that are happening in western China that really moving quite aggressively and increasing which give insight into this. When I look at this new development of what is taking place, I could say it will be different in every nation. In the application of it will be different everywhere. But I can picture this a little more clearly in terms of what Micah was hitting on or touching on. I do not know that Micah understood all the details. What is happening in western China—you can go on YouTube and look this up yourself. I do not want to take a lot of time on this—it’s the combination of facial recognition and artificial intelligence and a few more technological things. I do not want to go into all of this, as there are hundreds of YouTube videos on it, particularly in 2018. It is just exploding–the number of experts and so-called experts giving their opinions and thoughts.*

*Starting in November, December I began to look at these. We have just been in Florida for three weeks on vacation, and I probably looked at fifty videos, some long and some short. I am quite surprised at the actual advancement and the increase of what is happening in this arena. Again, it is all over the internet. I do not want to explain it all to you. You can go and become aware of it.*

*Last year, 2018, in western China they put 200 million cameras in one part of China. Every 100 yards, 200 million cameras. The idea is when a person walks out of their house, walks out on the street, or drives in their car, with the cameras the government can see your car and where you drive, where you go, where you shop. Every 100 yards. It just picks you up. Combined with artificial intelligence—and there is much to say about artificial intelligence and a lot is still unknown about it, but it is increasing quite rapidly. Some of the “experts”—I do not know if they actually are; they are presented as experts—say the day is coming where artificial intelligence will take over. In one sentence, artificial intelligence is computers programing computers. It is computers giving other computers information, and then they give it to the other one, and it grows and grows and grows, and they teach each other. That is a real simple way to say it. It is projected that, where artificial intelligence is going in the future, it will be able to process information a trillion times faster than the human mind can. It will be able to. Even right now it can process millions of pieces of information in a matter of seconds.*

*So with this—again there are a few more technologies involved; I do not want to spend so much time on this—it is the idea of a guy goes out the street. The cameras see him. Then the artificial intelligence sees you walk in a building. If you commit a crime, they see it. If you attend gatherings of people who are not in agreement with the government, that is a negative. You know, if you are a terrorist or a criminal or you are radical Christian who believes Jesus’ Word has authority over what the government says that, those are considered taboo. I mean those are not okay to believe those kinds of things. By the way these 200 million cameras in 2018, a number of sources are saying quite boldly that by 2020 there will be 600 million cameras. That they want to fill the entire land, with the artificial intelligence processing the information lightning speed.*

*China is quite excited about this. The takeaway is that they will give you a social credit score. This social credit score will affect your life and your opportunities or the penalties that a family or an individual will incur. So what happens is—several sources have said this same number—you begin every year with 300 points, social credit points. If you go and rake the leaves of a park or you go help a person in need, the cameras every 100 yards, they will catch you and you want to be caught because it is acknowledging and rewarding acts of kindness. It sees all of them. It also sees negative acts. So you go rake the yard, you go pick up trash, you help an elderly person, you help children, there are 1,000 things for which you get ten credit points. If your credit gets high that year, you have economic benefits and a number of extra privileges related to education, planes, trains, all kinds of benefits.*

*Well, the negative side is if you get negative credits, like if you do wrong things or what the government perceives to be wrong, they take ten points off. You go to a meeting, even if you walk into a meeting of 500 people, they know all 500 people because every 100 yards they know who is in it. Again, with artificial intelligence they can process the information super fast. They know not only the 500 people in the meeting, they know all the people, or at least many, to whom they relate, the places they shop, what they do, all these kinds of things. If you are in a criminal group or a terrorist group or a hate-crime group—which would include radical believers; wholehearted believers would be in hate-crime groups—they get a deduction in their score.*

*Anyway, there are 100 things to say about this. There is so much on the internet; you could look at it on your own. This is something that is not going away. It is here to stay. It is going to increase and increase and increase. It will become very well known in the years to come. I do not want to spend so much time on that. Here is the point: if you get a bad credit score at a certain level, you cannot get a loan. Your children cannot go to the university. You cannot board an airplane. You cannot have a passport. If it gets more severe, you cannot rent an apartment. You cannot get a job. It is quite intense. A number of people have been telling their stories, such as believers or journalists saying, “I am on the street. My family is experiencing this…it is unbelievable.”*

*The majority love this because the motto is, “If you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear.” By the way, all these cameras are rewarding and acknowledging helpfulness. Lots of people are growing in kindness. So it is really benefiting the country. But, because it is a Communist country, there is no pushback to the violations of civil liberties. So those are increasing, 200 million cameras now, 600 million in the next eighteen months or so, and on and on and on. It is a big, long story. The reason I say that is because certain rogue nations that do not honor civil liberty will want that technology. Eventually, you know, the western nations that have democracy are going to have to be involved at some level to stay up with what is happening at the global level. Anyway, big subject, and I do not want to give a bunch of theories on all that stuff.*

*The point is this—here is my takeaway, and then I will go to Micah 7—it is that there is guilt by association. Meaning, there is an on-fire believer who goes to that group of 500 people that are on-fire believers. It is really clear to the technology, to the data base, the big data, that is what they do. The government knows about their home groups, etc. I mean some of the stuff they get away with, but most of it is captured. So the believer has a really low score, cannot get in the university, cannot get on an airplane, cannot get a passport, cannot get a job. In some cases it goes on and on. Here is the point; here is the takeaway: he has an unbelieving brother, and they knock on his door. They say, “Hey, about your fanatic Christian brother, tell him to stop. If he will not, we need more information on him.”*

*The unbelieving brother says, “No, I am not going to turn in my brother.”*

*They say, “Well, here is the bad news: if you do not give us more information, his social credit score will be applied to your family.”*

*The unbelieving brother says, “What? What do you mean?”*

*They say, “Your kids will be on the street. You will not get an apartment. They will not get in the university. You cannot get on a plane.”*

*So the unbelieving brother goes to his brother whom he loves, and he says, “Hey bro, stop this fanatical-religious bigotry. Come on, just stop it. God knows you love Him, so just do it in private.”*

*The radical believer says, “No, I do not care if I lose my life. I will love Him unto death.”*

*The unbeliever says, “Yeah, but now it is my family in trouble if you do not stop,” because it is guilt by association.*

*Then the radical believer says, “No, I am not going to stop.”*

*The unbelieving brother gives him a couple chances and appeals to him and begs him. He will not. The unbelieving brother under the economic sanctions and penalties actually ends up betraying his brother, saying, “He won’t listen, but I am not going to have my family suffer for it.” So it is this kind of scenario; there are five or ten versions of that.*

*Well, Micah hits the economic penalties and rewards. The use of economics for the promotion of darkness is the part he highlights, and then the betrayal of friends and family members as relating to it. This is the sort of thing that is increasing in the nations. When it will come to which nation I do not know. I do not have opinions about that. I know one thing—here is what I care about, not so much that application—I care that it is real, that there will be economic tools to promote the darkness agenda, the agenda of darkness. If you are unwilling to cooperate, there will be penalties. Family members under the pressure of those penalties will betray one another.*

*Okay, let’s look at our handout here. We will not spend a lot of time on this. Most of it is pretty straight forward. I just wanted you to kind of get the bigger picture that this is real. The only safe place is in the Lord as mistreatment of people against one another, families against one another, increases, and it is going to increase dramatically the closer we get to the return of the Lord. However many years that is out nobody knows, but the closer we get, the mistreatment in the culture will intensify. Economic sanctions and other dimensions will be involved. Again, they will probably look different in different nations. I do not have theories on what it will look like. I just know that the only safe way forward is to go deep in God in relationship with Jesus. That is the only safe way forward spiritually safe.*

*We may lose our life, but you know what? The goal of life is not to make sure you do not die. Everyone is going to die. Some folks think the goal of life is to make sure they do not die physically. No, the goal of life is to leave this age with a testimony of faithfulness before the Lord. It will impact your life for billions of years. The goal is to be faithful, not to make sure you do not die.*

*So the only safe place is where we thrive spiritually, and that is what Micah is really saying. He is going to give seven responses to the betrayal in his generation. This was a prophetic picture of the increased crisis and the necessary response in the generation the Lord returns. We will look at his seven responses. They are quite straightforward. They are not complicated. They are pretty easy to understand. They are challenging to do, but they are not hard to understand. When we respond in these seven ways, we are preparing ourselves to thrive spiritually as the pressure increases.*

*We need to be going deep in this hour, because the verse that comes to mind is Jeremiah 12:5. Jeremiah asked, “If you cannot run with the footmen, how can you keep up with the horses?” He was speaking poetically and using different metaphors. That is, if a man runs at a certain pace and you cannot keep up with him, how are you supposed to keep pace with a horse that moves much faster? What Jeremiah meant, and it was really clear in Jeremiah 12, is if in the pressure of today you are not faithful to the Lord, how will you be faithful in the escalating pressures that are coming. The point is, how we respond to the Lord today matters in terms of equipping us in response, in having a greater capacity to respond to Him when the pressures increase. The pressures are going to increase.*

*Micah 7 lets us know there will be economic dimensions to that pressure. There will be betrayal by family and friends. It will become that personal and that intense. I mean, all through history people have mistreated people, so that is not a new thing. It is the escalation of it that is critical for us to understand. Because, when we know it is going to increase, then we look at today with the mistreatment we all experience. There is no one in this room who is not being mistreated by somebody if you are over age ten, you know. There is no one in the room who does not encounter mistreatment. We need to view the mistreatment differently, understanding that we are in a season—and I mean years, I do not mean this month and next month—of what I call the seminary of the Holy Spirit, the seminary of love. The Lord might say, “I am allowing you to know how to respond in love and humility in the midst of pressure that is really real.” The mistreatment is real. You feel the pain; it is real. You can learn to respond in love and humility and gratitude.*

*By the way, things you take with you to the age to come, the things that the Holy Spirit is insistent on so that the end-time Church will be a prepared Bride walking in glory, that means love, humility, gratitude, obedience. That is what glory looks. You know the power dimension, but power on the heart, not just power in our hands and miracles. That too, but the power on our heart because the only thing we will take with us to the age to come is our growth in love and humility, gratitude, those kinds of things.*

*So if we see coming an increase of mistreatment, then we view today’s mistreatment as the seminary of the Holy Spirit, even though the devil is involved in it, “Man, this is an opportunity for me to know how to get a hold of God.” The pressure is real and it hurts, but it is going to get far more intense and far more invasive in the next ten, twenty, thirty, whatever years ahead of us. Well, that is where Micah 7 really does matter to us.*

*Micah described the spiritual crisis in his day—society was filled with sin and betrayal (7:1-6).   
The wickedness and betrayal in Micah’s day will be surpassed in generation the Lord returns.*

*So let’s look at some of this handout here.*

* 1. Micah described the spiritual crisis in his day—society was filled with sin and betrayal (7:1-6).   
     The wickedness and betrayal in Micah’s day will be surpassed in generation the Lord returns.

*Micah described the spiritual crisis of his day. His society he was describing was filled with sin, sin related to bribes and money and economic gains for sinister activities. You know you gain money if you embrace the wrong things. He talked about his society being full of betrayal. That betrayal and sin in his day is a prophetic snapshot of a far greater intensity globally, not just in Jerusalem where Micah lived but worldwide.* *Well, let’s read the passage, verse 1-6, on my notes. I edited it down a little bit just to make it a little bit quicker to read. You can read it all in context in your Bible.*

1Woe is me!…2The faithful man has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among men…every man hunts his brother…3the prince asks for gifts, the judge seeks a bribe, and the great man utters his evil desire; so they scheme together…6For son dishonors father, daughter rises against her mother…a man’s enemies are the men of his own household. (Mic. 7:1-6)

*He starts off, verse 1, “Woe is me!” Micah is very burdened by this increase of darkness in his day. He said, verse 2, “The faithful man has perished from the earth.” Of course Micah lives in Jerusalem; he does not know what is going on worldwide. There are eschatological dimensions to this prophecy as well. He makes this big statement; it is a general statement. You could challenge it if you did not understand it rightly.*

*He goes on, “No one is upright.” Well, Micah, Isaiah lived in Jerusalem when you did. He was pretty good. Amos and Hosea, they lived in your generation. It is not true to say no one. Well, he goes on to say, as it were, “Let me be more specific.” In verse 3 he talks about leaders in the public square who are endorsed by the government, who are part of the legal system. He was talking about Jerusalem in his day. Isaiah and Hosea, those guys were messengers, but they were not in this dimension or place of society. In verse 3, he says, as it were, “Let me explain what I mean by ‘no one.’ The prince,” that is the government leaders, “the judges,” that is the legal system, the court system, “and the great men,” that is the entrepreneurs, the marketplace leaders, the social icons, the influencers of society, not necessarily governmental leaders but the men and women who influence society. That is the group I mean when I say no one is faithful.” Okay, that is okay.*

*What are they doing? In verse 3, he lays it out. He goes on to explain that the government leaders, the prince, wants financial gifts for participating together in their dark schemes. Okay, I can see it. We have seen that in history. The judges, the legal systems, too. Well, that has happened a number of times in history. “The great men,” he goes on, “they are all scheming together.”*

*Well, this scheming together you know about if you are familiar with Psalm 2. The passage I started with, Psalm 2, is God’s response to the growing crisis. David talks about the leaders, the kings across the earth, all conspiring together. This is an end-time passage. It is far beyond David’s day. The kings across the nations of the earth, beloved, the kings of the earth do not agree on anything together. They will agree, Psalm 2 tells you, on driving the Word of God out of the culture. That is their goal. They do not succeed, but that is what is on their mind. Well, in Micah 7:3, he lets us know there are economic incentives for participating with them and penalties refusing to participate with them. That is the clear part.*

* 1. ***The faithful man has perished***: Micah laments the lack of godly leaders faithful to the Lord in governmental roles or in the public square (7:2-3). He identified the primary leaders who will scheme together—*princes* (government leaders), *judges* (court systems), and *the great men* (leaders in finance, media, social icons, etc.—and seek gifts, bribes, and “pay-offs” from those under them.
  2. Micah warned the people not to trust some of their friends or family members because they might betray them (7:5-6) in order to avoid an economic penalty or to gain an economic advantage (7:3).

*So Micah warned the people of his day, but prophetically, because Jesus pulled out this passage and applied it to the end of the age. So I do not know how much Micah knew the extent of where his words, what they were describing, what generation. Surely they were true for his day, but far beyond his day according to Jesus.*

5Do not trust in a friend…6For son dishonors father, daughter rises against her mother…a man’s enemies are the men of his own household. (Mic. 7:5-6)

*He goes as far to say, verse 5, “Do not trust in a friend.” Like, wow! That is a pretty intense statement. Do not trust any friend? “For a son dishonors his father, a daughter her mother, a man’s enemies are men of his own household, his own family members.” Like, wow! That is a pretty pessimistic, dark view of relationships, Micah. Maybe you need to go through a twelve-step program and get some healing.*

*What Micah is talking about—in my interpretation of this, where things are going, not just because of western China, as I could give other reasons as well—is that there will be economic benefits and economic penalties related to standing for Jesus or against Him, really clearly. Those economic penalties will be incurred by family members who do not agree with a person’s faithful love for Jesus. Those family members are not going to put up with those penalties because it will affect their family’s life and future. They are saying, “I don’t even believe in your Jesus, yet I am being penalized. No, no, we are done. If you will not wake up to common sense, O Christian brother, we are done. I am actually going to betray you. I am actually going to give you up. I am going to cooperate with helping them indict you. I am actually going to help them, I am going to do it because you will not stop and I have warned you to stop.”*

*Well, this is quite an intense situation. So do not trust a friend, no friend? What I think he is saying here or the application is that you do not want to trust someone—here is the key—who does not have a history of faithfulness to Jesus when they are mistreated. So right now the Lord is allowing—again I do not know the timeframe, these next ten, twenty, thirty, forty, whatever years—He is allowing the Body of Christ to get a history in God of responding in humility and love and faithfulness to Jesus in the face of mistreatment. That history is causing two things. One, the individual grows in his capacity to encounter the Lord. His heart grows, His character grows. And, two, his reputation among his friendship network grows too. Another guy says, “You know what? I can trust him, I have watched him for ten years under mistreatment, even by Christians, and that guy will not gossip, he will not slander, he will not complain. I mean he is trusting the Lord. He is gracious and kind. I will get in a foxhole with that guy. I have watched him for ten years.”*

*So this history not only helps the man himself grow in his capacity, but also causes the people around him to say, “I trust you. I have seen you not get what you want and yet walk in humility and kindness and you trust the Lord.” The great part is that brother gets to take that with him to the age to come, because, beloved, all you are going to bring with you to the age to come is your growth in love and humility and kindness and generosity and graciousness. That is all you are taking with you.*

*So in this “seminary season,” we want to grow in these things. People are watching you. The day is coming when Micah’s words will be applicable; he is saying not to trust the guy who has not been faithful to Jesus. Not perfectly faithful, but do not trust the guy if it is not important to him to respond to mistreatment in a godly way. I mean you do not have to be mean to him, but do not trust him. There are lots of implications to that. So, no, I do not think Micah needed a twelve-step program. He might have for some other area, but anyway.*

* 1. In Mark 13:12, Jesus connected Micah 7:5-6 to the social crisis in the end times and identified standing for the gospel (Mk. 13:9-10) as the main reason for people betraying their families.

*Jesus took Micah 7 and placed it in the end-time context. Again, Micah might not have fully understood those implications in fullness. Jesus says, as it were, “Let me tell you something that Micah might not have known. It is going to be about their stand for Me and My leadership.”*

9“You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake…10The gospel must first be preached to all the nations…12Brother will betray brother…children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death…14When you see the ‘abomination of desolation’…flee.” (Mk. 13:9-14)

*He says here, verse 9, “You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake.” That is, “It is going to be about who stands for Me and who is not willing to stand for Me.” I am adding this, that it is going to have economic dimensions to it. There are other verses in the Bible that make that crystal clear.*

*Verse 10 is an end-time timing indicator. He says, “When am I talking about?” Of course, this was true in the first century church; in the book of Acts this passage was true. Jesus even used Micah 7 for the book-of-Acts generation. He said, as it were, “It does not end in the book-of-Acts generation in church history. It accelerates at the end.” He says in verse 10 that it is going to be really important in the generation or in the time season when* ***all*** *the nations hear the gospel, and we know that only happens one time, right before the Lord returns. So verse 10 tells us this is end times.*

*Verse 12, Jesus says it a little more dramatically than Micah. He said, “It is not just brother dishonoring brother; they are going to full-on betray each other.” They are going to turn each other in, a brother will, to avoid the economic penalties incurred by not turning in his Christian brother. He says that it is going to go beyond that: it is with parents. It is going to death. It is going to go beyond economics. It will involve prison and death. It is going to really intensify towards the end.*

*Then verse 14 makes it really clear with another timing indicator it is the end of the age. He says, “The abomination of desolation.” That happens right at the very end. So this is going to escalate in a dramatic way.*

1. seven responses to the Lord in the growing crisis (Mic. 7:7-20)

*Let’s look for just a minute or two at each one because they are pretty self-evident. They are not confusing responses. They are just challenging, but they are very, very necessary. These seven responses will never be easier than they are today, because the pressure and the mistreatment we will receive from family and the Body of Christ, not just unbelievers, is going to escalate and escalate and escalate. If our love and our insight does not escalate with it, we are going to be in a challenge. Again, if we cannot run with the footman how are we going to run with horses? How are we going to run when the pressure increases, that Jeremiah 12:5 passage?*

* 1. ***Response #1*** is to look to the Lord, pray, and wait on Him to act to fulfill His promises (7:7).   
     We look to the Lord to be our primary source of safety, justice, etc. Our natural response is to   
     “look to” (be preoccupied with) the people who mistreat us, the growing crisis in the culture, etc. When teaching on the end times, Jesus’ primary exhortation to His people was to *watch and pray* (Mt. 24:42; 25:13; Mk. 13:9, 33, 34, 35, 37; Lk. 21:36; Rev. 16:15).

7Therefore I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation… (Mic. 7:7)

*The first response, Micah says in verse 7, “Therefore.” Therefore, meaning in light of the betrayal because he was experiencing this betrayal. In light of the economic issues, he said, “Therefore I am going to look to God.”*

*You think, “Well, that is pretty simple.” Well, that is easy to say, easy to preach, easy to sing. It is not exactly the most natural response, even for a believer. Our most natural response when we are mistreated and there are economic issues involved and the Body of Christ as well as our natural family, our natural response is to look to, which means be preoccupied with, the person mistreating us. That is who we think about most. Probably everyone in this room has been mistreated by somebody in the Body of Christ. That is what we talk about, not necessarily most, and that is what we think about. That is the story we tell: our mistreatment.*

*Micah would say, “No, no, no, no, no! Look to Jesus as your source. Look to God as your source.”*

*Other people might say, “Well, it is not the guy that mistreated me. I am just captured by society. Society is getting worse. I am going to retreat and go live in a cave.”*

*He would say, “No, no, do not look to the society”—I mean, we want to be aware of the increased crisis—“but look to God as your source.”*

*Another guy says, “Well, let’s change the government.” We should try to change the government, we really should. In a democracy, that is part of our responsibility. But I am not looking to the government as my source. As a believer I want to be light and salt, make changes where we can. My hope of the perfected Church and the great harvest at the end is not the government changing. The government is not going to make that happen for us. I like righteous government. I am positive we are to appeal and we are to do biblical things to see things happen to the best we have, but that is not our source. I am not preoccupied with how the government is failing me and has bad laws. I am aware of it.*

*I do not want to be preoccupied with who is mistreating me or how bad things are getting. I want to be that “Mary of Bethany” lifestyle. I want to be connected to Him. I want to look to Him as my source. Simple thing to say, easy to preach, easy to sing, not so easy to do. This must be done now because we are in a seminary season. I am talking about church history is. I do not mean just us here in Kansas City, but us too. The Body of Christ is in a seminary season before the greatest intensity of crisis and the greatest outpouring of glory ever in history. The glory is not just going to come automatically. The glory is going to come as we make godly decisions and cooperate with Him.*

* 1. ***Response #2*** is to have confidence in the faithfulness of God’s promises even in the face of great darkness, social crisis, pain, set-backs, and personal failures (7:8). He understood that he would be tested with pressures, temptations, and set-backs when the society was being shaken.

8…when I fall, I will arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me… (Mic. 7:8)

*Response number two, he says in verse 8, “When I fall, I will arise.” He says, “When I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light.” What is he saying?*

* + 1. He was not idealistic in assuming that the pressures in society would not touch his life.

*Well number one, he is not idealistic. but some believers are. When society at large is under increased pressure and shaking, believers will feel it. Some people have the idea, “If I am a believer, all this darkness will leave. I am just going to have Shangri-La. You know, I am just going to be happy and, man, it is going to all work and nothing is going to be bad.”*

*Micah said, “It* ***is*** *going to touch my family and my heart when this increase of darkness happens.” He says, “When I fall.”*

I thought, “Well, how does Micah fall?” There are, you know, lots of ways to fall from major scandalous ways. I believe what Micah is talking about—and it could be more than this; I am not trying to make it easy for Micah—is if he succumbed to bitterness, to complaining, to lethargy, to just “I am quitting, I am not pressing into God anymore. You know what? I mean I am going to go to heaven when I die, but I am just going to draw back and just kind of indulge in self-pity for a while.” Nobody ever calls it self-pity; we call it burn out. It is called indulging in self-pity. “I am just going to stop.” That is called falling, being overcome with bitterness, being overcome with offense. All of us are tempted with this. We stumble in it in various ways.

* + 1. ***I will arise***: Any who set their heart on righteousness will arise, even if they fall seven times.

*He says, in effect, “You know what? I am going to rise up. I am not staying stuck. I am going to make a decision to rise up in the grace of God. I am not staying here.” He goes on, “When I sit in darkness.” That means when I am in this difficult setting or context, when I do not have any prophetic direction, no clarity. God, what are You saying? God, what are You saying? I have been faithful to You. Why won’t You talk to me right now?*

*The Lord says, “I want you to trust My leadership, not just the information I give you about how your life will be better. Trust Me.”*

*“Lord, I want info more than I want you. I want Your info more than I want relationship. I mean, I do want relationship, but I want to trust in the info.”*

*He says, “I am going to have strategic delays of what I tell you coming to pass. I want you to trust Me.”*

*So Micah says, “When I fall, when I am overcome with despair, bitterness, lethargy, when I quit a few times in my soul, when I am not pressing in any longer— I mean he is not going to deny the Lord, but he is just going to camp out and do his own thing for a while—“When I do not have any prophetic direction,” he says, “The Lord has promised me He is going to give me the direction. Light will come. Light will come. I will arise.”*

*The fog* ***will*** *lift. Beloved, if you get overcome, whether it is a major temptation or character issue or—these are important ones—bitterness, lethargy, offense… “You know what? They treat me that way, so forget it. If that is how the Body of Christ treats me, forget it.” Everyone in the earth in the Body of Christ has believers mistreating them. We have to settle the issue that we have a destiny in God, we have an assignment from God, and we have a stewardship from God. You cannot throw it away because somebody or a few leaders treated you wrongly. You do not want to give people that much power over your life.*

*When I look back over the years, I have had my fair share of people who say all kinds of evil things. I mean, a number of them were associates, and “blah-blah-blah-blah.”*

*The Lord has whispered to me many times over the years, “Don’t you dare throw away the stewardship I gave you and give them that power over your life.” You bless them, and you grow in godliness and generosity and character. You will bring it with you. With some of them you will recover the relationship.*

*Do not ever throw away your stewardship because some leader is being mean to you. So some folks, when they have fallen, need to get back in the game. They need to rise back up. They need to believe God, press in, and get through the fog.*

16For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again… (Prov. 24:16)

* 1. ***Response #3*** is to bear the Lord’s loving discipline without “quitting” our divine assignment (7:9).

9I will bear the indignation [discipline] of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my case and executes justice for me…I will see His righteousness. (Mic. 7:9)

*Boy, this is a, this is a surprising one! He says, “I will bear the indignation of the Lord” or the discipline of the Lord.*

* + 1. While bearing the Lord’s discipline, we engage in the process of often rehearsing our sin, repenting, and making a commitment to embrace Jesus’ leadership in our personal weakness.   
       This process “marks” the heart of His people in a deep way, resulting in genuine change.

*When society is in crisis and mistreatment is increasing, it is a premier opportunity. The Lord is saying that many more people are acting carnal and many more believers as well are saying this and that and the other.*

*Here is what the Lord whispers in my heart, “Mike, this is an opportune time for Me to show you fault lines in your heart where you are deficient in love, humility, generosity, gratitude. You want to know now.”*

*Shock me now, Lord. Do not shock me when I stand before You!*

*“I am letting the increase of trouble around you to show you fault lines, if you will look for them.”*

*Micah said, “I am not quitting, God. I am not going to draw back in my pursuit. A matter of fact, I am not going to be engaged with the guy who is treating me wrongly. I am going to look inwardly, and I am going to get cleaned up in areas that I was not paying attention to in the past.” He says, “I will bear patiently the discipline of the Lord because I have sinned.” I believe he sinned, whether it was in the area of bitterness, offense, quitting, lethargy, complaining. Those are real sins by the way. Those are not baby sins. Those are real. We are so used to them that they are seem minor to us. Like, “Come on, give me something real!” Those are real to God.*

*Here is what happens when we bear the discipline of the Lord. I have been under the Lord’s discipline a few times over the years. I do not like it. I like the discipline if it lasts a week. When it goes on some months, it is like, “Okay, okay, I repented! I got my attitude right. Lord, let’s lift the hand and let’s kind of get back to where we were.” Here is what I found out. When I am under the discipline of the Lord and I bear it, meaning, it just goes on, and I do not quit and I rehearse over and over something like, “I am guilty of this: my arrogance, my lack of love or gratitude. I am not responding rightly, but I am going to,” that rehearsing it over and over in our prayer, our talking to Him, it marks us. I say, “Okay, we talked about this for a few months now. We did it.”*

*He says, as it were, “No, no, no, I am marking you. Mike, I love you so much, I want you to bear a little bit longer because you are going to rehearse more the need for you to grow in love and humility and obedience in these areas.” See, when we are under that discipline, we talk about it, we think it through, and we make commitments to the Lord. It is marking us in a beautiful way.*

* + 1. Micah did not indulge in self-pity, but humbled himself, seeing the unperceived “fault lines” in his life so that he could grow in love, humility, and obedience—to go deep with God.
    2. The purpose of God’s discipline is to train His people in righteousness (Heb. 12:11).

5“Do not despise [regard lightly, NAS] the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged… 6For whom the Lord loves He chastens…” 10He [chastens us] for our profit…11It yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Heb. 12:5-6, 10-11)

*It says here, the discipline of the Lord is never joyful. You can read Hebrews 12 on your own. It is never joyful.*

*Verse 11 says it trains us in righteousness. It trains us. It is for our profit. Micah could have said, “Lord, there are fault lines in my character, deficiencies. I am not that attentive when things are moving fast and easy. When I am under this thing, the pain comes up.”*

*The Lord would say, “The pain is not a way for you to accuse others, even though they are guilty. The pain is for you to take a microscope to yourself and see the deficiencies. It is for your profit. I am cleaning you up. You will get a history with the people around you that you walk with God when you are under pressure and under mistreatment. They will trust you in the days to come. You are growing in your capacity as well.”*

* 1. ***Response #4*** is to acknowledge our sins and respond in humility with repentance (7:9b). Even the most devout are deficient in their love, obedience, humility, gratitude, and trust. It is common to see sin in the culture and especially the sins done against us *much* *more than* we see sin in our life.

9I will bear the indignation [discipline] of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him…   
(Mic. 7:9)

*Response four, same verse but instead of “I am bearing the discipline,” he says, “I really have sinned.” There is a humility here. You know, it is so common when we are mistreated to put most of our attention on who mistreats us. It is common when things are negative to look how negative the culture is: Look, sin is growing everywhere.*

*The Lord might say, “That is okay that you notice that, but I want you to see your fault lines more than you see that.*

*Most people see how much they are mistreated way more than they see their deficiency in love and humility. He said, as it were, “In humility, I acknowledge it. I have fault lines. I am going to go deep, and I am going to get clean on this. I do not like what those people in the Body of Christ are saying, my friends, my family. They should be on my team; they are around me. They are physically related to me, spiritually related. I work with them. I don’t like this.”*

*The Lord would say, “Do not lock into that. Look at yourself right now. Mike, this is for your benefit. I love you. You are going to have a great fruitfulness, because a bunch of you will do this together and you will trust each other in the days to come because you will have this history of having walked with God.”*

* 1. ***Response #5*** is to ask the Lord to intervene in power to fulfill His promises (7:14). The Lord answered this prayer by promising Micah that He would show Israel great miracles (7:15)—like the very miracles that He did when He delivered them from Egypt (Ex. 7-12; Jn. 14:12; Rev. 16).

14Shepherd Your people with Your staff…15“As in the days when you came out of…Egypt, I will show them wonders.” 16The nations shall see and…shall be afraid of the Lord… (Mic. 7:14-16)

*Number five, he responds in intercession. Verse 14, “Shepherd Your people, O God!” That is intercession. He is praying for the breakthrough revival. He is praying with all of his might. Beloved, we are a breakthrough people! We contend for breakthrough. That is what we do. It is not always fun. It is not always easy. It is our assignment. It is what we do as a community. We contend for the full breakthrough.*

*“Yeah, but that worship leader was mean to me. I am just quitting.” No, do not quit your stewardship because a worship leader was mean to you. Stop. You have a bigger calling. Don’t give somebody that power over you. “Well, it is not the worship leader; it was the district pastor… No, it was not the district pastor, it was Mike Bickle…Well, no, it was not Mike Bickle; it was blah-blah-blah-blah-blah-blah.” Don’t throw away your calling in intercession and worship because someone in our midst is not treating you the way they should. You have a bigger calling. Don’t do that, because when you get bothered, you quit praying in the intercession. You end up talking about how bothered you are.*

*Well, I love this: Micah said, “No, I am staying in the grip of God contending for the breakthrough.”*

*Look what God answered in verse 15. This is remarkable. It is one of my favorite Old Testament verses about the end-time revival. God said, “Here is what I am going to do, Micah.” When you read it, remember this part is an end-time passage. He said, “I am going to release the same miracles in the end times that I did with Moses.” What? Verse 15, He said, “The miracles I did with Moses are going to happen again.” It has never happened since Micah’s day. This is an end-time passage.*

*I have talked a few times on this. We address this in those end-time studies that we do every Wednesday night in this three-year, six-module series I was talking about earlier. There are quite a few passages on the coming great power that is like the book of Acts and like the book of Exodus. Beloved, here is the point. What I love is not his faith, though I love his faith. I love the fact he will not quit when he is being attacked by friends and family. He will not quit. He is engaged in intercession.*

* 1. ***Response #6*** is to worship God for His unique kindness—in freely pardoning our sins (7:18).

18Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity…because He delights in mercy… (Mic. 7:18)

*Number six, oh, I love this! He looks at God. He says, “Who is a God like You who forgives? You are so generous!” Beloved, I believe this revelation of the unique generosity of God. He delights in me. I am a broken and weak man. I deserve to be set down and set aside. All of us do, yet He says, No, I delight in mercy,” and I say, “Who is like You?”*

*You know how Jesus said in Luke 7:47 that the person who is forgiven much loves much. Well, everyone is forgiven much! They just do not know it. The person who does not know they are forgiven does not love that much.*

*Micah said, “Who is like You?” That is, “God, You have seen me in my setbacks. I have fallen. I have sat down a few times. I gave in to some of these attitudes. But, You have forgiven me. Why? Because You delight in mercy.” This is so beautiful, this on-going journey of discovering how God delights in mercy towards me and His gracious personality is so glorious.*

* + 1. The Lord’s people will be overwhelmed with awe and gratitude for His extravagant kindness.
    2. The most excellent way to live is to imitate this kind of kindness.
  1. ***Response #7*** is to delight in mercy towards others since God delights in mercy over me (7:18).

18…because He delights in mercy. 19He will have compassion on us…and subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. (Mic. 7:18-19)

*Then finally response number seven is the same thing: He delights in mercy. Verse 19, I want you to notice the plural pronouns. There are three of them in verse 19 that show there is a community dimension. This is the only time he uses the plural pronouns. Because He delights in mercy, verse 18, delights to give it to me, I say to Him, “I love You!” And, because He delights in mercy, He wants me to delight in giving mercy to you when you mistreat me. I say, “Well, Lord, I don’t want to. I want them to pay a little bit. I want them to own it. I want them to grovel a little bit.”*

*He would say, “No, no, I want you to delight in mercy towards that guy in the Body of Christ, on your team, who is speaking badly about you. Mike, you delight in mercy because I delight in giving you and that guy mercy. Jump into this with Me.”*

*Beloved, this is going to be the rescue and the restoration of the Body of Christ. The “family of God” dynamics is when we are caught up in the “Not only does He give me mercy, He gives the people bothering me mercy.” He doesn’t wants you to grit your teeth and say, “Oh, I will give you one more chance. You are on probation.”*

*He would say, “No, I want you to delight in mercy. That is how My kingdom prospers, and that is how love grows.” So that is where we are at.*

* + 1. The Lord delights in giving mercy to His people—this empowers His people to delight in giving mercy to one another, thus unifying the family of God.
    2. Because we know that He delights in mercy to us, thus we delight in giving mercy to those who fail, even to the ones who have mistreated or failed us (Jas. 2:13).

13For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. (Jas. 2:13)

*Well, amen and amen! Let’s stand before the Lord.*

*Lord, here we are before You.*

*A bunch of us—I am not speaking prophetically, but just because we are humans— find ourselves here. It is this verse, Micah said, “Though I fall, I will arise.” We fall. We have given in, caved in, to the criticism, to the bitterness, to the “you better pay what what you owe,” all these things. He said, as it were, “I want to rise in love and gratitude and mercy. I want to do the thing that I take with me forever in the age to come.”*

*I want to call us today to do this. I spent so much time on this on our vacation, personally, for me. I am not thinking about you. I said, “Lord, I am going down in flames in a good way, the fire of God in delighting in mercy to the most rank sinner, to the closest friend, wherever there has been any mistreatment towards me. I am going down in flames—I am saying that tongue in cheek—in the glory of God I am going to be a man who delights in mercy. I am not quitting. I am not drawing back. I am not letting go of my calling because somebody is mad at me. I am pressing in. Because You give me mercy, I am going to give them mercy, for mercy always triumphs over judgment when the hearts are right, in Jesus’ name.”*

*So, Lord, I ask You right now over this room, I ask You for people who have fallen and need to arise today. They need to say, “I am deficient in love and gratitude, in graciousness, humility. I am not okay about that. I am not okay about being deficient. I am going to go for it. I am going to go deep in God.”*

*I want to invite you—of course, everyone in the room ought to come forward; that is not my point. Even I need to come down here—if you say, “My heart is kind of stinging.” Or, “I feel inspired and I want prayer.” Or, “My heart is stinging; I just feel stuck. I mean I know this is right. I just need that little ‘Holy Spirit push.’ I need to get through this season because I am sitting in darkness. I do not have any prophetic clarity. I need some clarity right now.”*

*The Lord would say, “I am going to give it to you. I really am. Do not draw back. Press in. Do not draw back! Press in! Do not draw back.”*

*Beloved, we are a press-in community. We are a breakthrough community, meaning we are contending for fullness no matter how long it takes. We are not letting anybody steal this from our heart because they are treating us badly. I mean this people in this room and how we treat each other. We are not drawing back because He delights in mercy.*

*Well, I am trying to pray but I keep on preaching!*

*So if I could have you come up if you would like prayer. I just have been so touched by this personally these last couple of weeks for my own personal life. I am in all the way.*

*“Lord, I am going all the way, all the way. I do not care what anyone says. I am going to go all the way in mercy and in faith. I am going to press in all the way.”*

*Here we are, Lord.*

*Beloved, we are all being tested. We are in the seminary of the Holy Spirit right now, all over the nations right now. He is coming back for a perfected Bride, a unified family.*

*Jesus, we love You. We want to grow in love. Jesus, I love You. I am not drawing back. I am not quitting. I am not going to get stuck in my complaints. I am going to cling to You, Jesus. I am going to cling to You, Jesus. I am going to grow in love and gratitude and humility. Lord, I love You. I love You, Jesus.*

*All over the room, just tell Him, “I love You, Jesus. I am in this for real.” He delights in mercy, that is His way forward. That is the safety we find in Him. I press on, Lord. I press on. We love You, Jesus. We will not draw back. When I fall, I will arise. When I stumble, I will arise up and say yes to love and humility, gratitude, mercy until the end. Oh, we love You, Jesus, and again and again we say that You are worth it, Jesus. I will arise in love. I will not quit, I will not quit, Lord. I will not quit.*