No Rest for the Wicked

A Present-Day Illustration

Why are you speaking such ugly things over my daughter?” Helen said. “Are you trying to curse her?”

Gloria narrowed her eyes and looked at Helen’s daughter, Sheilita. The 30 year old sat in the restaurant booth next to her mother with a blank look. Gloria and Helen had arranged this luncheon date weeks ago. Sheilita had been at her mom’s house when Gloria arrived and had asked to tag along. Sheilita had been at her mom’s to make one of her frequent requests for money.

Sheilita was Helen’s only child. She was a pretty girl who was used to getting her way. Sheilita had taken to gambling in the last eight years or so for “entertainment.” Her “entertainment” had cost her mother Helen thousands of dollars.

Helen had said she was at her wits end with her daughter, yet she continued to loan and give her money. Helen had not only cried on Gloria’s shoulder, but had borrowed money from her twice. Helen, however, always paid her debts. Her daughter did not.

“What I’m speaking,” Gloria said, “is the truth.”

“Sheilita, you are addicted to gambling,” Gloria continued. “You think you can make easy money that way, but you can’t. Why do you get out of bed at night to go gambling? It’s your addiction, and if you keep going down this road, there is only more destruction waiting for you. But Christ is waiting for you, too. You can turn to Him before it’s too late!”

1. How is appropriate discipline a sign of love?

2. Why does appropriate discipline matter to God?

3. In your life, how has the discipline of someone who loved you helped you?
Parable of Woe

_Micah 2:4-5, KJV_

4 In that day shall one take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, and say, We be utterly spoiled: he hath changed the portion of my people: how hath he removed it from me! turning away he hath divided our fields.

5 Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast a cord by lot in the congregation of the Lord.

_During the eighth century B.C., both Israel and Judah rose to economic prosperity—while at the same time plunging to the depths of spiritual and moral corruption. Micah repeatedly warned them that God’s judgment was coming against them. Micah especially had a message for wealthy landowners who were gobbling up the fields of poorer families (Mic. 2:1-2). These lands were supposed to be the perpetual inheritance of Israelite families (see Lev. 25:10, 13). Micah described for the rich (and all who were not following God’s law) the ridicule they would have to endure at the hands of their captors. The conquerors would put words in the mouths of the newly-enslaved Israelites as they sarcastically lamented the plight of these new slaves. Their captors would mock their ruin and then divide up everyone’s property and possessions, rich or poor. In the ancient Middle East, demoralizing a captured enemy often made them more compliant. When Israel and Judah would be sent into exile, their captors would mock them, pointing out all the privileges and possessions they had lost._

No Israelites would divide up the land “by lot” (Mic. 2:5)—that is, no Israelite would divide the land as Joshua
had once done (Josh. 14:1-2). His division of the land had brought joy to the Israelites as they finally had a place, a land that would belong not only to them but to their descendants. In the Middle East, you are not a people without the land to grow crops, build houses on, and settle. Ironically, the Assyrians and Babylonians would also divide the land, but only to take the inheritance away from the people.

4. What was Micah’s message to Israel and Judah?

5. How were Israel’s conquerors going to mock them with the division of the land?

**Prophesy Not!**

*Micah 2:6-7, KJV*

6 Prophesy ye not, say they to them that prophesy: they shall not prophesy to them, that they shall not take shame.

7 O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the Lord straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?

*Micah 2:6-7, NIV*

6 “Do not prophesy,” their prophets say.

“Do not prophesy about these things; disgrace will not overtake us.”

7 Should it be said, O house of Jacob: “Is the Spirit of the Lord angry? Does he do such things?”

“Do not my words do good to him whose ways are upright?”

Micah, like many of the true prophets of God, had to contend with those who claimed to be speaking for God, but clearly had no genuine word from the Lord.

These prophets abandoned any confrontation or bad news and embraced the preservation of the status quo by offering false messages of peace and prosperity. For Micah, if a person claiming to be a prophet was telling the leaders of these apostate nations they had absolutely nothing to worry about, it was proof positive that these so-called prophets were not conveying God’s truth.

The false prophets did not like Micah’s forecasts of coming
judgment. They claimed the “disgrace” (vs. 6) and ruin Micah prophesied would not come.

But God responded to the false prophets with specific questions to force the people to clearly see what they are doing and what will happen to them. These questions pointed out truths that apply to any generation of God’s people. First, can the Lord be angry with His people? Of course. He will be angry with those who forsake His law, oppress the poor, and follow their own ways. Second, could God really “do such things” (vs. 7)—that is, bring disaster on people who are supposed to be His own? Of course He can. Judgment eventually comes to anyone who does not follow God. And third, can the Word of the Lord heal those who forsake their sins and return in their hearts to Him? Absolutely. God’s message through Micah was to stop listening to the false prophets, return to the Lord, and practice His righteousness.

6. Why were the false prophets angry with Micah?

7. What three principles did Micah give his audience?

Go Away!

Micah 2:8-11, KJV

8 Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy: ye pull off the robe with the garment from them that pass by securely as men averse from war.
9 The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses; from their children have ye taken away my glory for ever.
10 Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall

Micah 2:8-11, NIV

8“Lately my people have risen up like an enemy.
You strip off the rich robe from those who pass by without a care, like men returning from battle.
9You drive the women of my people from their pleasant homes. You take away my blessing from their children forever.
10Get up, go away! For this is not your resting place, because it is defiled,
The rich were starting to take on the bravado of military conquerors, helping themselves to the “spoils of war” with no fear of accountability. If a rich and powerful person wanted your robe (or anything else you possessed), that wealthy merchant would simply take it with no thought of the moral implication or the eternal consequences.

If the wealthy saw that a widow had inherited her home from her deceased husband, they would find ways to seize the home and drive the woman into the street. The children who depended on her and the inheritance those children should rightly receive from their father were gone as well.

God had had enough. He told the people to “go away” from Him (vs. 10), which they would soon do at the hands of the Assyrians. They had been told God’s truth, but instead they would rather listen to the lies of false prophets. What they really prefer to hear is “a liar and deceiver” (vs. 11). He would give them prophecies with an open bar! “Free wine and beer for everyone!” they would want the false prophet to say. “Drink up, because nothing’s going to change!”

Still today, our evaluation of those who preach God’s Word should not be based on whether or not we like their message but on its accuracy. Micah accurately prophesied God’s message, but no one wanted to really hear what God was saying because it was not a “happy” message.

8. How were the rich getting wealthier?

9. What are you learning about God’s truth for you or for your congregation?
Open My Eyes, O God

Saul, the young Jewish zealot, was cruelly arresting and imprisoning the followers of Jesus. As he traveled to Damascus to intensify this persecution, the Lord Himself appeared to Saul in a blinding light. The voice of Jesus penetrated Saul with this message: “When you persecute these believers, you are persecuting Me!” At that time, Saul was rendered blind. God’s hand of correction was unmistakable. By His grace alone, Paul was completely transformed by this toughest kind of love (1 Cor. 15:10).

Saul was abruptly brought out of a life of hateful self-deception into a life of profound usefulness to the Lord and to his fellow men. Because of the Lord’s correction, Saul was able to see himself for what he was. Because of his blindness, his eyes became opened to his sins, and he changed—immediately and radically.

We are so like Saul. We often charge down the road of self-righteousness until events, friends, or the Lord Himself shines His blinding light onto the sin we won’t admit. Though this exposure to the truth about ourselves is hard to take, it contains God’s power to set us free from lies, particularly lies we tell ourselves. Lies are the stepping stones on the path away from God. His truth, when received and heeded, removes us from that path, turns us around, and sets our feet on solid ground.

Ask God to show you where you are self-deceived and be interested in His answer. He is not afraid of offending and will speak strong truth to you. He is completely interested in leading you to goodness and is completely able to do so.

10. List some of the methods God uses to rebuke His people.

11. What makes a person correctable or uncorrectable?

12. Has there been a time that you are willing to share when God turned you around and led you to goodness? Describe what happened.
God Is Able

Our openness to the Lord’s loving guidance is the first step on the path into His goodness. When we begin to comprehend the indescribable freedom and peace of the path He offers, as compared to our own, gratefulness emerges followed by an increased desire to change our ways. We then willingly participate in this process of sanctification, remembering that all the resources of almighty God are on our side.

▶ Take a few moments now to ask God to search you and let you know if there is anything in you that is offensive to Him. Be ready to accept hard truths that He points out to you. Write those truths here (you don’t have to share them) and then pray this week for God’s guidance in correction.

KEY VERSE
O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the Lord straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly? —Micah 2:7, KJV

Should it be said, O house of Jacob: “Is the Spirit of the Lord angry? Does he do such things? Do not my words do good to him whose ways are upright?” —Micah 2:7, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON
July 6 through July 12
(See The Quiet Hour and Cross devotionals on these passages.)

Wed. 2 Chronicles 19:4-11—Act in the Fear of the Lord.
Fri. Matthew 7:15-20—Known by Their Fruits.
Sat. Isaiah 45:5-13—Woe to Those Striving with God.