

Henry Ow
 HCC Sermon
 A Case of Rebellion

INTRODUCTION

1. Image: When I stepped of the plane for my first short-term mission trip.
2. Need: Rebellion occurs any time we prioritize anyone or anything over God.
3. Subject: What do we do when a brother or sister refuses to turn from their rebellion?
4. Text: Micah 6:1-7:7
5. Preview: When does rebellion against God occur? What is the cost of rebellion? What do we do when believers insist on rebellion despite our warnings?

BODY

- I. Rebellion occurs when believers confuse complete faithfulness with partial faithfulness (Micah 6:1-8)
 - A. Micah invokes the image of a courtroom to teach Judah that partial faithfulness to God is rebellion (Micah 6:1-8)
 - B. Both types of people demonstrate a partial faithfulness to God because they don't trust God.
 - i. Many people see the Christian faith as insurance for eternity.
 - ii. Some people see God as someone as they must appease.
- II. The cost of rebellion is punishment (Micah 6:9-16)
 - A. Micah warns Judah that God will punish them for their unjust business practices (Micah 6:8-16).
 - B. Dishonest business practices fail to honor the work of others
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 - C. What goes around, comes around.
 - D. Warn the unrepentant believer that rebellion leads to punishment.
- III. Trust God despite their insistence to rebel (Micah 7:1-7)
 - A. Micah persists in trusting God despite Judah's continued rebellion (Micah 7:1-7)
 - B. When we see a brother or sister persist in sin, trust God by praying for them (1 John 5:16)

CONCLUSION

1. Summary: Trust God despite the insistence of a
2. Closing Image: Remember the story of my field host's daughter.

MANUSCRIPT

When I stepped off the plane for my first short-term mission trip, I met our field host and his family. There was his eldest son, his younger son, and his youngest daughter.

After gathering all our baggage, we all hopped into a small van and sped off to our lodgings. The youngest daughter enjoyed sitting on the laps of my teammates. She being quite the extrovert kept moving from one teammate to the next.

When the ride became bumpier, my field host warned his daughter that she was allowed to move one more time. Otherwise, she would spend some time by herself.

I thought to myself: The warning was clear and stern. My field host meant business.

But this four to five-year-old girl thought that her sweet smile would allow her to get away with rebelling against dad. She moved not once but twice.

When she moved the second time, my field host sprang into action and sat his daughter on his lap. He questioned her: "What did daddy say? I said you could only move one more time. Now you will spend some time by yourself."

He took her head and gently turned it toward the window away from everyone. Like any child who doesn't get what she wants, she began to wail, cry, and holler. But my field host ignored her cries and returned to conversing with my teammates.

After a few minutes, he turned to his daughter and asked: "Are you ready to return to the conversation? Yes, daddy." He awaited her response: "Yes, daddy". But her face screamed defiance. I will not submit. Despite my field host's warning, his daughter continued to defy his instructions. This was a case of rebellion.

How often have we found ourselves in the position of my field host? It may not have been as a parent warning a child. Think about a time when you warned a brother or sister in Christ that their rebellion against God would result in God's discipline. It could be a brother getting too close with a female colleague at work. Maybe you warn a sister that their continuing absence from church service will lead to feeling distant from God. Maybe you warn a brother that their inability to let a grudge go will consume their thoughts.

When we think of rebellion, we think of outrageous sins: embezzlement, fraud, bribery, murder, or rape. But as Christ followers, we realize that **rebellion occurs anytime we prioritize anyone or anything over God**. It happens when we put our agenda first, and God's agenda second.

Yet what do we do when a brother or sister refuses to turn from their path of rebellion? What do we do when we warn them, and they continue to defy God? How should we respond?

What do we do when a brother or sister refuses to turn from their rebellion?

To answer this question, we'll turn to a case of rebellion found in the writing of Micah the prophet. Please turn with me to Micah, chapter 6, verse 1. Micah had the unenviable task of warning Judah that their continuing rebellion would result in God's judgment. Despite Micah's pleas, Judah ignored him and God. Again, we'll be in Micah, chapter 6, verse 1.

In this morning's section of Micah's writings, we're going to answer three questions. **First, when does rebellion against God occur? Second, what is the cost of rebellion? Third, what do we do when believers insist on rebellion despite our warnings?**

First, when does rebellion against God occur? **Rebellion occurs when believers confuse complete faithfulness with partial faithfulness**. Disobedience occurs when we think that God's

truth applies to certain parts of my life rather than all of my life. If I follow God with my mind, then that's enough. Who cares about following God with heart, soul, and strength? That's when rebellion begins. It begins when we think that we just need to obey God in a few things instead of all things. Spiritual rebellion occurs when believers confuse complete faithfulness with partial faithfulness.

Micah invokes the image of a courtroom to teach Judah that partial faithfulness to God is rebellion. Imagine the scene. Judah sits on the left-hand side as the defendant. Micah sits on the right-hand side as the prosecutor. In the jury box sits the mountains and hills. Mt Camel and Mt Hebron are present. The LORD then steps foot into the courtroom and takes his seat at the judges bench and makes the pronouncement in Micah, chapter 6, verse 1: *“Hear what the LORD says: Arise, please our case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice.”*

The Micah pushes off from his hands to stand begins his case with the words in verse two: *“Hear you, mountains, the indictment of the LORD, and you enduring foundations of the earth, for the LORD has an indictment against his people, and he will contend with Israel.”*

Why on earth did God choose a jury of inanimate objects: mountains, hills, and the foundations of the earth? Other than God and the heavenly hosts, these mountains existed for millennia. Mt. Sinai bore witness to Moses receiving the law of God. Mt Moriah bore witness to God providing for Abraham a ram to sacrifice instead of Isaac. Mt. Carmel bore witness Elijah confronting the prophets of Baal. **The mountains have eyes to witness the works of God and the response of Israel.**

Micah as representative for the LORD reminds the court of the LORD's faithfulness to Israel. He begins his argument with a history of what the LORD has done for Israel. He first delivered them from slavery in Egypt through his appointed leaders: Moses, the administrator, Aaron, the mediator, and Miriam, the prophetess. Verse 3 says: *"O my people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Answer me! For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and I sent you before Moses, Aaron, and Miriam."*

Micah continues his argument. Not only did God save Israel with godly leadership, but **he also saved them through divine intervention**. Remember the time when Israel wandered in the wilderness and Balak, the king of Moab came up with the idea of cursing Israel through the diviner Balaam. Yet every time Balaam attempted to curse you, only blessings came out of his mouth. Balaam attempted to curse Israel not once, twice, or three times, but four times. Each time he uttered a blessing. Verse five says: *"O my people, remember what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him"*

Micah then recalls two locations: Shittim and Gilgal. Verse 5 continues: *"and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the LORD."* When Micah mentions these two places: Shittim to Gilgal, it's similar to the Texan cry: "Remember the Alamo!" Or for the Star Wars fan: "Remember Alderaan!" These locations have a significance in Israelite history. Israelite parents and priests would teach little Jewish boys and girls that after Moses died, Joshua assumed leadership of Israel. Before Israel crossed over from the wilderness into the promised land of Canaan, they camped at Shittim. There, Joshua sent out spies to Jericho. After the spies returned, Joshua led Israel to cross the Jordan into the area of Gilgal. At Gilgal, three things happen. Joshua sets up stones to remember the crossing of the

Jordan. He circumcises all the men. Israel celebrates the first Passover in the promised land.

Israel had arrived. God had fulfilled his promise. **Remember Shittim! Remember Gilgal!**

Despite God's faithfulness to Israel, Judah disobeyed the LORD. You hear it in Micah's opening questions: "What have I done to you? How have I wearied you?" Micah finished with his statement takes a seat.

Then Judah rises to respond. Essentially, Judah says: "What do you want from me? If you want me to bring a bigger sacrifice to offer at the temple then I would bring it." Look with me at verse 6: *"With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?"*

A worshipper offered a burnt offering such as a bull or a lamb or a ram by burning it whole. Judah says that it wouldn't bring just any calf, but it would offer a year-old calf whom they had fed for year and cared for and not helped to plow any field. They would give its tender meat to God. Not just part of it, but all of it. Judah would not even eat all of it. Take it all.

Judah continues in verse 7: *"Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams with thousands of rivers of oil?"* Judah asks: "Do you want an infinite number of rams or amount of oil? It's not just a pint or a gallon. We'll give you rivers of oil.

Judah concludes with the last question: *"Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"* Judah asks the most ridiculous question: "Would the sacrifice of our firstborn children pay for our sins? If Judah knew Torah, then it would have known that God forbid child sacrifice. He considered the practice of sacrificing children to Molech to be abhorrent. But Judah asks anyways. Judah finished its inquiry and sits down.

Micah rises again for the last time with this closing statement in verse eight: “He has told you, O man, what is good and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” Micah takes his seat.

A lot can be said about these verses. But the main thrust is this: God does just want your outward worship exhibited by sacrifices. He wants your inward worship of heart, mind, and soul. He doesn't want you to worship God at the altar, but he wants you to worship him at home, in the field, and in the market.

When hear a poor person's case in court, do justice. Listen to the case and render justice impartially.

When you see someone in need, help them. Provide for them a coat to keep warm, food to fill their belly, or a listening ear to hear their pain. Is this because the law says so? Yes. But it's more than that. Because you have experienced the committed love of God, you commit to love others. You love kindness. The word: kindness should have a foot note. If you look at the bottom page of your paper Bible, then you'll see another term for it would be “steadfast love”. Unfortunately, it doesn't show up in the YouVersion Bible app when I looked. But it may show up on other Bible apps. This idea of steadfast love talks about a committed love as demonstrated by God's committed love to Israel.

When you go to the temple to offer your sacrifice, you know that as Samuel did when he warned Saul that God doesn't just want burnt offerings. God delights in obedience. Just as the whole burnt offering is given to God, so is your life given to him. This is what Micah means by walking humbly before the LORD. You are completely faithful to God.

Judah believed that their partial faithfulness through sacrifice at the temple would save them. As long as they offered their sacrifices on the Sabbath, then they could do whatever they wanted. Micah corrects this misunderstanding by teaching them that God wants them their complete faithfulness. This means following God by not only offering the right sacrifice but by living rightly.

Many people see the Christian faith as insurance for eternity. Once you make a profession of faith, you can do whatever you want. After all, God will forgive you because of what Jesus has done. But that demonstrates a misunderstanding of grace. If God could be so faithful as to offer his only son, then how can we not offer all of ourselves to his service.

Some people see God as someone they must appease. You fear that if you don't do the Christian thing, then God will be displeased. If I read my Bible, attend church, or pray multiple times a day, the God will be more pleased with me. And God says to you that faithfulness is not just in what you do but also resting in the fact I'm faithful to you through Jesus Christ.

Both types of people demonstrate a partial faithfulness because they don't trust God.

The ones who see the gospel as insurance, don't trust that God's design for their lives is best. This is why they live as they please. For those who work hard to appease God, they don't trust that God is pleased with them through the faithfulness of Christ. An unwillingness to trust and obey God is rebellion.

If we're really honest, this describes not only other people. If we look deep down into ourselves, we discover I am a rebel. I have rebelled against God. This should humble us especially when we confront another believer's rebellion against God.

What is the cost of rebellion? **The cost of rebellion is punishment.** When God's people rebels, he punishes them. Discipline awaits those who God prefer to live according to their flesh rather than according to God's decrees. The cost of rebellion is punishment.

Micah warns Judah that God will punish them for their unjust business practices. Hear how Micah issues the image of the rod to illustrate the idea of discipline. The author of Proverbs uses the rod when it talks about a parent disciplining a child (Prov 13:25). Whenever I think of discipline, my mother's bamboo handled feather duster enters my mind. I still remember to the sound of it cutting through the air and creating a solid "thwack" when it hit my hand.

Whoever holds the rod or feather duster has the authority and demands respect. The Bible would use the word: fear. If the LORD holds the rod, then Judah ought to have a fear that leads to worship and obedience.

Micah writes this in verse nine: *"The voice of the LORD cries to the city – and it is sound wisdom to fear your name: "Hear of the rod and of him who appointed it!"*

What unjust business practices would lead to such punishment? Judah's merchants had been cheating its customers through fraud. If one ephah of flour, which is about nine pounds, costs half a shekel. They would have charged ten shekels. It reminds me of a New York Times articles tell the story of how a man In Tennessee at the beginning of the pandemic bought up all the hand sanitizer he could find and charged eight to seventy dollars for a one-dollar bottle.

Micah writes in verse ten: *"Can I forget any longer the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is accursed? Shall I acquit the man with wicked*

scales and with a bag of deceitful weights? Your rich men are full of violence; your inhabitants speak lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth."

What is the punishment that awaits these profiteers? These swindlers? God will bring about the curses that he had promised would happen if Israel broke the covenant. An invading army of Assyrians would lay waste to the cities of Judah. As they marched across the Judean countryside, they would raze fields, plunder, and take. When the Judeans retreated to their capital city: Jerusalem, they had no access to their vineyards or their fields. The Assyrian army stood between them and sustenance.

Micah writes in verse 13: *"Therefore I strike you with a grievous blow, making you desolate because of your sins. You shall eat, but not be satisfied, and there shall be hunger within you".*

Before the Judeans could eat bread until their stomachs were full. Now they would only have maybe half a loaf. This would make their stomachs growl for more. But there was none.

Verse 14 continues: *"You shall put away but no preserve, and what you preserve I will give to the sword."*

Remember the wheat you sowed. You'll never eat its grains Remember the bountiful harvest you received last year – those sweet and juicy figs that you made into jam. Think about those plump grapes you dried to make raisins. Recall the olives you pressed into oil and stored in vats. All those hours sowing, picking, harvesting, pressing, treading, stomping, and drying wasted. The Assyrians would take all of it and none of it would remain.

Verse fifteen says: *"You shall sow, but not reap; you shall tread olives, but not anoint yourselves with oil; you shall tread grapes, but not drink wine."*

Why has this punishment come? Judah instead of following the LORD wholeheartedly adopted the practices of their sister, Israel. Two kings in Israel had introduced alternatives to God in Israel. They were a father and son duo. Omri established himself as king because of his might. His son Ahab introduced Baal worship to Israel through his marriage to the Phoenician princess Jezebel. This led Israel into further decay. Instead of learning Israel's lessons, Judah adopted the same practices. Micah concluded his condemnation of Judah with these words in verse 16: *"For you have kept the statues of Omri, and all the works of the house of Ahab; and you have walked in their counsels, that I may make you a desolation, and your inhabitants a hissing; so you shall bear the scorn of my people."*

Now you may think that unjust business practices are a thing of the past. But even the early church struggled with deceit. Ananias and Sapphira sold their land and held back a portion of the proceeds while presenting the rest of the proceeds to the church saying: This all we earned from the sale of our property. Their lie cost them their lives.

Why does God detest dishonesty in business practices? Dishonest business practices fail to honor the work of others. When you fail to pay someone a fair wage for their work, we're essentially saying: You mean nothing to me. You are a resource for me to use as I please and discard when I'm finished. In some ways, it's stealing.

Think about media piracy. When we fail to pay for a film or a song. We may think to ourselves: Well... the artists and the actors get paid millions. But do we think about those working the sound booth or the person working for hours to create the special effects we enjoy. When you commit media piracy, you're not only stealing from the big companies, but you steal from the people who need the income to care for their families.

It happens not just in business. **Think about academic research.** When you take credit for someone's work by plagiarizing, you're stealing someone's ideas. You are essentially saying: I don't care how many hours of lab tests you ran or academic journals you read. You are just a resource to be used for my benefit.

This ultimately betrays a selfishness that looks out for myself because if I don't, no one else will. There's a phrase: **what goes around comes around.** If you fail to care for others, then God will withdraw his care from you. If you steal, then what you store up will be taken away. It may not be now, but everything will one day pass by the fire. Why do believers experience punishment when they disobey God? The author of Hebrews puts it this way: For the LORD disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives (Heb 12:6). It teaches us that if we stray from God's protection by living according to our flesh, then we find ourselves in danger.

Warn other believers of the punishment that awaits them if they persist in rebellion. If they struggle with sexual purity, that it will affect their dating relationships, marriage, view of men, and view of women. If they struggle with forgiving their brother and sister, the bitterness will eat them up inside. If they struggle with attending church, then their hearts will grow cold to the gospel. Warn other believers if they persist in rebellion.

What do we do when people insist on rebellion despite our warnings? **Trust God despite their insistence to rebel.** Believe that God is doing something may be beyond our ability to see. Have faith in God through a brother or sister may ignore your warning. Trust God despite their insistence to rebel.

Micah persists in trusting God despite Judah's continued rebellion. If Micah were to compare Judah's rebellion to something, then he would compare it to the late summer seasons. All the figs in the orchard would have been picked. Every cluster of grape had been plucked from their vine. There should have been a few figs left on the branches of fig trees and clusters of grape on the vine for the poor to glean. But nothing remains.

Micah writes this in verse one of chapter seven: *"Woe is me! For I have become as when the summer fruit has been gathered, as when the grapes have been gleaned: there is no cluster to eat, no first-ripe fig that my soul desires."*

Just as no more fruit hung on the vine, no righteous deed existed in the land of Judah. It's like trying to find nitrile gloves or Clorox wipes at Costco during the pandemic. No righteous person lives in the land. Of course, Micah spoke metaphorically because there was a remnant of those who were faithful to the Lord such as other prophets like Isaiah. But the majority rebelled against God.

Micah describes the situation in verse 2: *"The godly has perished from the earth, and there is no one upright among mankind; they all lie in wait for blood, and each hunts the other with a net."*

Instead of using their nets to capture birds or fish, they employ these tools to hunt other Israelites.

Micah goes on to describe the corrupt judicial system. From the King, which Micah calls "great one" to the official the prince to the judge. They conspire to create a system of bribery and corruption that the ability to do justice is extinct.

Micah writes in verse 3: *“Their hands are on what is evil, to do it well; the prince and the judge ask for a bribe, and the great man utters the evil desire of his soul; thus they weave it together.”*

He compares them to prickly shrubs that harm those who touch them and a hedge that obstructs justice. Micah writes in verse 4: *“The best of them is like a brier, the most upright of them a thorn hedge.”*

In light of all this corruption Micah compares himself to a watchman on the wall of Jerusalem. While others may see the Assyrian army with their chariots or siege works, Micah sees God’s punishment.

Micah captures this image in the latter half of verse 4: *“The day of your watchmen, of your punishment, has come; now their confusion is at hand.”*

Like a wooden structure that has been eaten by termites, so has societal structures disintegrate so much so that no one can trust one another, not even your parents or your spouse.

Micah describes this deterioration in verse 5: *“Put no trust in a neighbor; have no confidence in a friend; guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your arms, for the son treats the father with contempt, the daughter rises up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man’s enemies are the men of his own house.”*

Although there is rampant rebellion in Judah, and no one can be trusted, Micah turns to one who is trustworthy. He writes in verse seven: *“But as for me, I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.”*

Why does Micah still consider God the savior of Judah? Why does he still pray?

Micah knows that God will use Israel to bless the nations. He promised it to Abraham (Gen 17:17). He also promised to Moses that He would restore Israel after a time of exile. Micah awaits God to fulfil his plans. No one can ever foil God's plans.

For us, we recognize that God has fulfilled his promise to Israel. He returned them to the land after 70 years of exile. 400 years later, he would send his son to die on the cross for our sins and rise and ascend into heaven. He then sent the Spirit of God to dwell amongst those he believes. He fulfilled the words of Moses in Deut 30:6: *"And the Lord your God will circumcise you heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live."*

When we see a brother or sister persist in sin, trust God by praying for them. John reminds us that our first response when we see someone in sin is to pray. Pray that God would open their eyes to see their folly. Pray that God would help them see their need to repent and confess. Pray that God would show them that their rebellion will never satisfy. Trust God.

When does rebellion against God occur? Rebellion against God occurs when believers confuse complete faithfulness with partial faithfulness. What is the cost of rebellion? The cost of rebellion is punishment. What do we do when other believers insist on rebellion despite our warnings? Trust God despite their insistence to rebel.

Remember the story of my field host's daughter. After his daughter refused to acknowledge his authority with a "Yes, daddy." My field host calmly responded: "You'll have to spend more time by yourself then." He proceeded to turn her head again to the window away from everyone. My field host returned to chatting with my teammates.

After a few more minutes, he asked his daughter again: "Are you ready to return? Yes, daddy."

Recognizing further rebellion would not free her from her social solitary confinement, she said the two words acknowledging her dad's authority: "Yes, daddy."

Since the road had smoothed out again, my field host allowed her to sit on the lap of a teammate with the stern instruction: "Do not move." She giggled and laughed the rest of our car trip with the case of rebellion behind her.