

# Disintegration of the Nation

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Date: 22 November 2020

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ] Now Stephen Ballengall is going to be preaching to us in a short while and our reading comes from the prophet Micah. So do turn up in your Bibles, Micah chapter 3.
- Comes just after Jonah in our Old Testaments. And it's tucked in just before Nahum. So I'll give you a moment to find Micah and I'll read chapter 3.
- Micah chapter 3 verse 1. And I said, hear you heads of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel.
- Is it not for you to know justice? You who hate the good and love the evil, who tear the skin from off my people and their flesh from off their bones, who eat the flesh of my people and flay their skin from off them and break their bones in pieces and chop them up like meat in a pot, like flesh in a cauldron.
- Then they will cry to the Lord, but he will not answer them. He will hide his face from them at that time because they have made their deeds evil.
- [ 1 : 2 6 ] Thus says the Lord concerning the prophets who lead my people astray, who cry peace when they have something to eat, but declare war against him who puts nothing into their mouths.
- Therefore it shall be night to you without vision and darkness to you without divination. The sun shall go down on the prophets and the day shall be black over them.
- The seers shall be disgraced and the diviners put to shame. They shall all cover their lips, for there is no answer from God. But as for me, I am filled with power, with the spirit of the Lord and with justice and might to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.
- Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob and rulers of the house of Israel who detest justice and make crooked all that is straight, who build as iron with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity.
- Its heads give judgment for a bribe. Its priests teach for a price. Its prophets practice divination for money.
- [ 2 : 4 4 ] Yet they lean on the Lord and say, is not the Lord in the midst of us? No disaster shall come upon us. Therefore, because of you, Zion shall be ploughed as a field.
- Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins and the mountain of the house a wooded height. Amen.
- May the Lord bless his word to us this morning. Well, sobering words, aren't they? And Steve will be opening them up for us a bit later in the service.
- Well, please do take a seat. And if you could have your Bibles open at Micah chapter 3, that would be very helpful as we dig into this passage. It's been roughly 10 months since we last opened this book together.
- But thankfully, you know, it's been a fairly dull and uneventful 10 months. So I'm hoping that you'll remember absolutely everything that's going on in this book so far. And so we can just jump in straight to chapter 3.

[ 3 : 53 ] But just in the off chance that other things have been on your mind since January, here are 10 quick bullet point reminders. So make sure you're sitting up straight, you're paying attention and listening, because these will be quick fire.

And if you can remember two of these after I've said them, well done. Number one, God's chosen, treasured covenant nation of Israel are in a very sorry state.

Number two, the nation has been split into two kingdoms, the northern kingdom, Israel, and the southern kingdom, Judah. Number three, the northern kingdom have been an unrepentant nation, turning their back on their loving God.

They were warned to come back again and again to repent, but they didn't. They chose not to. And as a result of that, the Lord pronounced judgment on them, and they were exiled from God's land by the Assyrians.

Number four, Judah, the southern kingdom, are still God's people in God's land, but they too have big sin issues, and they're unrepentant about them, despite having front row seats to their northern neighbor's destruction.

[ 5 : 04 ] Micah has been sent as a prophet to the southern kingdom. He was preaching to people who belonged to the Lord in name and had all the trappings of belonging to him, but not in heart.

Number five, so Micah had a big undesirable task. He was to preach judgment against the people. He was to call them out for their sin and transgression and bring them to repentance in the Lord.

Number six, the way that Micah goes about this is by preaching of judgment and then restoration in three cycles in his prophecy. He basically does the same thing three times in a row.

But with each cycle, he adds another layer to both the sin of the people and the loving kindness of the Lord as he graciously saves his repentant, undeserving people.

Number seven, in chapters one and two, Micah speaks of judgment and then preservation for the remnant people God will save. Number eight, in chapters three, four and five, which we're looking at this Sunday and next, they show judgment first and then peace for Israel.

[ 6 : 14 ] Number nine, and in chapters six and seven, Micah preaches of judgment, then purity for all people, for God's people. And number 10, last but not least, the heartbeat of Micah is this.

How is the covenant God going to deal with his covenant-breaking people? If you followed any of that, then hopefully that's going to give us a good grounding in what is happening in this book and help us as we go through this chapter together.

Now, there might be a few people that disagree with this opinion, but if I was to give myself a rating out of 10 as a driver, I think I'd give myself, you know, a decent, solid seven.

I'm unreasonably proud of my parallel parking on one side. I can't do it on the right-hand side, but I'm good on that side. I've never had a speeding ticket. And in general, people don't seem too terrified when they step in the car with me.

But a few weeks ago, when I was driving home from Release the Word, just after I merged onto the Kingston Bridge, I began to see the blue flashing lights up ahead. And there was a lot of them.

[ 7 : 23 ] The closer I got, the more horrible the scene was. I saw the ambulance, multiple police cars, and then two cars that were crushed together with their drivers and passengers being attended to by the paramedics.

And it's funny how in a moment like that, it can quite often bring great clarity. You suddenly become very aware of actually how you're probably not that great a driver. And that could very easily be you sitting there in the ambulance.

Because of incidents like that, it makes me a lot more cautious and a lot more careful when I'm on that stretch of the road in particular. Well, this morning in Micah chapter 3, although Micah is speaking directly to Israel in 700 BC, it's like we here in 2020 are driving past a grim sight as Israel have utterly fallen to pieces.

They're disintegrating. Micah takes us through this step by step and he wants us to look at the disaster. He wants us to stop and see the devastation that happens when God's people lose interest in God's word and start to take him for granted.

These are God's chosen people who he plucked out of all the peoples in the earth to be his special treasured possession, to be a light shining out to all the nations, showing them what it meant and how good it was to belong to the Lord.

[ 8 : 58 ] And they've descended into utter chaos as their leadership have abandoned the Lord and abused his people. Israel were told of the devastating threat that the Lord made against the Northern Kingdom in chapter 1.

And that has now happened. In chapter 3, we've zoomed forward about 20 years. The Southern Kingdom has witnessed the destruction of their northern neighbours. And they've done nothing, nothing in response to it.

The threat of invasion from the Assyrian army still looms very large. It hangs over them like a dark cloud. But they're still not yet repenting towards the Lord. They're still taking him for granted.

Think of the State of the Union address that the President of the United States gives at the beginning of each year. It's usually at least an hour long, overly enthusiastic, and questionably positive speech.

Well, in this chapter, Micah gives his State of the Union address, assessing the rulers of God's people. But the key difference is that this is short, snappy, honest, and brutal.

[ 10 : 11 ] Micah takes aim at three groups of rulers, and we'll work through them group by group. So let's look at verses 1 to 4, where we see that the judges are judged.

Micah opens up his judgment on the people by addressing the judges and politicians of Israel in verse 1. He says, Now these judges and politicians have got previous in Micah.

If you flick back a page to chapter 2, verse 2, you can see the kind of stuff that they were actively involved in. The courts were getting the green light for land to be stolen from the vulnerable. And if you flick on to 2, verse 9, you can see they're even attacking single mothers and their kids.

The politicians themselves weren't getting their hands dirty, but they were rubber stamping all of this. It was going on under their noses, and they were saying it was okay, because they were making some money out of it.

That's the situation Micah's speaking into. God's people being abused by their rulers. And Micah takes aim at them by looking at three aspects of their lives.

[ 11 : 25 ] Firstly, their attitude, then their affections, and finally their actions. Just as a side note, I remember a few years ago thinking to myself, I'm never going to be one of those preachers who just uses multiple alliterative headings all the time.

Yet here we are with four alliterative headings and three alliterative subheadings. I can only apologize and blame it all on my senior pastor. Anyway, their attitude is seen in verse 1.

Micah asks them, is it not for you to know justice? And here, he's not just speaking of a kind of generic knowledge of justice, do you know the law, but an intimate knowledge of what is right and wrong in the Lord's eyes.

A knowledge that runs in your blood, that works its way into every nook and cranny of your life. Our rulers, our politicians, are all going to be judged by God's law, not their own policy or legislation.

Same goes for us. Our Western culture values so highly the separation of church and state. They don't want any religious involvement to be seen to be influencing their politicians.

[ 12 : 38 ] But that's not what's best for the people. Humanity flourishes under God's rule. Can you imagine how much more beautiful a country would be if it was being run by politicians who value what our God values?

That is what Israel should look like. But the attitude of these judges and politicians is just so far from that. And Micah goes further by shining a spotlight on the sin that lives in their hearts and their affections.

He sees through their actions that they're profiting from and knows that behind them lies a heart that loves evil. They hate the good that God has revealed in his word and love evil instead.

If someone chooses to love something contrary to God's word, it doesn't mean that they've just chosen another kind of good, a different version of good or something better.

But it means that they've chosen evil. Rejection of God's justice means loving evil. Even if the world around tries to dress up evil as good and label it as loving.

[ 13 : 51 ] And we see that so often today in our culture. Our country believes that killing a child that is alive in the womb is a victory for women's rights and is something worth celebrating. that what they've chosen is something good when we should know that what's been chosen is actually murder. They've not chosen another kind of good or a different good path.

Going against God's justice means choosing evil, whatever they try to call it. Before we get on to actions, it's worth us noting that Micah's prophecy didn't just drop out of the sky as a fully formed seven chapters long judgment on the people that Micah read out in the middle of the town.

This was collated and gathered after Micah's ministry. So what he's saying here, he would have said directly to the people involved, he would have looked them in the eye and said this to them.

This was deeply personal, deeply offensive judgment that Micah was giving out. Their actions are brutally exposed in verses two and three and they are designed to provoke a reaction.

[ 15 : 09 ] Let's read through them together as Micah speaks in this gruesome metaphor. He says, you tear the skin from off my people and their flesh from off their bones who eat the flesh of my people and flay their skin from off them and break their bones in pieces and chop them up like meat in a pot, like flesh in a cauldron.

This language is so vicious, isn't it? The judges are described as being like cannibals feasting on their own people and Micah's provoking them using shocking language to shine a light on what they've been doing.

He's exposing their sin. He knows that as soon as someone rocks up to court with a plea, the judges, while they're rubbing their hands together, thinking to themselves, well, what can I get out of this one?

Instead of loving these people as those who have the dignity of being made in God's image and belonging to God's chosen people, they treat them like pieces of meat, taking advantage of them for anything they can get their hands on.

They might be judges, but Micah says that a more fitting job for them would be Israel's butchers. These first few verses are the Lord's damning verdict on the justice system and his chosen people.

[ 16 : 39 ] And Micah has left us in no doubt that the judges are given the verdict of guilty. Therefore, God responds in verse 4. There is a time coming for them of real disaster and devastation.

The time this is speaking of is the disasters that Micah's prophesied in chapter 1, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Assyrian army that would come to them if they didn't repent.

Micah says that when that disaster comes upon them, then and only then will the judges cry out to him to save their own skin. And literally, it says when they make a plea to him, the kind of plea that the people of Israel made to the judges every day that they just batted away and paid no attention to.

It paints a picture of those judges ignoring God all year round. But when they feel like they need him, when they feel like they can get something from him, will they expect him to come and do their bidding?

When that happens, God will not answer them. He won't listen to them because he knows their hearts are so presumptuous. They've done evil before him.

[ 17 : 53 ] They cry out only when their life is threatened rather than crying out in true, humble repentance. The judges, those who are meant to promote good and punish evil, are gaining from evil themselves, all the while ignoring the real pleas and the real issues of the people.

So they're going to be given a taste of their own medicine. Micah now turns his attention to the religious rulers of the day in verses 5 and 7 where we have the prophets looking for a prophet.

See what I did there? Prophets looking for a prophet. Quite proud of that. Well, the judges and politicians have come up short and will face judgment if they don't repent towards the Lord. But not to worry.

The religious rulers are here to save the day. It's all going to be okay. The priests and the prophets, they're there. It's all going to be good. Surely they're going to be against this trend of taking advantage of the people for their own gain.

I mean, they're the religious rulers. Surely they're going to be standing up for what is right and preaching God's law faithfully, holding the judges to account. But very sadly, that's not the case.

[ 19 : 07 ] The religious leaders in the nation have instead, verse 5, been leading God's people astray. The prophets who are meant to be guiding God's people in the way of life are instead actively destroying and harming them, lying to them and leading them down the wrong path.

How do they go about that? Well, they let the price determine the prophecy. Read verse 5 with me. They cry, peace, when they have something to eat or literally something to bite on to sink their teeth into, but declare war against him who puts nothing into their mouths.

The language translated makes it sound like it's food they're after, but the original Hebrew makes it clear that money is the motivating factor, that the price determines the prophecy. If someone in Jerusalem were to go up to the temple in real distress because their family is at death's door or they themselves had real reason to worry, they wouldn't find the kind and loving words of the Lord greeting them at the temple, but the outstretched hand of the prophet expectantly waiting for you to put some real cash in their hands.

Slip a 20 pound note in their hands and worry not. I can feel a word from the Lord coming to me right now. That job, it's yours. How about 50 pounds?

Yes, yes, he's speaking to me now. You're going to be healed, your disease is gone. What's that, 100 pounds? Guess what? All of your successes are coming to you. Everything is going right for you.

[ 20 : 48 ] It's a very simple system, isn't it? But coming with a humble heart, calling on your heavenly Father to graciously hear your prayer, well, that's not going to cut it.

It won't even get a hearing. And in fact, it's going to bring war from the prophets. Not just ignored, but scorned, shamed, and declared unrighteous, unsupportive of the Lord's work.

The prophets took one look at the vulnerable people in need of guidance, and they had dollar signs in their eyes, thinking of all they could get from them. This is one of the earliest instances of people like the prosperity gospel preachers we see on God TV, telling you that if you give them money for the Lord's work, that he's going to bless every endeavor of yours and grant you success.

It's one of the lowest forms of manipulation, preying on the vulnerable, knowing that they desperately want something, that they trust the Lord, and that in your unique position as a pastor, you can exploit it.

And that is exactly what the prophets were involved in then. God's prophets only interested in his people for what they could line their pockets with. Therefore, God will judge them by taking away their words to speak.

[ 22 : 13 ] Read verses six and seven with me. Therefore, it shall be night to you without vision and darkness to you without divination. The sun shall go down on the prophets and the days shall be black over them.

The seers shall be disgraced and the diviners put to shame. They shall all cover their lips for there is no answer from God. At that time, the prophets were still receiving visions from the Lord to share with the people real, legitimate words from the Lord.

But he was going to take that away from them. Their judgment wasn't found in war and destruction and death, but in the silent treatment. It will be like night.

There will be darkness. The sun will go down on them. God was taking away their visions. There wouldn't be any more words from the Lord. Whatever the prophets tried, even illegitimate things like divination, showing their desperation to hear something, anything.

God's people wouldn't hear God's word at all. And we might be tempted to think that this kind of thing can't really happen today. That since we all have a Bible in our hands and in our homes, that God couldn't really take away his word.

[ 23 : 35 ] I mean, one click on your phone and you've got the whole Bible there. But just because you have a Bible in your home or in your church or in your pulpit, it doesn't mean that you have the living word, the word actively at work in your life to bring you to faith in Christ.

God can take away the desire of it or the interest of it from his people. How many churches are there in our country today who have loads of Bibles in their pews and in their hands who don't pay any actual attention to the word itself or the one who speaks it?

They don't let it speak into their lives, molding and shaping their characters into ones more pleasing to the Lord. God can take away his word from people who take it for granted and ignore him, and he still does today to devastating effect.

That is God's judgment on the prophets, that since they ignore God's revelation to them, they will be disgraced by being known to receive no word from the Lord.

They'll be shown to be frauds with nothing to say. Micah then widens his scope as we move on to verses 9 to 12 and see that he preaches against the presumptuous rabble reduced to rubble.

[ 25 : 01 ] And here we see Micah yet again shining a light on the judges and the prophets, the political and spiritual leaders of the day. He's zooming out and looking at the rule of the whole nation, and across the board they are falling apart.

God's special treasured possession among all the peoples of the earth, while they're acting just like every other country around them. They're not the distinctive group of people God's called them to be, but they've become like the idol-worshiping nations around them.

Look at verses 9 to 11 with me. He says, You who detest justice and make crooked all that is straight, who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity.

Its heads give judgment for a bribe, its priests teach for a price, its prophets practice divination for money. This is Micah's assessment of the nation, that none of the rulers are fit for purpose.

He highlights their crimes, their presumption, and their end. Their crimes are laid bare as they are building God's holy city, Jerusalem, with blood.

[ 26 : 19 ] There's evidence that Jerusalem's population and size grew quickly. It mushroomed around the time of Micah's preaching. Probably quite a few people from the northern capital of Samaria fled there to avoid being destroyed by the Assyrians.

Christians. And it seems that much of Jerusalem's expansion had come about because of the awful practices that we saw in chapter 2, of people being thrown out of their homes to make way for someone offering more money.

Jerusalem really was being built on blood and iniquity because of the sin of the rulers. And their presumptuous attitude is exposed.

The second half of verse 11 is a horrendous example of twisting God's word into something it doesn't mean, of making crooked what is straight. They say, is not the Lord in the midst of us?

No disaster shall come upon us. They take a promise made to King Solomon when he built the temple and use it as a blanket excuse to cover all of their awful sin.

[ 27 : 25 ] It's their get out of jail free card. They see God dwelling among his people as something they can take advantage of rather than a privilege to be enjoyed. So they'll hurt God's people, they'll treat them like slabs of meat, take bribes, lie for cash in their prophecies, abuse the vulnerable and do it all because they think they can get away with it.

They've got protection and it's found in twisting God's word into something that it was never meant to mean. They're using the phrase like a lucky charm, something they're just holding on to for good luck.

They're safe no matter what happens, no matter how badly they can treat people. They've got this promise to hold on to so they can just bring it out at moment's notice and make the most of it while they can.

Because of this, the Lord delivers his judgment as Micah preaches them of their end. Verse 12 shows the result of a deeply presumptuous people and its severity matches the seriousness of their failing.

God will in verse 12 turn Jerusalem into a field. His city, the city where his people dwelled, representing Zion, the great mountain of the Lord, will be reduced to rubble.

[ 28 : 44 ] Maybe good for growing some potatoes in, but not much else. He is a kind and patient God, but he's not going to be messed with.

He's not taken for a fool. And the mountain of the house, meaning the temple where God made his presence known among his people, will be so overgrown that it'll look like a forest.

The place that the people take God's presence for granted will be empty and abandoned for so long that it's basically a big greenhouse. The place God would make his presence dwell among his people was becoming a place only fit for plants.

Well, the clouds have well and truly gathered, haven't they? God's leaders have entered the examination room, been checked up and down and been delivered a grim diagnosis.

The whole country is falling apart there. Justice system, politicians, religious leaders, and everything in between have all come out of this judgment worse for wear. The prognosis is not good.

[ 29 : 54 ] So what's the antidote to their problem? What is God going to do about this mess of a nation that belongs to him? Well, God's answer to their problem is not even slightly what the people want, but is a great gift of grace.

As we see in our fourth point from verse eight, Micah's message. In this chapter, God's word is the constant, even when it isn't mentioned directly.

It's always lurking just beneath the surface. The judges in verses one to three are those who don't know and love and put into practice God's word. The prophets in five to seven are those who aren't faithful to what God reveals, but will sell their blessings to the highest bidder.

The nation as a whole, it seems in verses nine to 11, presume upon God's kindness by using his word as a never ending get out of jail free card they can bring out when it suits them.

And that's where Micah comes in. Let's read verse eight again. But as for me, I am filled with power, with the spirit of the Lord and with justice and might to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.

[ 31 : 18 ] This is the closest we get to a biography of Micah's life. He doesn't talk much about himself, doesn't tell us much about himself in his preaching, just his name and where he's from. But this verse tells us everything we need to know about his ministry.

Micah stands alone as God's gracious gift to the people, a preacher who actually tells people the truth. He's not like the rulers who try to flog the people for anything they can.

He's not like the false prophets who will say whatever you want if you put the right amount of money in their hands. He's not like the priests who will take a bribe. He stands alone as the faithful preacher telling God's people that they're sinful.

That's what being a spirit-filled preacher means. I don't know what kind of ideas might pop into your head if you were to talk of a preacher being spirit-filled with power and might and justice.

But I doubt it would be Micah. Micah. He's not very impressive and his ministry was really quite singular. He was to tell his people that they were sinful again and again until they repented towards the Lord.

[ 32 : 38 ] It was like every time he stood up to speak he was shining a light on the people exposing the ugly sin that was present in their lives. And that's always one of the essential components of faithful ministry.

Because the longer you go on in Christian life the more you realize how sinful you are. You don't need preaching that exposes your sin less. You need it just as much as the first time you heard the gospel.

Because the more you grow in godliness the more you realize that you struggle with sin in other areas of your life. And that you fall short in areas you didn't even know existed before. Exposing sin is a vital and deeply loving part of faithful ministry.



Micah's preaching to them so that they can see what their lives are leading to if they don't repent towards the Lord. Micah's preaching telling them how sinful they are and how greatly they have offended God so that they can avoid the fate he's preaching of.

So Micah standing there as the faithful preacher is exactly what the people need. It might be a bitter pill to swallow but it's for their good.

[ 33 : 59 ] And that's what Israel was to do with this chapter. The people of Israel had a very simple to-do list after this prophecy. It's only three words long. Listen to Micah.

Listen to his message from the Lord as he declares their own sin even as it makes them feel uncomfortable and even as it forces them to face up to the sin in their lives, to their own shame.

Making them face up to the reality of their hardened hearts. Sotron Church family. We may be in many different buildings and homes across Glasgow.

But what does this passage say to us as a church family today? It's like we've been driving past this car crash of a nation and one thing is for sure. It should make us drive more carefully afterwards.

Let's focus on two big things I think this passage is teaching us today. Firstly, we are to guard against presuming upon God's kindness by loving his word in every area of life.

[ 35 : 09 ] The implications of not loving God's word are made clear in these verses. As we've gone through Micah's State of the Union address on Israel, we've been met with a whole nation's worth of people being threatened with judgment.

Because sitting right beneath the surface of everything they do, bubbling away, is an ignorance of God's word and a presumption upon his covenant promises.

It's so easy for us to take something for granted. Don't you find that? The last eight months of living in Scotland has been one big lesson in not taking daily pleasures for granted.

I never really appreciated that breathing the fresh air of Aldi while I'm shopping without a face mask on was a privilege. Or that hugging my friends and family was a privilege.

Or that meeting with my church family sitting less than two meters away from them was a privilege until it was taken away. There are a lot of things we take for granted in everyday life.

[ 36 : 14 ] But the grace of the Lord should not be one of them. We might not say something as obvious as what the priests in Israel say in verse 11.

Saying we've got a blanket excuse to get away with anything. A get out of jail free card. But we do treat God's grace very cheaply sometimes. Sometimes.

Is there some sin in your life that you're not dealing with right now? I can't see into every heart here.

I can't see into every heart at home. And I don't know what it might be that you're struggling with. It could be pride. Lust. Lying.

Refusing to forgive someone. Worldliness. But if there is sin present in your life that you're aware of. But crucially you're not repenting in.

[ 37 : 17 ] Then that leads down a very dangerous path. That leads down the path of presumption. Thinking to yourself that you don't need to do anything about your sin because Jesus died on the cross.

And mercifully that's partly true. Jesus has died for our sin and there's nothing we can add to his perfect atoning sacrifice. But if we think that it means that we can do what we want and then live how we please.

Then how cheaply are we treating his sacrifice? How cheaply are we treating the son of God's death on a cross? If you're aware of sin like that then repent.

Now. Don't let it grow. Don't let it fester. Don't let it become like a poison that taints every part of you.

Deal with it now by repenting towards him. Avoid the destruction that your sin brings by repenting towards the Lord. Secondly, be thankful for preaching that exposes our sin.

[ 38 : 36 ] We all come to church in different moods, don't we? Sometimes you come to church feeling enthusiastic because you've had a pretty good week. You've had some really encouraging quiet times where you've learned something that's changed your day and changed the way you thought about things.

You might come to church thankful or encouraged because the Lord's been kind to you in a special way this week. Or you've had a great conversation with that friend who's shown no interest in the gospel up until now.

But sometimes you come to church quite down. In a fairly rubbish mood because you know you feel spiritually dry. You've barely opened your Bible.

You couldn't muster up the energy to join in with your growth group. And you feel like you'd rather be anywhere else that Sunday. You'd rather be in bed. And on those days, it can feel like as soon as the sermon starts, whoever is preaching God's word has had a spotlight pointed directly at you the whole time.

Showing up all the sin you would much rather keep hidden away to yourself. Sometimes I've come away from sermons feeling like I've left a boxing ring because I feel like I've been beaten black and blue over my sin.

[ 39 : 54 ] I've been confronted with the misery of my own failings, the depths of my own shame, and it's definitely not an experience I would describe as enjoyable.

What about when it doesn't come from a pulpit though? How do we respond to our sin being exposed? Maybe we find it easier when a preacher we don't really know that much personally tells us we're sinful because, well, we're quite far removed.

It's not very offensive. But what if it comes from a friend or your parent or your spouse or someone you think is a less mature Christian than you?

Someone who knows the ins and outs of your life. What if they tell you you're sinful? If they point out your sin, are you less likely to take their rebuke to heart because of who they are to you or because of what you know they've done in the past?

Whatever it comes from, if in the Lord's kindness he has sent someone to shine a light upon your sin, exposing the destructive sin that is present in your life, then thank the Lord for them.

[ 41 : 22 ] Don't get annoyed at them. Don't say how dare they. Don't say how could they say that when I know they've done this. Thank the Lord for them. Thank the Lord that he's given someone a spotlight to shine upon your heart, to tell you the truth, revealing the sin that ruins your relationship with him.

Because only in recognizing our sin and trusting in his grace can we be restored to a life pleasing to the Lord.

Let's all pray together. Our Lord and Father, we thank you that you are a God of mercy, grace, and patience.

We are sorry for the sin that lives in our hearts and the ways in which we presume upon your kindness, taking your salvation for granted. Please help us to be grateful for those you've given who reveal our sin to us.

Help us to have humble hearts, Father, that love your word in every area and are ready to be told where we need to change. Help us, Father, to respond in repentant faith.

[ 42 : 55 ] In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.