

# The Response of Hard Hearts

## Micah 2:6-11

**Introduction** – What is the reaction to hard words and tough preaching? It all depends. If God has granted repentance, then there is contrition, reconciliation – change in the hearers. If hearts remain hard, there is still a change – but the change is going to be in who fills the pulpit next Sunday.

**When the Word Is Not What You Want to Hear** (vv6-7) - *“Do not prattle,” you say to those who prophesy. So they shall not prophesy to you; they shall not return insult for insult. You who are named the house of Jacob: “Is the Spirit of the LORD restricted? Are these His doings? Do not My words do good to him who walks uprightly?”*

**Do Not Prophesy** – Tired of this sermon of judgment, Micah records that there is a general rejection of his message. This had happened to Amos (Amos 7:10-13) as well. Isaiah was so unpopular, tradition tells us, he was the prophet sawn in two (Heb 11:37). Those who bring the Word of God must remember that it is a stumbling block and foolishness to those who are perishing (1 Cor 1:23). Preachers must avoid the temptation to tickle itching ears (2 Tim 4:1-5). Faithful preachers are bound by the gospel, and not by the crowd (1 Cor 9:16).

**House of Jacob** – They claim to be sons of Abraham, and therefore exempt from such judgment. But this proves they are not sons indeed (John 8:37-40).

**Restricting the Spirit** – Christ taught that the Spirit, like the wind, blows where it wishes. Trying to stop the Spirit is like trying to catch the wind with a butterfly net. Silencing the prophets, and later killing the martyrs, has always been the means God has used to spread His Word. And to him who walks uprightly, these so-called harsh words are good and sweet.

**Like an Enemy of God** (vv8-9) – *“Lately My people have risen up as an enemy—You pull off the robe with the garment from those who trust you, as they pass by, like men returned from war. The women of My people you cast out from their pleasant houses; from their children. You have taken away My glory forever.”*

‘Robes’ and ‘pleasant houses’ are terms of prosperity. Judah was a decent place to live before Assyria came in. The people believe that they live in a time of peace and security, and yet their own leaders are robbing them blind. When corrupt men are in power, even the women and children will be exploited. This is not a side issue – how the weak are treated is the heart of true religion (James 1:27). And in their rebellion, the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, and their inheritance and blessing will be lost.

**Go Away!** (v10) – *“Arise and depart, for this is not your rest; because it is defiled, it shall destroy, yes, with utter destruction.”*

This land had been promised as a place of rest (Deut 12:9-10). But Leviticus 18:25, 28 also warned that, just as the Canaanites had been expelled from the land due to their abominations, so the land would vomit Israel out if it walked in the same abominations. Micah’s declaration is this fulfillment – there is no rest here for those who are hard-hearted to God’s Word (Psalm 95:8-11).

**Wine and Strong Drink** (v11) – *“If a man should walk in a false spirit and speak a lie, saying, ‘I will prophesy to you of wine and drink,’ even he would be the prattler of this people.”*

These are figures used to denote earthly blessings and sensual enjoyments, the fat things, and the words refer to such promises that God gives his people. So desiring them, or enjoying them, is not in and of itself bad. But these people are hiding from the hard words, from the chastisement, in their prosperity, comfort and earthly security. That which was for blessing will bring a curse. They turn to the prophets and ask for messages that, like the wine, will numb their senses from discernment and a call to holiness.

### Conclusions –

**To the Church** – Preach the Word, in season and out of season. The saying, ‘the customer is always right’, is true in the marketplace. It sells cars and shoes. But God is not trying to ‘sell’ religion, nor should we. There is an attitude that says ‘if you want to bring them in, do this and not that’. Preach the easy stuff. Then we wonder why the church has become so numb.

In an age of prosperity, we are particularly vulnerable to picking and choosing what we like. And we are tempted to believe that our soft life is an automatic sign of blessing.

**To the People** – Hear the Word, in season and out of season. Do not harden your hearts to the Word. Hard words make soft hearts. Come to the Word ready for the Spirit to have his way with you. To those who walk uprightly, God promises it will be good.