

What Does the Lord Require of You?

Micah 6:6-8

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Introduction: "Hear ye! Hear ye! This court is now in session." So opens this sixth chapter of the Book of Micah. Note the words "*contend*" (:1) & "*controversy*" (:2). These are legal terms, used in the forum of justice. "The noun (*controversy*) designates the lawsuit, case or complaint that is to be contended whereas the verb (*contend*) refers to the arguing of the case" (Barrett). In this chapter God is going to prove that though the Israelites are a religious people, they are not a righteous people. Rather than pleasing the Lord with their rituals & religion, they were deserving of punishment by the Lord because they were not demonstrating His righteousness. The chapter opens with the declaration from God to Israel (or an indictment). The subpoena is issued in verses 1-3 & the trial begins in verse 4. The Lord is both the plaintiff & prosecutor Who presents the evidence in verses 4-5 (describing the Lord's past redemption, instruction & preservation of Israel). Our text begins in verse 6, as Israel begins its own defense to God (or an interrogation), followed by the demand of God for Israel (or an imperative).

I. The **defense** to God from Israel [an interrogation] (:6-7)

Israel's "defense" is their accusing God of not making clear what He wants from them.

A. "*Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, & bow myself before the high God?*"

1. How can I meet the Lord; as one does a friend with gifts?
2. How can I suitably stand before in submission to Him?

B. "*Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?*"

1. Am I to come before the Lord with a burnt offering?
2. Am I to make sure to bring the best animal sacrifice possible?

C. "*Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?*"

1. Is it a question of quantity that the Lord desires?
2. Would thousands of rams or ten thousand rivers of oil be more suitable?

D. "*Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*"

1. To what lengths must I go to find favor with God?
2. Must I stoop to the heathen practice of child sacrifice in order to please God?
* Notice the intense progression of possible sacrifices. "Their willingness to stoop to heathen practice in order to reach the heights of God reveals their total ignorance not only of what God wants, but of who God is... Israel further incriminated itself by assuming God wanted things rather than hearts" (Barrett).

Summary: Man-made religion seeks to please God by the work of ones' hands apart from the worship of ones' heart.

II. The **demand** by God for Israel (as well as all mankind) > "*O man*" [an imperative] (:8)

Rebuttal by the prosecution (the Lord). He, through Moses, hath "*shewed*" - "to report or announce by putting something conspicuously in front of someone" (Barrett).

A. Reminder of His revelation to Israel (& available to all mankind through His Word)

1. "*What is good*"
 - a. That which is profitable to man (see Deuteronomy 6:24 & 10:12-13).
 - b. That which is pleasing to God (see Deuteronomy 6:4-5 & 10:20).
2. "*What is required*"
 - a. That which He has previously made known ("*shewed*").
 - b. That which He makes plain again now.

Application: "Does God want all men of all ages to know what pleases His heart? Yes... here we have the greatest saying of the O.T." (Feinberg).

B. Repetition of His requirement for Israel (& applicable to all mankind through His Word)

1. *"To do justly"* - 'justice' (righteousness; conformity to legal requirements) > outward action
 - a. In order to be "just" righteousness must be procured:
 - (1) A definition - Romans 10:1-10 ('declared righteous in the sight of God').
 - (2) A demonstration - Genesis 15:6 (Abraham).
 - (3) A determination - II Corinthians 5:21 (imputed righteousness)
 - b. In order to "*do justly*" righteousness must be practiced:
 - (1) An O.T. explanation > Deuteronomy 24:17-22.
 - (2) A N.T. exhortation > Matthew 7:12 (& cf. Matthew 22:39).
 - (3) A N.T. example > James 1:27.Note: "Social justice is not the essence of saving faith, but it is an evidence of it" (Barrett).
2. *"To love mercy"* - 'loyalty' (steadfast love, compassionate loyalty) > inward attitude
 - a. Examination of the terms:
 - (1) *"Love"* - "to set or incline the will toward the chosen object" (Barrett). [not mere emotion]
 - (2) *"Mercy"* - often used in reference to a covenant; "In simple terms the only loyalty that man can render God is obedience... Loyalty to God, expressed by obedience, takes precedence over mere acts of religion" (Barrett). [See Hosea 6:6 & I Samuel 15:22-23.]
 - b. Explanation of the task:
 - (1) We evidence our love for God by our obedience. See John 14:15 & I John 5:2-3.
 - (2) We are not to be "feeling-oriented" but rather "command-oriented."
3. *"To walk humbly with thy God"* ("to humble thyself to walk") > upward adoration
 - a. The imagery of walking - refers to customs, habits, or way of life; keep in step with.
 - b. The implication of walking "*humbly*" – cautiously or carefully; "*fear of the Lord*"?? "True religion consists in a whole life lived in awareness of God. To walk aware of God, Who is unseen, is to walk by faith. It is this submissive faith that is required of any & all who would please God (Hebrews 11:6)" (Barrett).
 - c. The importance of walking "*humbly with thy God.*"
 - (1) It is foundational – If this requirement is met, the other two will follow naturally.
 - (2) It is consequential – It results in grace (James 4:6), exaltation (James 4:10), revival (II Chronicles 7:14 & Isaiah 57:15), & blessings (Proverbs 22:4).

Compare Micah 6:8 with Matthew 23:23 - "...*judgment, mercy, & faith...*" Christ is speaking of the requirements of true religion.

Summary of :8 > Though salvation begins on the inside (Rom. 10:9-10) & then reveals itself on the outside, Micah reverses the order. The lesson is that outward behavior of the life simply indicates the inward attitude of the heart. God accepts the work of our hands when preceded by the worship of our heart.

Illustration: Changed lives in evidence (B.R. Lakin). Chorus – "Don't tell me my friend..."

Conclusion: Verses 9-16 go on to relate the judgment handed down by the Judge, God Himself. But what about us? What does God require of us, if we are to be pleasing unto Him? Three things are listed. From our human perspective, there must first be submission to & faith in our holy God. Do you really "*...believe that He is, & that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him*"? If we have true saving faith & are walking in fellowship with God, we will do justice & love obedience. In other words, the requirement of God is a humble walk which results in a life of justice & a love of mercy. "A sincere heart that is bent to observe loyalty will gladly perform every duty God specifies, whether social or religious" (Barrett). It is not then a question of "Should I be faithful to God's house?" or "Can I afford to tithe?" or "Will I be a witness to the lost?" Far from being charged with 'salvation by works' or 'legalism' because of one's obedience, this is the indication of one's heart faith & devotion. Apart from the grace & power of God, no one could possibly fulfill these requirements. But Romans 8:4 tells us, "*That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*" The requirements of true religion never change. How are you walking today? Is yours a humble walk, evidenced by living righteously & loving obediently?