

## **POWER IS A COWARD!**

**Today's Text:** Micah Chaps 1-3

### **Extracts:**

*Woe to those who devise iniquity, and work out evil on their beds! At morning light they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. ...But truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin. Now hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and pervert all equity, who build up Zion with bloodshed and Jerusalem with iniquity. Her heads judge for a bribe; her priests teach for pay, and her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the Lord, and say, "Is not the Lord among us? No harm can come to us." Therefore, because of you, Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of rains, and the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest [Mic. 2: 1; 3: 8-12].*

*On Friday, 11 April 2008, the Governor of Sokoto State in the north-western part of Nigeria, Aliyu Wamakko, went to a nearby state to attend the wedding ceremony of the daughter of a former Nigerian Head of State.<sup>1</sup> He went there in a motorcade of security and political aides, a mark of high office in Nigeria. He had been elected to a four-year term a year earlier.*

*Soon, news filtered in that, as a result of proven electoral malpractices, his election as governor had been nullified by the Federal Appeal Court (the highest court for election petitions in Nigeria), and that the State Assembly Speaker had been sworn in as the Acting Governor. Immediately, his aides "disappeared" and ex-Governor Wamakko was left alone to make private arrangements to travel back home!*

*The man lost power because he had lost his power seat That is understandable. However, there are some people who still occupy power positions but have no power or have lost the one they once had. Without power, a position loses influence or motivation. Where has the power gone? What does such power really mean? Why does power behave like a coward, running away at the slightest scare? What can we do to avoid such power loss in any leadership position that we currently occupy? Those and more are the issues that we shall examine in today's study that is based on the book of Micah.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Based on Francis Falola, "Security aides abandon removed Sokoto gov. at wedding, remove official vehicles," [www.punchng.com](http://www.punchng.com) of 4/12/2008 [12 April 2008]

## 1. Power takes flight!

You may find yourself in a leadership position - at home, school, church, office, business or club. You have a job title and description, suggesting what you do, who reports to you and to whom you report. Consequently, your position enjoys some power. For example, you may have the power to punish and reward others. You may have control over resources, such as budget allocations. At a higher level, especially in developing countries, you may enjoy the perks of office, such as security and other 'gadgets.' In most cases, the scope and exercise of your power are spelt out (clearly or impliedly) as limits of your authority in a constitution or bye-laws or regulations, for example. You may continue to enjoy those benefits and the power they attract for as long as you remain in those positions, *all things being equal*.

In today's study, we want to look at situations where you are still in office, that is, occupying a power position, but lack the power associated with it. This can be measured in several ways. For example, two officers may on paper be equal in rank and pay but, in practice, one is more 'powerful' than the other. One person may *succeed* another and yet lack the 'power' enjoyed by the predecessor. A person may begin in a position with enormous power which gets whittled down over time until the person becomes powerless. How do we explain such things?

Management scholars will tell you that your power is small if all you rely upon is your ability to reward or punish others, especially your subordinates. This is because the moment you lose that ability, your power disappears as in the case of the Nigerian state governor mentioned in our opening story. That is why most dictators are derided and disgraced by their former worshippers as soon as they lose office. Therefore, according to management experts, your power derives from your ability to obtain compliance from others beyond the coercive means at your disposal. They call that influence and it can come from a variety of sources, notably personal qualities, such as competence, character or moral authority and ability to work with others. However, no researcher can lay claim to an *adequate* measurement of influence or power as used in this study.

The word of God is quite clear where such power or influence comes from, "for there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God" [Rom. 13: 1]. It is God that has given us power to, for example, get wealth, strictly for His purpose [Deut. 8: 11-18], and only He can promote (elevate) or bring us down [Ps. 75: 6-7] from any leadership position that we currently occupy in life.

To make this point clearer, let us examine the case of Saul, the first king of Israel. After the children of Israel had settled down in the Promised Land, they were ruled by judges. At the beginning of our story, the then judge was Samuel, a prophet, who had become old. The people rejected his two sons as judges after him because they did not walk in his ways and they took bribes to pervert justice

[1 Sam. 8: 1-3]. So they demanded for a king like their Gentile neighbours. Even though their request displeased Samuel and amounted to rejecting God, the Lord granted their request and led the prophet to anoint Saul, the son of Kish from the tribe of Benjamin, as king [1 Sam. Chaps 9- 10]. The Spirit of the Lord came upon the new king. He began to prophesy and was “turned into another man” [1 Sam. 10: 6]. In presenting the new king to the people, Samuel said [1 Sam. 12: 13-14]:

*Here is the king whom you have chosen and whom you have desired. And take note: the Lord has set a king over you. If you fear the Lord and serve Him and obey His voice, and do not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the Lord your God*

Samuel added that fear of the Lord meant to serve Him “in truth with all (their hearts), and to always acknowledge “what great things He had done for (them)” [v. 24]. Clearly, Saul’s power came from God and it would continue to reside with him and his throne *as long as he feared God*. That was why he won his first battles against the Ammonites and Philistines [1 Kgs Chaps 11 & 12].

You can read Chapters 13-15 to see Saul’s acts of disobedience against God. As a result, God asked Samuel to anoint a teenage shepherd boy, David, of the tribe of Judah, in Saul’s place. We are told that as soon as David was anointed, “*the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul*, and a distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him” [1 Sam. 16: 14]. The Spirit of the Lord is the Holy Spirit. The spirit from the Lord is a distressing demonic spirit. Saul’s power came by the Holy Spirit. As soon as he disobeyed, Saul’s power disappeared because the Holy Spirit had left him. But he remained king for another thirteen years or so. He might have had the best managerial skills and the most wonderful interpersonal skills but without God’s power, they availed him nothing. Instead, he turned wicked and his kingdom became weaker and weaker. In the end, Saul and his sons were killed in battle by enemy forces [1 Sam. 31: 1-6], and his throne passed on to David, the man after God’s own heart.

## 2. How power eluded the leaders of Israel

Micah’s prophetic ministry covered the period of the reigns of Jotham, the son of Uzziah [2 Kgs 15: 32-38], Ahaz [2 Kgs 16: 1-20] and Hezekiah [2 Kgs Chaps 18-20]. He was thus a contemporary of Hosea (northern kingdom of Israel) and Isaiah (Judah). Since he spoke of the fall of Samaria in the future tense [Mic. 1: 6], we can infer that his ministry predated the captivity of Israel by the Assyrians and Hezekiah’s religious reforms in Judah [2 Chron. 17: 1-10].

Micah addressed mainly the people in leadership positions in both kingdoms. He gravely warned them to use their positions to glorify God rather than themselves

or face the consequences of losing God's power and protection. More specifically, he spoke to the following leaders:

a) *Political leaders*

The “heads of Jacob” and “rulers of the house of Israel” hated good and loved evil [**Mic. 3: 1-2**]. They afflicted the downtrodden whose skins they stripped, and tore off “flesh from their bones.” As a result, God would not hear such leaders when they cried to Him in that they had been “evil for their deeds” [**vv. 2-4**]. They perverted justice by taking bribes, and “built up Zion with bloodshed, and Jerusalem with iniquity” [**vv. 9-11**].

Examine the conduct of political leaders in your place of residence. Do they really care for the needs of the people or they merely pander to them so as to win their votes? Is it not politicians that mastermind corrupt practices in public office only to turn around to use their stolen wealth to bribe the poor to help them to steal elections? The police officers who take bribes from taxi-drivers, the customs officials who tamper with port entry rules or procedures for their own pockets and the civil servants who take gratification to do what they are paid for, are they not all part of the rulers that have lost moral authority (power) and hence public respect?

b) *Religious leaders*

The prophets and visioners divined for money while the priests taught for pay. Then, they turned around and assured the people, “Is not the Lord among us? No harm can come upon us” [**v. 11**]! The prophets relied on false spirits and prophesied what people wanted to hear (“wine and drink”), not what the Lord had said [**Mic. 2: 11**]. But God rebuked such prophets and other religious leaders in the following harsh words, “Is the Spirit of the Lord restricted? Are these His doings? Do not My words do good to him who walks uprightly?” [**v. 7**].

In many churches of today, the most popular ministries are prophecy and healing. Since bad money drives out good money (Gresham's Law), it may not surprise you to find the bulk of our prophets and pastors to be liars and small enterprise owners! Should it then surprise you that in spite of parading huge congregations, such religious leaders lack the backing of the Holy Spirit? Therefore, they are powerless.

When God's judgment comes, it can be devastating because most empires are destroyed from within. Foreign invaders merely pull down the crumbling fortresses. Micah warned the rulers of his day, “because of you, Zion shall be plowed like a field; Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the temple like the bare hills of the forest” [**Mic. 3: 12**]. God would make Samaria (the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel) “a heap of ruins in the field,” and

He would “pour down her stones into the valley” [Mic. 1: 6]. The prophecies came to pass. Yes, the power positions remained a little longer but God’s power had been ‘scared’ away by sin and disobedience. Israel and Judah ultimately went into captivity and Jerusalem was reduced to rubble. How many of us are in a similar position today?

### 3. Ways by which people lose power

I doubt if people in power positions set out to lose power. Yet, sooner than later, they are stripped of power in one or more of the following ways, among others:

#### a) *When they lose power position*

Every human beginning has an end. Sooner than later, we may lose our power position through end of tenure (such as contract or retirement) or when circumstances cut our tenure short (through death, resignation, dismissal or loss of re-election). In such cases, we lose the paraphernalia of office and go into private life. Parents face an empty nest as their children get married and leave home. Retired heads of government hardly have any mention in the media as against their daily monopoly of coverage while in office.

We do know that some people may not be welcomed in their former offices moments after they end their tenure because of the record they have left behind. Yet, there are some others the mention of whose names evokes lasting memories years after they have left. Departees with a solid legacy of successful tenure, marked by high moral authority, are likely to be the ones in the latter category. They have lost power position but not power!

#### b) *When they abuse office*

Every power position is limited by rules as set out, for example, in a country’s constitution or in a company’s memorandum of association, or a church’s bye-laws. Those who operate within the limits of their authority are said to be self-disciplined. They will certainly command respect from their colleagues and subordinates. However, there are many others who take advantage of their incumbency to do what they are not allowed by law, rules or regulations. These are the ones that have abused their office. They may be able to get away with it by serving out their full tenure, but they have lost their moral authority, and hence power.

#### c) *When they get carried away by pride*

As the popular saying goes, power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Some people get drunk with power. Perhaps they never

expected to get there and they cannot handle the intoxicating exaltations of praise-singers. Sooner than later, their heads get swollen and they have nobody else to respect or fear but themselves! But “pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” [**Prov. 16: 18**]. It amounts to attributing to oneself success that God has given by His grace. It is idolatry.

For example, see what happened to Nebuchadnezzar whom God had granted the grace to conquer the then known world, including God’s chosen nation, Israel. One day, as he walked about his royal palace in Babylon, he said to himself, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling *by my mighty power and for the honour of my majesty?*” As soon as those words came out of his mouth, God’s power departed from him. He was reduced to a grass-eating beast for seven years [**Dan. 4: 28-33**]!

#### **4. Conclusion: You need Christ as your head!**

Through the prophet Micah, God assured His erring people, “I will surely assemble all of you (and) gather the remnant of Israel ... together like sheep of the fold (and) their king will pass before them, *with the Lord at their head*” [**Mic. 2: 12-13**]. Micah succeeded at his job as a prophet because, in his own words, “Truly I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin” [**Mic. 3: 8**].

Jesus is the Good Shepherd [**Jn 10: 11**]. Therefore, as long as you look up to Him who is the author and finisher of your faith [**Heb. 12: 2**], then you have the Lord Himself ahead of you at all times. So, when you find yourself in a leadership position in your family, school, church, office or business, you know that you are accountable to a higher authority, not fellow human beings that you can manipulate for your own personal gains.

Jesus has told us, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit: without Me, you can do nothing” [**Jn 15: 5**]. The power behind your success in that leadership position comes from Jesus and remains with you for *as long as* you obey His *every* command (as contained in the word of God). But the moment you dishonour Him with your arrogance, and perpetuate predatory sexual immorality against hapless wards or sharp trade practices against your clients, you are on your own. His power takes flight *without notice*.

Power is a coward!