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**C1108 – March 9, 2011 – Micah 7:14-20**

**The Shepherd King Of Israel**

We conclude the last cursing-blessing cycle tonight. Cycle one is chapters 1-2. Cycle two is chapters 3-5 and cycle three is chapters 6-7. Each begins with cursings, each ends with blessings. Tonight it ends in blessing for Israel.

Now the prophet Micah shows us how to live in a depraved, godless society and probably things were worse there than they are here. As bad as things can get I don't think we've reached the point that Micah's society had reached. Every relationship was fractured from neighbor all the way down to spouse. So I don't think we've reached that point but it behooves us to remember that before the horizontal relationships are fractured the even more important vertical relationship has already been fractured. Always the priority relationship is man's relationship with God and if that is messed up then every other relationship begins to suffer. That's why the NT is so practical when it says, "Don't be unequally yoked," don't marry an unbeliever. What does righteousness have to do with unrighteousness? You've got one person that has a relationship with God and the other person does not. What kind of marriage are these two people going to have? Not a good one. It doesn't mean divorce. That's not what we're saying. We're just saying that the Bible points out in the practical arena the importance of man's relationship with God first. Then, after we get that straight, we can talk about man's relationship with other men. So what we see with all the fractured relationships in our society and people complaining, well, this marriage thing doesn't work, one man and one woman for life, it doesn't work for me. Well, yeah stupid, it doesn't work for you. You have to get right with God first, then it will work. The reason it isn't working isn't because it's a bad idea, it's because you haven't got the prior relationship with God working. Once you do you'll see that it does work. Well, I don't like talking about my relationship with God, I don't want to talk about that, I think every one is

entitled to his own opinion. Well okay, but just know there are consequences to that kind of thinking. You may not like the way God has arranged the universe but that's the way He arranged it and if you try to re-arrange it there are consequences to pay. We're looking at the society Micah had to live in and there were a lot of consequences to pay. They'd rearranged everything, nobody was in a right relationship with God and the consequence was total social chaos. Every human relationship was broken. And here Micah is walking around in a theological desert, a social upheaval and he's a godly person. How do you make it in that kind of an environment? You're going to be a lone ranger, nobody is going to think like you, nobody is going to dress like you, nobody is going to like you because you're the last living conscience, and it can get kind of lonely having to live in that day in and day out. In that kind of society Micah says in verse 7, "But as for me, I will watch expectantly for the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me." He's taking two lines of approach. One he's waiting and watching for the LORD. God made promises to the faithful remnant that He would restore them. And Micah is claiming those promises. Remember the faith-rest drill. We have God's promises so in a situation we recall the promises, we connect those promises to our situation and we trust. And that's the technique Micah is using. That's one side of how he's handling the situation. I claim the promises of God, that's how I relax when my nation is falling to pieces all around me. But then second he prayed. He says at the end of verse 7, "The LORD will hear me." That's prayer, Micah is going to pray in v 14 tonight. And yes, God will hear this kind of prayer because Micah prayed Scripture. He went back again to passages that promise a future for Israel and he prays for that future. That's always the best kind of prayer to pray because it's guaranteed to get an answer. So last week we looked at how he used promises, this week we look at how he used prayer. Both of these are marks of a loyal believer, a believer who has learned to trust and obey the Lord so that no matter what kind of adversity the believer faces he is trained to turn to the promises of God and go to the Lord in prayer.

So if we outline the final paragraph, verse 14 is Micah's prayer, verses 15-17 are the Lord's answer to the prayer and verses 18-20 is Micah's praise. You go and pray to the Lord, the Lord answers your prayer, what do you do in response? You praise Him. It's very logical and if you've been a believer for very long and you've learned to pray and the Lord has answered some of your prayers then you know that it naturally results in praise and thanksgiving.

So let's look at the prayer in v 14, it's a very short prayer, probably because God cuts him off, but let's look at it.

Verse 14, **Shepherd Your people with Your scepter**, what's the prayer for? It's the imagery of the Shepherd and His flock. First let's think of this imagery. What's the imagery of the shepherd and the flock? This imagery is used throughout the Scriptures. Let's think about the flock, the flock are sheep. What are sheep? They're weak, they're stupid, and they're dirty. Now that's you, so go ahead and get used to the designation. I am a sheep, at the very least it will humble you to realize God thinks this way about you. So if you're weak, stupid and dirty what do you need? You need a shepherd. And the shepherd does what? He protects the sheep and he provides for the sheep. Those are the two basic functions of the shepherd, every other function I think can be derived from those two; protection and provision. Now the nation Israel is about to be thrown to the wolves, they're stupid sheep and they've wandered from the Shepherd and so Micah prays, Lord, **Shepherd Your people with Your scepter**. He's looking for their restoration.

And who is he praying will Shepherd them? Obviously the LORD God. But who in specific? There's more here than just the general idea of the LORD God shepherding them again, reintroducing the Theocratic Kingdom. The Theocratic Kingdom is when God directly Shepherds His people and He did that from Sinai to Samuel. Sinai to Samuel, for about four centuries God was the king of Israel, no human king. And then in 1 Sam 8 the people reject God as their king and they ask for a human king, they wanted to be like all the other nations. God gave them Saul, Saul flaked out, Saul was a rebel, he hated authority and it's instructive to parents because the final commentary on Saul states that hatred of authority is as the sin of sorcery. So if you think witchcraft and divination and all of that is bad then you have an idea of how God thinks about rebellion against authority. Saul was a rebel; he lost his shot at an eternal dynasty. So God chose who? A shepherd boy named David. David took care of his father's sheep.

So our verse is harking back to who? David. David was the first human king to shepherd Israel. He got his training for shepherding people from shepherding sheep. There's a link between these two occupations. In other words, we're saying that if you want to go run the government, you want to be a king or a president or a politician, the training ground is out in the field

keeping sheep. That's where you learn how to shepherd people. You don't learn in the ivory tower, you learn by providing and protecting actual sheep out in a field. If the political science curriculum were up to me I'd make half the classes agriculture. And people would look at me as if I were crazy but God's wisdom is that you learn how to shepherd people by starting with sheep. Sheep teach you about people, not ivory tower professors. They might teach you a thing or two about wolves but they won't be much help so far as doing what a great ruler does, Shepherding.

So this is sending us back to David. David was a shepherd and God was using that as a training ground so that when David rose to be king he knew how to shepherd people. But the passage is pointing us to a Shepherd greater than David isn't it. David was a great shepherd, don't get me wrong, but David wasn't perfect, David had his flaws, David was a depraved human being, but it's with David that the promise of an eternal dynasty is secured which points to a greater than David. Remember how David wanted to build God a house, he was so concerned that he had this big mansion and God was over in this little mobile tent, and he came up with the grand idea, I want to build God a house, a permanent dwelling place, but God said David, that's a fine idea but I'm going to build you a house, I already have a house God, not that kind of house, a different kind of house, a dynasty, an everlasting dynasty. That's what God promised David. Now an everlasting dynasty could come about two ways. One, it could just be an everlasting succession of rulers from the same house and God secures it so that dynasty never gets knocked off. Or, two, it could be that the house ends in an everlasting person. And we know by hindsight that God used the second way, it ended in an everlasting person from David's house. Who is it? The Lord Jesus Christ. So the prayer, Shepherd Your people with Your Scepter, harks back to the shepherd David and the Davidic dynasty but points forward to the dynastic successor of David, the greater than David, the Lord Jesus Christ. Micah doesn't know of the Lord Jesus yet but he does know of the Messiah, he does know the Messiah will come through David and he does know that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem, the same city David was born in. He prays for him to come and Shepherd His people.

**Shepherd Your people with Your scepter**, The scepter there is the *sebet*, "the rod," same word. It can be used a number of ways, it can be used of ruling a kingdom. It stands for authority; one who has authority holds the

scepter or the rod. It has that intrinsic meaning. Authority. Or it can be used of discipline, using the rod, spanking with the rod and it was used that way in the original Hebrew of 6:9. Why the rod by the way and not the hand? You never hear of God's hand being lowered against Israel? Why not? Because the hand symbolizes fighting. If you hit me I think you're fighting me. The rod doesn't carry that meaning. It carries the meaning of authority. One who reigns, one who has authority. It's intrinsic to the instrument. And that's why God says when you spank your kids use the rod, don't use other objects, those communicate different ideas. But in this context does the scepter seem to be used in either of those ways? Does it sound like ruling a kingdom or lowering divine discipline? No, it's in a shepherding context. And here is the third use that we see David using in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. What did David say in that Psalm that gives us this exact usage? "Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me." What's that Psalm all about? The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. David is connecting what he does for the sheep with what the LORD does for Him. He doesn't beat them up with the rod, He doesn't rule them with a scepter, He provides for them and He protects them with it. The scepter is to protect and to guide to the living streams of life. And Micah is praying that the greater than David who saw this connection would come and Shepherd His people in this way. It's a delicate and powerful and beautiful function of the Lord Jesus Christ that He will fulfill in the Kingdom!

Then he says, **Shepherd...The flock of Your possession**, that word possession is "inheritance". What's an inheritance? It's something you put aside for a special purpose. It's something you save up and it's special to you. Turn to Deut 4. We want to see why Micah calls Israel God's inheritance. In Deuteronomy the nation is receiving the Law the second time, that's why it's called Deuteronomy. And Moses is emphasizing in this chapter the first commandment. What's the first commandment? Idolatry. It's theological evil to worship anyone or anything that is not God. And at Sinai this is the first thing, it's a negation, do not worship idols, the positive side is, love the LORD your God. And notice the distinction of v 19 and 20. Verse 19, "And *beware* not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven." Don't start worshipping the sun, moon and stars, that's something that is as modern as it is ancient, men have tended to attribute to the heavens causation, we see it happening right under our noses with this

whole Mayan calendar thing and the end of the world in 2012, here it is, God turned the nations over to worship and serve the heavens. Verse 20, “But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people for His own possession, as today.” And there’s our word inheritance. Same word used in Micah. When God brought Israel out of Egypt He did that so that they would be His inheritance. God has an inheritance and it’s Israel. He has set them aside for a special purpose.

And so if we come back to Micah we know now that God did not set aside every nation on earth to be His inheritance. He set aside one nation on earth to be His inheritance and it’s Israel. There is no other nation on earth like Israel. And he prays for the Messiah to Shepherd His inheritance. Now he gets to location. They say in business real estate; location, location, location. Well here’s the prime real estate for Shepherding your inheritance, **In the midst of a fruitful field** (in the Hebrew that’s Mt Carmel). (Carmel was on the west side of the Jordan. Bashan and Gilead were on the west of the Jordan). So we have **Carmel, Bashan and Gilead**. All three stand by synecdoche for the whole Promised Land. You know what synecdoche is. It’s when you use a part for the whole. Like when you say in the Navy all hands on deck, that doesn’t mean just the hands, it means your bodies, get up here on the deck. Well **Carmel, Bashan and Gilead** stand for the whole Promised Land. We saw the borders last week; they will extend far beyond their present locations. And he’s saying the whole country is going to be like Carmel, Bashan and Gilead. What does he mean by that? He means lush. We could go into all the details of how the Bible describes these areas but the point is they were the most lush and rich pastures ever enjoyed by Israel and in the future the whole Promised Land will be as lush and rich as these areas were. Ezekiel describes it as the Garden of Eden. So it’s going to be fantastic.

And he prays, **In the midst of Carmel, Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead As in the days of old**. When are the **days of old**? This goes with verse 14 not with verse 15. He’ll talk about some other days of old in verse 15 but this is talking about the **days of old** when Israel was at it’s zenith, when it enjoyed it’s greatest prosperity, when it created its greatest culture. When was it? King David and the Golden Era of Solomon. That era is easily the most prosperous and enjoyable and Micah prays for a restoration of those kinds of days, obviously speaking of the kingdom of the Messiah

Now in verse 15 God breaks in and cuts off Micah's prayer with an immediate answer, so the speaker shifts, now it's God talking, **As in the days when you came out from the land of Egypt I will show you miracles.** He's saying, oh yeah, I'm going to do it, I'm going to Shepherd you, I'm going to restore the kingdom to its lush beauty and when I do it will be As in the days when you came out from the land of Egypt. What's the event? The Exodus. What did God do for them at the Exodus? He redeemed them from the local house of slavery down in Egypt. What's he going to do in the future for them? There's going to be another Exodus. This time He will redeem them from the global house of slavery the world over. He will gather them from all the places which He has scattered them and He will Shepherd them.

You say how will He do it? Well, how did He do it back in Egypt? He did it by miracles. So how is He going to do it again? Answer: by **miracles.** You know, the things atheists say can't happen because of natural law. Whatever that means. What's natural law? Well, you know its nature, the laws embedded in nature; the laws of physics, the laws of chemistry, the laws of biology, that kind of thing. Yeah, I know what you're talking about but I thought people made laws. So who made the laws? Nobody made them, they're just there. Well, the biblical answer is no, they are not just there. They are how the word of God controls nature. So if the word of God controls nature 1001 times one way and then He controls it 1 time a different way, that's what we call a miracle. It's that one time when God controls nature in an extraordinary way. And the atheist says, well He can't do that.

Well, He doesn't ordinarily do that, He ordinarily does what He does every day. He ordinarily works in such a way that we can go out and measure things, quantify things, calculate, build bridges, make engines, use cell phones, all this is sustained by the way God ordinarily works. Why does He ordinarily work this way? Because of His word in the Noachic Covenant. It's that covenant that guarantees stability in nature to the post-Flood world. Without His word in that covenant there would be no stability in nature. It's His word in that covenant that explains why our math works, why we can drive our cars, why we have air to breathe. But why if He ordinarily works that way can't He work in extraordinary ways? There's no reason at all. It's not illogical to make this claim, it's not unreasonable at all to say that God does miracles, it's just stating who our God is.

He used miracles, stunning demonstrations of His power over all gods and goddesses associated with nature forces and what will He do again? He will use miracles; stunning demonstrations of His power over all gods and goddesses associated with nature forces and bring Israel into her Kingdom. And then there will be no atheists, actually there are no atheists now, all of them know God, it's just they won't openly admit it, but there will be no atheists in the sense people claim. And atheists don't believe in the non-existence of god by the way, they just believe there are no convincing proofs for the existence of god. But that's because they've elevated fallen human reason to god-like status, they worship at the altar of human reason, that's their god. The issue isn't revelation *or* reason; the issue is the proper use of reason. What role does reason play and the answer is that reason is a tool. God has given us reason to be used to think about and systematize His revelation. And there's nothing unreasonable about miracles.

But look at verse 16, here's the people who don't believe in miracles, **Nations will see and be ashamed of all their might.** They'll be ashamed of their military strength. What a joke. Turn to Ps 2. We have some pretty cool weapons out there, amazing things that can really rip things to shreds, you get to see some of them on the military channel. We know about nuclear and the whole world fears nuclear because we know what that can do, we saw it at Nagasaki and Hiroshima; we have biological weapons, think of the mass release of viruses, of course chemical warfare, we've seen what that can do. You have to be pretty impressed with the technological developments of modern weaponry. But Ps 2 says that's all a joke. If nothing else you need to come away with this with a greater appreciation of our God. Verse 1, "Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing?" that means no substance, that means whatever this plan is it's stupid. Verse 2, "The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together Against the LORD and against His Anointed," I mean, this is the great nations of the earth and they're all devising a war against God the Father and the risen, ascended Messiah. And they're coming out with all their weapons, big bad weapons saying, verse 3, "Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!" They want autonomy? They want God gone, they want Him out of the picture. They want to rule the universe. And



they've got their big bad weaponry to take it. Verse 4, "He who sits in the heavens is watching comedy central." Oh, you boys have your big bad toothpicks down there. It's a joke. God doesn't need big bad guns, big bad bombs or any of that. All He needs is to open His mouth. He doesn't need anything outside of Himself. He's the big boy on the block and if you come up to the big boy on the block and try to knock Him off all He has to do is open His mouth and your back to puny again. Look at verse 5, "Then He will speak to them in His anger And terrify them in His fury, saying, "But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain." You know, get off my planet, I've been supporting you jokers your whole lives and now I'm removing the support. Get outta here. I don't want to see you on My block anymore.

Come back to Micah. Look at them in verse 16. **Nations will see and be ashamed Of all their might.** You know, they're going to be embarrassed that they ever took the tanks out of the barn. **They will put their hand on their mouth,** they're not going to talk about the defeat, it's embarrassing, **Their ears will be deaf,** they don't want to hear anything about it. Just shut up about the defeat. It's so embarrassing that it's a politically incorrect topic.

Look at verse 17, this is the extent of the defeat and you should recognize this from somewhere else in Scripture? **They will lick the dust like a serpent,** what is this about the dust and the serpent? Does that remind you of Gen 3:15, the curse upon Satan, that serpent of old who is the devil? As Satan was cast down so the nations will be cast down. Licking the dust is a figure describing judgment and total defeat. When the Messiah returns in great power with miracles His enemies are going to be totally defeated. They're going to come groveling on their belly. Notice how he stays with the reptile kingdom, **Like reptiles of the earth.** What's the characteristic of the reptiles? They don't stand up, they move close along the ground, they're bowed down. What's it picturing? Total subjugation. What are you supposed to think of when you see a reptile. Wow, that's a neat creature. It's a bit more than that, it's an object lesson and it's to remind us that Satan was knocked down, he was defeated and every foe of the Lord Jesus Christ is going to be ultimately defeated. They're going to be subjugated to Him and they are going to bow down before Him.

Look at what Micah says, **They will come trembling out of their fortresses;** They will be coming out in total surrender, bowing the knee at the name of Jesus, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. That's Philippians 2 but the original is Isaiah 45:23 and in the original passage they're bowing before YHWH. In Philippians Paul takes the name Jesus and substitutes it for YHWH, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow. They will submit. Every person will submit to the Lord Jesus Christ whether they like it or not. And you can bow the knee willingly or He can break the knees. But everyone will bow.

**To the LORD our God they will come in dread.** Yeah, they'll be coming in dread. I mean, after that astounding display of power what is He going to do to us? We can't do anything to stop Him. What is He going to do to us? **And they will be afraid before You.** You there is Israel. The enemies of Israel will be afraid of Israel. Why? Because how you treated Israel is how you will be treated. How did they treat Israel? By attacking them, by trying to wipe them off the map. Now they're going to be wiped off the map. You just touched the sheep of the Shepherd and the Shepherd is good, He protects the sheep. So bye, bye now.

So that's God's answers Micah's prayer, and what this does is it gives Micah final hope, doesn't it. Yes, Micah, I will rise up and Shepherd My flock, the people of My inheritance. And so in vv 18-20 we have Micah's praise for this answer to prayer. And these verses have been taken by the orthodox Jews and read on two occasions annually. First on the Jewish calendar you have the New Year, Rosh Hashanah, that begins a ten day festival and the tenth day is the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur that ends the festival. Twice during this festival they recite these words. The first time they do it is on the Sabbath in between the first day and the tenth day, as part of what they call the Sabbath of Return. In other words, the return of Israel to the LORD their God. It's a plea for that. The second time they recite these verses is on the Day of Atonement and there they'll go down to a stream or river of running water and symbolically empty their pockets of their sins into the water as they're washed away and it's in the hope that the Lord God will be gracious to them and forgive their sins and transgressions and restore the Kingdom to them. So Micah's words of praise here have become very

important to modern Judaism. They're just missing one element and that's how their sins are washed away.

Micah asks, **Who is a God like You**, and that's what Micah's name means. **Who is a God like you who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His inheritance?** It's a rhetorical question demanding a negative answer. There is no one like God. J Vernon McGee used to say there is one thing that God has never seen that you see every day. It sounds wrong when I say that doesn't it? What do you mean you've seen something that God has never seen? I mean God has never seen His equal, you have. God has no equal, you do. That's what he means. God has no equals, you have many equals. He is the Creator, you are the creature. God points this out to Isaiah's generation, "To whom would you liken Me And make Me equal and compare Me, That we would be alike?" Go ahead, make it up, project it, imagine it, build it with gold and silver, bow down and worship it. "Remember this, and be assured," God says, "Recall it to mind, you transgressors. Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure.'" Remember. You know, God is very interested in history. Why is He so interested in history? Because history is the arena where He works. And by learning the true history we are having our view of God shaped. That's why I'm so intent on getting this framework through to you. One of the emphases is the historicity of the biblical events. And here we have a collision at every point with what secular historians say. It's not just a point here and a point there, it's a total universal history? What is the history of the universe? That's a very controversial question because the way you answer that question defines the nature of who God is. God says remember history because I wrote it, I planned it and I will do it. Nobody else can do that. Nobody can declare the end from the beginning. Except God. There is no one like Him. That's the idea Micah is getting at but he's applying it to a God's forgiveness. **Who is a God like you who pardons iniquity.** The word **pardons** means to pick something up and to carry it off. What God picks up and carries off iniquity? The gods and goddesses don't do that? Only God does that. Now there are three words related to sin in this verse and the next. The first one is in verse 18, **iniquity**, the second one is in the next phrase, **rebellious act** and the third one is near the end of verse 19, **sins**. Why do

you think he uses all three words? To emphasize that He takes care of all three. There's nothing out there you can do that is too great for God's forgiveness. People struggle with this but they struggle with this because they don't really realize who God is and who we are. If you think that you can do something that is too great for God to forgive then you're still thinking that God considers what you do. He doesn't consider what you do at all. You're already as filthy as you could be before Him. So doing something else isn't going to make you more filthy. And he's explaining that there is no one who takes all this filth and gets rid of it except God. Talk about the grace of God. I don't do this, nobody does this except God. God does this. This is the grace of God.

Now he's using some analogies so we get the point. But keep in mind they're just analogies and they don't always fit perfectly the situation. The first analogy is that He **pardons iniquity** and we said that means to lift something off of you and carry it off. He does that for you. The second thing is He **passes over the rebellious act of the remnant**. We'll come back to **the remnant** but notice the words **passes over**, it's reminiscent of what? The Exodus. What did the angel of death do for the Jewish homes that had blood over the door that night in Egypt? He passed over. Those inside enjoyed salvation. And then the third analogy is verse 19, **He will tread our iniquities under foot** and it's the picture of squashing insects. He's going to squash their iniquities like insects. And finally, the fourth analogy, **You will cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea**. What did God do to Pharaoh and his army? Cast them into the depths of the sea never to be seen again. So again the language comes from the Exodus.

Now all of this is emphasizing that it's going to be gone, never to be mentioned again. Now the reason that God can do this, we know, it's not because we walk down to some river and empty our pockets or toss some bread crumbs in the water. That's not quite going to cut it because God is holy and finally God can't just overlook sin. Finally His holiness looks down and it must judge. That's why the OT predicted the coming of Messiah in Isaiah 53 to suffer for their sins. He was being judged by the Father for our sins, our rebellious acts, our iniquities on that tree. He hung as the cursed of God. He died as a criminal. But not because He was a criminal. Because we were criminals and He took our place. He took our punishment. We were separated from God because of our sin so He took our sin and was separated

from God the Father to bring us to God. This is His amazing grace. But before the cross you have this tension between Israel's sin and the promises of future restoration. How is God going to solve this tension between Israel's sin and promised blessing? And it seems that verse 18 is talking about how God was handling things before the cross and verse 19 is talking about how God will finally handle things after the cross. There's a difference and you can see it in that v 19 translates these as the future tense. Verse 18 translates as the present tense. So verse 18 is how God was handling things before the cross and verse 19 is how God would finally handle things after the cross.

And we want to make a few more points about verse 18 before we leave. **He pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His inheritance?** Is there a limitation there? It only applies to the remnant. Why? Because only the remnant have a faith like Abraham. The remnant is the believing subset within the nation Israel. Not all individuals in the nation came to the same faith as Abraham and since they did not they did not step into the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. You had to follow the footsteps of Abraham and believe in order to become a recipient of the promises. That's the major point of Gen 15 when God makes this covenant the text says, now, when God did this, when God entered into a covenant with Abraham, know that Abraham had already believed God and been credited with righteousness. In other words God didn't enter into a covenant without legal righteousness as a base. Abraham was still a sinner but as Martin Luther said, "Simul Iustus et Peccator." Simultaneously just and a sinner. He had legal justice but he was still a sinner but because of the legal justice God could enter into a covenant relationship with a sinner. Not before. That legal basis had to exist first. Then God gave the sign of the covenant. What was it? Circumcision. And all the little boys would be circumcised on the eighth day and why did they do this? So that every time they went to the bathroom it was an object lesson. Something's wrong with you, from the very beginning you had to have this corrective surgery and it was a physical reminder of the fact that spiritually there is something wrong with you and you need corrective surgery, not on our flesh but on our hearts. We need a circumcision of heart and that comes through faith. Abraham showed us the way. Abraham, before he ever heard of circumcision of the flesh believed God and had a circumcised heart. The physical thing was just a sign of this need. And so to enter into the covenantal promises given to Abraham a Jew would have

to enter by faith. And all those who did constituted the believing remnant. And to those who are a part of the **remnant**, to those **He does not retain His anger forever**. For everyone else, yeah, He does retain His anger forever, a righteous holy anger. But to the remnant of His inheritance **He does not retain His anger forever**, why? **Because He delights in unchanging love**. And this is telling us that now that a legal basis has been established between God and the remnant then God is going to do what He said He will do. This is the basis of it. **He delights in unchanging love**. What's unchanging love? Whatever this is if it isn't there then there's unchanging hatred forever and ever. So what is it? It's His *chesed* love, we see this word over and over and over in the OT, you will see this word hundreds of times. What is it? His loyalty to the covenant. What covenant? The Abrahamic Covenant. He delights in it. He delights in entering into covenants with man, He delights in condescending to man and promising Him things and then as they trust Him He fulfills it. What did He promise them? A land, seed and worldwide blessing. Is God going to give the remnant the land? Yes. Is God going to give them the seed? Oh yes, He planned it, He will do it. Is God going to make the nation Israel a worldwide blessing? Oh yes, so much blessing will come through Israel that nothing in the present world can compare. He planned it, He will do it. God delights in not changing the terms of this contract and fulfilling it exactly as He spoke it.

Verse 19, this is all after the cross and it's more permanent, the analogies are that the sin is totally done away with, totally gone forever. In modern Judaism and Islam God is not going to deal with it. I mean, you can say He'll just overlook it, but this is not a description of God just overlooking it. This is a description of God doing away with it, somehow erasing it. **He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins**, rather "our" sins, there's a textual variant there, our sins, **Into the depths of the sea**. Gone, why? Because of Messiah. The Messiah Jesus will have paid for all of their sins and His righteousness will be actually derived in time and imputed to them.

Verse 20, **You will give truth to Jacob And unchanging love to Abraham Which You swore to our forefathers From the days of old**, to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the forefathers, these promises were made and they will be fulfilled. So the book ends on a high note, the final restoration and blessing of the remnant of Israel.

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