

Preached on 3/5/23 at GBC-Ruston

"The God WHO Pardoneth?"

Micah 7:18,19

Three of the four Gospels record the event where our Lord healed a man who was stricken with palsy (**which is a form of paralysis**), who was lowered through the roof of the house where Christ was teaching. In all three recordings, after healing him our Lord told the one stricken with palsy – "*Thy sins be forgiven thee.*" Because of this statement, the self-righteous scribes began to reason **WITHIN THEMSELVES** – "*Why doth this [man] thus speak blasphemies? WHO CAN FORGIVE SINS BUT GOD ONLY?*"(Mk.2:6,7) The word translated "*forgive*" in these passages have basically the same meaning as the word used in our text this morning, translated "*pardoneth*". Both mean '**to take away, to carry off, or to sweep away**'. These Scribes were right in their reasoning - **NONE CAN** take away, carry off, or sweep away sin or **INIQUITY BUT GOD**.

The Prophet Micah begins by asking a searching question: "*Who [is] a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage?*" Look at the first phrase - "*Who a God like unto Thee?*" The answer is clear - **THERE ARE NONE**. Think about the way King David described our God - "*For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God?*"(Ps.18:31) "*Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high.*"(Ps.113:5) "*But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.*"(Ps.115:3) **We must be very clear on this point:** Other than **JEHOVAH**, there are no other gods. Every other god is nothing more than an idol. There are none as great, none as mighty, and none like our God in the perfections of His character. When the Prophet asked this question, he was showing that the true and living God can be distinguished from all those idols based on **THIS ONE TRUTH - that He graciously forgives the sins of His people and bears with their infirmities** - "*That pardoneth iniquity; and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage.*" There is no questioning the fact that all men by nature are of the opinion that their god is ready to pardon. We know this to be true because of the various sacrifices and offering they make in order to make amends and atone for their failures. These kind of sacrifices and offering reveal the ones that make them to be idol worshippers, worshiping a god of their imagination, a god that is **NOT THE ONE TRUE GOD**. The Prophet doesn't say our God merely **OFFERS** to pardon iniquity if we'll fulfill whatever conditions are required. He tells us plainly that "**OUR GOD**", **HE ALONE** "*pardoneth iniquity*". The word "*pardoneth*" means '**to lift, bear up, carry, or take**'. So the One True God distinguishes Himself from every other idol by 'lifting, bearing up, carrying, or taking the "**INIQUITIES**" (**which literally means - perversity, depravity, iniquity, guilt or punishment of iniquity**) of His people, the objects of His love. Here is the **SAME EXACT** word for "*pardoneth*", used in setting forth the Person and work of the God sent Messiah - "*Surely He hath BORNE (same word as "pardoneth") our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*"(Isa.53:4) **Look at vs.5** -"*But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our INIQUITIES: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.*" (Isa.53:4,5) Here we see that Christ **ALONE** bore the **ENTIRE BURDEN** of our "*iniquities*" as our Substitute and Surety.

But the Lord moved the Prophet Micah to declare something else that distinguishes **OUR GOD** - "*and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage.*" This phrase "*passeth by*" means that the true and living God overlooks the rebellion of His children. This doesn't mean that the sins of God's children escapes His view - "*The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding*

the evil and the good." Even though the Lord SEES and KNOWS our "*transgression*" (rebellions), **HE DOES NOT CALL THEM BEFORE HIS BAR OF JUDGMENT**, seeing they were dealt with in the person of our Substitute, Surety, Redeemer, and Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary - "*He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*"(Rom.8:32-34) This teaches us that the "glory of God" principally shines forth in this - that God is **RECONCILED BY CHRIST'S WORK** and that **HE FORGIVES OUR SINS**. This is where **TRUE GOD-GIVEN FAITH** rests. **Think about it:** Unless we are **fully persuaded** that God is **FOREVER** reconciled to us; Unless we are **CONVINCED** God is a God who "*delights to show mercy*", **WE CAN NEVER TRULY WORSHIP HIM**. In other words, true reverence for God is born from an understanding of His forgiveness and mercy - "*If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared.*"(Ps.130:4,5) I love the way John Calvin stated this: "Hence the fear of God, and the true worship of Him, depend on a perception of His goodness and favour; for we cannot from the heart worship God, and there can be no genuine religion in us, except this persuasion be really and deeply seated in our Hearts - that He is every ready to forgive, **WHENEVER WE FLEE TO HIM.**"

As if this isn't enough to distinguish Jehovah from every idol, He moved Micah to continue with this theme - "*He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy.*" While it is true that God does and will chasten all His children for their transgressions through His providence, **HE WON'T CHASTEN THEM FOREVER**. In time, for His glory and our good, God changes the course of His providence toward us, showing us again His forgiving love, which is Him turning His anger from us - "*Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Selah. Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned [thyself] from the fierceness of thine anger.*"(Ps.85:2,3); "*And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God [is] my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH [is] my strength and [my] song; he also is become my salvation.*"(Isa.12:1,2) The question is **WHY does God do this?** Is it because of our improvement; our confession; our **REPENTANCE** - **NO!!!!** There is no doubt God's children do seek to improve, they do confess, and they do repent, **BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS**, or **ALL OF THESE THINGS COMBINED** are the cause of God not retaining His anger toward them. **What is?** "*BECAUSE He delighteth in mercy.*" **LISTEN TO ME CAREFULLY:** Mercy is what is natural to our God! Listen to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "**JEHOVAH OUR SALVATION**": "*But go ye and learn what that meaneth, **I WILL HAVE MERCY**, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*"(Matt.9:13) While God's mercy is abundant, His mercy is **always exercised** according to His sovereign will and pleasure - "*And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.*"(Exo.33:19) Mercy is delightful to our God and He takes pleasure in showing mercy to miserable creatures, to those who **HOPE** in God's mercy - "*The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.*"(Ps.147:11) God's mercy is the spring of all pardon, which streams through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Let's look at vs.19 - "*He will turn again, He will have compassion on us*". Since God loves mercy, **as we've already seen in Vs.18**, this verse literally tells us - "He will return and have mercy on us." At times, because of our sinfulness and rebellion, it appears to us that God has turned from us and forsaken us - **ELABORATE**. But we **KNOW** this cannot be true, seeing He has declared - "*I will NEVER LEAVE THEE, NOR FORSAKE THEE*." **These times in the believer's life are troubling times to their soul**. But the heart of faith hopes in the Lord, and gloriously the Lord returns and shows us His marvelous mercy and grace. **Think about Peter**: When he denied our Lord, our Lord looked into Peter's eyes and it broke Peter's heart. The Lord was taken from his presence, and Peter departed from the Lord. Yet the Lord "*returned*", and had mercy on him - "*Go tell the disciples, AND PETER*". What was true of Peter is true of each and every one of God's elect in every generation, in every circumstance and situation.

Notice the next phrase - "*He will subdue our iniquities*". We have here another explanation of the grace of **PARDON**. Sin is the enemy of God, as well as the enemy of His people. It is an enemy **TOO STRONG** for us, reigning over us by nature. We are under its power, influence, guilt, and condemnation, **UNABLE** in and of ourselves to conquer it. This phrase shows us **WHO** "subdues" or literally "treads down or underfoot our sin". **GOD DOES**. Our blessed Lord has conquered sin, made an end of it, and took it away. Like a conquering king over a beaten enemy, Christ alone put His feet on sin's neck and trampled it underfoot. Christ did it in such a way that it **CAN NEVER** rise in condemnation to one of His beloved - **Rom.8:1-4**. Because of God's efficacious grace, sin shall never have dominion over us - "*For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*"(Rom.6:14)

Look at the last phrase - "*and Thou wilt cast ALL THEIR SINS into the depths of the sea.*" I watched a video one time on Facebook on the actual depth of the sea. The deepest part of the ocean, called "**the challenger deep**" is **35,856** feet. If you put Mount Everest (**29,029 feet**) into the deepest part of the ocean, it would be covered by over a mile of water. **Listen to me**: God (**NOT US**) - hurled our guilt into the "*depths*", which in the original means 'the deep sea'. In other words, they cannot be found and they will never be seen again. Remember, God is **OMNISCIENT**, meaning He sees all and knows all, **yet He will not avenge our sins** because **HE SATISFIED HIMSELF IN CHRIST**. Christ **BORE** them away, effectively and eternally. Now the actual allusion here was to the Egyptians who were covered by the Red Sea, whom our God told Israel by Moses that they would never be seen again. It is the same with the elect sinner's sins. All the elect's sins were all forgiven for Christ's sake - "**ALL THEIR SINS**". They are all pardoned, covered, and blotted out, and not one sin remains charged to us, **SEEING THEY WERE CHARGED TO CHRIST** - "*I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*"(Isa.43:25)

Let me say this in closing: Henry had a saying that has always been so important to me in regards to God no longer remembering my sin, particularly as it relates to this verse. He use to always say: "God threw our sins over His back into the depths of the sea, and put up a sign that says **NO FISHING**." God is no longer "fishing" for our sins, because He was satisfied in Christ. So why do we continually go dredging up what God has dealt with in the person of our Redeemer? Let us by faith believe God's promise, trusting He is reconciled to us in the person of Christ, and as

reconciled sons and daughters of the living God , **LIVE ACCORDINGLY** out of grace and gratitude to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.