

The God Who Pardons Sin

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- [0 : 00] And reading at verse 18, Micah chapter 7, reading at verse 18. Who is a God like unto you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression for the remnant of his inheritance?
- He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in steadfast love or delights in mercy. It was said before that Micah and Isaiah, they were contemporaries.
- They were both prophets in Judah at the same time. Isaiah was a royal prophet. He prophesied to the kings. He prophesied mainly in the courts.
- And in fact, he thought there might even be royal blood in his veins. And Isaiah's prophecies, as we know, were really quite extraordinary.
- He's called the evangelistic prophet. Because so many of his prophecies regarding the Lord Jesus Christ are not just breathtakingly accurate.
- [1 : 10] You would believe that Isaiah, for instance, if you look at Isaiah 53, you would believe that he had been an eyewitness of what was happening to Jesus here in this world.
- So the language of Isaiah is magnificent. It is reckoned. It is as beautiful as any language, any writings that are found within the Hebrew language.
- Micah, on the other hand, was more a rural prophet. He prophesied in the countryside and amongst the people. And just he ministered there.
- And of course, the Lord always fits his people for the different missions and different works that he gives them to do. And so both Micah and Isaiah were fitted for the particular audiences that they had.
- Now, as we know, Judah was in a state of terminal decline. You remember how Israel had split in the time of David's grandson.
- [2 : 18] There was David, then Solomon, and then there was Rehoboam, which was Solomon's son. And it was during the reign of Jeroboam that Israel split in two.
- The northern kingdoms of Israel, they went with a man, Jeroboam. And the southern kingdoms, they remained faithful to the line of David, and they stuck with Rehoboam.
- The northern kingdom went into a terminal decline a lot quicker. And it became virtually apostate and idolatrous.
- And you had kings like Ahab and so on that were leading, that had sold themselves to sin and led the people so far from God that they ended up in captivity. But the southern kingdom, they had a succession sometimes of good kings and not so good kings.
- But they remained for a much longer time, and they were still adhering to the ways and the practices of God. But it was going down and down and down. And God was sending warning after warning after warning to them and saying, Look, this can't go on.
- [3 : 29] You've got to sort yourselves out. You've got to get back. But as we know, in the end, they didn't heed these warnings. And they were, of course, eventually taken into exile.
- So here we have prophecies that are warning of what is going to happen. But side by side with that, there is a great truth given to us of God's faithfulness to his people.

And even although there's exile, even although there's hardship, even although there's brokenness, even there's all, God will never leave. He's always in the business of restoring his people.

Even although hard things have to go through first, he's always in the business of restoring. Now, of course, there were many sins, you just read through this chapter, that were prevalent in the land at the time.

There was the great sin of idolatry. But sometimes when we read of the Jews going into idolatry, we think that they had completely abandoned the worship of God, and that they had just set up idols, and that's what they were doing.

[4 : 29] Sometimes that's what did happen. But often, they kind of tried to marry the two together, so that they would take something of the practices of others round about, but they would still be worshipping God too.

There was a very mixed up way. And of course, that was an abomination to the Lord, because it's either all or nothing. God demands complete allegiance.

And this was part of his great controversy with his people, that they were mingling customs and bringing it in to the worship of God from the nations round about.

And so, God again is promising to deal with them. And when you read through Micah, you see that a lot of the sins of the nation at that particular time are the same as we have here in our own land.

And corruption was rife. Bribery was rife. There was an incredible sense of injustice. People were feeling just that it just wasn't fair the way that things were being done and things were being run.

[5 : 41] There was a sense of oppression, where they were really feeling that the rich were exploiting the poor. There were all these sort of things.

Violence was part and partial of the day. There was a... The streets weren't safe. It wasn't... There was violence all round. And again, when you look at our own day, we're very fortunate where we live here, but there are many parts of our country that people are prisoners in their own homes.

A lot of people won't go out at night. The streets aren't safe. And it's an awful reflection on our society that we're living in times like these, where there's just...

It seems like there's almost a sense of anarchy and lawlessness. And the powers that be almost seem incapable. It seems to be almost out of control. Well, it was like that.

There's nothing new under the sun. And it was like that back in the days of Judah. And even within the home, the home life, it was full of deceit and untruths and rebellion, fighting and all sort of things.

[6 : 53] So it's an awful picture, really. And it's on the back of all this that we find in Micah often, although there's hard-hitting judgments, there are beautiful truths, beautiful promises.

And here is one that comes before us. As Micah comes to the end of his prophecy, he gives us this beautiful statement or great question, Who is a God like you?

And that is a question, in a sense, that we cannot answer, because there is no God like the living and true God. Who is a God like unto you? Because when we stop and think of who the living and true God is, we can't get the words to describe.

We just look up into the sky. The Word of God says, The heavens declare the glory of God. The skies, his handwork, the intricate work of his hands, it proclaims.

The whole creation is speaking to us of the might, the power, the majesty, the glory of God all around us when we look at the human being where God took from the dust to the ground and he made the most beautiful, most amazing creation where he made man and woman.

[8 : 14] We don't have to look beyond anything to be amazed at the God who made us. Who is a God like unto you? It's a question.

And when we come to the Scripture, we see so much of what God has revealed to us of himself. Things we couldn't work out ourselves. But he has revealed so much of his justice, his truth, his righteousness, his precepts, his love, his grace.

We begin to understand so, so much of who God is. And the more we go into who God is, the more amazing he appears. And we keep saying, Who is a God like unto thee?

And in fact, when we begin to try and work out, we can only go so far. And like the psalmist, we have to say, You know, such knowledge is too strange for me.

It's too high to understand. It's beyond me. And there's not one person on earth who can say, You know, I understand everything about God. It goes way beyond us.

[9 : 23] But the question that's asked here, Who is a God like unto you? Is with regard to pardoning iniquity. It is regarding the demonstration of God's grace.

And as we know, The marvel of God's grace Is the most amazing marvel really in the world.

But you know, the marvel of God's grace Isn't a marvel To those who don't know of his grace. If you're here today, And you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ As your own personal saviour.

If you've never come to understand What it is to be saved by Jesus, Then you don't understand the marvel Of his grace.

It's many years, And I'm sure we could say Most of us here were like that. Spent years, And we didn't know, We couldn't understand the marvel. We'd hear people talk about The marvel of God's grace.

[10 : 26] But until you yourself Come to understand it, It's then that you see, As John Newton said, It's amazing grace.

Amazing grace. How sweet the sound That saved a wretch like me. Because God's grace, You see, God's grace is so remarkable That what it does is It's like a searchlight That comes into your life And reveals to you Who you are.

And that changes everything. But it doesn't stop there. God's grace comes into your life, Reveals to you Who you are, And then also reveals to you Himself.

And He shows Himself To be the one that you need. The one that you must have. But it goes even further than that. That grace enables you To lay hold upon Jesus.

And that changes everything. Because when God's grace First comes into our heart And where God's spirit Opens our heart to see ourselves, We get a shock.

[11 : 40] We didn't realize we were bad. Now, if I say to everybody today, You know, You don't know how bad you are. Some people may say, Oh, hold on.

I'm not that bad. Well, I believe you're all decent, Good, nice people. That's not what we're talking about here. But when we get right into Who we are In the depth of our being.

When our soul is opened up A wee bit to us. And we begin to see something Of the twistedness, And the deceit, And the corruption, And the rebellion, And all that's lying Hidden away in there.

We say, Oh. And there is this sense Of guilt before God. And we realize That it's against God. That we are who we are.

And that's why we hit Like the publican Would cry out, Lord, Be merciful to me, A sinner. You know, Before God's grace Comes into your life And touches your life, You don't cry that cry.

[12 : 43] You might say it With your mouth, But you don't mean it. Because you don't understand What it is to be a sinner. But when his grace Comes in, You begin to see it.

And then, Of course, As we say that in turn, Helps you to Turn to Jesus. And to discover from him His great mercy.

And that's what it says, Who is that God like unto you Pardoning iniquity. And he does, Pardons this iniquity Because he delights In steadfast love.

Now that word Steadfast love Is just what it is. It is steadfast love. But it is also So often translated In mercy. And you know, It's one of the most Wonderful things.

See that verse, He delights in mercy. There are things God doesn't delight in. He doesn't delight In judgment. His judgment Is a strange work.

[13 : 43] God hasn't That delight in his heart In dealing with judgment. But he has a real delight In his heart In showing mercy. It's what he does.

It's what's natural to him. It's what is Consistent with his being. And his messages Are new every morning We're told. And you know, It's one of the most Wonderful things Is to realize That God is a God Who delights in mercy.

And because He delights in mercy He, in turn Pardons iniquity. That's the most Wonderful thing.

That God Pardons our iniquity. The word pardon Has the idea Of lifting up And carrying away. And that's what God Has done for us In Jesus Christ.

He has lifted Our sins From off us. And he has carried Them on to his son Who has taken them Away from us.

[14 : 45] And the freedom And the liberty When your sin Is forgiven Is amazing. Pardon He pardons Because of his Mercy.

You remember the story Of the young Very young Soldier Young recruit In Napoleon's Army. And he did Something wrong And he got Into trouble Over it.

Then he did Something wrong Again. He called Before Napoleon And Napoleon Said that's The second time And he said You're going To be executed. They were still In France At the time.

And his mother Got word of it And she was Distraught And she came To Napoleon And she pleaded To Napoleon And she said Please, please Spare my son. Napoleon said No.

This is the second Time he has done That. He's going to Be executed. And he said Justice demands He be executed. But she said She said I'm not asking For justice.

[15 : 52] I'm asking For mercy. Napoleon said To her He doesn't Deserve Mercy. And she said To him Sir If he deserved Mercy Then it wouldn't Be mercy.

And that's A point. If we Deserved Mercy Then we Wouldn't be We wouldn't Be receiving Mercy. Mercy Is giving us What we don't Deserve.

And that's What God Is doing. He delights To do that. To give us What we don't Deserve. And he Bestows upon us His love And his grace His mercy.

That's what it is. And so that's What he's doing. He pardons. He lifts up. It's a royal pardon. We're told And passing over The transgression For the remnant Of his inheritance.

He's passing over it. There's all your sins. It's like It's like he's got it all Documented. Written everything About you Down in his great book. This great journal And page After page And every Fault And every Blemish Every sin Transgression Iniquity It's all recorded.

[17 : 04] And as he pardons you It's like he Not just lifts up It's like he would Tear out all the pages That are there And throw them away. They're washed Everything that's recorded Is erased By the blood Of Jesus Christ.

Isn't that what it says? That he has Washed away Our sins In the blood Of Jesus Christ. And so This is all part of the Part of the wonder of it.

And of course We have this pardon We have this forgiveness Because of What his son The Lord Jesus Christ Has done for us. And then We see there For the And passing over Transgression For the remnant Of his inheritance.

Now His inheritance Are his people. You today As a believer You are the inheritance Of God. Out of this world Out of everything That he made In this world This whole creation In all its beauty And splendor And glory And majesty We're told That this earth All about it Is going to burn up With fervent heat.

There's going to come A day And the Lord alone Knows when that day Is going to be. That this world As we know it Is going to end And it's going to end By fire. It's going to burn up. But God is going to And there will be New heavens And a new earth Wherein dwells Righteousness.

[18 : 28] That's a great hope We have. But the Lord Tells us that Out of this world He's going to take His own possession. This is what Belongs to him.

This is what's Precious to him. This is his jewel. And these are his people. You. You're precious to him. And that's what He's going to take.

He's taking every Single one of you Home to be with himself. You are his inheritance. But you'll notice That so often It talks about here It talks about The remnant Of his inheritance.

And you know It's so often In the Bible It talks Of a remnant. A remnant Is a kind of A smallish number Out of a group Isn't it? And you know It seems to be One of the sad things So far in the history Of the world.

That the majority Of people Reject Jesus. Jesus himself Talks about The broad road And the narrow road. And he shows That the broad road That leads to destruction Is absolutely Full of people.

[19 : 32] But that there are Few on the narrow road. Thankfully When we go to Revelation It tells us As we have a picture Of the great number And glory That it's a number That nobody can number.

Which shows us That there are going To come millions And millions And millions Of people Will come to faith In the Lord Jesus Christ. But it talks here About the remnant.

So you see It's so important That we That we come To lay hold Upon Jesus. So he It tells us That he That he passes Over Our transgressions.

And again That very word Passing over It takes us back. It's a great word Of redemption Isn't it? It takes us Back to Egypt. That's what the Lord Did in Egypt.

He passed over. Remember When I see The blood I will Pass over. And it's The same today. When God Sees the blood Of his son On us And covering us Then he passes over.

[20 : 40] He says I find no fault In that passion. Yeah? Isn't that incredible? You open up Your life And you see All that you've Done wrong And the Lord Says Your sins And your Iniquities I will Remember No more.

That's That's grace That's mercy And that's what This is That's what This is telling Us about. God's anger And then he says He does not retain his anger forever.

Now God's anger is not vindictive like ours might be. It is righteous anger against sin, against lawlessness, against the breach of his law. But again that's part of what Jesus did on the cross.

It's part of that he diverted God's anger. God's anger went on Jesus and went away from us. That's a marvel of it. So he says I will not retain my anger forever because he delights in steadfast love.

And just as we conclude we see there in the following verses and it shows how it's all of God. He will again have compassion. The idea there is he will turn again to us.

[21 : 52] Psalm 34 tells us that the face of God is set against those that do wickedly. But it also tells us in that psalm that the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous.

and that his ears are open to their cry. So you see two different facial reactions with regard to God to the two different lots of people. To those who love the Lord his eyes are on them.

Just the way a parent would be forever watching their child. Always watching in case anything happens. Always watching to do for them. Ear ready to hear. That's how he is for you today.

But against those who are against him his face is set against. But here we have the picture of the Lord turning right round again. And it says he will again have compassion on us.

Compassion. You know people will say oh you don't get compassion in the Old Testament. People say the Old Testament and the New Testament are so different. No they're not. As we've said before they're the two lips of God telling the same thing.

[22 : 59] Jesus we read so often he was moved with compassion when he saw the multitude. Well here we have it in the Old Testament. Here is God and he's telling us he will have compassion on us.

And he will tread our iniquities underfoot. Isn't that great? In other words the Lord isn't going to leave us to ourselves and say you know I've covered your sins but just get on with it yourselves. You're on your own.

No. He says I'm going to help you because you can't do it yourself. See all these iniquities and things that drag you down and down again.

You haven't a hope on your own. I'm going to come in and by my grace we will tread them down. Tread down the iniquities. Suppress them. So that by grace you will get on top and you'll be able to walk with me in a better way.

And then he says I will and you will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. Well if you don't want to see something ever again you take it out into the middle of the ocean and drop it down there so that it will go down into the depths of the sea.

[24 : 07] Never to be seen or never to be found again. And that's what he's doing. That's what he's going to do. In fact the whole thing there's as has often been said there's grace in the grammar who is a God like unto you pardoning iniquity.

It's ongoing. It doesn't say who is a God like unto you who pardoned. Like it happened long ago and there were people in Micah's time and maybe a wee while after that their iniquity was pardoned.

No. It's on and on generation after generation after generation to today. he is still pardoning lifting up and carrying away.

Will you today then seek this Jesus and discover for yourself this amazing grace and know the freedom and liberty of what it is to have your sins pardoned your iniquities lifted up and carried away.

Let us pray. Oh Lord we pray to bless us today. We give thanks for your word and the challenge of it and the blessing of it. We give thanks oh Lord for how you highlight to us so many great truths in it.

[25 : 20] We give thanks oh Lord that your word is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy you. Pray to bless the cup of tea coffee in the hall after and we pray to grant travelling mercies to us all as we make our way to our different places.

Pray that you'll bless the evening service Mr. McKeever tonight. We ask Lord that you will grant us your grace in all that we do and all that is ahead of us.

You know we don't and so we put our hands into your hand. Lead us we pray taking away our sin in Jesus name. Amen. We conclude singing from Psalm 36 and sing psalms.

Psalm number 36 from sing psalms. The tune is Huddersfield. It's on page 44. Psalm 36.

Psalm 36. Your steadfast love is great O Lord it reaches heaven high. Your faithfulness is wonderful extending to the sky. Your righteousness is very great like mountains high and steep.

[26 : 37] Your justice is like ocean depths both man and beast you keep. How precious is your steadfast love what confidence it brings both high and low find shelter in the shadow of your wings.

They feast within your house and drink from streams of your delight for with you is a source of life in your light we see light. These verses are Psalm 36 5 to 9 the tune is Huddersfield.

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[27 : 53] Your justice is like ocean depths both man and beast you keep.

high and steep. High and steep. Your steadfast love what confidence it brings O pine and low I shelter in the shadow of your wings they feast within your hearts and drink from streams of pure delight for with you is the source of light in your life we see light.

Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen. Amen.