

Our text for this evening is Micah 7 verses 18 to the end, which begins with these words: "Who is a God like unto Thee?" Beloved congregation, Micah had seen much in his day - so much darkness! The world around him was bleak. You see that in the beginning of this chapter. He said, "Woe is me!" for all these things that are taking place in this land, all the sin around him. And then for him to see, and to even proclaim, this great deliverance that God would bring! He sees all the things that God has done, and as he looks into the future, the things that God has promised He will yet do, and he breaks down into a posture of worship. That what he's doing in verse 18: "Who is a God like unto thee?" It's the refrain of Micah after he sees the great contrast between what *should* happen, what God *should* do, and what *does* happen, what God in mercy *does*. "Who is a God like unto Thee?" He sees, perhaps clearly for the first time, that this God whom he serves is incomparable to anyone, to anything, to any other god, to man made gods.

This refrain is heard more often in the Scriptures. Moses had the same refrain after the Israelites came through the Red Sea, and the waters crashed upon their enemies, the Egyptians. Boys and girls, you remember that amazing story of God's deliverance. Moses sings in Exodus 15 verse 11 "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Another man, Ethan the Ezrahite sings in Psalm 89:6 and 8, "Who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord? O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee?"

Micah, Moses, and Ethan were all sinners, they all deserved the righteous judgments of God, but God came in mercy and pardoned their sins, and all of them worshipped this incomparable God. They sang of the mercies of the Lord, they became worshippers of God, because they had tasted the grace of God!

What about us this evening? Let us also sing of the mercies of the Lord! Let us join these holy men of old in worship, and consider together for a few moments, as the Lord enables us, the incomparable nature of God. The incomparable nature of God:

- 1) First, Seen in His gracious pardon.
- 2) Second, rooted in His amazing mercy.
- 3) Third, shown in His peoples confidence.

1) First then, **the incomparable nature of God** seen in His gracious pardon. Micah was amazed at this one truth: that God pardons iniquity. Iniquity! Not some petty crime, not some incidental and inadvertent accident, no, no, iniquity! Transgression! These are strong words! These words indicate the power and the vehemence of sin. It is active transgression, purposeful. This is rebellious iniquity. This speaks of the persistency of sin, the obstinacy of sin. This speaks of failing in every point, and of breaching the commands of God in every point. Friends, iniquity and transgression are no light things. They are very serious. Yet, it is these things that Micah says God pardons! As a result, Micah says "Who is a God like unto thee?"

Friends, let us learn that those who have small views of their sin will have small views of the grace of God. They will never have these amazing moments like Micah, they will never stop to marvel at what God has done in forgiving and pardoning sin. Those who think sin is some insignificant, trifling matter, something harmless, will never be in awe at the pardon of sin. But that wasn't Micah. He did not consider sin a light thing. He saw the sin of his nation, and the sin of his own soul, as a heinous thing. Because he had this clear view of the ugliness and the horror of sin, when he saw that God pardoned *that*, he saw it as amazing thing!

Sin is horrible, but sin is worse yet. Sin is worse than just transgressing against a commandment. Sin is also a transgression against a person, against God Himself, against the being of the Living God! You know, when a president pardons a criminal, that criminal did not sin personally against that president. But when God pardons a sinner, that sinner has sinned against God personally! So to speak, he has slapped God in the face, he has spit in His face - think of the trial of Christ. He has usurped God's supreme authority and has tried to make himself like God, a king in his own life. That sinner has denied that God exists, he has mocked God, he has despised God, he has hated God, he has resisted God at every turn, he has despised the commandment of God.

Sin is not something against just some impersonal being or commandment. No, sin is against a God who made the sinner! And yet God pardons such. You know, a president would never pardon a criminal who had tried to assassinate him. He might pardon for tax evasion, or for skipping out on going to war, or for thefts, but never has a president pardoned one who tried to assassinate him, or plotted against his life. But "Who is a God like unto thee?" because that is what He does!

You know, if sinners could, they would kill Him. As one man put it, 'If they could, they would cast the Almighty from His throne.' Very serious! And yet, God pardons! He didn't have to, you know. The Lord didn't pardon devils. But He pardoned sinners!

Micah calls them the remnant of His heritage. These are those whom the Lord pardons: all those whom He has chosen, all His own people. Is there something special in these people that Micah sees? Is there something different about them, compared to the others around them? Are they incomparable people to the other people around them, so that the incomparable God pardons them? No, they too are marked by sin. They are corrupt, they are perverse, they come short of the glory of God, they too are worthy of condemnation, they are, as Paul said in Ephesians 2, "children of wrath, even as others". They were just as wicked as the rest, just as hell-deserving as the rest of mankind, fallen sons and daughters of Adam. All their iniquities and transgressions too were against them, but the wonder is that God pardons that transgression!

Micah saw it – he had a view of this, and he said "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?" Is that your view of God and His pardon? What is your view of God's pardon this evening? Maybe it needs to be tweaked a little bit, or maybe it needs to be completely transformed. You know, we grow up all our life with the pardon of sin, and the Gospel, and the salvation of God, and the offer of eternal life ringing in our ears. Does it ever hit home to us? This pardon of God for sin and iniquity is unimaginable, inconceivable, it makes God incomparable to anyone and anything else. Just that salvation is even possible for sinful, rebellious wretches such as we are, is so amazing!

And yet, we get so used to it, that it ceases to amaze us. We are like an Eskimo living under the northern lights - he doesn't even notice them after some time. When the splendour of God's offer of forgiveness is displayed in dazzling array, in the Word of God, or through the preaching, in so many other ways, do we just live on as if it's normal, as if it's expected even, and really nothing to get excited about we? We heard it yesterday, we hear it today, and we'll hear it tomorrow again? My friend, slow down, stop, and wonder with Micah in humble, amazed worship. Stop and consider it. Don't become one of those cast into hell with this ringing in their ears.

Is God's pardon is this not amazing to you? The Lord pardons iniquity, and Micah was enthralled with it. But there is more, for he also says "and passeth by transgression". Oh, what a wonder this is! He pardons iniquity, He passes by transgression. Do we forget, friends, that God is holy? And that because God is holy, because He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot look on evil, as God cannot but lash out in anger at sin in His people. God cannot overlook sin, and yet He does just that! He passes it by as if it was not there! He sees no iniquity in His Jacob.

How can this be? Well, Micah pointed forward to that great Gospel age, but we have the full Gospel, don't we? And we know why this is possible - because the Lord has laid on Him - on Christ - the iniquity of all His people. That's why God can pass by transgression. He's not just ignoring it, He's not just allowing sin to be, suffering sin for some time. No, but He bruised Christ for your sins, child of God. Think about the Lord's Supper, when the bread is broken and the wine is poured out. They are the symbols of the broken body, and of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. His body was so broken for the full remission of all of our sins. His blood was so shed for the full remission of all our sins. He was slain, He was crucified, and that's why the Lord can pass by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage.

That's why the Lord can pass by your transgressions, child of God. Your iniquities, the things that make you so unworthy before Him, the things that make it so by rights you ought to be cast into hell, the things that make you a rebel against His perfect holiness. Do you say what Micah says when you consider that? "Who is a God like unto thee?" Who by no means clears the guilty, and then does that very thing, and stays Just?! Who is a God like unto thee, who has found a way to be Just, and yet justify the ungodly. Oh, no religion of the world has ever come up with this divine logic. This is the salvation of our God. This is something only God can do. How great God is!

2) But *why* is all this true? What is the thing that is behind all this? Or we could ask it this way, what moves the Lord to pardon? What moves the Lord to pass by? It is **His amazing mercy**, our second point. Micah here, at the end of verse 18, lets us in on a secret, the secret of the driving force behind the pardon of sin. You could say, Micah doesn't just look at the effect, and marvel, but he sees deeper. He sees the cause behind this effect. "He retaineth not his anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy."

Why does the Lord pardon? Does He do so because He is lax, or because He sacrificed the demands of His Justice, just to be nice? No! "He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy". The Lord in His mercy ceases to be angry. He doesn't keep His anger forever. Oh, He is angry with all sin, also the sin of His people, and yet He doesn't stay angry forever. The anger that burns in the heart of God towards His people's sins, and against His people for their sins, is turned away. To use the New Testament word, it is propitiated. Propitiation means the turning away of wrath. He is no longer angry with them as their Judge, because in Jesus Christ His heart is as the heart of a father towards His children.

Now, that doesn't mean that His people never feel the Lord's displeasure against their sin. They need to feel the displeasure of the Lord when He withdraws Himself, but He does so only for a moment. He says, "for a small moment have I forsaken thee". He retains not His anger forever.

But still, we could go deeper. Why? It's because of his mercy. The very provision in Jesus Christ enabling the pardon of sin is made out of His delight in mercy! Sin can be pardoned because Christ paid the penalty of sin, but Christ came to pay the penalty of sin because God at His heart is a God of mercy. When we consider the pardon of sin, it opens up for us a view of the inner chamber, as it were, of the heart of God Himself. Who is God? God is a God of mercy!

Well then, we can ask one more 'why'. Why this mercy? Oh, this mercy is there out of His Free and Sovereign Being. God is who He is, because He is who He is. We can go no deeper. We hit an intellectual wall. God has revealed Himself in this way.

God's mercy was not constrained by any merit in the sinner. No way! God's mercy also was not constrained by any merit in Christ. Now you say, pastor, what are you saying? Listen, that mercy

was not constrained by Christ's merits. That mercy made *provision* for those merits, but that mercy was not *constrained* by the merits of Christ. Christ did not, as it were, reverently speaking, have to twist the arm of the Father to finally have mercy on His people. No, the mercy of God was *prior* to this merit of Christ. It was the driver behind it! Mercy was first. It shows what is at the core of who God is - He is a God of mercy. Mercy is His chief attribute.

How do we know? When the Lord revealed Himself to Moses on the mount, do you remember boys and girls what He said? What was the very first thing that the Lord said who He was as He passed by? He proclaimed the name of the Lord - "the Lord, the Lord God, *merciful*". Merciful! God is a God of mercy! Micah saw it - "Who is a God like unto thee?"

This amazing mercy of the Lord can be seen at the Lord's table, when unworthy sinners gather in a place where God comes and speaks peace to their souls. It can be seen even if you aren't at the table. Mercy is on full display. Mercy offered to each and every one. God delights in mercy. The thing that makes the Lord so happy, so to speak, that revels His heart, is to show mercy. Think of the father of the prodigal son, looking day by day, longing, looking for a dot on the horizon that just might be his lost son, every day on the edge of his seat, as it were, just waiting to show mercy. Eager to show mercy, delighting in mercy. What an apt picture the Lord Jesus paints in that parable of who God is. We see that so clearly as the parable unfolds. We don't read that when the son stumbled into the living room that the father looked up and said, 'Oh there you are.' No, when he was yet a far off, a great way off, his father saw him. He didn't say, 'Well, there he is, finally came to his senses. I'll wait for him here.' No, he *rushed* to meet him, and showed him mercy! And mercy broke that son. That's who God is.

**3)** The amazing mercy of the Lord ought to lead to a **holy confidence in His people**, a confidence that Micah also showed. Our third point shows that the Lord will add yet more blessings to the salvation that He gives in mercy. Micah switches now to the future. He begins now to speak about what God will do. It's like he's saying, if the Lord will pardon iniquity because He delights in mercy, then Micah is sure the Lord will do more, He will add more blessings to His salvation.

This is why we read Psalm 135 together. In that Psalm we read these words: "For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods." We have similar sentiments here, similar expressions of the incomparable nature of God, but he says "*I know* it". See his confidence? Micah and the Psalmist, so sure. "*I know* that the Lord is great, and above all gods."

God's people, of all the people on earth, have reason for confidence. The psalmist of Psalm 84 says that they go "from strength to strength". Strength continues to be given to them from the One who is the everlasting source of strength, the One in whom all their confidence ought to rest. They have Jehovah the Everlasting God as their Lord and King.

What is the confidence that Micah expresses here in these verses? Four things:

*First*, he says in verse 19, "He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us." Micah was still faced with a bleak present reality. It felt as though the Lord had turned away His face forever. As he thought of the sin of the nation, all the evil that he had spoken of earlier in the chapter, no doubt he thought of God withdrawing Himself. He must have felt very much as if God had turned away His face.

There are times like that in the experience of God's people too. They feel it to be so in their own heart: "Because of my foolishness, my neglect, God is turning away His face." But then there's also this confidence that remains. It may ebb low at times, then flow again, but it's there. 'Because of

his pardoning mercy, He will turn again. He is not going to deal with us as our sins deserve, He will give the favourable sense of His presence again.' You feel cold, and spiritually low, depleted, and empty. What confidence do you have left? None in yourself!

But there is a confidence that can be had in God! He will turn again, He will give a sense that my trust in Him, my hoping-against-hope is not in vain, He will come again and confirm for me that my religion is real, and founded, not on sand, but on the rock of who God is. And how your heart rejoices, child of God, when the Lord then comes, and turns again, and has compassion upon you.

Think of the Saviour. He had compassion on the multitudes, He had compassion on so many individuals that came. He looked on the leper, and had compassion on him. It's the compassionate look of Christ that we see through the Gospels. "He will turn again, He *will* have compassion upon us."

*Secondly*, Micah goes on, and he says "He will subdue our iniquities". He will subdue, or suppress, our iniquities, those very iniquities that He pardoned, and that continue to be present in the heart and life of a child of God. Know this, child of God, the Lord will help you in the fight against sin, and Satan, and your own evil heart. There's a confidence that you may have in this. He *will* subdue also my iniquities. Notice here Micah doesn't place himself above all this. He says "our iniquities". Micah remained a sinner. He too needed this pardoning mercy from God to subdue his iniquities.

There can be much reason for discouragement in the fight against sin. All sorts of sins ravage our lives: sins of parenting, sins of marriage, sins of hard thoughts against God's Providence, sins of failing to trust God in every circumstance, sins of discontentment with the things that we have, sins of being attracted to the ways and the things of this world. They can be so strong, and it can be discouraging. We will learn here in what Micah says, "He will subdue our iniquities", that victory over sin comes from the Lord Himself, and so seek it from Him.

He gives His Spirit for this end, mortification of sin. Paul says, "If ye, through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body". It's through the Spirit. The very fact that sin doesn't completely swallow you up, doesn't overwhelm you totally, is due to this. "He will subdue our iniquities." That sin will never be gone, not until your dying day, child of God. There will be a conflict until then, all your days. Sometimes the Lord will give victory over sin, but sometimes there has to be that acknowledgement within, that sin has gotten the victory over me. But ultimately, there's no doubt about the outcome. At length He will subdue our iniquities, and that gives confidence to press on, confidence to be encouraged to look unto the Lord to subdue them.

But Micah says more. *Thirdly* he says "And Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea". Here he addresses God Himself. He switches from speaking about God, to addressing God directly. "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Here we come to the finality of forgiveness. "Thou wilt cast those sins into the depths of the sea." Especially to the Jewish mind, that sea was a place you never got to the bottom of, that sea was a place where once it was in there you never saw it again, the sea was a place where things were finally gone. The message is that their sins will never rise to condemn them, because God has drowned those sins in the bottom of the sea. Think of Moses there on the shores of the Red Sea, singing about what God had done to the Egyptians. This is what will happen to the sins of God's people. They will be dealt with, they will be buried in the ocean. So final, so complete, so thorough is this pardon of sin that the Lord gives.

What reason for confidence! Confidence in the justification that God gives by faith. His people are justified, and that justification given is sealed, and can never be broken. It will ensure that every one of their sins will be cast into the depths of the sea, and will never ever rise again to condemn them.

If you're here, and you're not justified, and you don't know God, then there's no seal of justification in your life. You have not been justified if you do not know God, and your sins are not at the bottom of the sea. They are on your own account, they're on your charge, and every one of them will rise up against you. Do you want that? Do you see the danger you're in? Close with Christ so you may also have this confidence, that all those sins that were once on your account, are now because of His justifying pardon and grace, be cast to the bottom of the sea, and will never rise again to condemn you.

And there's one more thing, *fourthly*: the Lord will keep His Word. Verse 20, "Thou will perform the truth to Jacob". Now, truth and Jacob can hardly be said in the same sentence. That deceiver! But what does God do? He comes and performs the truth to Jacob, to all Jacobs. No, God is not like Jacob! "Who is a God like unto thee?" God will perform the truth to Jacob, to sinners like he was. He will do all His promises to those who look to Him. Micah says "and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old." What a mercy it was of God to call Abram from the Ur of the Chaldees! There was no merit in Abram, there was no reason for God to choose him, but mercy. "He will perform the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old." He will keep His Word from those days.

As the apostle would later write, "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it." When He sets before you His Gospel promises, and by faith you take hold of them, He will do it, and that gives confidence. Confidence that in turn reflects "there is no God like unto our God" who will keep all His promises. His mercy, His works, His Word abides forever. The covenant that He made with Abraham is formed in Jesus Christ. It's in Him that the covenant is referred to as "the sure mercies of David", ordered in all things, and sure. Without Christ, given of God's mercy, this confidence would not exist.

So let me ask you, what is your conception of God like today? As you consider all these truths, do you come to say and see with Micah, "Who is a God like unto thee?" What a contrast such a posture is with all those who place their confidence in so many other places. This world, and false religions, place their confidence in a million different things, but none of them give final and lasting confidence. But our God gives confidence.

The idol gods that we read about in Psalm 135 "have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not, neither is there any breath in their mouths." Then the psalmist makes this piercing statement: "They that make them are like unto them: so is every one that trusteth in them." They put their confidence in such things, and there is no confidence there. Confidence placed in any other place but God is vanity. Is that where your confidence is today? In this God who is totally unlike, incomparable, to any other resting place?

Here is the Psalmist again: "For I *know* that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods." Is that your confidence? You can know this confidence even today. His cup overflows, even to you dear one, and it says to you 'come and lean 100 percent of your existence on this God'. And then to say with Micah "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy." That brings true confidence, and for all the people of God, all those who belong to Him, that confidence will not be put to shame, not even in that last day.

We read in the verses just before this that "the nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf." See the lack of confidence they will have. "They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of

Thee.” Such great fear will strike the nations when Christ comes again on the clouds of heaven. But what will be in the hearts of all His people? In the Lord’s Supper form we read “will appear without terror before the judgement seat of Christ”. What is that? It is confidence. Now already in this life, until that day you may “lift your up your eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help”. Every day, every trial that comes across your path. All my confidence is in this God who is totally unlike anything, or anyone, anywhere. Amen.