

A Lord's Day Snippet!

Biblical And Southern Studies

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1 Great God of wonders, all thy ways
are matchless, God-like and divine;
but the fair glories of thy grace
more God-like and unrivaled shine:

Refrain:

Who is a pardoning God like thee,
or who has grace so rich and free?

2 Such dire offences to forgive,
such guilty rebel souls to spare;
this is thy grand prerogative,
and none shall in the honour share: [Refrain]

3 In wonder lost, with trembling joy,
we take the pardon of our God,
pardon for sins of deepest dye,
a pardon sealed with Jesus' blood: [Refrain]

4 O may this glorious matchless love,
this God-like miracle of grace,
teach mortal tongues, like those above,
to raise this song of lofty praise: [Refrain]

Samuel Davies (1723-1761)

Our Pardoning God

"Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity?"

Micah 7:18

Micah the Prophet of Jehovah closes the prophecy given him by the Lord, "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. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:18-19). Micah shows us why we are overwhelmed by our majestic God. For he begins, "Who is a God like unto Thee" (v. 18a)? This a way of describing God as being incomparable as recorded in Job, "we cannot find him out." Yes, our majestic God is incomparable as to who He is, what He had promised, what He has done, and what He will do. There is no God except Him or that even compares to Him, for He is the only true and living God!

This is the God “that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage” (Micah 7:18b). This majestic and only true God alone can pardon iniquity. He “pardons iniquity” or literally He “lifts it up and takes it away,” this is pictured by Samson when he yanked up the city gates and carried them away, even so our God takes away sin. This was accomplished by Christ, as the Lamb of God who was slain to take away sin. Yes, our sins were carried away as the scape goat was released into the wild to never be seen again or remembered any more. This pictures the removal of sin and the remembrance of sin as grace deals with it in Christ.

Micah went on: this God “passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage” (v. 18b). What is the meaning of this? Remember that in Egypt the Israelites were spared when the blood of the Passover lamb was applied to their door posts and lintels, while inside they were having a meal on the body of the lamb they had sacrificed. The result was that the death angel passed them by or passed over them. This reminds us that God does not impute our sin but passes us by due to the atoning blood of Jesus Christ which has borne our sins away.

Micah also tells us that the Almighty, “retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy” (v. 18c). There is a proper way for God’s anger to be pacified. God’s mercies are foundationally based on this pardon for sin. The Psalmist put it this way, “LORD ... thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin” (Ps. 85:2). Isaiah the Prophet of Jehovah declared, “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. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation” (Isa. 12:1-3). It pleases our God to show mercy, and He does not delight in the death of the wicked (Ez. 18:32), which we previously considered. God does not stay angry because He has delighted in mercy through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ being our substitute, redeemer and mediator.

Jehovah “will turn again, he will have compassion upon us” (v. 19a). Thus, the redemption that turned Him from His anger allows Him to show mercy and favor because the sin question has been satisfied. The word “compassion” refers to a fondness or tenderness for those who are helpless to change their situation. The Lord by nature is compassionate, merciful, and gracious. It is a grace from Jehovah. He is the only source of help and hope for “us,” says the prophet. The Psalmist also noted, “But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath” (Ps. 78:38).

Jehovah “will subdue our iniquities” (v. 19b). He is the mighty conqueror of sin. “Iniquity” is seen as an enemy which must be brought under control or subdued. This is the word used in God’s admonition to Adam, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen. 1:28). Thus, since sin is an enemy to God and His people it must be subdued and Christ has subdued or conquered sin. The word “subdue” means to trample down and bring into subjection. The Lord is the only one who has the power to do this, so “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 5: 20-21). “Our” iniquities will be subdued! Sin can no longer have dominion over the redeemed because they are not under law but under grace (Rom. 6:14).

Jehovah “will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (v. 19c). This is the result of God’s marvelous grace through His victorious Son’s vicarious sacrifice. Christ did always those things which pleased His Father. What is pictured here is the permanent removal of our sin. The word “cast” means to be thrown away and abandoned once it is thrown away and this is what was done with the sins of those who have Christ’s redemption. The LORD said, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31:34).

To illustrate: There was a man who once was being tried for a crime which required a death penalty. One by one the witnesses came in to testify to his guilt. However, he never showed any emotion, but remained calm and unmoved. His utter indifference was baffling to the judge and jury. How could he take such a serious matter so calmly? The jury retired for only a few minutes and brought back a GUILTY verdict. And when the judge was passing the death sentence upon him, he remarked about the prisoner’s uncaring attitude at the prospect of death. When the judge finished the prisoner reached into his shirt and pulled out a document and walked away from the court room a free man. What happened? His calmness was due to the pardon he had in his pocket from his king. The king had instructed him to allow the trial to proceed, and only produce the pardon when condemned. That is what will make the children of God joyful in the great day of judgment! Why? Because in Christ we have a pardon from the Great King, which is sealed with the blood of His cross. There is therefore *now* no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1, 32 ff.).