

The Pardon of the Cross

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If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.

Psalm 130:3-4

For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.

Psalm 25:11

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished,
that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.

Isaiah 40:1-2

In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD,
the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none;
and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.

Jeremiah 50:20

And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh,
hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us,
which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

Colossians 2:3-14

Preparatory Reading: II Samuel 12:1-14; Nehemiah 9:1-25; Isaiah 40:1-11; 55:6-9; Acts 13:14-39.

Introduction:

1. Today is communion Sunday; we want to review, remember, and rejoice in our Lord's death for us.
2. We cannot slight this greatest gift given to us for the greatest deliverance from the greatest punishment.
3. We want to consider the legal and forensic facet of salvation called *pardon* in the Bible. Though it may directly mean forgiveness, it was chosen by the Holy Spirit also for its legal implications and sense.
4. Our legal salvation is the payment Jesus made to God the Judge of all to satisfy God's righteous nature.
5. By forensic, a synonym of legal, we mean what is plead or done in courts to legally settle a controversy.
6. The terms should not trouble you; they are very scriptural and helpful as phases or facets ... **Chart #1, Facets of Salvation.**

7. There is no occurrence of *pardon* in the New Testament, yet the concept is clearly there by many references to *forgiveness* (Acts 13:38; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14), *unblameable and unreprouvable* (Col 1:22), *damning ordinances blotted out* (Col 2:13-14), *without charge* (Rom 8:33), *death abolished with life and immortality instead* (II Tim 1:8-11), *accepted in the Beloved* (Eph 1:6), *faultless* (Jude 1:24), etc.
8. Of course, the world rolls on in total ignorance of such things as sin, condemnation, death, or pardon.
9. For this topic preached from a different angle with some other verses, [Abundant Pardon](#) (2009).

What is a pardon?

- A. **Pardon.** To remit the penalty of (an offence); to pass over (an offence or offender) without punishment or blame; to forgive. *Pardon* is a more formal term than *forgive*, being that used in legal language; also often in theology. (OED).
- B. **Pardon** = an executive order granting clemency for a conviction or sentence = undoes some consequences of a criminal conviction and restores civil rights = forgiveness.
- C. Executive authority, like that of a king or president or governor, includes the right of *clemency*, meaning *commutation* of a sentence (reduce or shorten it), *remission* of fines or restitution, *reprieve* (an interval of time to delay execution of a sentence), etc.
- D. Clemency is a broad word for a ruler or the courts of law showing gentleness, grace, leniency, mercy, or relief. It is presumed that authority to judge includes some clemency.
- E. Clemency is considered to be ***an act of grace***. It is based on the policy of fairness, justice, and forgiveness. It is not a right but rather a privilege, and one who is granted clemency does not have the crime forgotten, as in Amnesty, but is forgiven and treated more leniently for the criminal acts.
- F. A pardon is the *executive order* to forgive a convicted person, usually not making them innocent, but restoring civil rights. It is usually given after a completed sentence based on good behavior and responsible conduct; it may include commutation or remission.
- G. Commutation is the mitigation, reduction, or end of punishment for a person currently serving a sentence for a crime after conviction, without vacating the conviction itself.
- H. A ruler's clemency can only be granted by a ruler with sufficient authority to override the legal system that convicted, charged, and sentenced the criminal to be punished, and though civil rights are restored, the record and/or stigma of conviction usually remains.
- I. Presidential or gubernatorial (state governors) pardons are decrees that free criminals from charges and punishment that the legal system convicted and sentenced them for, and SCOTUS has ruled or declared that presidential pardons are absolute or unlimited.
- J. Our president is given pardon authority by Article II, Section 2, Clause 1 of the U.S. Constitution ... *Power to grant Reprieves and Pardons* ... for all kinds of legal clemency.
- K. Our nation has an Office of the Pardon Attorney in our Justice Department, where criminals may request a pardon after five years following their conviction or sentence.
- L. In spite of horrible offences, proven carefully by solid evidence in court, failed appeals for retrial, or no good defense for the crime, a pardon forgives crimes, a commutation of sentence can end imprisonment, or a stay of execution can stop the death penalty.

- M. A stay of execution is a form of clemency or pardon, like a commutation or remission, in which a death penalty sentence is either postponed or lifted fully by legal authority.
- N. Appealing a case to go back to court is no sure relief or pleasant prospect, for the first conviction or sentence could be upheld, but a pardon provides both relief and new hope.
- O. President Ford gave President Nixon a “full, free, and absolute pardon” 30 days after President Nixon’s resignation and before any charges, convictions, or sentencing.
- P. On October 4, 1983, James Autry was tied down in the Texas execution chamber with needles in his arm when a stay of execution came. He was executed five months later.
- Q. There are pardons given in our nation after a person is dead, as in the case of Robert E. Lee, who was pardoned for his crime of treason by President Ford on June 13, 1975.
- R. President Bill Clinton pardoned 456 persons, 140 of them in his last hours Jan 20, 2001.
- S. We say, “Pardon me,” when we ask to be forgiven or excused for improper conduct, and Hezekiah used this form of speech when asking for mercy in a Passover (II Chr 30:18).
- T. The president pardons a turkey from death each Thanksgiving; presenting a turkey to a president before the 1970s included eating it, President Reagan first pardoned it in 1987.
- U. Nothing written above is a legal definition or statement but a few select aspects of pardons as generally understood. The legal literature is confusing and contradictory, typical of courts ruling back and forth, for there is no absolute source of legal doctrine.

We need a pardon.

- A. We first sinned in Adam; we are guilty of that sin; even babies die (Rom 5:12-19), and regardless of sentimental ideas, they must be pardoned or suffer eternally for the sin.
- B. Sin is the transgression of God’s law, leaving sinners condemned and guilty (I John 3:4).
- C. We have sinned countless ways ourselves to earn a sentence of death (Rom 1:32; 6:23).
- D. We are condemned before God for sin, rejecting His Son, rejecting light (John 3:18-19).
- E. The wrath of God from heaven abides on sinners (Jn 3:36; Rom 1:18-32), and we will face God with nothing but holy fury and righteous vengeance without a pardon in Jesus.
- F. The last death is worst, eternal torment without rest or relief (Rev 20:15; 14:11); you are on eternal death row more certainly than any court, sentence, or prison on earth.
- G. The Day of Judgment has been known from the beginning, though it will shock ignorant humanity around you (Jude 1:12-16; Eccl 12:13-14; Matt 25:31-46; Romans 14:10-12).
- H. You cannot avoid condemnation or sentencing (Job 9:30-32; Jeremiah 2:22; Ps 49:7-9), though it is easy to manipulate and excuse yourself to compromising human authority.
 - I. All sinners are going down, condemned to eternal hellfire (I Cor 6:9-11; Rev 21:8,27).
 - J. You cannot avoid this certainty; you cannot excuse or explain; you are totally guilty.
 - K. Jesus rhetorically asked Jews, *How can ye escape the damnation of hell* (Matt 23:23)?

God cannot pardon.

- A. Love a God that cannot pardon, but punishes all crimes/sins rightly; no lax courts or judges with God, like we must continually endure reading about here; He is always just.
- B. God will not at all acquit the wicked, so says His Constitution (Nahum 1:3; Job 10:14).
- C. God will be no means clear the guilty, judging sin to children (Ex 34:7; Num 14:17-19).
- D. If God marks iniquity, there is no man alive or dead that can stand (Psalm 130:3; 143:2).
- E. The Angel of the LORD would not pardon (Exodus 23:20-21; II Kings 24:4; Jer 5:7-9).
- F. God's law was not given to Moses to deliver but to condemn (Rom 3:19-20; 5:20-21).
- G. The arrogant and profane folly of man thinks too highly of himself (Ps 5:4-6; 11:4-6).
- H. The Day of Judgment will mock all claims to goodness before Him (Matthew 7:21-23).

But God does pardon!

- A. God pardons some sinners by full and free forgiveness and declares they are freed from all charges and are without blame in His sight and may come boldly into His presence.
- B. Moses saw God's glory – He forgives, or pardons, sin (Exodus 34:5-9; Num 14:17-19).
- C. There is not one in heaven or earth that can charge or condemn us (Romans 8:1,31-34).
- D. Our God is *ready to pardon* and of *great kindness*, among other wonderful expressions of forgiveness, like the father running to meet his prodigal son (Neh 9:17; Luke 15:20).
- E. God pardons in order to *get Himself a name* for great mercy and goodness (Jer 33:8-9).
- F. When God pardons, He *rejoices with joy, rests in His love, joys with singing* (Zep 3:17).
- G. He blots out our sins and even His charges against us (Ps 51:9; Is 43:25; Col 2:13-14).
- H. He puts sins behind Him, in the sea, and forgets (Is 38:17; Mic 7:18-19; Heb 10:17-18).
 - I. Do you want a stay of execution? Thief on the cross! David ruled death; God pardoned.
- J. Our Jehovah God does not barely pardon, but He rather pardons abundantly (Is 55:6-9).
- K. The book of life is the book of pardons, and you will absolutely need your name in it.

How can God pardon?

- A. By His faithfulness to His justice through Christ's death (Romans 3:21-26; I John 1:9).
- B. God legally bound us to Christ in eternity (Eph 1:3-12; II Tim 1:8-11; Rom 8:28-39).
- C. Jesus, the Second Adam, obeyed for us and then died for us (Rom 5:15-21; I Pet 2:24).
- D. This is a faithful saying, worthy of all acceptance – Jesus pardons sinners (I Tim 1:15).
- E. Jesus became a curse for us, who were cursed, that we might be pardoned (Gal 3:13).
- F. The book of life of the Lamb slain is the book of pardons, saving from hell (Rev 20:15).
- G. Our sins are pardoned, forgiven, remitted, as we celebrate (Matt 26:28; Heb 10:17-18).

Compare Pardons!

- A. Most pardons are after the sentence has been served for good behavior – leaving two problems for us: our sentence is hellfire for eternity, and we despise any good behavior.
- B. Many pardons are issued for political friends or friends of friends, but God pardoned His enemies, defying human logic, friendships, or political connections (Rom 5:6-11).
- C. Many criminals apply many times for pardons, even after serving sentences, but receive none. We never sought a pardon, loving death row with Satan, but pardoned anyway.
- D. Men may pay for pardons on earth; our loving God Himself paid dearly for our pardon; what price did He pay to give a pardon to us His enemies? The life of His beloved Son.
- E. Our pardon is more than forgiving of crimes after a sentence is served, which leaves the conviction and stigma in place; President Ford pardoned President Nixon, but he was still ruined forever; we are made perfectly righteous and unblameable (II Cor 5:21).
- F. He calls His pardon abundant, for it is far better than our pardons, and He compares it as infinitely superior to thoughts and ways of U.S. jurisprudence or yours (Is 55:6-9).
- G. To illustrate the vast superiority of His pardon and restoration of rights and promises, consider the case of Israel as an extreme and wild adulteress (Jer 3:1; Ezekiel 16:60).
- H. Presidential pardons are mocked, as those that dislike a president question or slander his motives, but Jesus pardoned a vile sinner and mocked her adversary (Luke 7:36-51).
- I. Most criminals seeking a pardon never get one, no matter their efforts, but David was pardoned instantly for a capital crime he had judged worthy of death (II Samuel 12:13).
- J. A pardoned criminal in the U.S. must still report his crime, but not us (Ps 103:10-12); we are holy and unblameable and unprovable in His sight (Col 1:22; Jude 1:24-25).
- K. Our sins cannot be found, for He forgot them (Jer 50:20; Heb 10:17-18), and He expects us to boldly live, boldly approach Him, boldly die, and boldly enjoy eternity's blessings.
- L. We are judged as innocent without any sin, fault, blame, or guilt at all; but far more than commutation, we are justified perfectly righteous forever, and then eternally adopted.
- M. There are no examples in human history that can come close to this glorious drama.

Accepting pardons?

- A. U.S. legal precedents and rulings are confusing and contradictory, but various courts have ruled or said that a pardon must be accepted in order to be valid, though absurd.
- B. Why would anyone reject a pardon? Because court rulings and writings have said that a pardon is an imputation of guilt and that its acceptance carries an admission of guilt.
- C. Here is where a pardon must be separated from a commutation, a stay of execution, or the other forms of clemency such as authoritative reprieves, remissions, amnesty, etc.
- D. Arminian imposters teaching you must accept a pardon for it to be valid are effeminate heretics, for a commutation or stay of execution ignores a criminal's ability or approval.
- E. Our pardon is like a stay of execution; whether you know it or not in your cell, it does not alter the facts;

the electric chair sits empty and the executioner has been transferred!

- F. The issue is not making a pardon valid, for the execution is stayed, thus the penalty for the crime is not enforced by the high authority, *but accepting it is the way to enjoy it!*
- G. Compare reconciliation in place but needing preaching (II Cor 5:18-20); it is the same with our death penalty abolished, the gospel only brings it to light (II Timothy 1:8-11).
- H. The acceptance necessary for our pardon is God's acceptance of the Substitute that died in our place (Eph 1:6; Heb 9:14). The Bible declares God was satisfied (Isaiah 53:11).

What is the right response?

- A. For a presidential pardon on death row, we would do anything for a pardon and then because of a pardon. Anything! Every day would be a gift to enjoy and praise the giver.
- B. We should love the gospel of grace – the good news that God has pardoned us in Christ, for it excels all human dramas as light excels darkness but even greater. Hallelujah.
- C. Jesus said those who are forgiven the most and grasp it will love most (Luke 7:36-50).
- D. How or why could you ever resist or deny this God anything He might ask of your life?
- E. We should love those pardoned, not like the prodigal's brother. Let us copy the angels!
- F. We should be most forgiving of all men, since their worst is 100 pence (Matt 18:21-35).
- G. We forgive because we have been forgiven; we forgive that we might be forgiven. Both.
- H. Pardon is passing over transgressions, which is a glory to the man doing it (Prov 19:11).
 - I. It is a terrible shame Christians live in anger, bitterness, envy, strife, and revenge, when abundantly pardoning others as they have been pardoned would bring peace and joy.
- J. Jesus said to one with palsy, *Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee* (Matt 9:2).
- K. Consider God will pardon even nations for a truly righteous man (Jer 5:1; Ezek 22:30).
- L. Use this wonderful word in prayers of confession and appeals for mercy (II Chr 30:18).

For Further Study:

- 1. [Abundant Pardon ... a sermon and outline \(2009\)](#).
- 2. [Unsearchable Riches ... sermons and outline \(2015\) ... The Unsearchable Riches of Christ \(5 Sermons\)](#).
- 3. [A Lake, A Book, A Lamb ... sermon and outline \(2021\)](#).
- 4. [Phases of Salvation ... slides, sermon, chart \(2018\) ... How Are You Saved?, Five Phases of Salvation: When Were You Saved?, Chart #1](#).
- 5. [Facets of Salvation ... sermon and outline](#).
- 6. [10,000 Talents! ... sermon and outline](#).
- 7. [Forgiveness of Sins ... sermon and outline](#).