



The term 'pardon' is not mentioned in the New Testament (for good reason). Simple forgiveness of sins without justice being satisfied is not possible in the economy of God's Law. *Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.* (Romans 3:24-25) Our sins can only be forgiven through a satisfaction of the requirements of the law. Pardon does not provide such a remedy. . . . *without shedding of blood is no remission.* (Heb 9:22) God does not overlook even the slightest sin, but He does honor that propitiation for every sin made by His beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Those theologians of the heretical antinomian persuasion would have us believe the Law of God has been annulled by the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is grave error for the Law of God was both fulfilled and satisfied by His death, burial and resurrection. The satisfaction of the terms of the law by the willing sacrifice of God's only Begotten Son did not cancel the law of God, but simply satisfied its terms in justice for those who are *the called according to His purpose*. These have been saved, not in spite of the law, but under its very demands which state, *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.* (Romans 3:23), and, *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* (Romans 6:23) Since all have sinned, and the absolute penalty for sin is death, then only the death of a Personage who is guiltless of any taint of sin could satisfy the terms of the Law as our substitute – that is the Lord Jesus Christ!

I take the liberty to quote below a legal scholar and devout Anglican cleric, Rev Stephen Cooper, Federal Prosecuting Attorney in the State of Alaska, who with great clarity defines the terms of justification under the Law as opposed to the legal parameters of 'PARDON' which cannot legally forgive crimes or sins except to correct some deficiency in the law that could not have been foreseen by those who crafted the law in addressing a circumstance. The Rev. Cooper also cites references from the book by Charles F. Creighton entitled, *Law and the Cross*. Below is his commentary on the matter:

*The above is a heavy subject. To condense it a little, the true theory of pardon in the criminal law is not an act of mercy or clemency, but an act of justice, to make up for a mistake in some part of the law or its application to a specific case.*

*William Blackstone's 18<sup>th</sup> Century Commentaries on the Laws of England states: The king is intrusted with this high prerogative [of pardon] upon special confidence that he will spare those only whose case, could it have been foreseen, the law itself may be presumed willing to have*

*excepted out of its general rules, which the wisdom of man cannot possibly make so perfect as to suit every particular case.*

*A later judge observed: The admission of the power [to pardon] is a tacit acknowledgment of the infirmity of the course of justice.*

*From this, CF Creighton in Law and the Cross (1911), reasoned: If the prerogative of pardon is corrective, then the power of pardon will not exist under a perfect administration of law in moral government.*

*In short, the fall of man sealed the doom of creation, unless it could be redeemed. The penalty for sin is death, and eternal, immutable righteousness must punish sin. To justify sinners would justify sin and compromise God. It would introduce a dangerous and more damning precedent into the moral government of His creatures than the execution of the penalty which the law imposed.*

*To pardon sin and save sinners without violating principles of righteousness was therefore the governmental problem that confronted the divine love, and it could not be solved by any means less than the voluntary death of the Son of God. His death became a substitute for the penalty, thus declaring the righteousness of God, 'that He might be just and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.' (Rom. 3:26.)*

*It would have been wrong for God to overlook the transgression of His law, the announced penalty of which was death. The pardon of a penitent sinner could not be justified without some adequate atonement for sin.*

*The atonement must, first of all, reconcile the fundamental principles of moral government to the prerogative of pardon. It is a necessity, grounded in the righteousness of God, and growing out of the just requirements of a perfect moral government in which pardon without atonement is forever impossible.*

*The immutable Jehovah, the habitation of Whose throne is justice and judgment, could not pardon sin or ameliorate human conditions without an atonement – first, because of what He is: it would involve complicity or compromise, and contradict the principles of righteousness upon which the divine administration rests; – and second, because the demerit of sin demands the total and irremediable retribution of death.*

*We agree with St. Paul in prefacing the atonement with 'the righteousness of God.' In the third chapter of Romans, verses 21-26, he uses the phrase four times in six verses.*

*It was not merely expedient that Jesus should die for the sins of the whole world; it was necessary – that God might be just and the Justifier.*

*. . . . this explanation of the true nature of pardon really does prove how totally helpless we are to bring about our salvation, that we are both doomed and dead, spiritually. A Rescuer, a Saviour, was needed to pay the ransom with His Life – this is our only hope, as it satisfies God's righteousness and justice for us, enabling God's mercy to reach us and be effective for us.*

*The author (Creighton) emphasizes that the primary requirement, that of proclaiming and satisfying God's righteousness in the face of sin and the fall, presented an unsolvable problem – unsolvable except through the atonement by the death of God's Son Whom God sets forth as the propitiation for our sins. This alone permits mercy to rejoice against judgment. This is the exclusive way to the fulfillment of the prophetic verses in Psalm 85, that Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. (Rev Stephen Cooper)*

*The distinction between the act of pardon as opposed to justification under the law, is no casual one. We must know that every sin that is not covered by the redemptive act of Christ on the cross is subject to the judgment. The failure to grasp, or acknowledge, this fact has resulted in much deception in the Church concerning the Law and our means*

of salvation through the unmerited grace made available to us through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ

I am grateful to Stephen+ for defining that difference with such clarity for me and many others who may read this devotion.