

November 23, 2014 PUNISHMENT AND PARDON
Exodus 34: 5-7

There can be no PARDON (no forgiveness) of sin where there has been no PUNISHMENT. **I.e.** BEFORE sin can be PARDONED, it must have (first) been PUNISHED. **And**, where sin has been PUNISHED, it **MUST BE** (it can only be) PARDONED. **I.e.** It would be unjust to PUNISH a sinner whose sins have already been PUNISHED in a Substitute. **THAT** sinner (must be) PARDONED.

Look at Exodus 34: 5-7 “**And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. 6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, 7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.”**

Our concentration will be on verse 7. **God’s** mercy is toward “thousands”. These “thousands” are those that He chose and (eternally) blessed in Christ before the world began.

Look to Ephesians 1: 3-4 “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him.”**

He blessed “us”. **He** chose “us”. **And**, He did it in order that “**WE should be holy and without blame before Him**”. That “us” and “we” do NOT include ALL without exception. That “us” and “we” are a multitude no man can number out of Adam’s fallen race. **They** are a mixture from EVERY kindred, tribe, tongue, and nation. **I. e.** No distinctions of race, or ethnic background, or heritage, or geographic location. **God** is no respecter of persons. **He** did not choose these sinners because of ANYTHING He foresaw in THEM. **He** blessed THESE sinners in eternity IN CHRIST. **THESE** sinners are eternally, unchangeably “**accepted in the beloved**”.

He forgives THEIR sins (all kinds). **Look** back at our text, “**Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.”**

Some interpreters distinguish these three words. “**Iniquity**”, they say, signifies sins done through pride and presumption. “**Transgression**” covers rebellions against God. “**Sin**” is what is committed through error and mistake. **Whatever** their distinction, it covers ALL the sins of the “thousands” who are shown God’s mercy. **God FORGIVES** their sins. **He PARDONS** their iniquities. **He** shows them **MERCY** for Christ’s sake.

BUT, He does not FORGIVE; He does not PARDON (any) sin without PUNISHMENT. **Look** back at our text, “**Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.**”

The phrase “**that will by no means clear the guilty**” can read: **Although** it (the sin God forgives), will by no means (most certainly not) go unpunished. **God** does NOT “clear” the guilty. **He PUNISHES** the guilty. **He** does not fail to PUNISH sin. **He PUNISHES** every sin with eternal death. **Because** God is JUST, He CANNOT do otherwise.

There is no PARDON of sin without the PUNISHMENT of sin. **How** has God (already) PUNISHED sin? **He** has PUNISHED the sins of His people in the death of His Son.

There is no doubt that the death of Christ was divinely appointed. **It is** recorded in Acts 4 that the whole world (Jew and Gentile) was “**gathered together. For to do whatsoever God’s hand and God’s counsel determined before to be done.**” **There** is NO DOUBT. **Christ’s** death was by God’s appointment. **And**, there is NO DOUBT that this appointment was to a (particular) END.

The prophet Daniel stated this END in Daniel 9: 24, “**Christ will finish the transgression. He will make an end of sins. He will make reconciliation for iniquity. He will bring in everlasting righteousness.**”

Christ’s ENTIRE work in coming to this Earth was to DEAL with the sins of His people. **It** was to DEAL with our (legal) GUILT; **it** was to DEAL with our LEGAL standing before God. **Christ** came to DEAL with the sins of His people. **And**, He has dealt, is dealing and will deal with them three different ways.

As the Surety of His people, Christ has (already) DEALT with the sins of His people by His Cross. **The** Cross is where Christ made an end of sin’s (legal) GUILT. **The** Cross is where Christ made propitiation, (i.e. the penalty bearing sacrifice that satisfied God). **The** Cross is where Christ bore the full PUNISHMENT His people deserved. **I will** have much more to say on this in a moment.

Christ IS (right now) DEALING with the sins of His people in Regeneration. **He** is (right now) delivering His people from their BONDAGE (slavery) to sin. **He** is (right now) bringing each of His sheep to the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

Christ WILL DEAL with the sins of His people in eternity. **He** will deliver them from the very PRESENCE and INFLUENCE of sin.

Christ's ENTIRE work is about His DEALING with the sins of His people. **It** begins with Christ taking care of sin's (legal) guilt. **It** begins with Christ delivering His people from sin's PUNISHMENT. **Our** understanding of who God is and who Christ is MUST begin here as well. **To honor** God as a Just God and Savior, we must FIRST see how Christ has dealt a death blow to the sins of His people.

Until sinners understand what Christ has (already) done to save His people from the (legal) guilt of their sins, UNTIL THEN, we are in BONDAGE to sin. **We** are SLAVES to sin in a way we don't even know.

Our deliverance from this BONDAGE can only come from an understanding of the work Christ has done to end the (legal) guilt of His people's sins. **Our** deliverance from this BONDAGE can only come from a VALUE for the work Christ FINISHED in order to ACCOMPLISH the (full) salvation of EVERY sinner He was given.

So, how did Christ DEAL with sin's (legal) guilt? **He** died! **He** became obedient unto death! **But**, Christ's death needs some explanation. **And**, the scriptures give plenty of explanation.

Christ DIED as the Surety of a particular people. **He** was set up as such in a Covenant that is older than time. **As** their appointed Surety, Christ assumed the (legal) debt of the (particular) sinners God gave Him. **He** said to His Father in this Everlasting Covenant of Grace exactly what Paul said to Philemon concerning his runaway slave Onesimus.

Listen to these words from Philemon 17-19a, "**If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself. 18 If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; 19 I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it.**"

Christ (the Surety) was “made sin”, which means He DIED under the (legal) guilt of IMPUTED sin. **Listen** to II Corinthians 5: 21 **“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”**

It was sin imputed that “reigned unto Christ’s death”. **Look** at Romans 5: 21 **“That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

Where has sin ALREADY “reigned unto death”? **In** Christ the sinner’s Substitute and Surety. **Christ** said in Revelation 1:18 **“I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”**

Christ “died unto sin ONCE”. **Sin** “had dominion over Him” ONCE. **Look** at Romans 6: 9-10 **“Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. 10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.”**

Christ died the death His people deserved; the death His people would (most certainly) be facing if He had not died in their place (as their Substitute; as their Surety). **He** died the death of the “accursed”.

Look at Philippians 2: 5-8 **“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:**

**6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:
7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:
8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”**

Christ “became obedient unto death”. **He** “became obedient EVEN to the death of the cross”. **The** death of the cross is the death of the “accursed”. **“It is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:”**

Christ became obedient unto the death His people deserved. **His** people are the “accursed”. **He** died the death WE deserved. **Christ** had done NOTHING (in Himself) to deserve death. **He** was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners”. **Christ** “knew no sin”. **The** Apostle Peter said, **“He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:”**

Christ died the death His people deserved; He died the death of the “accursed”.

How has Christ dealt with the (legal) GUILT of His people? **He** died! **He** became obedient unto death. **He** died under the (legal) GUILT of imputed sin. **And**, He died the death of the “accursed”, (the death His people deserved). **He** suffered the (full) PUNISHMENT God’s justice demands of any (every) soul that sins.

And, the death Christ died was not without RESULTS. **Set** aside WHO Christ died FOR momentarily and consider three things Christ’s death (actually) ACCOMPLISHED. **First**, His death “put away” sin.

Look at Hebrews 9: 24-26 **“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:**

25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

In His first advent Christ “**appeared to put away sin**”. **What** does that mean? **And**, did He do it? **It** means His obedience unto death SATISFIED the law and justice of God. **It** means He answered the (legal) charges of God’s justice for the sins He bore. **And**, it means that He answered those charges SO COMPLETELY that those charges will NEVER be brought up again in the court of God.

The scriptures teach that God “**remembers them (the sins Christ bore) no more**” (Hebrews 8: 12). **Those** sins are removed from God’s people “**as far as the east is from the west**” (i.e. infinitely) (Psalm 103: 12). **They** are “**cast behind the back of God**” (Isaiah 38: 17). **They** are “**cast into the depths of the sea**” (Micah 7: 19).

All that language is to show us just how FULLY and COMPLETELY the sins Christ bore have been dealt with; and dealt with according to God’s inflexible Justice. **When** it came time for Christ to bear God’s wrath and the PUNISHMENT of His people, “**God spared not His own Son!**”

Moses asked God to show him His glory. **And**, God said, “**I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.**”

God's "goodness" towards sinners is in the "mercy" He shows them in Christ. **We** must be TAUGHT God's "goodness" in Christ. **And**, we don't see this "goodness" until we see Christ's death "bearing sin away" to a land uninhabited. **We** don't see God's "goodness" until we see Christ's death "putting away" every sin He bore SO COMPLETELY that it will never be brought up again in the court of God's Justice.

We don't see God's "goodness" until we see Christ being punished SO COMPLETELY for the sins He bore that those sinners He Substituted Himself for CANNOT be punished or ever face ANY wrath from God because of their sins. **Their** sins cannot be CHARGED to them.

"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. 34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Not only did Christ's death "put away" sin, His death also OBTAINED eternal redemption.

Look at Hebrews 9: 11-12 **"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;**

12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

Christ's death did NOT make "redemption" a POSSIBILITY. He paid the RANSOM required by the Justice of God. **"The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."** (Matt 20: 28). **His** death (actually) REDEEMED a people of God's choosing. Their RANSOM price is paid. They MUST go free.

Not only did Christ's death "put away" sin. **Not** only did it "obtain eternal redemption". It also established "the Righteousness of God".

Look at Romans 4: 25 **"Jesus our Lord was delivered for (because of) our offences, and was raised again for (because of) our justification."**

Christ's resurrection from the dead is a testimony from God that Christ had done all that is required to make it right for God to show mercy to those He represented.

By His obedience and death, Christ had satisfied the law and justice of God. **He** had put away the sins of His sheep. **He** had established the Righteousness by which God is just to justify the ungodly.

Whether it be Christ's resurrection from the dead or our (spiritual) resurrection in regeneration, RIGHTEOUSNESS is the requirement. **It takes** righteousness to raise ANYONE from the dead. **Christ** was raised because He had established the (one) righteousness by which God is Just to justify those He chose in Christ before the world began.

Christ died under the (legal) guilt of imputed sin. **He** endured the (full) PUNISHMENT God's justice demands of every soul that sins. **And**, Christ's death was not without RESULTS. **It** "put away" sin. **It** "OBTAINED eternal redemption". **It** established the Righteousness of God.

Next, Christ's death was not IN VAIN. **I.e.** His death was not without EFFECT. **It** ACCOMPLISHED something. **Christ's** death "put away" the sin of; **it** "obtained the eternal redemption" of; **it** established Righteousness for **EVERY** sinner He died for. **Christ** did not die for a sinner only to have THAT sinner end up under the eternal wrath of God anyway. **That** is the thinking of MOST (professing) Christians. **But**, it CANNOT happen.

Christ was NEVER acting as a private Person. He was ALWAYS acting as the Representative, the Substitute, the Surety of a chosen people. He was PUNISHED for that CHOSEN people. **He** bore THEIR sins in His body on the tree. **By** His stripes THEY are healed. **They** MUST and (shall be) PARDONED because of Christ's death ALONE.

Here is that SECOND statement I told you we would consider. **Where** there is PUNISHMENT, there (must be) PARDON. **And**, there is. **Each** and every sinner Christ represented has been "healed by His stripes". **Look** at Isaiah 53: 4-5 "**Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.**"

There is NO DIFFERENCE in the names of or the number of those Christ "was wounded for" and those who were "healed by His stripes". **They** are the SAME.

In addition, God MUST and He SHALL give each of these sinners every benefit and blessing Christ obedience unto death earned for them.

Look at Romans 8: 31-32 “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

God “spared not His own Son” for THOSE He was given. **He** was “delivered up” for THEM. **And**, THEY will EACH “freely” receive every benefit and blessing He earned for them by His life and death. **None** of THEM can perish. **Not** ONE of THEM is facing God’s eternal wrath. **Christ** delivered THEM from that wrath and punishment. **THEY** are blessed forevermore in Christ.

These sinners just need to hear about the Savior who has suffered the (full) WRATH of God; **who** has endured the (full) PUNISHMENT of sin; **who** has SATISFIED the law and justice of God; **who** has obtained the PARDON of EVERY sinner He was given. **And**, they will EACH hear about Him. They will EACH be brought to Him. They will EACH rejoice in Christ ALONE: Because Christ’s death was not IN VAIN.

In the context of the scriptures we are considering, Moses asked God to show him His glory. **And**, God showed him His highest (His Redemptive) glory. **He** showed him the Person and work of Christ and the mercy that would be found in Him ALONE.

We, too, need to be shown God’s Redemptive glory. **And**, we are. **Under** the Gospel, God shines in the hearts of His people. **He** shines the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ.

That’s when we see God’s GLORY in salvation. **That’s** when we see a Just God and Savior. **That’s** when we see the sins Christ went to the Cross for punished and put away. **That’s** when we see the sinners Christ died for PARDONED, (i.e. delivered from any possibility of PUNISHMENT in themselves).

That’s when we see that the sinners Christ died for, died when He died. **That’s** when we see their sins (fully and finally) PUNISHED in Christ’s death. **They** CANNOT be PUNISHED in themselves. To think they can is to worship an UNJUST “god” of your imagination.

The ISSUE in salvation is NOT what sinners do to make themselves “savable”. **It is** NOT what sinners do to “earn” their acceptance with God. **It is** NOT what sinners do to “avoid” God’s wrath.

The ISSUE in salvation is what Christ has done to make it RIGHT for God to show mercy to those sinners His Father “gave” Him, (Those sinners His Father entrusted Him to save and bring to final glory).

The ISSUE in salvation is how God can PUNISH a sinner with all the PUNISHMENT his sin deserves and God’s justice demands, **and** yet, at the same time PARDON that same sinner’s sins, **not** charge them to the sinner, **but** (fully) forgive the sinner and declare them unchangeably Righteous in His sight?

THAT is the “goodness” of God, the “mercy” of God, and the “justice” working TOGETHER (consistently) in God’s salvation.

PUNISHMENT and PARDON! **No** sin can be PARDONED that has not been (fully) PUNISHED with all the PUNISHMENT the sinner deserves and God’s Justice demands. **But**, the sin that has been PUNISHED in the death of Christ, CANNOT be PUNISHED further. **THAT** sin can only be PARDONED. **God** is Just to PUNISH the sins of His people in Christ and PARDON them based on Christ’s imputed righteousness ALONE.

May the Lord enable His people to rejoice in this Savior and in Him ALONE.