

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

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“Pardon Definition: A pardon is a government decision to allow a person who has been convicted of a crime, to be free and absolved of that conviction, as if never convicted” (Duhaime’s Law Dictionary; duhaime.org).

That is essentially what the New Testament term **justification** means. You know you did the crime (sin). God knows it, too. But he acquits you of the charge – finds you “not guilty” even though everyone knows you did it. How can a holy, righteous, just God do that? Only by accepting the penalty Jesus paid for you.

How can you know God has pardoned you? Sincere religious people may say, “I’m just putting my trust in Jesus.” So far so good, but is “trust” merely an exercise of the heart? Suppose a death row inmate summons the warden and says, “open the prison gate and let me go! The Governor has pardoned me!” The warden asks, “what evidence shows that the Governor has pardoned you?” The convict replies, “I have full confidence in the Governor; I’m certain he has pardoned me.” If you’re the warden will you turn him loose?

Another prisoner might say, “I know I’ve been pardoned because I feel it right here in my heart!” We can’t know what he feels, but no warden worth his salt would release him based on feelings!

Reliable assurance of pardon comes from a trust that obeys! *“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water”* (Heb. 10:22). The reference to baptism is hard to miss, especially considering that baptism is *“an appeal to God for a good conscience”* (1 Peter 3:21, NASB).

On what basis do you have assurance of pardon?

Do you have a good conscience? What is its basis?

We’ll See You After School!

When I was in third grade, I had two boys threaten to beat me up after school one day. They were the Ciccarelli twins – tough guys (it still sends a cold chill down my spine even when I type their name)! I couldn’t understand it. Why did these boys want to beat up a charming, precious little third-grader (according to my mother)? It didn’t make sense to me; I barely knew them. But one thing I knew was that they were going to be waiting for me after school.

And sure enough, after school there they stood waiting. However, I had all day to think about their threat, and I took action. I rounded up all my friends, and we all walked home from school together. In fact, we walked right past the Ciccarelli brothers, and they didn’t say a word.

Now, to the point of this story. Why is it that a third-grader may know how to deal with bullying and opposition better than grown Christians? What do I mean? Well, when the Devil begins to pick on some Christians, and make their lives difficult, what’s one of the first things that some Christians do? They stop attending church services. They withdraw from everyone. Instead of drawing on the strength of their brothers and sisters in Christ, they choose to face their enemy all alone.

As a third-grader, I knew that I was going to get “beat up” if I was found all by myself. So I surrounded myself with friends, and avoided the beating. Seems there’s a lesson in there for us. "

--Steve Higginbotham (via *Bulletin Gold*)

Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ [Galatians 6:1].

WHO HINDERED YOU?

“You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?” (Gal. 5:7 ESV)

As I endured another sleepless night, writhing in pain, the above text kept running through my mind. Oh, not in the spiritual context, rather from a fleshly concern.

Permit me to air my frustrations. Since my back surgery I had been “running well.” Yes, I pressed my limitations by sometimes lifting too much and sometimes overdoing at certain chores. But I always bounced back within a couple of days after agitating my back.

But not this time. I knew that climbing a ladder was a no-no but I did it anyway, as I had a few times before. But this time I went too far. I stayed on the ladder longer than I normally do, as I worked on a ceiling fan. Now I am paying the price for not obeying the doctor's orders.

Now to the spiritual context. How many Christians, who were running well, have been hindered by pressing the limits that God has set upon us?

It could be any number of things that fall under the category of that which is in the world, *“the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life”* (1 John 2:16).

The one who was running so well but is now writhing in the pain of sin must now ask, “Who, or what, has hindered me?”

Next, one must be willing to go to the source that will bring a successful recovery.

For my back pain, I am seeing a chiropractor, doing my stretches, taking pain medicine etc. Tomorrow I will talk with the medical doctor about doing what will relieve me of my pain.

Those who are in spiritual pain must go to the spiritual doctor and follow His orders in order to be relieved of what is hindering their Christian walk.

“Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19 ASV).

--Roy Allen Crutcher (Mt. Carmel, IL)