

RANSOM OR PARDON – WHICH?

The failure to discern the distinction between ransom and pardon, has led to much confession of faith. Christian people of general intelligence will quote texts relative to our being ransomed from the tomb, redeemed from death, bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ, etc., and in the same breath they speak of the Father's gracious pardon of all offences. Seemingly few seem to think, for many must know, that pardon and ransom, express exactly opposite thoughts.

Webster defines ransom, to mean – "to redeem from captivity, or to forfeit by paying an equivalent."

His definition of redeem, is – "to purchase back, to regain possession of by paying of a stipulated price."

His definition of Pardon is – "to remit the penalty" or "to suffer to pass without punishment" – "to refrain from exacting a penalty."

The most ordinary thinker must see, that these words are as opposite as could be; all can see that both could not be true of the same thing. If Jesus did redeem us – ransom us, by paying an equivalent, thus purchasing the release from death, then our Father did not PARDON us; that is, He did not suffer our sins "to pass without punishment," but "Laid upon Him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all." (Isa. 53:6.) Then God did not (pardon), remit the penalty; for "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." (1 Cor. 15:3.)

The general difficulty seems to be, that people use the words, forgive and pardon, as though they were the same, whereas they are not so: Webster's primary definition of FORGIVE is – to give away, to make over, to resign, "to cease to feel resentment against," or, "to cease to impute" – to remit. Webster also gives, as a secondary

meaning of forgiveness, the generally accepted sense – pardon. But note the difference in the primary meaning of the words: Pardon "refrains from exacting a penalty" while forgiveness signifies much less, viz., that a claim is made over to some one else. Thus Jehovah sold or "made over" or resigned to Jesus, the claims of Justice on mankind; and thus Jesus bought us with his own precious blood. Thus we see, too, that when "we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son," it was because he forgave us, i.e., "ceased to feel resentment against" us (Web. def.) because our ransom price had been paid as provided by himself, who so loved us that he gave His son to redeem us. Thus, too, "God was in Christ RECONCILING the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." The sins had been imputed to mankind, until Jesus died, then God FORGAVE i.e., "ceased to impute," (Webster's def.) to us, what had been paid by our RANSOM.

Now mark clearly that God did not PARDON, i.e., "refrain from exacting the penalty," but "Laid upon Him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all." He bore our sins (penalty) in his own body on the tree. (1 Pet. 2:24.) And now we see how God forgave us freely for CHRIST'S SAKE, i.e., because He paid the penalty which was the full satisfaction of Justice.

Not that God desired to destroy men and Jesus appeased his wrath; no, God's love for the world was the cause of the redemption or purchase. "God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son" to purchase – redeem them. Yes, the whole plan is of God. (Rom. 11:36.)

But it should not be supposed, that God compelled the just one to die for the unjust. No, Justice could not inflict punishment upon one for another's sin. The Scriptures declare – He laid down his life, of himself; not for fear of Divine wrath; not because compelled; but for the joy that was set before him, (the Father's promises of high

exaltation to glory, honor, and immortality: and for the joy of redeeming and restoring mankind and of bringing many sons to glory) HE ENDURED THE CROSS. Heb. 12:2.

Now notice, the Greek words – Apoluo, Aphiemi, and Aphasis, translated – forgiveness, forgiven, and forgive, in the New Testament, have the same significance as the corresponding English words: or as given by Young – "To let go," or "to send away." Mark well, it does not mean as some seem to infer – to send away without an equivalent. It does not mean that God will let go the sinner unconditionally. But God will let go the prisoners out of death, because he has found a RANSOM. (Job 33:24.)

Yes, Jesus gave himself a RANSOM (an equivalent price) for all: (1 Tim. 2:6.) Therefore, "all that are in their graves (prisoners in the pit) shall hear his voice and come forth.

Though the word pardon does not occur in the New Testament, a Greek word of nearly the same meaning does occur, viz: Karazomai – It signifies, to forgive freely. We will give some illustrations of the use of this word, from which you will see that it does not oppose but confirms our statements, that our Father does not pardon, or unconditionally set sinners free, from sin's penalty. (The words forgive and forgave as translated from this word Karazomai occur in all, only twelve times.)

"Forgiving one another...even as Christ forgave you." (Col. 3:13.) "When they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both." "He to whom he forgave most." (Luke 7:42 and 43.) Here are four instances in which it is FREE forgiveness, or PARDON. But notice it is not Jehovah, but Christ and the disciples who do the free forgiving. Jesus was in the very act of paying the ransom price of both Simon, Mary, and others, and realizing that Justice would be satisfied by his act, he, as the purchaser, could freely forgive them.

We wish that all our readers might hereafter be able to appreciate the difference between pardoned and forgiveness, or reconciliation toward us as based on our "redemption through his (Jesus') blood." (Col. 1:14.) All will admit that God is JUST; and if so, he did not inflict too severe a sin penalty on man when he deprived him of life. Now, if that penalty was just, 6000 years ago, it is still a just penalty, and will be just for all coming time. If the penalty was too severe, and God pardons the sinner from further continuance of the penalty, it proves that God was then, or is now UNJUST. If it was right 6000 years ago to deprive mankind of life because of sin, it would be always wrong to restore the life, unless the sin were paid for – canceled. This could only be accomplished by another being of the same kind, whose right to life was unforfeited, giving himself as a substitute or ransom.

It is written: "There is none righteous – no, not ONE." Therefore none, in the sight of justice, have a right to life; and God could not justly give pardon and life to those whom his own Justice had already condemned; to do so, would be to make Mercy and Love over-ride Justice, and such a warfare is not supposable in God's attributes. No, if the Love and Mercy of God would benefit men, it must be done in harmony with Justice. And it was; LOVE provided the ransom (1 John 4:10.) And MERCY uses the same ONE [Christ, head and body] as its agent in blessing the world of men.

"Forever firm Thy JUSTICE stands,
As mountains their foundations keep."

This very principle of JUSTICE which underlies all of our Father's doings is the ground of our strong confidence in all his promises.

Our Father declares that He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; with Him is no variableness at all, neither shadow of turning.

(Jam. 1:17.) If He were so changeable as to condemn to a penalty in Adam's day, and 6000 years after to revoke and annul His own decision, what security could we have that in 6000 years, more or less, He might not change again, and remand us to the prison-house of death by REVOKING THE PARDON of some or of all. And we have no foundation for hope, except in the fact that Christ died for us.
