

THE GROUND AND CONDITIONS OF FORGIVENESS OR PARDON

(A section from the booklet "The Vicarious Atonement of Christ")

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The ground must be understood to be "because of which" while the conditions must be understood to be "not without which". The ground of forgiveness or pardon is the ultimate cause, while the conditions are the necessary elements required.

The ground of forgiveness (justification) is entirely grace (Rom. 3:24; Eph 2:8-9; Tit. 3:7). To earn forgiveness is a contradiction in terms. Forgiveness is always gracious and can never be merited or deserved. Retributive justice is the execution of what is deserved. Forgiveness is withholding what is deserved. Forgiveness is entirely grounded in the loving kindness of God, granted only because God is gracious and merciful and not because of anything we have done. It was because God was loving and gracious in the first place that He sent His Son to die (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8)

The conditions of forgiveness (justification) are four fold. These are the conditions God has established in His Government to make the act of forgiveness or the granting pardon safe and wise, protecting the well-being of all.

The first condition is blood shed (Heb. 9:11) to substitute our punishment and thereby uphold God's justice. The shedding of blood must vindicate the rightness of the Law, declare the value of the Law, and enforce the precept of the Law. The shedding of blood allows God to be just in remitting our penalty of hell (Rom. 3:25-26).

The second condition is repentance (Mk. 1:4; Lk. 13:3; 13:5; 2 Cor. 7:10) to secure a return to lawful conduct, lest sinners are granted impunity or immunity (a license to sin) and the well-being of others is once again endangered instead of protected. Repentance is when a person changes their mind about sinning and makes up their mind to sin no more (Isa. 1:16, 55:7; Jn. 5:14, 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:34; Eph. 4:28). God is utterly against all those who sin every day (Isa. 52:5; 2 Pet. 2:14), His wrath is against anyone who is in willful sin or known disobedience (Rom. 1:18, 2:6-11; Heb. 10:26-31). Our God of love cannot abrogate His Law of love, so a return to obedience is absolutely necessary for God to safely, wisely, and lovingly grant pardon to sinners. Repentance must come before salvation (2 Cor. 7:10), repentance comes before the remission of sins (Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3, 24:47; Acts 2:38).

The third condition is faith (Rom. 3:25; Eph 2:8) which is the heart's embrace and obedience to the truth (Lk. 24:25; Acts 8:37, 15:9, 26:18; Rom. 10:10; 1 Pet. 1:22), choosing to live in accordance with intelligence, conscience, or reality as revealed by God. Without the truth, and obedience to the truth, it is impossible to be free from sin (Jn. 8:32; 1 Pet. 1:22). Faith and faithfulness cannot be separated (Jas. 2:18, 2:20, 2:26). And the final condition of ultimate salvation is perseverance unto the end (Matt. 10:22; Acts

13:43; Acts 14:22; Heb. 3:14; 2 Pet. 2:20) since God absolutely will not allow sin into Heaven (Isa. 52:1; Matt. 22:11-14; Rev. 22:11; 22:15), since Heaven will be Heaven because there is no sin and consequently no misery there (Isa. 51:3, 51:11, 52:1; Jer. 31:12; Rev. 7:17, 21:4). Only the narrow road terminates on eternal life (Matt. 7:14-15), so men must persevere unto the end of that road to reach that destination.