

## The Power of His Pardon

**If you, LORD, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?**  
(Psalm 130:3).

**Scripture:** Psalm 130

**Song:** “Standing on the Promises”

As Steve Crews pulled his charter boat near the small head bobbing in the choppy gulf waters, a struggling kitten came into focus. Shocked by what he saw, Crews swiftly netted the tiny orange tabby, lifted it onto his boat, and watched as the water-saturated form seemed to melt with relief onto the deck’s warm surface. After being tended, the fortunate kitten would make a full recovery and be placed in a new home.

Without Christ, we are like that young cat, swept away by powerful tides of our own wicked desires, the world’s enticements, and the devil’s schemes. We are in dire spiritual straits, with no chance of survival on our own. Our struggle against our sinful nature is exhausting. Sin’s consequences, fear, and defeat wash over us. However, the power of the Father’s pardon is our source of rescue and relief.

As believers in Christ Jesus, our hope comes not from our ability to surmount the high seas of our lost condition, but from His intervention to save us. Then with our feet firmly planted in the Father’s grace, we can grow strong in the stability of His righteousness and find our home in His heart of compassion.

**Father,** You are my rescuer and my home. Grant me opportunity today to tell of Your great mercy! In Jesus’ name, amen.

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April 25–May 1. **Shannon Baldridge** teaches Bible studies at her church and in her Atlanta-area community, where she resides with her husband, two daughters, and four-legged running partner.

## Moved by Mercy

**“Neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin” (John 8:11).**

**Scripture:** John 7:53–8:11

**Song:** “Love One Another”

Shrieking and wailing could be heard from my 4-year-old as she came barreling down the stairs to report that her 1-year-old sister had hit her on the head with a plastic princess baseball bat. Surprised by the account given, I asked my daughter where she thought the toddler got the idea to take a swing at her. Resigning to her swell of conviction about having struck first, she blurted her confession and defense together: “But she hit me harder than I hit her!”

While the Pharisees focused on laying out their legal snare for Jesus, our Savior focused on the woman they were publicly prosecuting—a woman whose sin was paraded out as a prop by those who were no purer than she was. Jesus knew He would suffer and die for the sin she had committed. But it was her soul and well-being that concerned Him most.

Each day we have a choice to make: we can be a part of the mob or a part of the mercy, part of the outrage or part of the outreach. Forgiveness is not fashionable by today’s standards, and yet people have an aching need for grace. Let’s bring Christ’s compassion to those caught in condemnation so that both the vengeful and the vilified might see the grace of Jesus our Lord on display!

**Father,** help me to emulate Your compassion and mercy so that others might know You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Faith in His Forgiveness

**We maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law** (Romans 3:28).

**Scripture:** Romans 3:19-31

**Song:** “His Grace Reaches Me”

In 1833 President Andrew Jackson extended a pardon to George Wilson, who had been sentenced to hang for his role in the robbery and endangerment of a postal worker. It was the first time a federal pardon was ever refused. Many have speculated why Wilson did not accept the pardon. Was it because his partner was already executed? Were there additional sentences he had yet to serve? Was it a misunderstanding? Regardless of his reasons, Wilson chose not to receive the pardon offered to him.

While Wilson’s decision might seem crazy, we can be guilty of doing the same sort of thing with our Savior’s pardon. Any time we put our confidence in keeping the law for a sense of self-righteousness, or any time we begin striving for a perfect record or enforcing legalism on others, we can count on our self-glorifying boasts going full bust!

Like George Wilson, all of us have and will miss the mark. Relying on the law for a sense of right standing with God delivers only guilt and condemnation. Our works can never bring us freedom. Freedom from our guilt can only come through faith in Christ. Our perfectly just God has provided Jesus, our perfect justification. *His* righteousness is our redemption. Let’s lean into our Lord’s saving grace and choose daily to serve for His glory.

**Father,** help me to trust that my perfection is only possible through Your pardon. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Access Granted

**We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we stand** (Romans 5:1-2).

**Scripture:** Roman 5:1-11

**Song:** “’Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus”

Hurricane Danny’s outer bands whipped the Alabama coast as I finished the closing shift at a home-supply store across the bay. I thought I still had time to get home before the bridge closed, but as the roadblock came into view through the rain, I realized I was wrong. At just 18, I was nervous to go to a local shelter by myself, so I pled my case to the officer. I trusted his decision to let me pass, and started across the vacant, seven-mile bridge.

Without Christ, all of us face a roadblock to the peace and security we crave. Our sin denies us access to the Father. It disqualifies us from the righteousness He requires. And it denies us the earthly and eternal blessings He has to offer. There’s nothing in our power we can do to remove that sin. We are stuck in a storm of our own making.

But Jesus stands at that blockade waiting. His cleansing blood offers us entry with no need to plead our case. His decision was made known long ago when He hung on the cross. We need only trust that His grace covers us, grants us justification, and provides a secure journey into the Father’s presence. Our peace and our hope are found in Jesus alone.

**Father,** thank You for Your Son, who ushers me into Your loving presence. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## One for All

**Just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people** (Romans 5:18).

**Scripture:** Romans 5:12-21

**Song:** “Grace Greater Than Our Sin”

In 1965, Private First Class Milton Olive III and his army platoon were making their way through the jungles of Phu Cuong, South Vietnam. Suddenly a grenade launched by a Vietcong combatant landed in their midst. Keenly aware of the imminent death and destruction facing him and his fellow soldiers, 18-year-old Private Olive took quick action and fell on the explosive to absorb the blast, sacrificing himself to save the others.

In the Garden of Eden, God had warned Adam that to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil would precipitate certain death (Genesis 2:15-17). Adam’s disobedience was like a grenade launched on every future generation of humanity. All would follow in his sinfulness and inherit death. But then Jesus did something astounding to intervene. By His atoning death, our magnificent Lord absorbed sin’s blast for all eternity and gave us the opportunity for new life. Through faith in Him we escape the curse of Adam’s sin, are forgiven of our transgressions, and gain everlasting fellowship with the Father.

God’s gracious gift through Jesus is exponentially greater than the grenade of depravity detonated by Adam. As we rejoice daily in Christ’s saving act of love, let’s be ready to tell others that good news so they too may live.

**Father,** thank You for Your willingness to save us through the sacrifice of Your dear Son. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## The Perfect Cure

**Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near** (Isaiah 55:6).

**Scripture:** Isaiah 55:6-13

**Song:** “O Lord, You’re Beautiful”

As I compared products in the health-food aisle, an older gentleman with a warm smile pointed to the item in my right hand and declared, “You want this one.” His wife had cancer, and in his research, he had learned that a seemingly innocuous ingredient in the other product was suspected of being a cancer accelerator. As he shared about the lifestyle changes they had made, it became clear that this committed husband was a desperate seeker of any and all information that could help his wife beat her disease.

God invites us to seek Him with that kind of intensity. In our pursuit of Him, we are to forget what we thought we knew was best for us and, instead, fill our minds with His renewing Word. As we turn to Him and receive His generous pardon, we are free to follow His lead into lifestyle changes that pave the way for the restoration He wants to provide.

We will never be cured of our deadly disease, sin, without first seeking the Lord. But what a blessing that our remedy is within reach! He has come near, and His Word provides the spiritual nourishment we need. His merciful saving grace never fails. If you’re choosing between God’s wisdom and ways and something else today, choose what will bring life: choose the Lord.

**Father,** thank You for showing me the wisdom of Your ways. Let Your restoring Word accomplish Your desire in me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## Completely His

**Offer every part of yourself to [God] as an instrument of righteousness** (Romans 6: 13).

**Scripture:** Romans 6:1-14

**Song:** “A New Creature”

Five-star college football recruit Dante Fowler grew up loving the Florida State Seminoles, so his early verbal commitment to play for them surprised no one. But as the incoming class began to form, questions grew about his potential playing time and place in the depth chart. On National Signing Day, Fowler shocked the nation by formally committing to the cross-state rival Florida Gators. He never looked back. Dedicating himself wholeheartedly to his new team, Fowler completed a college football career that solidified his status as a first-round NFL draft pick.

Switching our allegiance from sin to Savior should make our lives look shockingly different. Paul uses polar opposites—such as “dead” and “alive”—to help us understand the extreme change of our new loyalty. Our old life and our new life are in no way congruent or complementary. And we cannot lay claim to the new mercies afforded on “team God” while glorifying ourselves by means of an old, self-indulgent playbook.

Our full repentance is more than a verbal commitment. Paul pleads with us to “suit up” in Jesus, get out on the grace-covered field, and give God our all in the work of His kingdom. We’ve been heavily recruited, highly pursued, and there are blessings awaiting us when we put our talents to use for Him. Let’s be counted among those in His starting lineup and make the most of our new life in Him.

**Father,** I give my whole being in service to You. May You be glorified in my life. In Jesus’ name, amen.