

Paul H. Dixon
The Bible and Capital Punishment
circa 1980

Unedited Transcript

Paul H. Dixon:

I announced tonight that I would speak on the subject, the Bible and capital punishment. It was back on June the 29th of 1972, that the Supreme Court ruled that the death penalty as has been imposed is cruel and unusual punishment. It was immediately hailed by many as a landmark of a more humane society and folks all around the country started rejoicing that the Supreme Court had made this decision. I personally found it very difficult to rationalize how it was possible on one hand for the same Supreme Court, to say that it was all right to take the life of a baby that was in the womb of a mother through the means of abortion, who never had a chance to defend himself, never had a chance to set forth his case. It's all right to take that individual's life, and yet it was not all right to take the life of someone who had taken the life of another.

Paul H. Dixon:

It appeared to me to be totally inconsistent. And I still hold the same position. I have in my hand tonight, a copy of a portion of a debate that came out of the Dayton Daily News on March the 17th of this year, it was a record of a debate that took place in the Senate between Senator John McClellan of Arkansas and Senator Harold Hughes of Iowa. Of course, as many of you perhaps know, Senator Hughes is a very religious man who is resigning from the Senate, or at least he does not plan to run again, and he is going to devote his law life to religion. You might be surprised to know that Senator McClellan defended the death penalty and Senator Hughes was opposed to it. And I thought that it would be well to help you to understand. I've gathered many facts and so forth as to who is for the death penalty and why they're for it.

Paul H. Dixon:

And some facts as to why many are opposed to it, and why they take that position. I think in just briefly covering some of the things in this debate, it'll help you to put it all in perspective. Senator McClellan said this: "We are faced with a basic question, whether or not this country should have a death penalty at all. The answer to that question becomes clearer and clearer with every new kidnapping, with every new hijacking of a plane filled with innocent people, with every new murder by the Symbionese liberation army, with every murder committed for hire." He goes on to say that the death penalty must be restored if our criminal justice system is to combat effectively the ever increasing tide of violent crimes, crimes of terror that threatened to engulf our nation, and if the confidence of the American people in our system of justice is to be restored.

Paul H. Dixon:

Those who argue against the death penalty claim that it serves no useful purpose and should therefore be eliminated. Perhaps more importantly, they say, that there is no proof that it deters crime. I simply do not agree with that. Life is our most precious possession. So long as the premeditated murderer has his life, there is the chance for parole, for freedom, for escape. Where the criminal, the murderer, knows that he's going to pay a price for his crimes, and that price is death, he will be deterred. The criminal must be made to realize he's going to die himself if he chooses to murderously deprive someone else of his life.

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Then Senator Hughes takes the position, of course, opposed to the death penalty by saying this: "The question before us today is symbolic and overriding, whether it is morally right and socially defensible for the state, under our system of criminal justice, to destroy a human life for any crime. How is it that a nation that has not suffered the brutality of public execution for eight years is now deliberately considered going back to the hangman's noose, the electric chair, and the gas chamber? Is the morbid trip back to the death penalty the right way to protect society from violence, and to keep faith with our moral purpose as a people?"

Paul H. Dixon:

"Is ultimate violence the antidote for violence? For me, the answer must be no. I oppose the death penalty because it demeans human society without protecting it. The weight of evidence is that capital punishment does not deter crime. I oppose the death penalty because as the Supreme Court has ruled, it is cruel and unusual punishment. It is capricious and unjust in its application, discriminates against the luckless, the poor, and the racial minorities. I oppose the death penalty because it cannot undo or rectify any crime that was committed, however brutal, because there is no road back if the convicted man is later proven innocent. I deeply believe that violence solves nothing but only breeds more violence. I believe our reverence for human life, even that of the lowliest and most depraved, must transcend our passions for revenge if the human family is not going back to the caves. I ask my colleagues to join in me in rejecting death, in affirming life, in rejecting vengeance, in affirming redemption."

Paul H. Dixon:

The Senate then went on to vote and they voted to restore the death sentence for treason, espionage, and other specified crimes when death occurs. I trust that'll help us to at least get it in perspective as to how the leaders in our country are looking at it. Most of the defenders of the death penalty have been the law enforcement officers, the families of those who have been murdered, and the great bulk of Evangelical Bible believing Christians. I must, in fairness to those people who are opposed to the death penalty, say that there are many who claim and are Bible believers who take the stand in opposition to it. The opponents generally are made up of those who are belonging to the liberal churches, to those who somehow feel that the humanistic philosophy of our day, that it is not right to take the life of another individual.

Paul H. Dixon:

Actually, as I evaluated the arguments, I do not really hear many setting forth a case from the Word of God. And actually the entire idea of the death penalty to begin with came from the Bible. And tonight I would ask you to consider not necessarily even what your heart would say and not a philosophy that would be based upon what is best for the individual, what is best for society. I would challenge you tonight to give serious consideration to the biblical mandate for capital punishment. I'd like to begin by turning you to the ninth chapter, The Book of Genesis. If you'll turn over there with me please, Genesis chapter nine. And I'd like to read the first six verses. But before I do, I'd like to give you a little bit of background to Genesis chapter nine. While you're turning there in the sixth, seventh chapters of the Book of Genesis, God has seen fit to destroy the then known world by a flood that covered the entire Earth.

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He spared Noah and his family in the arc. It occurs to me that when God got ready to punish Man for his sin, he saw fit to do it through capital punishment. God himself was the first one to exercise the death penalty. And as we come to Genesis chapter nine, God is establishing a new society through Noah and his family. And he's changing some things, some things that he did not do with Adam and Eve, he is now going to instigate under Noah. And I believe with the ninth chapter of the Book of Genesis, we have the establishment, the beginnings, the foundation of human government as we know it today. And I'll just, first of all, read the sixth verse. Genesis chapter nine, verse six, God says, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man." There's a very definite direct statement as to God's position as to what he would have society to do regarding someone who would murder another individual.

Paul H. Dixon:

God said, if you murder someone, if you kill someone, you take their life, then you will in turn lose your life. Oh, but you say, "Preacher, don't you know that was under the law?" I beg to differ with you. Genesis chapter nine occurs 1000 years before the law was given. We do not find the law until we get into the Book of Exodus. Mount Sinai is a thousand years removed. Oh, but you say, "What God gave to Noah in Genesis chapter nine was just applicable to his day." I don't believe that and I'd like to prove that. I would say this is very important in our interpretation. If we're going to apply Genesis chapter nine, verse six, to our society now, we have to be willing to apply the other verses that surround it. Let's see if we can.

Paul H. Dixon:

Notice if you will verse one, "God blessed Noah and his sons, and he said unto them, 'Be fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth.'" That's exactly what he told Adam and Eve back in the Book of Genesis, chapter one, chapter two. He said to be "fruitful, multiply, replenish the earth". Question, if it applied to Adam and Eve, it applied to Noah, does that apply to us today? Oh yeah. That's exactly what we're doing in our families. We are being fruitful, and multiplying, and replenishing the earth. Next verse, "The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand, are they delivered." All God is saying here is that you will have dominion over the animals, over the beasts. Does that apply to us today? Do lions roam our streets? Do the animals control us or do we control the animals?

Paul H. Dixon:

Certainly that's applicable to all of society. Noah's day, our day as well. Next verse, "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. Surely your blood of your lives will I require. At the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of a man." Basically what God is saying in those three verses is that you can kill animals and you can eat the meat of those animals that you kill. Now I'm not dogmatic on this, but I'll give it to you for your consideration. I seriously question that until this time man ever ate meat. It occurs to me that probably this is the first time that God is instituting that man has the right to kill animals and to eat that meat.

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I believe that before the flood, they were probably vegetarians. But God is saying he's giving his permission right now that you can go out and kill a cow and have a steak. Question, that applied to Noah's day, does that apply to our day? Oh yes. Again, in the ninth chapter, the Book of Genesis, look at verse 13. Let's read verses 12 and 13. "God said, 'This is the token of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations.'" For what? Perpetual generations, what is that covenant? "I do set my bow in the cloud, it shall be for a token of a covenant between Me and the earth." Preacher's [pals 00:12:13] , how many of you have ever seen a rainbow? Could I see your hands?

Paul H. Dixon:

All the preacher's pals who've ever seen a rainbow. Isn't that amazing? You know what a rainbow is? That's a covenant between God and Man. What God is saying in that rainbow is I will never destroy the Earth again by a flood. I will never deal with man again like I did here in the Book of Genesis. Question, if we still have rainbows today, was that covenant just for Noah and his day, or does that apply to us as well? Of course, the obvious conclusion is everything around Genesis chapter nine, verse six, applies to us. Then how can we say the Genesis chapter nine, verse six, was just for Noah. You can't. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for the image of God made He man." Before we go to the next section of verses, let me say this: In answer to the objection that to take a person's life who has murdered another, demeans the worth of the individual, devalues the worth of the individual, I say I have to totally disagree.

Paul H. Dixon:

God said the reason He instituted the death penalty was because the individual life is so important. And because man is made in God's image, he says if you take that image, if you admire that image, if you destroy that man, that is such a serious crime, my friend, that you shall in turn, lose your life. It does not decrease the worth of the individual, barely it increases it. Someone has said that when you kill another human being, you are defacing the King's image and that is nothing short of treason. Turn with me to the Book of Exodus for our next section of verses. Exodus, chapter 21, verse 12. Now we're going to get under the law. I certainly do not believe that we are under the law today, according to the Book of Galatians, but I think we need to deal with this for a very important reason.

Paul H. Dixon:

I think you'll see why as we continue in this discussion. Exodus 21, verse 12, God says "He that smiteth a man so that he die shall be surely put to death." That's very plain. There's no debate. I mean, God didn't him-haw around about it, he said if you kill a man, you're going to lose your life. You'll "surely be put to death". In fact, if you would study it under the law, you lost your life not only for killing someone else, but for many other reasons. For instance, in verse 16, it says that you could lose your life for kidnapping. "He that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death." You would find in other core verses in this chapter that if a child insulted his parents, he would be put to death.

Paul H. Dixon:

In the Book of Exodus, chapter 35, verse two, if you worked on the Sabbath, you lost your life. Leviticus, chapter 20, verse 27, if you had anything to do with spiritism, an effort to communicate with the dead, we'll talk about this tomorrow night, you lost your life. Leviticus, chapter 24, verses 10 through 16, you

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suffer the death penalty for cursing God. In Numbers, chapter one, verse 51, if there was any kind of disobedience in religious services, you lost your life. Deuteronomy 13, six through nine, false worship brought the death penalty. Deuteronomy 16:25, any kind of idolatry. Deuteronomy 22, verses 21 and 24, any kind of immorality, and the law said that you would live no longer.

Paul H. Dixon:

But you say, "Preacher, I thought that the 10 Commandments said that you weren't supposed to kill." Look, if you will, back at the 20th chapter of Exodus and the 13th verse, because there is so much misunderstanding about this verse. That's the main reason I brought you to this passage tonight. That says very simply in four words, "Thou shalt not kill." Now, most of the people who are opposed to the death penalty will quote that. They'll say, "Doesn't the Bible say 'Thou shalt not kill'? Then how can you put someone in a gas chamber and kill him, put him in electric chair and take his life?" In fact, most of the people who are pacifists, and who do not want to go to war, use the same verse. "The Bible says, 'Thou shalt not kill.' And I'm not about to take a gun and go out to the front line and take another individual's life."

Paul H. Dixon:

I remember when I was first saved, I went to a Wednesday night prayer meeting and we had one of these fellows who was always getting on a new kick. I don't know that he ever got involved in winning people to Christ, and he could find a lot of excuses for not attending church, but boy, he could become very dogmatic about some things that he really didn't know much about. And on this particular Wednesday night, he came to church. I suppose he was in his early twenties and he said, "Well, I'm going to sell all my guns." He said, "I'll never hunt again. I'll never kill a squirrel, never kill a rabbit, or a quail, or a deer," he said, "because the Bible says 'Thou shalt not kill.' And I finally realized that the Bible is against the killing of animals, 'Thou shalt not kill.'" And that shows you how far you can take that verse.

Paul H. Dixon:

I have a question I'd like to ask: If you mean to tell me that when we talk about the death penalty, capital punishment, that God says one thing in Exodus, 20:13, and then he contradicts himself in chapter 21, verse 12? No, God doesn't contradict himself at all. Chapter 21 is an amplification of the 10 Commandments.

Paul H. Dixon:

Well, how can we explain it then? What do we say to the pacifist? What do we say to the one who says, "Oh, we cannot take another person's life because the Bible says, 'Thou shalt not kill.'" There's a Hebrew word that is used here for "kill". The Old Testament being written in Hebrew and the New Testament being written in Greek. And that word is the word Ratsach, found some 49 times in the Old Testament, or at least some variation of it. And it's always used in relation to murder or manslaughter, every time you find it. It is never used in the killing of an animal, in men who kill each other when they go to war, or when God sees fit to judge someone and takes their life.

Paul H. Dixon:

Barely, if you study this word out, the Old Testament being translated into Greek is called the Septuagint translation. And again, the Greek word that is used always has to do with murder. So the point is that

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what God is saying here, "Thou shalt not murder someone." And what he says in Exodus chapter 21, verse 12, is if you do break my law, and if you do murder someone, then you shall in turn lose your life. But you say, "Paul, all you've given us is Old Testament. What's the new have to say?" Did Jesus have to say anything about it? Turn with me to the Book of Matthew, chapter five, if you will please. The fifth chapter of the Book of Matthew. And while you're turning, let me share with you something that I heard some months ago. I sat in a Sunday school class of adults and the lesson that week, probably you were studying it here as well, had to do with capital punishment. And this individual who spoke up is someone who I'm sure ordinarily would know his Bible very well.

Paul H. Dixon:

In fact, this individual teaches in one of our Christian schools. And when he spoke up, he made this statement: He says, "I'm opposed to the death penalty." And I don't remember all that he said, but I do remember this. He said, "Jesus had nothing to say about the death penalty. Jesus didn't speak to this subject of capital punishment, and since Jesus didn't speak out on it, I'm opposed to it." I couldn't believe what I heard. First of all, Jesus never attempted to speak out on everything. If we're going to take positions on whether Jesus had something to say about it, or didn't have something to say about it, we're forgetting the fact that Jesus didn't come to give us a foundation on capital punishment, Jesus came to provide redemption. This is what bothers me about the faith healers today. And so many of these fringe things, they seem to emphasize that Christ came to provide a physical wellbeing for individuals, or somehow to teach some kind of social structure for us.

Paul H. Dixon:

That's not the prime reason why he came. Christ came to seek and to say that which was lost. Jesus did not have a thing to say about the death penalty that would not make the case for those who were opposed to it. I believe he did have something to say about it, in fact. Matthew chapter five, I know that many quote some of the things he said to underscore their position and being opposed to it. I don't think their arguments have any weight, but I want you to notice what he said in verses 21 and 22.

Paul H. Dixon:

Matthew five, 21 and 22. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, 'Thou shalt not kill,'" He's quoting Exodus 20, verse 13, "'whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.' I say unto you, whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." He didn't deny the death penalty here, he amplified it. He is stressing the seriousness of this thing. Not only taking another person's life, but even having hatred in your heart towards someone, where you would not kill him physically, but where you would attack him with your tongue and in your heart.

Paul H. Dixon:

"And whosoever," I continue, "shall say to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, 'Thou fool,' shall be in danger of hell fire." Now, did you notice that on two occasions he talked about the judgment and then he changes it to being in danger of the council? And that's interesting, because I believe what he's talking about here is a literal council that existed in that day, that is called the Sanhedrin Council. Now, you preacher's pals can get this. You just follow me right here. The Jews had a governing body of 70 men called the Sanhedrin and they had entrusted the authority and the right to exercise the death penalty. Now, to be fair to Judaism and to the Sanhedrin, they did not do it and they had not practiced it for many years before the coming of Christ.

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Paul H. Dixon:

They were not practicing it now, but that still in no way took away from their authority to do it. And what Jesus is saying here, he says, you shall be in danger of having to stand before the Council who has the authority to exercise the death penalty. He's not denying it, he's underscoring. Say isn't there something perhaps even a little clearer in the New Testament? Christ hasn't even died yet, what about after the cross? But probably the two classic passages on capital punishment come from the lips of the apostle Paul. I'd like for you, if you would, to turn with me, first of all, to Acts 25, verses nine through 11. The 25th chapter of the Book of Acts, and remember that the apostle Paul is on trial.

Paul H. Dixon:

Festus gives him opportunity in the ninth verse of Acts 25 to defend himself. There are some serious accusations laid against him, notice what Paul says in verse 10. "Then said Paul, 'I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. I'm not being tried by the Jews, I'm being tried by you Romans. If I be an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death,'" underline that in your Bible, "'anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die.'" He said, if I have done anything that is worthy of you killing me, of you sentencing me to the death penalty, I refuse not to die. I deserve it. Go ahead and take my life. If ever the apostle had an opportunity to take his soapbox and say, "I'm opposed to this business of the death penalty,"

Paul H. Dixon:

It was here, but rather he said, "I am for it. In fact, I am so much for it that if I'm worthy of it, kill me." That's what he said. Then over in the Book of Romans chapter 13, where the apostle Paul has a great deal to say about our responsibility to those who are in power and authority of government. In verse one of Romans 13, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." Or another better rendering would just be simply "judgment". "Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power?" Said you ought to be afraid of those who in authority. "Do that, which is good, and thou shall have praise of the same."

Paul H. Dixon:

He said, the authorities are there, government is there. Number one for punishment, number two for praise. He is a minister of God. That one who is in authority, that ruler. "For he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which his evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain..." Underline that, "...he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." Now, if you look up from your Bibles, let's explain it.

Paul H. Dixon:

The emperor wore a sword indicative of the fact that he had the position of authority. The emperor had a magistrate, and the magistrate also wore a sword, but it was a different kind of sword. And the word that is used here is the word that has to do with that magistrate's sword. And it was the magistrate who had the right under Roman law to exercise the death penalty. And Paul says, "He beareth not that sword in vain." How plain is the Word of God on this subject that we're considering this evening?

Paul H. Dixon:

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I'm not concerned about what the philosophers say. I want to know what God has to say. But you say, "Paul, how do you answer such objections? Is the fact that capital punishment doesn't deter the criminal?" Well, I say that's absolutely contrary to the Bible. You say, "Can you prove that?" I surely can. I could give you a half a dozen passages tonight, that show that it would deter crime, but I'll just give you one that maybe you've never marked in your Bible. I think you ought to mark. Turn with me to the Book of Ecclesiastes, chapter eight, verse 11. Back in the Old Testament, Ecclesiastes, 8:11.

Paul H. Dixon:

Now this applies to the home, this applies to the school system, it applies to government, not just to capital punishment, but to every kind of punishment. In fact, I think if you'll read this verse, think about what it's saying, you'll realize what's problem in America today with the crime situation. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

Paul H. Dixon:

And for six years before the Supreme Court passed the ruling, the law in the book doesn't do any good. It's when we execute those laws. J. Edgar Hoover said before he died, I quote, "The death penalty is a warning just like a lighthouse throwing its beams out to sea. We hear about shipwrecks, but we do not hear about the ships the lighthouse guides safely on their way. We do not have proof of the number of ships it saves, but we do not tear it down." An excellent observation.

Paul H. Dixon:

But in the closing minutes tonight, I would like to tell you why I am so much for the death penalty as it's spelled out in the Word of God. Friends, I personally believe that in this land of ours, we have totally lost sense of the doctrine of judgment, of the doctrine of retribution, justice. That's why there's so much permissiveness that prevails in the land, in our school systems, in our homes, in our churches. I realize there would no doubt be some here tonight who would be opposed to the death penalty and I'm not going to make an all inclusive statement, but I do believe that you would have to admit that many of the same people who will not accept the death penalty also will not accept an everlasting hail. And that's consistent because they do not believe in the doctrine of justice and judgment. It's basically what has come out from the arguments of Senator Hughes.

Paul H. Dixon:

This message I'm preaching tonight has been put in print and I have been wanting for a long time to sit down and send him a copy of it, or perhaps a copy of the cassette because I like when he claims to be a born again Christian, to reconsider his position. You see the same thoughts that somehow we should not take another person's life because there's no hope for them after they're dead, perhaps they were innocent. And incidentally, I believe that would be very rare. I'm not saying that it has not happened, but if we're going to work on the premise that if someone innocent might be punished, therefore do not punish the guilty, we might as well tear down our prisons.

Paul H. Dixon:

But when we think about this matter of judgment, I believe that we have to admit if a person is saying that there's no hope after death, when that person is put in the gas chamber, then they would also have

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to say, I cannot see how a God of love could send anyone to hell, because for sure, there's no hope then. There's no way to get out. We'll be preaching about this Sunday night.

Paul H. Dixon:

Here's a person who perhaps has murdered someone, he's found guilty, he's put in the gas chamber, but before he dies, he receives Jesus Christ as his personal savior, he may die in that gas chamber. He's paying the penalty for his crime, but his sin has been forgiven in the eyes of God. And he goes right to be with the Lord. And he's with God for all eternity. Friends, the doctrine of judgment is the basic doctrine that's behind this whole premise of the death penalty throughout the Bible. Justice must be satisfied and I want you to know that tonight we stand before the Supreme Judge of the universe and there is no appeal beyond him. And we are all found guilty. And the death penalty, the eternal death penalty, hangs over every one of our heads.

Paul H. Dixon:

Perhaps you've listened to this message tonight. And you've said, "This is very informative and it's helped me to understand it, but it doesn't apply to me because I've never murdered anyone. I don't know anyone who has, it doesn't involve me personally. I don't plan to go out and take anyone else's life. I don't plan to debate the issue. So I don't need to know about this." Friend, you are in far more serious problem tonight than someone who's on death's row because you have sinned against the God who made you, and so have I. And God has said, "The wages of sin is death." And that's not just a physical death where we're put in the ground someplace, but that's a spiritual death and we'll spend eternity in hell if we continue in our sin.

Paul H. Dixon:

I'm so glad to tell you tonight that God's son chose to provide salvation, deliverance for you and for me, listen to this, through the common means of capital punishment in that day. The way they exercised capital punishment under Roman law was not through the gas chamber or through hanging, but through nailing on a cross. And Jesus Christ went to the cross. As he hung on that cross, God judged him and God put him through that eternal death penalty so that we would not have to go through it. God's son went through Hell so that we wouldn't have to go to Hell. And there is salvation for every one of us here tonight through God's son, Jesus Christ, and what he did on the cross.

Paul H. Dixon:

People say, "I don't see how you can believe in the death penalty and still believe in love." It is totally impossible to ever understand love apart from justice. I don't care who it is that claims that they love, but they do not exercise justice, they do not know what love is all about. We would never have known the love of God had God not seen fit to exercise justice and judgment and pour out his wrath upon his son at Calvary's tree.

Paul H. Dixon:

God demonstrated his love to us, and that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. There has been a great debate raging in this country in recent days about the pardoning of a president. Gerald Ford made that decision on a Sunday, he announced it to the nation, and the nation apparently was appalled. I'm not going to enter into that discussion, but just to make a few observations about a pardon, it appears to me there have to be three things for a pardon, for a pardon to be effective. Number one,

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there has to be an admission of guilt. There would be no reason for a pardon unless the individual was guilty. Number two, there must be a legitimate offer of that pardon.

Paul H. Dixon:

Those who are in authority, I could offer a pardon to the President, but it wouldn't mean anything because I don't have the authority to do it. Gerald Ford did. Number three, that pardon, to be effective, must be received. It must be accepted. The decision must be made, "I will admit that I'm guilty. I realize this is a legitimate offer and I am prepared to receive it right now." And friend, God is offering, oh I trust that somehow the spirit of God would meet with us in these next two minutes and impress upon us the seriousness of this thing. We're going to Hell in our sin. We're under the judgment of God tonight.

Paul H. Dixon:

But if we are willing to admit our guilt, if we are willing to admit that we're sinners, that we deserve to go to Hell, that we cannot pardon ourselves, save ourselves, make ourselves right by joining a church, or being baptized, or trying to do the best that we can, but admit that we're guilty. Admit that God's offer is legitimate, that His word is true. Do not make God a liar when he says, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." And then by faith accept God's offer. Accept God's son as our personal savior tonight, and I'll guarantee you, friend, the moment you do that, and I pray you'll do it as this invitation is given, the death penalty will be lifted. A wrath will be passed, you'll no longer be under the condemnation of God, but it must be accepted.