

"IF YOU WERE PUNISHED AS YOU DESERVE," said the officer, "YOU WOULD BE SHOT AS YOU DESERVE, BUT SOMEONE HAS PLEADED YOUR CAUSE AT WASHINGTON AND OBTAINED YOUR PARDON, YOU ARE FREE?"

This act of kindness broke the heart of the spy, his hatred and anger suddenly ceased, and one who knew him and recounts the incident, said many years after: "No one may say in his presence a single word against President Lincoln. No person in the United States is more attached to him."

This spy had not *deserved* pardon, on his side there was only hatred and revolt, but there was compassion in the heart of the chief of state, and that was why grace was accorded him. It is the same with the grace of God; it is mercy *unmerited*. God does not wait until we have done certain things before pardoning us. He pardons us freely without demanding anything for it. Pardon is obtained through Jesus Christ. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. x. 22); but Christ has shed His blood as a sacrifice for the whole world, and the gospel is nothing else than a proclamation of free salvation to a wicked and rebellious world. This is the means God uses to touch the hearts of His enemies. When the Lord sent the apostle Paul to the Gentiles it was with this message: "To open their eyes, and to turn