



## And Forgive Us Our Debts

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Forgiveness is a Christian value. It is often an aspiration for anyone following Jesus' footsteps. Wasn't Jesus on the cross, the ultimate example of forgiveness? Didn't he ask God to pardon those who crucified him?

Letting go of resentment in our hearts and giving way to compassion for those who wrong us is a message that is frequently preached. The Lord's Prayer has forgiveness of others as a prerequisite to our own absolution. However, this selfless act becomes harder when those who hurt others do not care about the consequences of their actions and are not remorseful. Who and what are there to forgive when those who rob, marginalize, and oppress feel entitled to trample over others to pursue their own interests? Forgiveness should not operate alone. An act of repentance elicits a compassionate act of forgiving.

On February 18, President Trump pardoned [Rod Blagojevich](#), who had served 8 years of his 14-year sentence for corruption and for using his political position for profit. Other white-collar criminals were also pardoned by the President that day. Forbes reporter [Stephanie Sarkis](#) pointed out, "Trump is ... sending the message that white-collar crime is 'no big deal.' Minimizing is another gaslighting manipulation technique. The message Trump gives is that if these people who defrauded or bribed others were given too harsh of a sentence; the crime must not be so bad."

The presidential pardon of rich, powerful, corrupt white associates of Trump's friends and acquaintances reflects the blatant racism of the justice system. Incarceration of people of color happens at twice the rate than white counterparts in the United States. The policing of blacks in America is violent and aggressive. A [Human Rights Watch](#) case study recently reported that "black people, even regardless of wealth or poverty, disproportionately receive aggressive treatment by police."

The cycle of poverty is an additional confinement that impacts blacks and Latinx in the United States more than whites. Poverty pre-sets the path for many into the structural machinery that will imprison them for reasons beyond their control.

Let's not forget, too, that there are children in immigration detention centers. The crime of not being U.S.-born and seeking refuge in the richest country in the world is penalized by indefinite detention, away from parents. In the name of democracy, the U.S. perpetuates senseless wars and militarization, displacing and hindering people around the world.

The examples of how our society selects the privileged to walk out free are endless. Those who are often pardoned by the system are not the poor. They are not black or Latinx. Those who get a pass continue to be white, rich, and connected to the status quo. For forgiveness to make sense, society needs to recognize that oppression is sin and that repentance means creating access for all to enjoy freedom.

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