

GOD'S TWO LAWS OF PARDON

By definition, sin is “lawlessness.” (1 John 3:4). All accountable human beings are guilty of sin. The Apostle Paul wrote: ***“For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God”*** (Romans 3:23). Even those who have committed their lives to Jesus Christ and have been forgiven of their past sins are capable of sinning again. The Apostle John warned: ***“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world”*** (1 John 2:1, 2).

While forgiveness of sin is freely given by our heavenly Father, it is conditional, both for the alien sinner and for the erring child of God. The conditions are not the same for both, but must be complied with in both cases if pardon is to take place.

When our Lord gave the Great Commission to His disciples, He taught them to ***“Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”*** (Mark 16:15,16). In Luke’s account of the Commission, the Saviour states that ***“repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem”*** (Luke 24:47).

In Acts we read of the Gospel being preached, the terms of pardon plainly given, and several cases of conversion are recorded. In the eighth chapter of Acts, there is an account of conversion which illustrates God’s two laws of pardon, one for the alien sinner and the other for the erring child of God. Philip, the evangelist, had gone to Samaria to preach the Gospel. God confirmed his preaching by the miracles which Philip did (Hebrews 2:3,4). The Samaritans who had followed Simon, a sorcerer, now recognized true miracles and gave heed to Philip’s preaching. The result was that ***“when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done”*** (Acts 8:12,13).

The apostles in Jerusalem heard of the conversion of the Samaritans and sent Peter and John to Samaria to give the miraculous gifts of the Spirit to the believers. ***“And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, ‘Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit’”*** (Acts 8:18,19). Simon, along with the other Samaritans, had been pardoned of his past sins when he heard the Gospel, believed, and was baptized (Acts 8:12,13). But now this once pardoned man had sinned again. What must he do to be pardoned? Peter told him to ***“Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you”*** (Acts 8:22).

Simon still believed in Jesus Christ and had already been baptized into Him (Galatians 3:26,27). He did not need to be baptized again. He did, however, need to repent of his sin and ask the Lord’s forgiveness. Asking the Lord for forgiveness involved the confession of his sin to God: ***“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”*** (1 John 1:9).

Thus, we see in the case of Simon the sorcerer God's two laws of pardon in effect. When Simon was an alien sinner, he needed to believe and be baptized in order to be pardoned. But when Simon, the child of God sinned, he was told to "***Repent and pray.***"

All people outside of Christ have sinned. They must comply with the conditions of God's pattern to be saved. This requires faith in Jesus Christ and baptism for the remission of sins. Once this has been done, one is a child of God. If he then sins, he can be pardoned for his sin if he will repent of it and confess it seeking God's forgiveness.