



## GOD'S TWO LAWS OF PARDON

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By definition, sin is the "transgression of God's law" (1 John 3:4). All accountable human beings are guilty of sin. The Apostle Paul wrote: ***"For all have sinned, and come 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 write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"*** (1 John 2:1,2).

While forgiveness of sin is freely bestowed by our gracious 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 ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"*** (Mark 16:15,16). In Luke's account of the Commission, the Saviour stated that ***"repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem"*** (Luke 24:27).

In the book of 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 well 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 formerly followed Simon, a sorcerer, now recognized true miracles and gave heed to Philip's preaching. The result was ***". . .when they believed Philip preaching the***

*things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done"* (Acts 8:5-12).

The apostles in Jerusalem heard of the conversion of the Samaritans and sent Peter and John to Samaria to confer the miraculous gifts of the Spirit upon the believers. *"When Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost"*(Acts 8:14-19). 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 thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee"* (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 accountable 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 for 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.