

## Chapter Nineteen

## God's Condition For Forgiveness

The Law is bad news to the sinner. The Gospel is Good News to the believer. The Law is God's perfect standard of righteousness a standard that sinful man cannot attain, for we all, according to Psalm 51:5, "*are shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin.*" The Law is the declaration of God's justice, while the Gospel is the declaration of God's mercy and grace. Both the Law and the Gospel are perfect, but they have entirely different purposes and results, because the law condemns the sinner, while the Gospel justifies, and offers salvation from sin. The Law and the Gospel are mutually exclusive. It cannot be partly Law and partly grace. There can be no mixing of the two in salvation. Nowhere does this seem more clearly stated than in Romans 11. Paul was giving the history of Israel to illustrate the truth of Grace. He shows in Romans 9 that God did not choose Israel because of any goodness or merit that He saw in them – but it was by His pure grace. Abraham had been chosen in grace; Jacob was chosen in sovereign grace. This was all determined before Jacob was born. God knew that Jacob would be a rascal, however, because of His "*foreknowledge,*" knew Esau would choose to live by the flesh. To illustrate His grace, God chose Jacob in spite of his meanness, tricky, and unworthiness. Listen to the Word:

*"(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated"* (Romans 9:11-13).

Does this seem unfair? Paul anticipated this question and says:

*"What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid"* (Romans 9:14).

God is sovereign and no one may say to Him that He is unjust. Daniel expressed it long ago, centuries before Paul wrote, and said:

*"He (God) doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"* (Daniel 4:35).

Will man call God's dealings into question, or call God into account for what He does in sovereign grace? Well may we answer this in the words of Paul:

*"Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"* (Romans 9:20-21).

Israel Called by Grace

Israel was chosen by God to be His covenant nation, not on the basis of their superiority or excellence, but by the sovereign grace of God. But there is more. Israel was also *kept* by this same sovereign grace. How miserably the nation failed. Their history is one of rebellion, idolatry and sin, culminating in the rejection of their Messiah at Calvary. Did God cast them away again when they proved themselves unworthy of His grace? If justice had prevailed without mercy, truly this would have been the result, but the same sovereign grace that chose them in the beginning also kept them in spite of their unfaithfulness. Although this chosen nation broke God's Law over and over again, God did not cast them off. To be sure, He chastened them, He punished them, He corrected them, He scattered them, but He did not violate His covenant of grace.

### Hath God Cast Away His People?

Paul asks this question, because it is an important one:

*"I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid...God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew" (Romans 11:1-2).*

The reason was the unfailing grace of God. If Israel's blessing as the people of God had depended upon their behavior, all would have been different – but it was all of grace, and grace excludes all works. Grace is the underserved, unmerited favor to those who are utterly unworthy. If the least bit of works or human goodness is introduced, it ceases to be the work of God alone. I repeat, grace and Law are mutually exclusive – it must be either all of grace *without works*, or it is not grace at all. We recommend for careful, intensive study of Paul's statement in Romans 11:6,

*"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Romans 11:6).*

All of this reference to God's dealing with Israel in grace is given as an illustration for us that we are not only saved by grace, but we are also *kept* by grace without the works of the Law. I have taken this excursion into the history of Israel because there are multitudes of sincere believers who imagine that we are saved by grace, but then after we are saved we must be kept saved because we have perfect behavior and observing the Law of God without one transgression. But this nullifies the whole blessing of salvation, because who are they who can say that they continuously and uninterruptedly live a perfect sinless life in full obedience to God's Law, even after they are saved? Is there a day in your life when you can say, *"This day I have not sinned in thought, word or deed? I have lived in perfect obedience, during everything that God has commanded and have not come short of any of the Law's requirements, and perfect demands of holiness?"*

Can you say, *"This day, every minute of it I have loved the lord with all my heart and mind and soul, and my neighbor as myself? I have not been angry, I have not had any evil thoughts, and I have not coveted or been jealous or been selfish. I have not injured my neighbor by gossip, or failed to help him in time of need?"* Please step forward if you dare claim this. I candidly confess that I have never lived a day when in the evening I have not had to confess, *"Oh, Lord, this day I have not been all I should have been. I have been critical,*

*impatient, and been more concerned with my own comfort than the needs of others. Oh, Lord, I ask forgiveness, I confess my sins and imperfection, and accept Thy provision of daily grace and cleansing."*

## Grace, Not Law

To those who say that our security depends upon our perfect behavior after we are saved, I would ask, "*Don't you need the grace of God any more? Don't you ever need to confess your failures in your struggle with the old nature – the flesh?*" If you can answer, or even suggest, that you do not need God's grace after you are saved, then I fear that you know nothing about either the requirements of God's holy Law and the true nature of sin.

It would indeed be a sad situation – if every time the Christian failed to measure up to God's perfect commandments, he would lose salvation. If the believer is under the Law, he would be lost again every time he came short of its perfect demands. Remember, the law condemns sin, and if we are under that Law, we would be condemned all over again. But God has also made provision for the believer. Jesus not only delivered us from the curse of the Law by dying on the cross, but He keeps us delivered from the condemnation of the Law by His presence as our interceding High Priest at the right hand of God. Unfortunately, there are some poor, blind, mistaken people who claim sinless perfect. They tell us the old sinful nature had been eradicated, root and branch, and they never sin any more. To them the Lord Jesus Christ is wasting His time at the right hand of God as our interceding High Priest, because they have nothing to confess, and need no one to intercede for them.

## Shall We Sin?

This does not mean that we must not strive for holiness. This does not mean that we should not be careful *to avoid sin*. We ought not to sin, but the fact is that as long as we have our sinful nature we do sin, and for this God's grace has made provision in the priestly work of our Lord. How clear and unmistakable are the words of the Spirit through John:

*"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not"*  
(1 John 2:1)

John is writing to believer. He addresses them as "*my little children.*" To these – born-again Children of God – he writes, "*These things write I unto you, that ye sin not;*" but, sad to say, we all too often do sin. And our Father knew that, too, and so John adds to the warning ***not to sin***,

*...and (but) if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father,  
Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).*

Thank God for that glorious provision! Without it, it would be of little or no value to be saved in the first place, if provision had not been made to keep us saved to the end. And so we admit our failures, and we grieve over them and long for victory over sin, and yearn for holiness: we do not deny our failure, for we know that in us

(that is, in our flesh,) “*dwells no good thing*” – according to Romans 7:18. The worst thing a believer can do is to close his eyes to the possibility of his sinning, and consequently fail to confess them, and so come under the chastening, scourging hand of our God.

## Don't Deny Your Sins

To deny that we have failed is only to deceive ourselves and make God a liar. Read to what God says:

*“If we (believers) say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us . . . If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (1 John 1:8, 10).*

When then shall we do? The verse inserted between the two verses 8 and 10) that we have just read, gives the remedy. That 9<sup>th</sup> verse reads:

*“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).*

We do not even have to ask Him to forgive our sins, but the only condition is **confession**, but when we confess He forgives. Are we under Law? Thank God, no! For then we would come back under condemnation every time we fail, but we are under grace, which makes provision for forgiveness and for cleansing.

We must ask our self, “*Do we know our own heart in the light of the Word of God? Do we know the true nature of sin?*” Sin is not only an overt, outward act, but it is primarily an attitude of the heart that fails to put God first in every thought, word and deed. Sin is doing anything independently of God. Do we have a true concept of the holiness of God? To do anything without recognizing God is sin. As way of an illustration, look at Proverbs 21:4, “*...the plowing of the wicked, is sin.*” What it is referring to is that fact that even failure to recognize God as the giver of the harvest, is sin. Look at the confession of one who was one of the most godly, spiritual men in history, and read what he (Job) says:

*“If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse” (Job 9:20).*

Have you been defeated in your struggle? Have you failed so often, and are you tempted to say, “*What's the use?*” Or are you dependent because you think God has cast you off, and you are no longer saved? Then go to Him, and claim His promise of grace,

*“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).*

Trust Jesus Christ, and go on to claim His victory!