

What are the Conditions of Salvation?

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What are the Conditions of Salvation? If the term *condition* were at all admissible in reference to that which is the sovereign act of Jehovah, I would give these as the conditions of salvation, namely: 1. That there are guilty, justly condemned sinners to be saved; and 2. That a way was provided in which God is just in saving sinners or in justifying the ungodly. These are certainly inseparable from the idea of salvation though not conditions in the common sense of the term. If we were not sinners ruined in ourselves, and already condemned by the just and unchangeable law of God, we had not been proper subjects of salvation; but on the contrary would still be *probationers*; that is would be in such circumstances that our future destiny whether of happiness or misery would depend on our acts or the course we take. Could we get to heaven under such circumstances, it would be as much the consequent result of our own acts, as would be our going to hell in pursuing a different course; hence there could no more be salvation in the one case, than there would be unjust oppression in the other. So also in reference to the other circumstance or condition, justice must be satisfied; the law of God must be canceled in its demands or it would forever bar the flowing of grace to the sinner: God *cannot deny Himself*. Hence the grand leading subjects of revelation are that these circumstances actually exist, or that these conditions are fully met in reference to all who are chosen to salvation. Thus the use of the law on the one hand, to show our guilt and condemnation; "That sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." See Rom.7:7-13 & 3:19, 20. So on the other hand, the gospel is a declaration of Christ Jesus having magnified the law and made it honorable, and being *the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*; and hence, of redemption and salvation in Him. Of Him it is said, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare I say at this time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom.3:25 & 26. Hence the justice of God is manifested in fully acquitting and justifying all them that believe in Jesus though in themselves *they have sinned and come short of the glory of God*, and are justly condemned by the law. So in christian experience, none can receive the hope of salvation in truth until they know themselves sinners, ruined and justly condemned by the law; and by faith know that God is just in pardoning and saving sinners alone through the redemption that is in

Christ Jesus. On the other hand he that knows and feels his just condemnation as a guilty transgressor of the law, and the deep pollution of his nature and acts so as to have lost all hopes of escaping the curse by anything of his, is the very character, whom, as declared in the Scriptures, Christ came to save. He *came to seek and to save that which was lost*. And he that by faith knows and receives Christ as the end of the law for righteousness, his hope for salvation resting upon a foundation that can never fail, is according to the Scriptural decision, a saved one.

But I presume the inquirer had in view conditions according to the common notion of the term; something found in us or done by us, which at least gives us the ground to hope for acceptance with God; such as our repenting, believing, sincerely seeking and loving God, &c. The natural mind becomes so completely imbued with this notion of conditions, by hearing and reading of them so much, as set forth by men, that even believers frequently, notwithstanding what they have been taught of themselves, and of Christ's full work, will be looking for some of these conditions as an encouragement to hope, instead of looking to Christ. Hence the propriety of discussing this subject. In contradiction to all notions of conditions performed by creatures interposing in the work of salvation; 1st. We are taught that "Salvation is of the Lord," that "He that is our God is the God of salvation." The consideration that He claims salvation to be of Himself; and that He is self-existent and absolutely independent, that everything else exists of and from Him, and therefore that He cannot be influenced to act from anything out of Himself, shows that salvation being of Him, it must be exclusively of Him. Were He induced to save by the creature's performing certain conditions, He would be controlled in the act by the will of the creature, and could no longer justly claim the sovereignty He does, when He says, "I even I am the Lord {Jehovah} and besides me there is no saviour. I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God, &c. Isa. 43:11-12. 2nd. The fact that those who are saved were, *from the beginning chosen to salvation*, and therefore before they actually existed or had *done any good or evil*, effectually excludes all conditions or works done by the creature. See II Thes.2:13, Rom.9:11. 3rdly. Salvation as wrought out is embraced in redemption; it is redemption from the curse of the law, and from under the law. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Gal.3:13. And receiving the adoption of sons was the result of this redemption, Gal.4:4 & 5. And mark, it was God that sent forth His Son, &c., to redeem, and hence it was not that He was moved to it by any act of the creature. Even in His very birth as a Saviour, all fleshly power was excluded, He was *made of a woman*; not born by any act of man. And lest men might claim that God's thus sending His Son was the result of conditions performed by Abraham or his posterity, it is declared that, in the very relation in which Christ was born as a Saviour, *His goings*

forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Micah 5:1 & 2, and Matt.2:5 & 6. Thus effectually debarring all creaturely influence or conditions from having any control over His coming. 4th. The experience of salvation, or being brought to have communion with God as a Father, is so represented in the Scriptures as effectually to deny its dependence on conditions. God is a Spirit, this communion of course must be spiritual, and of which the flesh can have no part. Therefore to enjoy it we must become spiritual. This can only be by our being born of the Spirit; *that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* The fleshly birth is the result of being begotten of the flesh. The spiritual birth of course must be the result of being begotten of the Spirit. So says our Lord, *It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.* Of course the flesh has no part in the quickening or begetting. No room then for conditions here. See John 3:6, and 6:63. And of this birth as sons of God or as spiritual, it is said "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:13. Here all natural or blood descent is excluded, and of course all conditions performed by parents. No fleshly volition wills it, nor any will of man, even though he may be regenerated, produces it; but it is of God's sovereign volition. If we perform a condition as such do we not will the result? In excluding then the will of the creature, is not the condition excluded? - But 5. Not to be extremely tedious in multiplying proofs establishing the same fact, I will confine myself to this one more point of illustration. Paul in confirmation of the view above given of salvation as wrought out, says, Eph.2:4 - 6, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, {by grace ye are saved;} And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Here he shows that the saints were delivered from it; and were raised up together and made to sit together in *heavenly places* - not placed back again in Adam's original state of innocency and like him left subject to conditions or the requisitions of the law; but embraced in the provisions of the heavenly or everlasting covenant, having no *ifs* in it, no conditions to render it uncertain, but *ordered in all things and sure.* Well therefore might Paul interrupt the thread of his discourse to exclaim, "By grace ye are saved," every line, and word, shows God as going forth in the sovereignty and independence of His love and mercy, toward guilty sinners; a love that even their being dead in sins, could not check, and one therefore which creaturely works could never have drawn forth. But Paul goes on in verse 7 to show an object God had in *raising them up and making them sit together in heavenly places*; namely, "That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." *In the ages to come*, that is, in the experimental deliverance, in all succeeding ages, of those He had made to sit together in heavenly places, He might show the *exceeding riches of His grace*, &c. One might have supposed that if Paul had mentioned

only the *riches* of God's grace as that which He intended to show, no one would ever think of its being found so scanty as to be limited and confined within the bounds of such conditions as puny man could comply with. But the Holy Spirit knowing the proneness of man to bring everything, even God's rich grace, down to the standard of *earthly things and places*, which all have limitations, directed the use of the still broader expression, the *exceeding riches of His grace*. That which is *exceeding*, must *go beyond, over-top* everything in competition; but if the grace of God in salvation, were suspended upon any conditions whatever, those conditions uncomplied with must bar that grace and therefore exceed it. And hence where sin abounded in the non-compliance *grace could not abound*. Not so, such is the riches of God's grace that it must exceed every impediment. So is the testimony, "That where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom.5:20 & 21. It certainly cannot be possible that a conditional salvation can consist with the exceeding riches and sovereignty of God's grace. Salvation must flow as sovereignly free from Him as did creation, for He is alike the God of both.

But again, many persons, generally sound, hold the idea of a conditional covenant contracted between the Father and Son, the salvation of the elect being suspended on Christ's fulfilling the conditions thereof. The inquirer may have had reference to this idea. But there is no declaration made in the Scriptures of any such contracting between the Father and Son, nor anything to justify the idea of such a conditional covenant. That there is an *everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure* established with the elect in Christ as their Head I think the Scriptures clearly teach. Of this covenant {or *testament* as the original word is in some cases rendered, though more generally rendered *covenant*} Christ is revealed as the Surety, Heb.7:22, the Mediator, Heb.9:15, and the Messenger, Mal.3:1, each of these terms conveys an idea very different from that of a contracting party, as will be manifest on a moment's calm reflection. The great mistake in reference to this covenant arises from man being disposed to think of God as *such a one as themselves*, and therefore when God's covenant is spoken of, they conclude it must be like the covenants existing between men; and to carry out the idea they split up the Godhead into contracting parties having distinct, and therefore clashing interests in the concern. But no such idea is conveyed in the language of any covenant revealed in the Scriptures. As the Psalmist says of the everlasting covenant, Ps.111:9, "He sent redemption unto His people: He hath commanded His covenant forever &c.", so it will be found in every covenant recorded, and in every reference to the everlasting or new covenant made in the Scriptures, that God appears as the sovereign Jehovah establishing every part by His absolute *wills* and *shalls*. Look at the covenant God established with Noah, &c., Gen.9:8-17; the one established with Abraham, Gen.15:7-18, and the one, Gen.17 - then to the covenant

mentioned by David, II Sam.23:5 & Ps.89:19-37 and see the wording; and David's views of it, as confirmed to him as the type of Christ, II Sam.7, and then pass to Isa.59:21, and to the new covenant - Jer.31:31-34, and see if in any instance God appears in relation to those covenants in any other light than as the sovereign God commanding and promising in His own absolute independency? And then look through the Scriptures and see if you can find a single promise made to Christ as the Head or to His people in Him, depending on an *if* or contingency. If you cannot satisfy yourself hear Paul's testimony: "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." II Cor.1:20. I said above, this covenant was made with the elect in Christ their Head; thus all the other covenants mentioned in the Scriptures were made with certain persons as heads and their seed in them; the head being subject to the provisions of the covenant in common with the posterity. So in this in an infinitely fuller extent; He being their Head, their Life, their all, every provision centers in Him, whilst its blessings terminate in His seed. Thus the purpose and grace which secures their salvation, are given in Him, II Tim.1:9; all the promises of God are in Him, II Cor.1:20; and indeed He is the covenant; was *given for a covenant of the people*, Isa.42:6 and 49:8. And notice in all this, that Christ instead of being represented as stipulating and coming forward as a contracting party, is represented as the servant, God directing and promising that He shall do it and succeed. So Christ Himself represents the matter. He says not, that I *came down from heaven to fulfill my part of the contract*; but that, "I came down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of Him that sent me," &c. John 6:38-39. Thus, in accordance with the above, when the sword of justice was commanded to awake, it was to awake against Him who was the Lord's *Shepherd*, against the *Man* that was His *fellow*. Zech 13:7. Thus, it was not by contract, but as the Lord's appointed *Shepherd* that He was accountable for the safety of the sheep. See also John 10:11-16. It was not to the God that was *fellow to the Lord of hosts*, but to the *Man* that was His fellow. It has been said that *fellow* means an *equal*. Not so, its proper meaning is an associate, and it here particularly designates, that *Man* who is the one Mediator, and who is associated in personal union with the Godhead. I think if the Scriptures are carefully examined on this head by anyone disposed to receive Scriptural truth, he will be convinced that the covenant securing salvation as sovereignly free and absolute as the purpose and grace thereby revealed; that God appears as God commanding it; and that Christ and His people are one in all its provisions.

To the inquirer then, in conclusion, I would say trouble not yourself about *conditions of salvation*. If you have been taught by the law to know that you are altogether sinful in yourself and justly condemned, be assured that God has provided in Christ Jesus a full and free salvation for you as thus helpless.