

THE ALIEN SINNER

Alien Sinners

By Allen Dvorak

I grew up hearing sermons in which “God’s Two Laws of Pardon” were described. To obtain forgiveness, one who was an “alien sinner” had to meet certain conditions.

The Christian who sinned had to meet different conditions in order to be forgiven. The reason for the two separate laws of pardon was not partiality on the part of God, but the fact that the relationships to God of the Christian and the “alien sinner” are different.

To the younger generation among us, an “alien” is one of those bizarre-looking creatures on the science fiction channel of the television. Those fictional creatures are not aliens, however, because of their appearance; they are aliens because they are from another planet or solar system. They are not “citizens” of our planet.

I myself was a temporary alien once. No, I didn’t have a guest appearance on the Star Trek series! My family and I lived in Brazil for a couple of years and, since we were not Brazilian citizens, we were “aliens” from the viewpoint of the Brazilian government.

According to Webster, that's exactly what an alien is — “a foreign-born resident who has not been naturalized and is still a subject or citizen of a foreign country.”

Paul used this kind of terminology to describe the condition of Gentiles in the past. They were “without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12).

Gentiles in Old Testament times were “aliens” in the sense that they were not part of God's special people, the nation of Israel. They had no citizenship in the nation with whom God had made covenants.

All men sin (Romans 3:23). **The alien sinner, however, lives in sin, but the Christian has become dead to sin** (Romans 6:1-12). The Christian still sins occasionally, although sin no longer reigns over him (1 John 1:8;3:9).

Despite the fact that both alien and Christian sin, there is a world of difference between them. The citizen enjoys certain privileges that the alien does not. The Christian lives in a filial relationship with his heavenly Father. As a result of his walk of life, he has fellowship with God and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses him from all sin as he meets the conditions of repentance and confession (see 1 John 1:7). He lives with constant access to divine grace.

Christians are described collectively as a holy nation, a kingdom of priests (1 Peter 2:9). The “alien sinner” is not a citizen of this holy nation. He has “alienated” himself from God through his sin and has no fellowship with God (James 4:4; 1 John 1:6-7). The law of pardon for the alien sinner is designed to forgive his sins and to thus bring him into a relationship of fellowship with God. Having been born again in the waters of baptism, he becomes a citizen of the spiritual kingdom of Christ (Philippians 3:20).