

# THE CHRISTIAN, THE LAW, AND LEGALISM

This paper was originally published in December 1997. It has been modified in several ways for this internet version of the paper (June 2006). For one thing, the original paper was done using a Smith-Corona word processor that didn't permit me to use italics, different size fonts, etc., and I'm adding some of these things as I convert the document to a Word document (using a scanner) that can be uploaded to the internet. Also, some of the quotations (or parts of the quotations) that were included in the original paper are not included in this internet version. And I am making some improvements to this paper in November 2011.

I frequently make comments in the middle of quotations using brackets [ ] or [ ] to make the brackets more obvious.

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1. INTRODUCTION. A few months ago I was asked a question regarding what is legalism for Christians, and regarding the Christian's relationship to the law of God. I gave a brief answer but later decided it would be beneficial to give a more complete answer to this question. As I started preparing the answer, it became obvious that it would require a paper to adequately cover this topic. There's much confusion in the Body of Christ on this topic, and there's much inadequate and out-of-balance thinking (I'm speaking of missing the balance regarding what the Scriptures teach).

The thing that motivated me the most to write this paper was the fact that this topic is so relevant to the all-important topic of Christians living in righteousness and holiness, with the victory over sin. Much of this paper is directly applicable to that topic and will help the reader better understand that topic. We desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches regarding repentance, redemption, righteousness, holiness, faith, law, works, legalism, salvation, etc. in the Body of Christ. For one thing, Christians can unite around the balanced truth, and we should be united according to the Bible (cf. John 17:20-23; Eph. 4:3-6).

The Table of Contents will enable the reader to see where we're going. In sections 2-7 I demonstrate from the Scriptures (mostly the New Testament) that Christians are enabled (by God's grace/Spirit), and required, to keep the moral law of God (including the moral law found in the Old Testament, but not the ceremonial law of the old covenant), to obey God, to be righteous and holy, and to do the necessary works (the works of righteousness). (It's important to see that we need God's law to know what it means for Christians to be righteous and holy, to walk in love, etc. It's also important for us to have a proper perspective regarding God's moral law: It's not that we *must* obey God and keep His commandments [though we must], but that we have the great privilege of obeying God, of keeping His commandments, and of coming into divine order, into peace with God, and [before long] into eternal glory.) In section 8 we'll consider the verses where the apostle Paul said Christians aren't under the Mosaic Law. We're aiming for the balanced truth of what Paul said. In what senses is it true that Christians aren't under the Mosaic Law, and in what context did Paul make these assertions? In section 9 we'll discuss what legalism means for Christians. The first quotations in the Appendix help explain the different approaches to the moral law of the Bible (including the Mosaic Law) by Martin Luther and the Lutherans and by Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin (key leaders of the Reformed tradition) and the Reformed (often called Calvinistic) tradition. Other quotations from

three books by John MacArthur help explain dispensational antinomianism and no-lordship salvation, and they point out some key problems we must face, and deal with, in the church of our day.

There's quite a bit of legalism in the Body of Christ, and we all have the potential to be in legalism to one degree or another. It can be a serious problem. There are, however, many other problems equal to, or greater than, legalism in the Body of Christ: There's far-too-much sin and worldliness (actually any sin is too-much sin). There's far-too-little recognition of sin as sin. There's far-too-much viewing Christianity in a man-centered way (instead of a proper God-centered way), putting most of the emphasis on our self-esteem, our desires, our opinions, our rights, and our needs (instead of putting the emphasis on our obligation to learn God's will and to make it top priority to do His will by this grace, for His glory, and for our eternal good). There's far-too-little fear of God and repentance. There's far-too-much emphasis on forgiveness and right-standing with God (though these things are an important part of the truth of the gospel), while there's far-too-little understanding of the fact that the Bible teaches that Christians are enabled, and required, to live/walk in righteousness and holiness by grace/the Spirit through faith, based on the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our faith and our walk/life in Christ cannot rise above our understanding of what the Bible teaches. It's of crucial significance for Christians to rightly divide God's Word, and especially regarding the basics of the gospel. It's necessary for us to know and understand, and for us to believe (and not doubt), that the Bible teaches that Christians are enabled, and required, to walk in righteousness and holiness with the victory over sin—these things aren't optional; they are mandatory for God's people, according to the Scriptures. This is good news! The more we understand and teach the balanced truth of God's Word, the more we'll see a healthy, Biblical fear of God and repentance, and the more we'll see Christians with faith that yields righteousness and holiness, to the glory of God. We must always keep in mind that the righteousness Christians have comes from God; it's His righteousness imputed and IMPARTED to us through Christ Jesus at a very high cost to Himself. It isn't that we, in our strength, or for our glory, keep God's commandments; however, we must, by God's grace, keep His commandments. A primary goal for this paper is to help bring forth transformation (where it's needed), not condemnation. For us to be transformed and live in the will of God and for the glory of God is what Christianity is all about. God hates sin, for one thing.

Here I want to say a little about what isn't legalism, though it is often wrongly called legalism by some Christians. The charge of legalism often comes from those denying that Christians are required to keep God's law/commandments, or from those who are putting all the emphasis on forgiveness and right-standing. It's not legalism for Christians to make living in righteousness and holiness a top-priority item; this is something that Christians are called, enabled, and required to do (but many don't know it). It's not legalism for Christians to make it a top-priority item to find out what the Bible teaches, very much including the moral law/commandments, to learn what God provides for, and requires of, His people; all Christians are called to do this.

Christians are quite dependent on the Old Testament, including the moral law found in the Old Testament. We need all of the help/grace God has made available to us. The New Testament is built on the foundation of the Old Testament, and much of it we couldn't adequately understand without a knowledge of the Old Testament. Many things we need to know, including quite a bit of God's moral law, are not repeated in the New Testament; there was no need to repeat it because it was understood that the Old Testament is part of the Christian's Bible. It's clear that the ceremonial law (which includes, for example, circumcision, food laws, and the sacrificial offerings), which isn't part of God's moral law, has been set aside and isn't applicable for Christians (cf., e.g., Mark 7:14-23, espec. 7:19; Acts 15:1-29; Rom. 14:5, 6, 14; Gal. 2:3-5, 11-21; 4:9, 10; 5:2-4; Col. 2:16, 17; 1 Tim. 4:3-5; Heb. 6:1; 10:1-18; and 13:9-16).

There's also widespread agreement that the Christian church isn't under the civil law of the Old Testament. The civil law includes the penalties that were to be enforced by those governing in Israel. The Old Testament frequently spelled out the particular penalty to be enforced for breaking specific commandments—often the penalty was death. The New Testament shows that these penalties typically aren't applicable for the new-covenant church. For one thing, the church consists of believers called out from the nations but still living in the nations, whereas Israel was set up as a theocracy, with God somewhat directly ruling the nation.

On occasion there can be a difference of opinion as to whether a particular Old Testament commandment is in the category of moral law and binding for Christians, or not. (Again, let me say that it's not bad news and bondage if something is binding upon Christians in accordance with God's will; God's commandments, rightly responded to, bring guidance, order, and blessing.) Let's briefly consider tithing, which some consider not binding for Christians. Tithing was clearly commanded in the Old Testament, and Jesus spoke of tithing (Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42); however, it could be argued that Christians aren't commanded to tithe. I don't know that we must dogmatically say that Christians are commanded to tithe; however, with the teaching of the Old Testament, I can't imagine Christians not tithing, even if we aren't commanded to tithe—and I don't have the knowledge or the authority to say we aren't commanded to tithe.

We, in common with the old-covenant saints, are dependent on God for all things (only we have a lot more to be thankful for), and if we really trust Him as our God, we certainly won't think of not trusting Him and showing gratitude to Him in the area of tithing. In old-covenant days the tithe was primarily used to support those in the ministry (priests and Levites), and today the ministry and the work of God still needs to be supported (cf., e.g., Matt. 10:10; 1 Cor. 9:4-14; 2 Cor. 11:7-9; Phil. 4:10-19; and 1 Tim. 5:17, 18). Even if it's not strictly a commandment for Christians to tithe, I'm quite sure that Christians can get into trouble with God by not tithing, and all-the-more so if He has been dealing with a Christian in this area.

The gospel of the new covenant, which includes the moral law/commandments that we are required to keep, wasn't given to bring bondage—it brings the only real freedom. We are set free from bondage to the evil task-masters of sin, Satan, and spiritual death. See, for example, what Jesus said in John 8:31-36, what the apostle Paul said in Rom. 6:14-20, and note that James spoke of the word of the new covenant (very much including the need for Christians to fulfill God's moral law/commandments) as the "perfect law, the law of liberty [the law that gives freedom]" in James 1:25. The law Christians are required to keep

isn't burdensome (see Matt. 11:28-30; 1 John 5:3 ["His commandments are not burdensome"]). A lot depends on how we look at God's law: It's a blessing (not a curse) for God to give us direction through His commandments. This is especially true for new-covenant believers, but it was also true (in some ways) for old-covenant believers (cf., e.g., Psalms 19:7-14; 119).

We aren't just automatically transformed to a life of righteousness and holiness because we have received the new birth. We must know that God enables, and requires, us to be righteous and holy through the gospel and by the Holy Spirit who dwells in every true Christian (Rom. 8:9). We must submit to this all-important aspect of gospel truth in faith, and we must walk in/after the Holy Spirit on a continuous basis by faith. The Spirit of God always guides us to a walk of righteousness and holiness, and away from everything that is sinful. But some Christians think the Holy Spirit is going to guide them to a life of righteousness apart from knowing and understanding what the Bible (very much including the moral law/commandments) teaches about righteousness and holiness. We can't walk in God's will without knowing His will (cf., e.g., Col. 1:9, 10). The Holy Spirit doesn't just teach us about God's definition of righteousness and holiness and guide us into a walk of righteousness and holiness apart from the Bible. (In a situation where it wasn't possible for a person to learn what the Bible teaches, God might teach them, and guide them, to a much greater extent directly by the Spirit.)

Many Christians wrongly think they don't need God's law—all they need to do, they think, is to walk in love (being enabled by the Holy Spirit). It's true that Jesus taught that the whole law depends on the two great commandments to love God with all your heart and to love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:34-40), but we need God's Word, very much including His commandments, to know what He means by His command to walk in love (love for God and love for the neighbor). Loving God includes doing things His way; however, some people are experts in justifying sin while claiming to walk in love—this can be done a thousand different ways.

One of the main reasons a paper like this is needed is because of the viewpoints around the Body of Christ that set aside or at least substantially minimize the importance of God's law for Christians. I'm speaking of God's moral law found in the Old Testament and the New Testament, but it's the Old Testament moral law that is most often set aside.

The extreme view, which is called antinomianism (meaning "against law"), isn't very common around the Body of Christ (at least not when the term is understood to include a disdain for living in righteousness; we'll say quite a bit on the meaning of antinomianism as we continue), but there are many who teach that Christians aren't required to keep God's law, including some dispensationalists. (Quotations in the Appendix will help the reader understand "dispensational antinomianism"; see under that heading. Other quotations in the Appendix help explain the Lutheran viewpoint, going back to Martin Luther, toward the law of God. Lutherans, of course, aren't all the same; there is much diversity among them in our day, as there is among Calvinists, Methodists, etc.)

*Webster's New World Dictionary* defines the antinomian as "a believer in the Christian doctrine that faith alone, not obedience to the moral law, is necessary for salvation." I'll include several excerpts from L. Berkhof, a Calvinistic scholar, that will help us understand antinomianism (*Systematic Theology*, Eerdmans, 1941]):

“Antinomians...desiring to honour the unlimited pardoning grace of God, maintain that sins of believers are not accounted as such to the new man but only to the old, and that it is quite unnecessary for them to pray for the forgiveness of sins” (pages 514, 515). “...the imputation of His [Christ’s] righteousness to us makes us personally righteous, so that God can see no sin in believers at all” (page 518). I have heard it said several times that God doesn’t even see it when Christians sin because He looks at us through the blood of Jesus. “...good works necessarily follow from the union of believers with Christ. ‘He that abideth in me and I in him, the same beareth much fruit,’ John 15:5. ... The necessity of good works must be maintained over against the Antinomians, who claim that, since Christ not only bore the penalty of sin, but also met the positive demands of the law, the believer is free from the obligation to observe it, an error that is still with us today in some of the forms of dispensationalism. ... The law as the standard of our moral life is a transcript of the holiness of God, and is therefore of permanent validity also for the believer, though his attitude to the law has undergone a radical change. He has received the Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of obedience, so that, without any constraint, he willingly obeys the law” (page 543). “Jesus taught the permanent validity of the law, Matt. 5:17-19. Paul says that God provided for it that the requirements of the law should be fulfilled in our lives, Rom. 8:4, and holds his readers responsible for keeping the law, Rom. 13:9. James assures his readers that he who transgresses a single commandment of the law (and he mentions some of these), is a transgressor of the law, James 2:8-11. And John defines sin as ‘lawlessness,’ and says that this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, 1 John 3:4; 5:3” (page 613). I recommend reading the section in the Appendix titled “Dispensational Antinomianism” next.

This paper was designed first of all to be used in a class setting where I am able to supplement what is written here. Some of the verses cited are not typed out in this paper; the reader will have to read these verses from their Bibles. I recommend the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB), and all the Bible quotations in this paper are from this translation (1977 edition) unless otherwise noted. Now I use the 1995 edition. (In November, 2011 I’m adding the quotations of some of the verses that I didn’t include in the original paper, taken from the NASB, 1995 edition.) Typically I don’t discuss in this paper verses that have already been discussed in the books or papers I have written, but I refer the reader to those discussions. I have included some lengthy quotations from other writers in this paper because I realize that it would be quite difficult for those reading this paper to obtain copies of those books. May God be glorified, His will be accomplished, and His people be edified through this paper!

Several Quotations from the Book *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian: Five Views*. I’ll quote from three of the five authors of this book, which was edited by W. G. Strickland (Zondervan, 1993). All three authors are professors at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. (In this internet version of my paper, I’ll just include a small sampling of the quotations. I didn’t receive permission to quote extensively from this book beyond the original paper.)

First I’ll quote from Willem A. VanGemen: “... Regrettably, while the academic

discussion of the law has significantly advanced, the observance of the law has eroded. Growing individualism and narcissism [*Webster's New World Dictionary* defines narcissism as "self-love; excessive interest in one's own appearance, comfort, importance, abilities, etc."], the closing of the American mind, and ignorance of the Bible have resulted in an ethical crisis, affecting even evangelical Christianity. ..." (page 14).

"Obedience to the law always begins with a heart that fears the Lord: 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil' (Prov. 3:5-7). The fear of the Lord comes to expression in acts of obedience.... Obedience to the moral law brings peace (Prov. 3:17; 12:20) and order with God and man..." (page 34).

"...God's will demands a response of obedience. It is the Father's will that his children conform to his character and learn 'obedience.' Of course, obedience must come from a believing heart. Nevertheless, I want to stress the word 'obedience,' because in our modern intoxication with liberty, many evangelicals have lost the art of simply trusting God by being obedient to specific commands. ..." (page 202).

Now I'll quote from Walter C. Kaiser: "The current evangelical generation has been raised almost devoid of any teaching on the place and use of the law in the life of the believer. This has resulted in a full (or perhaps semi-) antinomian approach to life. Is it any wonder that the unbelieving society around us is so lawless, if those who should have been light and salt to that same society were themselves not always sure what it was that they should be doing?"

The time for a powerful proclamation of the proper uses of the law is now long overdue. [Even more overdue is the need for the proclamation that Christians are enabled, and required, to walk in righteousness and holiness with the victory over sin by grace/the Holy Spirit through faith.] Meanwhile, the moral character of the living God continues to be what it has ever been, even before it was codified and given to Moses by revelation. ..." (page 75).

And, lastly, I'll quote from Douglas J. Moo: "...the last two decades...have witnessed a remarkable resurgence of interest in the theology of the Mosaic law. A deluge of books and articles has examined virtually every bit of evidence and from almost every conceivable perspective. Yet nothing even approaching a consensus has emerged. Several factors account for the radically different conclusions reached by biblical scholars and theologians, the most important of which is the diverse theological and hermeneutical [dealing with the interpretation of the Bible] frameworks that are used to order and arrange the various texts [of the Bible]. Theological and confessional allegiances—Lutheran, Reformed, dispensational, etc. - thus dictate which texts are given precedence and used to interpret others" (pages 319, 320).

This may sound trite, but Christians (especially ministers) need to check themselves to make sure their primary allegiance is to God and His truth. It's all too easy to get locked into a system that doesn't represent the fully balanced truth. There's no doubt in my mind that most Christians have a need to make major adjustments in what they believe. It's

amazing to me that each group is so sure that their system is close to perfect, if not perfect, while being sure that everybody else is in substantial error. There must be a lot of fleshly pride at work here, not to mention the devil; it ought not be; it need not be; it's a serious problem!

2. CHRISTIANS ARE ENABLED, AND REQUIRED, **TO KEEP THE LAW OF GOD, INCLUDING THE LAW CONTAINED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, EXCLUDING THE CEREMONIAL LAW** (things like circumcision, the dietary laws, and the sacrificial offerings).

Matthew 5:17-48. **(17) Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. (18) For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.** [Jesus fulfills the Law and the Prophets in several significant senses. For one thing, by the time He has finished His work, everything prophesied in the Word of God (including the Old Testament) will have come to pass. Furthermore, He lived a sinless life, and He enables, and requires, His people to walk/live in righteousness and holiness, thereby fulfilling the moral requirements of the Law. Although it's not specified in this passage (for one thing, they were still in a time of transition, before the new covenant had been fully revealed and implemented), these words must be qualified by the subsequent, fuller revelation that the new covenant (which was established on the atoning death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ) sets aside the old covenant, which was established on the Mosaic Law. In a very real sense, Christians aren't under the Mosaic Law (we'll discuss this later), but this doesn't contradict Jesus' words here in that the setting aside of the Law to make way for the new covenant is what enables Christians to fully enter into the righteousness and holiness required by the Law. The following verses of this chapter (Matt. 5:19-48) put all the emphasis on the need for righteousness and holiness in God's people, and rather than setting aside the moral obligations specified in the Old Testament, Jesus demands (He also supplies the enablement) a higher level of righteousness and holiness.] **(19) Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (20) For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.** [It would certainly be worthwhile to study the following verses in detail, but for our present purposes it will suffice to quote and discuss a few of the following verses. The primary message of Matt. 5:17-48 is that Jesus was not diluting the moral requirements of the Old Testament—He was requiring a higher level of righteousness and holiness.] ... **(27) You have heard that it was said, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY"** [This is one of the ten commandments; see Ex. 20:14; Deut. 5:18.]; **(28) but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.** [The Old Testament certainly doesn't condone lusting (cf., e.g., 2 Sam. 11:2-4; Job 31:1), but Jesus put lusting in the category (an obviously very serious category) of adultery. (All sin is a serious matter to the Lord Jesus.) It is important to see that Jesus didn't say that if a man had a lustful thought, which he resisted, he had committed this sin (or any sin); He was speaking of a man who

looks on a woman *for the purpose of lusting* for her. That's very different from a man having a lustful thought and turning his head or closing his eyes so that he will not look at a woman with lust.] **(29) And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell** [Gehenna]. [This verse (and the next verse) certainly emphasizes the need for God's people to make it top priority to repent and live/walk in righteousness and holiness, by God's saving grace. Teachings/exhortations like Matt. 5:17-48 (cf., e.g., Luke 13:1-5) are designed to wake people up to see their need to repent and submit to the Savior from sin. There's no idea here of literally removing your right eye—that wouldn't begin to solve the sin problem that centers in the heart of man (cf., e.g., Mark 7:20-23), but these words call for a radical dealing with sin—it's serious business!] ... **(45) ...for He** [God the Father] **causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.** [I want to comment on these words, even though it's not relevant to our present topic, because they are so often misused in the Body of Christ (about half the time, based on my experience). It's a substantial blessing for God to send the sun and rain, not a curse. For one thing, without the sun and rain, there would be no harvest, and many are dependent on the rain for water to drink.] ... **(48) Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.** [These words certainly constitute a call to walk in righteousness and holiness with the victory over all sin. Cf., e.g. 1 Pet. 1:14-16; 1 John 2:29; 3:9, 10.]

Matthew 7:23; 13:41-43; and 19:17b. **“And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’ ... (41) The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, (42) and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (43) Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear. ... (19:17b) ...if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.”** These verses confirm that Christians cannot be characterized by lawlessness and expect to enter God's eternal kingdom.

Matthew 22:36-40 (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:25-28) with Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:14. The first passage shows that the entire Old Testament depends on the two basic commandments of loving God with our entire being and loving our neighbor as ourself. Romans 13:8-10 and Gal. 5:14 show that Christians are required to walk in love toward their neighbor; this is, Paul says, “the fulfillment of the law [Law].” Paul failed to mention in these verses that first and foremost we must love God with our entire being; he was dealing here with the need to love our neighbor, but he would be quick to agree that we don't fulfill the Law without loving God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength (cf. Mark 12:30).

Romans 2:1-16. It's necessary to see that the apostle Paul, though writing an epistle to the Christians at Rome, is dealing mostly with the Jews and their need for salvation through Christ Jesus in Rom. 2:1-3:20. See, e.g., Rom. 2:17-29. In Rom. 1:18-32 Paul shows why the Gentiles need salvation through Christ, and in Rom. 2:1-3:20 he shows why the Jews need this same salvation: all men are sinners, and are without excuse. In Rom. 3:9, which is a key summarizing verse, Paul says, “...we have already charged [referring back to Rom.

1:18-3:8] that both Jews and Greeks [Gentiles] are all under sin.” Paul loved the Jews and the Gentiles (cf., e.g., Rom. 9:1-5; 1 Cor. 9:19-22); he wasn’t attacking them, but it was necessary for him to help them see that they needed Christ. The gospel (good news) doesn’t sound like good news until we see our need for salvation, then it’s good news indeed. According to the gospel Paul preached, Christ is God’s only answer to the sin problem.

**Therefore you are without excuse** [Paul begins to speak to the Jews here. For one thing, there is a contrast with what Paul said regarding the Gentiles in Rom. 1:32: The Gentiles not only sin, “but also give hearty approval to those who practice [sin].” The Jews, by contrast, tended to judge/condemn the Gentiles for their sins (cf. Rom. 2:17-20). The trouble was, it is hypocrisy to judge others for sinning when you are sinning yourself, and as Paul points out in this verse, there was much sin among the Jews (cf. Rom. 2:22-27). They too needed the Savior from sin. The Jews may not have been sinning in some of the ways the Gentiles were, or to the same extent, but God required more of them because of the light and blessings He had given them. The Jews tended to minimize their sin; didn’t they descend from Abraham; didn’t they have the Bible (Old Testament); didn’t they have the temple, the sacrifices, the Day of Atonement, circumcision, etc? Christians very often make the same mistake, and it can be a catastrophic mistake.], **every man of you who passes judgment, for in that you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.** [This verse has sometimes been wrongly applied to Christians, which is a serious misunderstanding of Paul. His gospel, as he presented it in Romans, includes (he even puts a strong emphasis on) victory over sin for Christians (by grace through faith). Paul has already brought this up in Rom. 1:16, 17, which contains the theme for his epistle to the Romans. (I’ll comment on these super-important verses later in this paper.) A primary purpose for Romans chapter 2 was to help the Jews see that they needed new-covenant salvation, so they could begin to walk/live in the righteousness of God with victory over sin; Paul certainly didn’t write this verse to teach Christians that they couldn’t walk in this victory. It’s no wonder we don’t see more faith for victory over sin in the Body of Christ when we so seriously misunderstand the New Testament. It’s true, of course, that to the extent Christians are living in sin, what Paul says here would apply to them too, even though Paul wasn’t addressing that issue here.] **(2) And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. (3) And do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment upon those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? (4) Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?** [The point here in 2:4 is that when God is kind, forbearing, and patient, as He had been with the Jews in those days, giving them much time to repent, God’s people often wrongly assume that there isn’t much need for repentance. Cf. 2 Pet. 3:9. Intense judgment wasn’t far off for Israel. About fifteen years after Paul wrote Romans, Jerusalem, the temple, and much of Israel were destroyed by the Romans, and judgment day is yet to come for all mankind.] **(5) But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God** [The next verse helps explain the righteous judgment of God. There will be no partiality in God’s judgment for Jew, Gentile, or Christian (see Rom. 2:11).], **(6) who WILL RENDER TO EVERY**

**MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS [WORKS]** [Cf. Psalm 62:12; Prov. 24:12; Matt. 16:27; John 5:28, 29; Rom. 14:11, 12; 1 Cor. 3:13-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; 11:15; Gal. 6:7-9; Eph. 5:6, 7; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 20:12, 13; and 22:12. A major point Paul makes in this chapter is that it won't be good enough to depend on your Jewishness to suffice to open the doors of heaven; the same thing is true for Christians, but I find a lot of Christians confused in this area. It is true, of course, that true Christians are forgiven when they ask for forgiveness (and forgiven sins will not be held against us on judgment day), but it is also true that our Christian life (our works) must demonstrate the reality of our salvation. (True Christian faith will necessarily bring forth good works [a righteous life] by God's grace/Spirit; we'll discuss the need for works in a later section of this paper.): **(7) to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality** [Paul is speaking of Christians here; all Christians are enabled, and required, to live like this. Paul (who received his gospel by revelation) didn't believe there were any people on the earth so righteous that they could bypass salvation through Christ Jesus; he was sent to preach the gospel to all men. Paul is dealing here with the people of his generation to whom the gospel was being proclaimed.], **eternal life** [When judgment day comes, they will be ready, and they will inherit eternal life; God will render eternal life to them (cf. Rom. 2:6). See Rom. 6:22, 23. All those interested in doing good and inheriting eternal life will be interested in the gospel, which gives God's only answer to the sin problem.]; **(8) but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth** [the truth of the gospel (cf. Rom. 10:16 [KJV]), the truth that includes the righteousness and holiness of God (cf. Eph. 4:24)], **but obey unrighteousness** [God "will render to [them]"], **wrath and indignation** [instead of eternal life]. **(9) There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, (10) but glory and honor and peace to every man who does good** [As in Rom. 2:7, Paul is speaking of true Christians here.], **to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (11) For there is no partiality with God.** [Cf., e.g., Acts 10:34; Col. 3:25; and 1 Pet. 1:17. This verse proclaims essentially the same truth as Rom. 2:6. These words apply to all people, including Christians.] **(12) For all who have sinned without the Law** [speaking of non-Christian Gentiles] **will also perish without the Law; and all who have sinned under the Law** [speaking of the Jews who had not submitted to the gospel in faith] **will be judged [condemned] by the Law; (13) for not the hearers of the Law are just** [There is no verb in the Greek here in 2:13; it must be supplied in the English translation; the Greek just has the adjective *dikaio*s translated "just," which is normally translated "righteous." I would translate "will be righteous." Paul seems to be looking forward to judgment day (cf. Rom. 2:5-12, 16), and note that he uses the future tense in the verb at the end of this verse. This Greek verb (*dikaioo*) is closely related to the Greek adjective *dikaio*s; it was derived from the adjective.] **before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified** [that is, they will be found righteous/they will be declared righteous]. [Paul's point here is that it's not good enough for the Jews to be hearers of the Law; if they want to be found righteous on judgment day, they must be righteous, they must be doers of the Law; therefore, as far as Paul was concerned, the Jews needed to receive Christ so they could become righteous/doers of the Law. It really isn't Paul's point here, but it must be observed that Paul would be engaged in great hypocrisy if he was telling the Jews that they must actually be righteous/doers of the Law unless the same truth also applies to Christians—it does apply (but many Christians don't know it).

This is good news! We have been set free from slavery to sin! In Rom. 2:26, 27 and 8:4 (three ultra-important verses that are discussed next in this section), Paul says that Christians keep the Law/the requirement(s) of the Law. As this entire paper shows, Paul (along with the rest of the Bible) frequently shows that Christians are enabled, and required, to walk/live in righteousness and holiness. On the need to be doers of God's Word, cf., e.g., Matt. 7:24-27; James 1:21-25.] **(14) For when the Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, (15) in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing of else defending them** [It's important to see that Paul is speaking of non-Christian Gentiles here. He is making two important points. For one thing, he shows that God has a basis, a standard, by which to judge the Gentiles on judgment day. They have a law in their heart, their conscience, given by God. It's also true that they have many basic truths regarding right and wrong in their cultures; some of these basic truths, based on God's earlier revelations, have been passed down through the generations. Paul doesn't say that the Gentiles had the same light that the Jews did (with their Law, etc.), but he does say that they have enough light to be judged by God.

It's important that we don't confuse the "work of the Law written in their hearts [the hearts of non-Christian Gentiles]" with the glorious prophecy of Jer. 31:31-34, where God prophesied that there would be a new covenant and that a major feature of this covenant was that He would write His Law on the hearts of His people. Jeremiah's prophecy speaks of God's transforming His people in their hearts (through new-covenant salvation) that they might begin to fully do His will (His Law) from their hearts. (We'll further discuss this prophecy of Jeremiah later in this section.)

The work of the Law written in the hearts of non-Christian Gentiles speaks only of their conscience; it certainly doesn't speak of their being transformed or of their fully keeping God's Law. Note that Rom. 2:15 shows that often their conscience tells them they have sinned. I'm quite confident that Paul didn't believe there were any non-Christian Gentiles so fully living in the will of God that they didn't need to repent and submit to the Savior from sin. Remember that the primary thing Paul is doing in this part of Romans is showing that all men, all Jews and all Gentiles, are sinners and therefore need new-covenant salvation (cf. Rom. 3:9).

A second point Paul makes here in verses 14, 15 is that the Jews shouldn't overestimate the significance of their having the Law. It was a blessing all right, but the Gentiles have a law too. The real need, as Paul shows in verse 13, is to become a doer of God's law.], **(16) on the day [the day of judgment] when, according to my gospel [which Paul received from Jesus Christ], God will judge the secrets of men [including their motives, and the sins they know about in their hearts] through Christ Jesus** [cf., e.g., Matt. 16:27; John 5:22, 27; and 2 Cor. 5:10].

Romans 2:26-29. If therefore the uncircumcised man [Paul is speaking of a Gentile *Christian*. It's clear, I believe, that Paul is speaking of a Christian here. Throughout this paper I demonstrate that the New Testament shows that Christians, and only Christians, are enabled to keep the Law of God. As I showed above under Rom. 2:1-16, a primary purpose for Paul's writing Rom. 2:1-3:20 was to demonstrate that, though the Jews had the Law, they weren't keeping the Law (they weren't doers of the Law), and therefore they too (with

the Gentiles) needed Christ. What he says here in Rom. 2:26, 27 of a Gentile Christian's keeping the Law/the requirements of the Law would also be true of a Christian from a Jewish background, but Paul makes his point (that Jews need Christ too) more forcefully by contrasting the *circumcised* non-Christian Jew with an *uncircumcised* Gentile Christian.] **keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?** [It's clear that Paul is excluding the keeping of *ceremonial* parts of the Law, which include circumcision. On judgment day this Gentile Christian (being physically uncircumcised), who has been so transformed by the grace of God in Christ that he lives in righteousness and holiness (he "keeps the requirements of the Law") "will be regarded as circumcision" in the sense that he will be regarded as righteous since all that was sinful had been cut away from his heart and life by the new-covenant circumcision wrought by the Spirit spoken of in Rom. 2:29. Romans 8:4 (discussed next) is a very important cross-reference; it speaks of "the requirement (using the same Greek noun as Rom. 2:26) of the Law" being fulfilled by Christians as they walk after the Spirit (which Christians are required to do).] **(27) And will not he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law** [This is even richer in the Greek in that there is no "if" here. I would translate **keeping the Law**. The NIV doesn't have an "if" here: "The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker."], **will he not judge** [I would translate "condemn," with the NIV. The idea is that this Gentile Christian who has become a doer of the Law will condemn, by contrast, the Jew who wasn't a doer of the Law. (Cf. Matt. 12:41, 42.) Paul's purpose here is not to ridicule the Jew (all men are sinners apart from the grace of God in Christ), but to help him see his need for Christ. (It's not love to flatter someone with lies; true love shares the truth.) I must point out that many Christians are far from being doers of the Law, but not because the grace of God is insufficient. Many Christians don't believe it's possible for them to really be righteous and live in the will of God; however, the apostle Paul (and the other writers of the New Testament) did.] **you who though having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law? (28) For** [This "For" at the beginning of verse 28 ties verses 28, 29 to verses 26, 27. Here in verses 28, 29 Paul shows, as he so often does, that the only way for men to become fully righteous and holy is through the new covenant in the blood of Christ, since it is only the new covenant that brings the new birth and transformation to righteousness by the Holy Spirit.] **he is not a [real] Jew who is one outwardly** [that is, without the new-covenant inward ("of the heart") work of the Spirit]; **neither is [real] circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. (29) But he is a [real] Jew who is one inwardly; and [real] circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter** ["the letter" of the Mosaic Law. The old covenant, which was established on the basis of the Mosaic Law, was good, and it was from God; however, it could not accomplish the life-giving, sanctifying work of the Spirit reserved for the new covenant. See, e.g., Rom. 6:14; 7:1-8:14 (these verses are discussed in my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*); 2 Cor. 3:6-18; and Gal. 3:1-29 (these verses are discussed in my *A Paper On Faith*, especially see Gal. 3:21.); **and his praise is not from men, but from God.** [There's always the danger of men (very much including Christians) seeking the praise of other men, especially their religious peers, more than they seek the only really important praise (using praise in the sense of acceptance/approval), the praise of God. Cf. John 5:44; 12:43; 1 Cor. 4:5; and 2 Cor. 10:18. To fully appreciate what Paul says in Rom. 2:26-29, we must know the

meaning of the word *Jew*, which derives from *Judah*, and means “praise.”]

Romans 8:4. I don’t suppose there is any more important verse in the Bible to demonstrate the bottom line of new-covenant salvation: **that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us** [In other words, that we Christians might live/walk in righteousness and holiness, doing the will of God from the heart. As this verse continues, it shows how this happens:] **who do not walk according to the flesh** [which is all that is possible until you are born again through Christ Jesus], **but according to the Spirit**. As born-again Christians, we are enabled, and required, to walk after the Spirit by faith. (See, e.g., Gal. 5:16-25, which is discussed in *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.) Romans 8:4 is all the more enlightening, glorious, and powerful when it is studied in context with all of Rom. 8:1-17. (See pages 116-123 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* for a discussion of these verses.) Romans 8:4 is more glorious yet when studied in context with all of Rom. 1:1-8:17. (Much of this extended passage is discussed in *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*, and this teaching is supplemented in my subsequent writings, including this present paper, which discusses most of Romans chapter 2 in some detail.)

1 Corinthians 9:20, 21; Galatians 6:2. **And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews** [that is, that he might win them to Christ]; **to those who are under the Law, as under the Law** [When Paul was with the Jews, he did everything he reasonably could to show them respect and keep from unnecessarily offending them.], **though not being myself under the Law** [See section 8 of this paper.], **that I might win those who are under the Law; (21) to those who are without law, as without law** [When Paul was with the Gentiles, he didn’t conform to the ceremonial (non-moral) law of the Jews, things that would have tended to separate him from the Gentiles and unnecessarily offended them.], **though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ** [These words are important to our study. The apostle doesn’t define here what he means by being under the law of Christ, but I assume it includes everything required for Christians to live in the will of God (cf., e.g., Rom. 12:1, 2). This includes living in line with the moral law of the Old Testament and the commandments given by Christ (including those given through His apostles in the New Testament). As slaves of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 7:22; Eph. 6:6), we are enabled (by God’s saving grace), and required, to be faithful to Him in all things. We’re not Law oriented—we’re Christ/grace oriented—but we are required to keep His moral law. In the light of Matt. 22:36-40 with Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14 (discussed above), the “law of Christ” undoubtedly includes an emphasis on walking in love.], **that I might win those who are without law**. Galatians 6:2 says, **Bear one another’s burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ**. In Gal. 6:2 fulfilling the law of Christ could be understood in the somewhat limited sense of the requirement to walk in love (cf. Gal. 5:13, 14) by the enablement of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:16-18, 22, 25); however, it’s probably better to understand the law of Christ in the somewhat fuller sense just discussed under 1 Cor. 9:21.

Hebrews 8:10; 10:16 with Jeremiah 31:33. In Jer. 31:31-34 Jeremiah prophesied regarding the new covenant. Jeremiah 31:32 helps show why a new covenant was needed: Although God had given Israel the old covenant, established on the Mosaic Law, Israel rather consistently broke that covenant (not that this was a surprise to God; cf., e.g., 1 Pet. 1:19, 20). God didn’t give the old covenant to solve the sin problem (see Gal. 3:21, for

example.) Jeremiah 31:33 shows that a major feature of the new covenant is that God will put His Law within His people (in their hearts). In other words, He will change them down inside (in their hearts), and they will then do His will; they will live in line with His Law; they will live in righteousness and holiness. Ezekiel 11:19, 20 and 36:26, 27 are important cross-references for Jer. 31:33, and they are important references for this study. The last verse, Ezek. 36:27 is doubly relevant in that it also prophesies of the new-covenant, sanctifying work of the Spirit: “And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.” See pages 156-163 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* for a discussion of Heb. 8:6-13 and 10:8-18, passages that build on Jer. 31:31-34.

**James 1:18-2:13. In the exercise of His will He brought us forth** [This speaks of the new birth; the Greek verb used here can be translated “give birth to,” and the same Greek verb is translated that way (by the NASB) in 1:15.] **by the word of truth** [Cf., e.g., 1 Pet. 1:23-25. The “word of truth,” through which God brought us forth by His Spirit (when we submitted to Him and His “word of truth” in faith) clearly includes the gospel message of new-covenant salvation in Christ Jesus. And (because of James 1:12-17 and the teaching of many of the verses that follow to the end of this passage [and much of the rest of the book of James and the rest of the New Testament], with a strong emphasis on the need for Christians to be doers of God’s word/law), the “word of truth” here surely includes God’s moral law (including the moral law contained in the Old Testament), which Christians are enabled, and required, to keep (by grace through faith). Keeping God’s moral law is a big part of what the gospel of new-covenant salvation is all about. As this paper demonstrates throughout, Christians are enabled, and required, to keep God’s moral law, which includes walking in His righteousness, holiness, love, etc.

Born-again Christians do not automatically put off sin and keep God’s moral law, and James does a lot of exhorting Christians with the requirement to walk in line with God’s Word. For one thing, Christians must understand God’s Word (which includes knowing what God has provided for us in the new-covenant and what He requires of us). And Christians do not automatically walk by the Holy Spirit on a continuous basis (which we are enabled, and required, to do [cf., e.g., Gal. 5:16])., **so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures** [The NIV has, “of all he created.” Cf. Rom. 8:18-25.]. **(19) This you know, my beloved brethren. But [or, Now] let everyone be quick to hear** [For one thing, we must be quick to hear God’s word.], **slow to speak and slow to anger; (20) for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.** [These words of 1:19, 20 are quite important, and we need to listen. Also see 3:5-4:2.] **(21) Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness** [The NIV has, “the evil that is so prevalent.”], **in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.** [“The word” here can apparently be equated with the “word of truth” of James 1:18. The “word” here and in verses 22, 23 clearly includes God’s moral law. To receive God’s word implanted is to take His word into your heart (by faith) and to live/walk as the word requires (by grace through faith)—to become/be a doer of the word (1:22, 23, 25). The first half of verse 21 shows that receiving the word implanted includes putting off everything that is sinful from your heart and life (cf., e.g., Rom. 13:12; Eph. 4:22, 25; Col. 3:8; Heb. 12:1; and 1 Pet. 2:1). Much scripture also shows that we must also put on the God’s truth, righteousness, holiness, love, etc. To save your soul includes not

losing your soul to eternal death, the second death of Rev. 20:14, 15 (see James 5:19, 20; 1:15; Matt. 16:24-27; and Heb. 10:35-39; all these verses are discussed in my paper, *Once Saved, Always Saved?*.) **(22) But [And] prove yourselves doers of the word** [God’s word includes His moral law.], **and not merely hearers who delude themselves.** [It’s not acceptable, Biblical Christianity for us to be mere hearers of the word of God. Cf., e.g., Matt. 7:24-27; Luke 11:28; and Rom. 2:13.] **(23) For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror** [The hearer of the word who isn’t a doer is the man who listens to the word without making it top priority to understand the word, to take the word into his heart (to receive the word implanted), and to become/be a doer of the word on a continuous basis (by grace through faith). James considers looking at your face in a mirror a low-priority item; you don’t need to remember and meditate on what you have seen.]; **(24) for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of a person he was.** [The NIV has, “immediately forgets what he looks like.”] **(25) But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty** [We are required to keep, and it is a blessing for us to keep, “the perfect law, the law of liberty.” God’s “perfect law” includes all the moral requirements given in the Old Testament and the New Testament. This is the perfect law in that, through Jesus Christ and new-covenant salvation, we have been delivered from the kingdom of darkness, and we are enabled to walk in the righteousness and holiness of God, which includes walking in His love, by grace through faith. It is “the law OF LIBERTY” in that we have been set us free from bondage to sin and spiritual death (cf. John 8:31-36; Gal. 5:1-25; Rom. 8:1-16). Instead of “liberty” we could translate this Greek noun as “freedom”; the NIV has, “the perfect law that gives freedom.” James 2:12, which also mentions “the law of liberty,” confirms that God’s moral law is included in what James means by these words.], **and abides by it** [In other words, he is a doer of the word.], **not having become a forgetful hearer** [When you make hearing, understanding, and doing God’s Word top priority, you don’t just go away and forget what you have heard.] **but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does. (26) If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue** [Cf. 1:19; 3:2-12.] **but deceives his own heart** [Compare “delude themselves” in 1:22. As James shows in 2:10, 11, Christians are enabled, and required, to walk according to God’s word/law in every area.], **this man’s religion is worthless. (27) This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by** [the sinful things of] **the world** [cf. James 4:4]. ... **(2:6) But you have dishonored the poor man.** [James 2:1-5 show how they dishonored the poor man.] **Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? (7) Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?** [We are called “Christians” though our having become united with the Lord Jesus Christ.] **(8) If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF,” you are doing well.** [James is continuing with the topic of dishonoring the poor man of 2:1-6. The NIV has, “If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing right.” The NIV and many commentators understand the “royal law” to refer to the law (commandment) to love your neighbor as yourself, quoted here from Lev. 19:18. (This commandment is given special prominence in the New Testament [cf. Matt. 19:19; 22:39, 40; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Rom. 13:8-10; and Gal. 5:14]. Fulfilling this commandment along with the even-more-

important first great commandment [Matt. 22:37, 38] pretty well covers fulfilling all God's moral requirements for His people. However, as we discussed in the Introduction, it isn't adequate to say that all we need are the two commandments to love God and to love our neighbor. We also need God's definition of what it means to love God and our neighbor that is provided by other commandments.)

I prefer the view that the "royal law" includes all the moral law that God requires Christians to keep. The royal law can undoubtedly be equated with the "perfect law, the law of liberty" of 1:25 (cf. 2:12).] **(9) But if you show partiality** [See James 2:1-6. The Greek verb translated "show partiality" is closely related to the Greek noun translated "personal favoritism" in 2:1; both Greek words were derived from the same Greek noun. To "show partiality" to the rich (against the poor) violates God's law.], **you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. (10) For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.** [Cf. Gal. 3:10; Deut. 27:26 (Septuagint). To break one of God's commandments is to transgress God's law, and God's people are not supposed to be transgressors. Here's further confirmation that the Bible teaches that Christians are enabled, and required, to walk in the righteousness and holiness of God, with the victory over all sin (by grace through faith). This is good news! James' point here is that he doesn't want to hear anyone minimizing the importance of loving/showing mercy to the poor (or of keeping any other commandment). He wants to see repentance where repentance is required] **(11) For He who said, "DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY," also said, "DO NOT COMMIT MURDER."** Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder [It's worth mentioning that 1 John 3:15, which was written in a context dealing with the need to share with a brother in need, says that "everyone who hates his brother is a murderer."], **you have become a transgressor of the law. (12) So speak and so act, as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty.** [In other words, we will be judged according to our works (see under Rom. 2:6 in this paper). These words confirm that Christians are enabled, and required, to fulfill God's law/commandments. God knows if we are making it top priority to stop sinning and to live with the victory over sin.] **(13) For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy** [Cf., e.g., James 1:27; 2:8; Matt. 5:7; 12:7; 18:21-35; and Luke 6:36-38. All Christians are dependent on God's mercy/grace. (We were spiritually dead, and we were sinners. Furthermore, although it need not be the case, most Christians have had to receive God's mercy of forgiveness for sinning after they became Christians. Everything we receive from God throughout this life and on into eternity comes by His mercy to us through Christ Jesus.) This being the case, we must show mercy to others, even as we have been commanded. In this context, James is undoubtedly thinking mostly of showing mercy to the poor brethren in Christ (see 2:1-12; 14-26; John 3:11-24).]; **mercy triumphs over judgment** [or, condemnation]." That is, God can be merciful to those Christians who show mercy. We can't earn God's mercy by being merciful (or by doing anything else), but the Bible clearly shows that we can block His flow of mercy by failing to show mercy. (Compare our need to forgive if we want to be forgiven.) All sin tends to block God's grace/mercy. In 2:14-16 James goes on to deal with the need to share with the brethren in need.

James 4:11, 12. (These verses fit well with the sins of the tongue and the strife, jealousy, selfish ambition, disorder, etc. mentioned in James 3:1-4:10.) **Do not speak against** [This

Greek verb can also be translated “speak evil of, defame, [or] slander”; the NIV has slander here. The Bible is clearly against all such speech (cf. Lev. 19:16; Psalms 50:19, 20; 101:5; Rom. 1:30; 2 Cor. 12:20; 1 Pet. 2:1; 2:12; and 3:16. The English word *devil* was derived from the Greek adjective *diabolos* [slandorous/the slanderer].) **one another, brethren. He who speaks against** [The Greek verb used earlier in this verse is also used here, and it is used again later in this verse.] **a brother, or judges** [James is speaking here of totally inappropriate judgments (cf. Matt. 7:1-5; Luke 6:37-45; Rom. 14:1-13; 1 Cor. 4:5; and James 2:4). There are situations that require Christians/the Body of Christ to make judgments about other Christians. See the discussion on this topic under Rom. 14:4 in my *A Paper On Faith*. The five passages I just listed don’t exclude all forms of judging. When Christians/the Body of Christ take note of the fact that a Christian is clearly going against God’s Law, it is God’s Law that is acting as Judge, not those taking note of (and properly dealing with) the sin. Also see, e.g., Matt. 7:6; 7:15-20; 18:15-18; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; and 1 John 4:1-6; these verses show that there are situations where Christians are required, in some ways, to judge others. We must be very cautious about trying to judge another’s motives, or what they have been instructed to do by God, but we have been instructed, for one thing, to evaluate (judge) whether ministries are valid.] **his brother, speaks against the law, and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge of it.** [ A “Christian” judges the law by failing to keep the law, for example, the commandment to love his neighbor as himself mentioned in 2:8 (by failing to submit to the law, he sets himself above the law and, in a sense, judges it as unworthy), and he speaks against the law, and judges the law, by trying to take the place of the law (and of God Himself, who gave the law [cf. 4:12]) in passing his own (inappropriate) judgments.] **(12) There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor** [cf. James 2:8]?

1 John 3:4. This significant verse informs us that even as righteousness is lawfulness, **sin is lawlessness.** This verse is discussed as part of 1 John 2:28-3:12, a passage that clearly shows that Christians are enabled, and required, to live/walk in righteousness and purity with the victory over sin, on pages 208-213 in my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

Some Other Verses to Consider: Deut. 6:1-9; 30:11-20; Isa. 2:2-4; 42:4; 51:4-8; Micah 4:1-5; Matt. 23:23, 24; and 1 Cor. 9:8, 9.

3. CHRISTIANS ARE ENABLED, AND REQUIRED, **TO KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD/CHRIST.** The commandments of God go with the Law of God.

Matthew 28:19, 20. **Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**

Luke 17:10. **So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, “We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.”**

John 14:15-24. (15) **If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.** ... (21) **He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him.** ... (23) ... **If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word** [Jesus' word includes His commandments.]; **and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make our abode with him.** (24) **He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.**

John 15:10-17. **If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love.** (11) **These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you** [Jesus' joy is the joy He experienced as He always kept the Father's commandments and (fully) abided in His love. Here Jesus exhorts His disciples to always keep His commandments, so they may (fully) abide in His (and the Father's) love. Many Christians have no room for such concepts; they speak only of God's unconditional love; however, these verses are clear enough, along with many others. See, for example, John 14:21, 23 (quoted above); Jude 1:21; and see the discussion of Rev. 2:1-7; 3:1-6, 11, and 14-22 in *Once Saved, Always Saved?* The fact that there's so much out-of-balance teaching on God's unconditional love helps explain the low level of emphasis on repentance, on having a healthy, Biblical fear of God, and on living in righteousness and holiness that we often see in our day.], **and that your joy may be made full.** (12) **This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.** [This isn't Jesus' only commandment, but it is of key importance.] (13) **Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.** (14) **You are My friends, if you do what I command you.** ... (17) **This I command you, that you love one another.**

1 Corinthians 7:19. **Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God.** This verse is very important to this study. It confirms that the bottom line of Christianity is the keeping of the commandments of God (by grace through faith). It also confirms the important point that Christians are not required to keep the *ceremonial* laws of the Old Testament, like circumcision.

1 Corinthians 14:37. **If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment.** Paul's commandments (and those of the other apostles) came with the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Cf. 1 Thess. 4:2.

Ephesians 6:1-3. **Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.** (2) **HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER** (which is the first commandment with a promise [The promise is spelled out in the next verse.]), (3) **THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.** See Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16. It is significant that the apostle Paul quotes the fifth of the ten commandments of the Mosaic Law and considers it still applicable for Christians. All ten commandments by their nature are moral commandments and are binding for all time (to the extent they are

applicable), with the exception of the fourth commandment, which deals with the Old Testament sabbath. It's clear that Christians are not required to keep the sabbath as required under the old covenant (including the fact that it came on Saturday). See, e.g., Col. 2:16. I'm not suggesting that Christians aren't obligated to set aside time for worship and rest; in some ways Sunday has become the Christian's sabbath (cf. Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; and Rev. 1:10).

**1 Thessalonians 4:1-12. Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as you received from us instruction as to how you ought [or, as to how it is necessary for you] to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you may excel still more. (2) For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. (3) For this is the will of God, your sanctification [The Greek noun is *hagiasmos*; I would translate **holiness**. See the last chapter of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* on the meaning of holiness in the New Testament; see on 1 Thess. 5:23; 4:1-8; and 3:10-13 in that chapter.]; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality [Paul undoubtedly singled out the sin of sexual immorality because he had just learned from Timothy (cf. 1 Thess. 3:1-10) that this was still a problem in the newly-founded church at Thessalonica, but holiness requires abstaining from all sin.]; (4) that each of you know how to possess his own vessel [that is, his own body] in sanctification [holiness; *hagiasmos*] and honor, (5) not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; (6) and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter [by getting involved, for example, with his brother's wife, or daughter] because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. (7) For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in [in the state or sphere of] sanctification [holiness; *hagiasmos*; the KJV has "unto holiness," the NKJV "in holiness," and the NIV has "to live a holy life."]. (8) Consequently, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you. (9) Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; (10) for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, (11) and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you; (12) so that you may behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.**

**2 Thessalonians 3:4-15. And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will continue to do what we command. (5) And may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ. (6) Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep aloof from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. ... (10) For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone will not work, neither let him eat. (11) For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. (12) Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. ... (14) And if anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that man and do not associate with him, so that he may be put to shame. [The desired result is the repentance of the**

brother.] **(15) And yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.** Paul obviously considered the sin of living an undisciplined life a serious matter, but there's a big difference between this sin and sins like apostasy and full-scale rebellion.

1 Timothy 6:13, 14. **I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, (14) that you keep the commandment** [To "keep the commandment" here equals being faithful to the new-covenant, which includes living in righteousness and holiness (in accordance with God's commandments). Timothy (and all Christians) are charged to be faithful (by God's enabling grace through faith) until the end of his life, or until Christ returns, whichever comes first. For Timothy (or any minister) the charge includes being faithful in his ministry.] **without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

2 Peter 2:21. **For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness** ["The way of righteousness" speaks of the righteous way of life Christians are enabled, and required, to live through salvation in Christ Jesus. Cf., e.g., 1 Peter 1:13-21; 2:24; and 2 Pet. 1:1-11. In 2 Pet. 2:20 Peter spoke of having "escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."], **than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment** ["The holy commandment" here speaks of the new covenant (cf. 1 Tim. 6:14 [just discussed]), with the emphasis on the holy state in which Christians are enabled, and required, to walk/live.] **delivered to them.**

2 Peter 3:2. **that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets** [speaking of the Old Testament prophets; cf. 1 Pet. 1:10-12; 2 Pet. 1:19-21] **and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.** "The commandment" here is probably essentially equivalent to the "holy commandment" of 2 Pet. 2:21 (just discussed). The gospel of the new covenant came to the recipients of this epistle from our Lord and Savior (and God the Father) through the apostles. It comes to us through the writings of the apostles.

1 John 2:1-6. These verses powerfully demonstrate that Christians are enabled, and required, to keep the commandments of God, with the victory over all sin. On these verses see pages 206-208 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*. I'll quote verses 3-6, **By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments (4) The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in Him; but whoever keeps His word** [which includes His commandments], **in him the love of God has truly been perfected** [cf. 4:12]. **By this we know that we are in Him: (6) the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.** And it is clear that He didn't sin at all.

1 John 3:22-24. These verses are important to this study. 1 John 3:22, 23 are discussed as part of 3:16-23 on page 75 of my *A Paper on Faith*. **and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that pleasing in His sight. (23) This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another** [We must believe the truth and walk in line with the truth (by grace through faith)], **just as He commanded us. (24) The one who keeps His**

**commandments abides in Him. We know by this the He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.**

**1 John 5:1-4. Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ** [The apostle John says it this way because the heretics he was refuting when he wrote this epistle denied that “Jesus is the Christ.”] **is born of God** [The new birth enables us to walk in righteousness (cf., e.g., 1 John 2:29), and it enables us to love with the love of God (cf., e.g., Gal. 5:22; 1 John 2:5; 4:7, 12); however, righteousness, love, and such things don’t just automatically manifest themselves in the lives of born-again Christians; we must cooperate with God’s grace/Spirit through faith (faith based on, and submitted to, God’s Word). For one thing, we must walk by the Spirit on a continuous basis (Cf. Gal. 5:16).]; **and whoever loves the Father** [Instead of “the Father,” the Greek more literally reads “the One who begat.”] **loves the child born of Him** [or, “loves the one begotten of Him.”]. [If we love God, we will love those born of Him, speaking of the other born-again Christians. Love of the brethren is a dominant theme in this epistle (cf. 2:9-11; 3:10-24; and 4:17-21).] **(2) By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe [do] His commandments.** [John’s wording is a little unusual here, but his point is that if we really love God and keep His commandments (we don’t love God if we don’t keep His commandments [cf. 1 John 5:3; John 14:15, 21, 23, 24, 31; including His commandment to love the other born-again Christians]), we will necessarily “love the children of God.”] **(3) For this is the love of God [John is speaking of love for God.], that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.** [Cf., e.g., Matt. 11:28-30; James 1:25. God’s commandments bring freedom (not bondage) and order.] **(4) For whatever is born of God [speaking here, as in 5:1, 2, of born-again Christians] overcomes the world** [To overcome the world here means to be faithful to God and His Word (especially the Word of the new covenant) by believing the truth and living in line with the truth, being enabled by God’s grace/Spirit. The heretics John was refuting were part of “the world.” Cf. 1 John 4:4-6. On the world, also see 1 John 2:15-17.]; **and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.** It is by faith we submit to the gospel and are born again, and it is by faith that we stay faithful to the gospel in what we believe and in how we live (by God’s enabling grace/Spirit).

**Quotations on 1 John 5:1-4.** First I’ll quote from Donald W. Burdick (*Letters of John the Apostle* [Moody Press, 1985], page 359): “This section on the ethical test of the genuineness of salvation (1 John 4:7-5:5) concludes with an assurance concerning the possibility of keeping God’s commands. What is the point of talking about obedience as evidence that one loves God and His children, if obedience is so difficult that it is practically impossible. John’s answer is that it is far from impossible. The load is not too heavy to bear...not because it is light, but because of the enabling power the new birth makes available. Being born of God enables a person to make righteousness his life-style (3:9); being born of God results in love for one’s fellow believer (5:1); and being born of God provides the ability to obey God’s commands (5:3b-4a). The apostle presses the matter of enablement back to initial faith (5:4b). [We must continue to walk in faith.] Faith in Jesus as God’s Christ results in regeneration, and regeneration provides ability to overcome the world and to obey God’s commands. ....”

I'll also quote from I. Howard Marshall (*Epistles of John* [Eerdmans, 1978], under 1 John 5:4): "How, then, can the believer keep God's commandments? John's answer is that he has been given the power by God to overcome the forces of temptation which would prevent his obedience. Everyone born of God has overcome the world. The power that enables believers to overcome false prophets (4:4) also enables them to overcome the world with all its temptations. And what is this power? The means of victory is our faith. The fact that we hold the true faith from our hearts is the means whereby the power of the new world operates in us and enables us to overcome the world. ... To believe that Jesus has been victorious is to have the power that enables us also to win the battle, for we know that our foe is already defeated and therefore powerless. And it is precisely faith that we need. To the natural man the power of evil appears uncontrollable, and to the weak Christian the force of temptation appears irresistible. It requires a firm belief in Jesus to enable us to dismiss this appearance of irresistible, uncontrollable evil as being merely appearance. Nor is such faith a means of escape from conflict; on the contrary it is right in the middle of evil's display of power that the believer is able to call its bluff and proclaim the superior might of Jesus. Such faith is far from being wish-fulfillment or sheer illusion. On the contrary, it rests foursquare on the fact that Jesus Christ has defeated death [and sin and Satan], and anybody who can defeat death can defeat anything."

**2 John 1:4-6. I was very glad to find some of your children walking in** [The NIV supplies "the" here; I prefer the translation of the NIV.] **truth** [The apostle John is writing to a particular church, pictured as a lady; her children are members of that church. Apparently we are not to infer that the rest of the Christians of that church were not walking in the truth.], **just as we have received commandment to do from the Father.** [To walk in the truth, as we are commanded by God, includes believing the Word of God (especially the Word of the gospel of the new covenant) and "walking in the truth," which includes living in righteousness and holiness and walking in love. "Walking in the truth" includes loving God and His people, and if we truly love God and His people, we won't be sinning against Him or His people (cf., e.g., Matt. 22:36-40; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14). As I have mentioned, we need God's commandments to know what loving Him and people entails. See verse 6.] **(5) And now I ask you, lady, not as writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.** [Cf., e.g., 1 John 2:7-11; John 13:34, 35. "From the beginning" refers back to the beginning of Christianity. The commandment to love wasn't new, but new-covenant salvation takes love to a whole new level through union with the Lord Jesus and by the indwelling Spirit, etc. Here in verses 5, 6, John speaks of the commandment to love one another, as he does throughout 1 John. (We must understand, however, that the commandment to love God is more important than the commandment to love one another. Without loving God and His Son, and walking by the Holy Spirit, we lose the reality of new-covenant salvation.) 1 John 4:12 says, "if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us" (cf. 1 John 2:5). John undoubtedly focused on the need for Christians to love one another, because he knew that some Christians needed to be exhorted in that area.] **(6) And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments.** [Apparently the idea here is that as love one another, we will be keeping God's commandments, the commandments that show what loving one another entails (see under verse 4). It is also true, as 1 John 5:3 shows, "...this is the love of God, that we keep

His commandments....”] **This is the commandment** [The “commandment” here seems to be limited to the commandment for Christians to love one another, but as I mentioned, the commandment to love God is more important.], **just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.**

**Revelation 12:17; 14:12.** In Rev. 12:17 Christians are spoken of as those **who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus** [that is, they testify to their faith in Jesus]. Revelation 14:12 speaks of Christians as those **who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.**

4. CHRISTIANS ARE ENABLED, AND REQUIRED, TO OBEY GOD/CHRIST (including His Word/Law/commandments).

**Luke 6:46-49.** These powerful words are self-explanatory. **Why do you call me, “Lord, Lord,” and do not do what I say? (47) Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: (48) he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. (49) But the one who has heard and has not acted *accordingly* is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great.**

**John 3:36.** **He who believes in the Son has eternal life [Cf., e.g., John 5:24.]; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.** Faith/believing in Christ/the gospel includes obedience to Christ/the gospel. (See, e.g., Rom. 10:16; 2 Thess. 1:8; these verses are quoted and discussed below.) “He who does not obey the Son” is the one who hears the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and rejects Him and the gospel—he does not submit to Christ/the gospel in faith.

**Romans 2:8.** This verse is discussed as part of Rom. 2:1-16 in section 2 of this paper. **But to those who are selfishly ambitious and who do not obey the truth** [The truth includes righteousness and holiness (cf. Eph. 4:24)], **but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.**

**Romans 6:16-18.** These important verses are discussed (with all of Romans chapter 6) on pages 101, 102 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*. **Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience [to God and His Word] resulting in righteousness: (17) But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching** [the teaching of the new covenant that requires Christians to obey God and live for Him in righteousness (by grace through faith)] **to which you were committed [were delivered over]; (18) and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of [God and His] righteousness.**

**Romans 10:16.** **However, they did not all heed the glad tidings....** I would translate “they

have not all obeyed the gospel,” with the KJV. The NASB translates the Greek verb used here as *obey* (in some form) nineteen times out of its twenty-one uses in the New Testament. This verse is discussed with all of Rom. 9:18-10:18 in my *A Paper on Faith*. Also see below on 2 Thess. 1:8.

2 Corinthians 2:9. **For to this end also I wrote that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things.**

2 Corinthians 10:1-11, especially 10:5, 6. [It is necessary to understand the context in which the words of 2 Cor. 10:5, 6 were written to adequately understand these verses. Throughout this epistle Paul defends his apostolic ministry; he defends his ministry, which was being challenged by some, including “false apostles” (2 Cor. 11:13), for the sake of the Christians at Corinth. Paul was the apostle who had brought the gospel to Corinth, and he knew that he was a genuine apostle; he knew that to the extent the Corinthians rejected his ministry (as they were being challenged to do) and followed the false apostles, it would harm them greatly—they could lose their salvation. Second Corinthians chapter 11 is especially relevant to help us understand Paul’s primary opponents at Corinth when he wrote this epistle. In 2 Cor. 11:13-15 he speaks of “false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their [ungodly] deeds [works].” It’s clear that Paul also had other opposition in the church at Corinth, and it’s clear that when he wrote First Corinthians, he was already facing opposition at Corinth.] **Now I Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek** [The NIV’s “timid” for this last word probably better communicates Paul’s meaning.] **when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!** [Cf. 2 Cor. 10:10. These insults probably originated with the false apostles who were trying to supplant Paul’s authority in the church at Corinth; it seems that quite a few at Corinth were listening to much that they said.] **(2) I ask that when I am present I may not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh.** [See 2 Cor. 13:1-10.] **(3) For though we walk in the flesh** [Although Paul walked in the flesh in the sense that he was living in a physical body in this world (cf., e.g., Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:22, 24), he walked/lived and ministered above the flesh/world by walking in/after the Spirit (cf., e.g., 2 Cor. 10:3b-11; Gal. 2:20; 5:16-25; and Rom. 8:1-14).], **we do not war according to the flesh, (4) for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.** [The fortresses represent Satanic strongholds in the earth. In this context Paul is concerned lest the enemy have any fortresses/strongholds (any presence) in the church at Corinth, which includes his having any strongholds in any true Christians at Corinth. Satan establishes a stronghold in the church at Corinth to the extent his false apostles (or other ministers) are accepted as genuine, to the extent false doctrine is accepted, to the extent that sin continues in the church, etc.] **(5) We are destroying speculations [reasonings] and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought** [The Greek noun translated “thought” here is translated “schemes” (speaking of schemes of Satan) by the NASB in 2 Cor. 2:11. The BAGD Greek Lexicon translates it “designs” in 2:11, and here in 10:5 BAGD has, “we take captive every design

to make it obedient to Christ.”] **captive to the obedience of Christ** [In this context the “speculations,” “lofty things,” and “thoughts (schemes/designs)” Paul is taking captive refer, at least for the most part, to every false doctrine and idea (which comes from the world, the flesh, or the devil and his people) that has no right whatsoever to have any place in the church at Corinth, or in any true Christian (cf. Eph. 4:27). The apostle isn’t dealing with his own thought life here, but the same principles apply; he would not (and we must not) tolerate any false doctrines or ideas to remain in our hearts and minds. As Paul had the authority in his own life (and much authority in the church at Corinth), we all have the authority to cast all such things from our hearts and lives, and we must do our part to cast them out of the church.], **(6) and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.** [Paul has been waiting for the many Christians in the church at Corinth who needed to repent to repent, including those who had been listening to the false apostles, before he used his authority to restore order in the church.] **(7) You are looking at things as they are outwardly.** [For example, some of the Christians were focusing their attention on things of the flesh like Paul’s bodily appearance, his demeanor, and the way he spoke. What they should have been looking at was what Paul had from God (including his apostolic ministry, his authority, and the truth of the gospel) in/by the Holy Spirit.] **(8) For even if I should boast somewhat further about our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I shall not be put to shame** [These last words apparently mean that he will not be put to shame by someone, or by circumstances, which will be able to demonstrate that he doesn’t have this authority; he’s not limited to talking (like many people are, including Paul’s opponents at Corinth), he actually has this authority, and when the time is right, he will use it at Corinth.], **(9) for I do not wish to seem as if I would terrify you by my letters.** **(10) For they say, “His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive, and his speech contemptible.”** **(11) Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when absent, such persons we are also in deed when present.** Paul goes on to speak of his authority at Corinth, and of the fact that the false apostles certainly didn’t have authority in the church at Corinth (or any other church). Paul was functioning within his measure assigned by God (cf. Rom. 12:3-8; these verses are discussed in my *A Paper on Faith*).

**Galatians 5:7. You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth** [the truth of the gospel]. [The epistle to the Galatians shows that (at least some of) the Christians at Galatia had begun to waver on the basics of the gospel through listening to the Judaizers. This verse confirms that Christians must obey the truth of the gospel (by God’s grace/Spirit through faith).]

**Ephesians 2:2; 5:6.** In both of these verses, the apostle refers to non-Christians as “sons of disobedience.” These verses (especially 5:6), when studied in their contexts (see Eph. 2:1-10 and 5:1-7), powerfully demonstrate (and warn Christians) that Christians are enabled, and required, to live in righteousness and holiness as sons of obedience. As 5:1 says, “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved [obedient] children.” See 1 Pet. 1:14.

**Philippians 2:12-16. So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed** [They had obeyed God, Christ, the gospel, and the apostle Paul.], **not as in my presence only, but**

**now much more in my absence** [Now that Paul wasn't there with them, to help them, they needed all the more to be diligent regarding their obedience to God, Christ, the gospel, and the apostle Paul.], **work out your salvation with fear and trembling.** [We must cooperate with God's grace/Spirit through faith—faith which includes obedience (by grace)—in accordance with God's Word (especially the gospel), including the commandments, on a continuous basis. On "fear and trembling," cf. 1 Cor. 2:3; 2 Cor. 7:15; and Eph. 6:5. The Bible makes it very clear that we must have a reverent fear of God, which includes being afraid to sin against Him. Cf., e.g., Ex. 20:20 ("And Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin.' "); Lev. 25:17; Deut. 5:29 ("Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and their sons forever!"); Deut. 6:2 ("so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD [Yahweh] your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged."); Deut. 6:13, 24; 10:12; 17:18-20; 31:12, 13; Psalms 33:18; 34:7, 9, 11; 103:11, 13, 17; 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 3:7 ("Fear the LORD [Yahweh] and turn away from evil."); Prov. 8:13 ("The fear of the LORD [Yahweh] is to hate evil."); Prov. 16:6 ("by the fear of the LORD [Yahweh] one keeps away from evil."); Jer. 32:39; Matt. 10:28 ("And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell [Gehenna]."); Luke 1:50; 12:5 ("But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell [Gehenna]; yes, I tell you, fear Him!"); Acts 9:31; Rom. 3:18; 2 Cor. 7:1 ("Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." This verse is discussed on page 183 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin.*); Eph. 5:21; 1 Pet. 1:17 ("And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth." On 1 Peter 1:13-19, see pages 190-194 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin.*); and 1 Pet. 2:17. (Many more verses from the Old Testament could be listed; see a Concordance under "fear."); **(13) For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.** [The Greek verb translated "work" (*energeo*) is used twice in this verse. First it is used of God working in us (cf. 1:6), then (because of His working in us by His enabling grace) we are enabled to will and to work that which pleases Him. God must receive all the glory, but we must also understand that if we don't do our part of cooperating with God's grace through faith (working out our salvation with fear and trembling) God's will won't be done in our lives. (Faith doesn't earn anything, but it receives, and cooperates with, everything that God freely gives.)] **(14) Do all things without grumbling or disputing; (15) that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach** [In other words, they are to be obedient children of God, doing His will from the heart.] **in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear [shine] as lights in the world, (16) holding fast the word of life** [The "word of life" is the gospel. To hold fast the word of life is to have faith in (which includes living in obedience to) the gospel.], **so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory** [Cf. 1 Thess 2:19, 20; 2 Cor. 1:14. Paul will have cause to glory to the extent the Philippian Christians are fully ready to stand before Christ at His return. It must be understood, of course, that Paul's ministry was effective only by the grace of God, and He receives all the glory.] **because I**

**did not run in vain nor toil in vain.** Paul's work at Philippi would have been in vain if, in the worst-case scenario (which wasn't about to happen), all of Paul's beloved brethren at Philippi turned their backs on the Lord Jesus Christ and were not ready to stand before Him.

2 Thessalonians 1:8 (NIV). **He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.** In verse 9, the apostle Paul goes on to say, "They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord...." (I quoted the NIV on 2 Thess. 1:8, 9, instead of the NASB, because I believe it better communicates Paul's meaning.) What we need to discuss here is the fact that Paul speaks of *not obeying* the gospel. This helps demonstrate that for Paul to have faith in the gospel includes submitting to, and obeying, the gospel, which, when understood in a full sense, includes the moral law of God. Obedience to the gospel includes living in the righteousness and holiness required by the gospel (by God's grace/Spirit). It's significant that quite a few other verses also speak of obeying, or not obeying, the gospel (cf. Rom. 1:5; 6:17; 10:16 [discussed above in this section]; 15:18; 16:26; Acts 6:7; 2 Thess. 2:10-12; and 1 Pet. 1:22; 2:8; and 4:17. Obedience to God and His Word (by His saving grace in Christ) isn't optional.

Hebrews 4:11. **Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience.** The "rest" spoken of here is the rest of heaven that we enter after finishing our race in faith and obedience (Bible faith includes obedience). In context the writer has been exhorting his readers not to follow the example of the Israelites who failed to enter the promised land because of unbelief/disobedience. (See Heb. 3:7-4:9; many of these verses are discussed on pages 28, 29 in my *A Paper on Faith*. Disobedience is mentioned in Heb. 3:18 and 4:6. This passage demonstrates that disobedience goes with unbelief; especially note Heb. 3:18 ["disobedient"] with 3:19 ["unbelief"].)

Some Other Verses on the Requirement for Obedience: Acts 4:19; 5:29; 2 Thess 3:14; Titus 3:1; Heb. 5:9; 1 Pet. 1:2, 14; Rev. 1:3; and 22:7, 9.

**5. CHRISTIANS ARE ENABLED, AND REQUIRED, TO LIVE/WALK IN RIGHTEOUSNESS,** which means living/walking in the will of God, according to His Word/Law/Commandments. (Cf., e.g., Gen. 18:19; Deut. 6:24, 25; Psalms 15; 106:3; 119:172; and Ezek. 18:4-9, 21-24.) Living/walking in righteousness (which includes lawfulness) is the opposite of living in sin: "Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). Christians must live/walk in righteousness from the heart, from a heart that loves God and His Word. It is crucial to understand that Christians are enabled to live in righteousness by God's grace/Spirit through faith in God and His Word (especially the gospel). One last comment before listing some key passages that will help us understand righteousness: Being forgiven and declared righteous is a very important part of the truth of the gospel, but if we stop there, or put most the emphasis there (like so many do in our day), we greatly distort God's plan of salvation, as the passages of Scripture listed in this section demonstrate.

Romans 1:16, 17; 3:21, 22. God's righteousness imparted to Christians (in accordance with His new-covenant salvation promised in the Old Testament) enables Christians to live/walk in righteousness. For a discussion of these super-important verses, see pages 76-79 of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

Romans 5:19. This verse, which uses the adjective "righteous," is important to help us understand righteousness. See page 94 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* on this verse. **For through the one man's [Adam's] disobedience the many were made sinners [spiritually dead and in bondage to sin (as Rom. 5:12-21 demonstrates)], even so through the obedience of the One [the Lamb of God] the many [all who submit to God, His Son, and the gospel in faith] will be made righteous [They will be declared righteous, and they will be made righteous with the imparted righteousness of God, which includes being made obedient].**

Romans 6:13, 16, 18, 19, 20. The word "righteousness" is used in each of the five verses listed here. Romans chapter 6 is one of the most powerful passages in the New Testament, if not the most powerful, which demonstrates that Christians are enabled, and required, to live/walk in righteousness with victory over sin. This chapter is discussed on pages 96-106 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*. I'll quote Rom. 6:13-18, 19b, 20. **(13) and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead [having become born-again Christians], and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. (14) For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace [the powerful saving grace of God in Christ that enables us, for one thing, to live in the imparted righteousness of God]. (15) What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! (16) Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves to obedience, you are slaves of the one who you obey, either of sin resulting in death [back into spiritual death], or of obedience [to God and His Word (which includes His moral law)] resulting in righteousness? (17) But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart [in faith] to that form of teaching [with the emphasis on the requirement for Christians to walk/live in the righteousness of God, being set apart for Him] to which you were committed [delivered over; we either stay slaves of sin or we agree to be delivered over to be faithful slaves of God and His righteousness (which brings real freedom)], (18) and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness [which is very good!]. ... (19b) so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification [holiness; an abiding state of holiness]. (20) For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.**

2 Corinthians 5:21. Before we quote and discuss this very important verse, I should point out that in 2 Cor. 5:20 Paul is dealing with the need for mankind to be reconciled to God through submission to the gospel. This exhortation applies to the Christians at Corinth to the extent they need to repent and begin to fully walk in righteousness before God. In 2 Cor. 6:1, the verse that follows 5:21, Paul exhorts the Christians at Corinth "not to receive the grace of God in vain." They would receive His grace in vain to the extent they weren't walking in the righteousness required of Christians, in accordance with the gospel.

**He** [God the Father] **made Him who knew no sin** [the sinless Lamb of God] **to be** [or, to become] **sin on our behalf** [These all-important words are often misunderstood. The Lord Jesus Christ did not become a sinner in any sense, or die spiritually, or have His nature changed; nor was He reduced to a state where He, like us, needed to be born again. (Jesus is called “the first-born of/from the dead” in Col. 1:18 and Rev. 1:5, but this speaks of His resurrection.) He never sinned, nor did He cease being God the Son, deity with the Father (cf., e.g., John 1:1-9, 14). He became sin only in the sense that He bore our sin with the guilt and the penalties in His atoning death.

The Hebrew noun *chattath* will help us understand this important concept. This noun is translated sin(s) 168 times in the Old Testament (NASB). This very same noun for sin is also translated “sin offering(s)” 118 times. This makes perfect sense once we understand the important fact that the sin(s) of the Israelites (with the guilt and penalties) were literally transmitted to (put on) the sacrificial animals. In this sense the sacrifices became sin, and they were even called by a word for sin (*chattath*). This enables us to understand the sense in which Jesus became sin. See the discussion of Lev. 16:20-22 on pages 15-18 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*. Leviticus chapter 16 deals with the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement. *Chattath* is translated *sins* in Lev. 16:16, 21, 30, and 34; it is translated *sin offering* in Lev. 16:3, 5, 6, 9, 11 (twice), 15, 25, and 27 (twice).], **that we might become [be] the righteousness of God in Him.** [In His atoning death, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, dethroned sin, Satan, and spiritual death; He provided forgiveness, the new birth, and the authority and power for believers to live/walk in righteousness, the very “righteousness of God.” Sin, Satan, and spiritual death had gained authority over mankind through sin, especially the sin of Adam (and Eve). By bearing that sin, and all subsequent sin (with the guilt and penalties), the Lamb of God stripped sin, Satan, and spiritual death of their authority, and He saved all who submit to the gospel in faith. As I mentioned, Paul was concerned that some of the Christians at Corinth needed to repent and begin to walk in the righteousness of God by faith (this walk isn’t automatic); this certainly wasn’t an optional matter.]

2 Corinthians 6:14; Hebrews 1:9. These verses are significant in that they contrast righteousness (which includes living in the will of God, according to His moral law) with lawlessness.

Galatians 3:21. **Is the Law** [the Mosaic Law, which was the foundation for the old covenant] **then contrary to the promises of God** [the promises of new covenant salvation in Christ Jesus]? **May it never be! For if a Law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.** This significant verse confirms two very important points. The old covenant, which was established on the Mosaic Law, was not able to impart life (the new birth) to those under the covenant. This verse also shows that we must have the life of God (by the indwelling Spirit, starting with the new birth) in order to have righteousness in an adequate/full sense. (See Gal. 2:21.) This is significant in that it confirms that Paul uses the word *righteousness* here (as he typically does) of much more than just being forgiven and declared righteous; the emphasis here is on Christians actually walking/living in the imparted righteousness of God. This righteousness is imparted by the Spirit; Christians are enabled to walk/live in righteousness by the Spirit (through the Lord Jesus Christ and His all-important atoning death). For a

discussion of this verse, see pages 103, 104 in my *A Paper on Faith*. All of Galatians chapter 3 is discussed verse-by-verse in that paper.

**2 Timothy 3:16. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness.**

**1 Peter 2:24, 25. and He Himself bore our sins** [with the guilt and penalties, including the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin] **in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness** [In other words, through the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ, Christians are enabled, and required, to die to sin (to stop sinning) and to be faithful to God and His covenant (the new covenant) and “live to [or, in] righteousness.”]; **for by His wounds you were healed.** [Actually, as the margin of the NASB shows, “wounds” is singular in the Greek. Significantly, Peter was quoting here, as he was in the next verse, from Isaiah chapter 53 (see Isa. 53:5, 6). The Hebrew of Isa. 53:5 also uses the singular for the word translated “wounds” here. This collective noun (wound) embraces all that the Lamb of God bore in His atoning death, as He took our sins with the guilt and penalties. See the discussion of Isa. 53:4-6 on pages 18-24 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*. Include the section titled “All the Old Covenant Sacrifices, and Especially Those on the Day of Atonement, Pointed to the One Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ” on page 18.

Isaiah 53:11 deals with the fact that the Lamb of God, the Righteous One, through His atoning death, would *make righteous* His people; He brings us to a state of righteousness). This verse is discussed on pages 26-29 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*. Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is probably the most important passage in the Bible dealing with Christ’s all-important atoning death. It’s clear (when these words are read in context) that when Peter said “you were healed,” he was speaking especially of the spiritual healing we receive (including forgiveness, the new birth, and the transformation to righteous living), but it’s also clear, I believe, that physical healing, mental healing, etc. are provided in Christ’s atoning death. See on Isa. 53:4-6 (pages 18-24 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*), and see the chapter in that book titled “A Study to Show that Healing and Health Are Included in the New Covenant Atonement.”] **(25) For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have [through repentance and faith in Christ] returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.**

**1 John 2:29; 3:7, 10.** These three verses powerfully demonstrate that Christians are enabled, and required, to walk/live in righteousness; we must practice (be doers of) righteousness. These verses are discussed as part of 1 John 2:28-3:12 on pages 208-213 of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*. **If you know that He [God] is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices [or, who is doing] righteousness is born of Him. ... (3:7) Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices [or, who is doing] righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. ... (10) By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice [or, who is not doing] righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.**

Revelation 22:10-12. **And He said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. (11) Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and let the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice [or, do] righteousness; and let the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.” (12)** **“Behold, I** [The speaker starting with verse 12 is the Lord Jesus Christ, as 22:13-16 demonstrate. In 22:13 He says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end”; these words confirm His deity (with God the Father and the Holy Spirit).] **am coming quickly** [The words of 22:10, 11 and the words “I am coming quickly” effectively communicate the warning that there is no time left for fellowship with sin (that has always been true for Christians); however, I’m quite sure they don’t go so far as to say that people (believers and unbelievers) could no longer repent. For one thing, Christians are called to repent in the Book of Revelation. The closer we get to the return of Christ (or the end of our life, and we don’t know when that will be), the more dangerous it is to be in sin.], **and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what He has done.** [Here “reward” includes both positive and negative “rewards,” dependent on what the person has done. I prefer the translation, “My recompense is with Me.” The fact that we will be judged according to our works, which is a common Biblical theme (see under Rom. 2:6 in this paper), confirms that Christians must live in righteousness and holiness. We’ll discuss “works” in section 7 of this paper.]

6. CHRISTIANS ARE ENABLED, AND REQUIRED, **TO BE HOLY, TO LIVE IN HOLINESS**, which includes living in the will of God, according to His Word/Law/commandments. There’s very much overlap between being righteous and being holy. The *righteous* live according to the will of God; the *holy* are set apart by God, and for God, which includes living according to His will. In this section we’ll look at some verses that will enable us to see the connection between righteousness (discussed in the preceding section) and holiness, and the connection between holiness and keeping the Law/commandments of God. For a discussion on the meaning of the word holiness (and the closely related words holy, saint, and sanctification) see the last chapter of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

Romans 6:19. (All of Romans chapter 6 will help us understand this verse; see pages 96-104 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* on this chapter.) **I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh.** [In other words, I am belaboring the need for Christians to live/walk in righteousness and holiness, Paul says, because the victory over sin is far from being automatic. We Christians must clearly know and understand this all-important aspect of gospel truth, and we must be totally committed to walking in righteousness and holiness in our hearts, or we’ll be far from the victory over sin. This is “because of the weakness of [the] flesh.” (The NIV has, “because you are weak in your natural selves.” Cf. Matt. 26:41; Mark 14:38.) Because of “the weakness of [the] flesh,” Christians (born-again Christians) must make sure they walk in/after the Spirit on a continuous basis and cooperate with the Spirit through faith (faith in God and His gospel).] **For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness** [I would omit the word “further,” which was added by the NASB in italics. These words, “resulting in lawlessness,” speak of the abiding state of

lawlessness Paul's readers were living in before they became Christians.], **so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.** [I would translate this last word **holiness**, with the KJV and NIV. "Holiness" here (as in Rom. 6:22, and often) speaks of the abiding state of holiness that Christians are enabled, and required, to live/walk in that contrasts with the former abiding state of lawlessness. (See the quotation regarding Rom. 6:19, 22 on page 180 in *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.) Note the important connection between righteousness and holiness, and between holiness and lawfulness (the opposite of lawlessness).]

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8. These important verses, which use the word *holiness* three times, are discussed in section 3 of this paper. I listed this passage here because it shows the important connection between God's commandments and holiness.

1 Peter 1:13-19. [These significant verses are discussed on pages 190-194 of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*. Here I'll just quote and discuss 1 Peter 1:15, 16, verses that deal with being holy and that help demonstrate the connection between holiness and keeping the commandments of God. I should mention that the tie between holiness and obedience is demonstrated by 1:14, that the redemption from our former sinful way of life through the blood of Christ is mentioned in 1:18-20 (cf. 1 Pet. 2:24), and that 1:17 shows that we will be impartially judged (as will all mankind) by God according to our works.] **(15) but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior** [To be holy here is to be living in an abiding state of being set apart by God, and for God, which excludes all sin.]; **(16) because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY** [I prefer "Be holy," with the NIV.], **FOR I AM HOLY.**" Peter could have been quoting from more than one place in the Mosaic Law. See Lev. 11:44, 45; 19:2; and 20:7, 26. Leviticus 19:1-37, for example, show some of the commandments that the Israelites were required to keep in order to be holy. These commandments are still applicable for the holiness of Christians to the extent they are part of God's moral law. I could refer to many other verses from the Old Testament that show the strong tie between being holy and keeping God's Law/commandments, but I'll just quote Deut. 28:9, "The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, as He swore to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and walk in His ways." The primary difference between the old and new covenants is that in the new covenant we are redeemed from sin through the blood of Christ, which includes being forgiven (in the full new-covenant sense), being born again (not available under the old covenant), and being made holy (in the full new-covenant sense).

Ephesians 4:17-24; John 17:11. [Ephesians 4:17-24 demonstrate that Christians are enabled, and required, to live/walk in holiness (and righteousness), with the victory over sin. This passage doesn't specifically mention the connection between holiness and the Law/commandments of God, but it does emphasize the connection between holiness (and righteousness) and the truth of God; the truth of God includes His Word, which includes His Law/commandments.] **This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles** [The apostle is addressing Gentile Christians here (cf. Eph. 1:11-13; 3:1-13).] **also walk, in the futility** [or, emptiness, vanity] **of their mind** [or, way of thinking. See Rom. 1:21-32 (These verses show that the root problem of

sin was/is a failure to honor God as God. Without God in the center of our thinking, our thinking [including who/what we worship, and our attitudes, motives, and priorities] must necessarily be greatly distorted.); Rom. 8:5-8; and Col. 1:21. (These last two passages demonstrate the important connection between thinking wrong and living wrong/living in sin. Romans 8:5-8 [which are very important verses on Christians thinking right by the Holy Spirit] are discussed on pages 118-120 and Col. 1:21-23 on pages 186-190 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.) Paul exhorts these Christians (and all Christians) to think right, that is, to think in line with the truth/Word of God (by His enabling grace/Spirit; cf. Eph. 4:23; Rom. 8:5, 6) and then to live right (by God’s enabling grace/Spirit) in the “righteousness and holiness of the truth” (Eph. 4:24).

It’s necessary for us to know that in the Bible the mind/thinking is not at all limited to the head; we do our most important thinking in our heart. For a discussion on the renewal of the mind/thinking of the Christian, see note 32 on pages 138, 139 of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*. That note includes a brief discussion of Rom. 12:1, 2, which is another important cross-reference on the renewal of the mind/thinking of the Christian. Romans 12:1-8 are discussed in some detail in my *A Paper on Faith*., **(18) being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God** [They are spiritually dead; cf., e.g., Eph. 2:1-3.], **because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; (19) and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. (20) But you did not learn Christ in this way** [When we learned about Christ and new-covenant salvation through the gospel, we learned that Christians are enabled, and required, to die to sin and to begin to walk/live in righteousness and holiness.], **(21) if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as the truth** [In this context (Eph. 4:17-24) the truth of righteousness and holiness is emphasized (especially see “the righteousness and holiness of the truth” (Eph. 4:24).) **is in Jesus** [For one thing, Jesus is the truth (John 14:6).], **(22) that, in reference to your former manner of life** [cf. 4:17-19], **you lay aside** [or, put off] **the old self [man]** [The idea is to put off the old man, which includes everything that is sinful, once-for-all and completely; this is, at least, the ideal. (The aorist tense of the Greek verb used here fits the idea of putting off the old man once-for-all and completely.) On putting off the old man, see Col. 3:8, 9; Rom. 13:11-14; on death to the old man (which is the equivalent of putting off the old man), see Gal. 2:20; Rom. 6:6; and Col. 3:3, 5.], **which is being corrupted** [I would translate “which is corrupt” with the KJV.] **in accordance with the lusts of deceit** [Instead of “deceit” we could translate “deception.” The BAGD Greek Lexicon translates “deceptive desires” (instead of “lusts of deceit”). The deceit/deception here is contrasted with the truth of 4:21; the deceit/deception goes with having the unrenewed mind/thinking of 4:17-19.], **(23) and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind** [I would translate “and that you be renewed by the Spirit in your mind/thinking.” (See the references on the renewal of the mind/thinking under Eph. 4:17.) It takes the truth/Word of God plus the indwelling Spirit of God to enable us to have a renewed mind. Furthermore, as these verses confirm, we must do our part of submitting to, and cooperating with, the truth/Word of God and the Spirit of God (through faith) to have a renewed mind.], **(24) and put on the new self [man], which in the likeness of** [The NASB has these last three words in italics. A more literal translation would be, “in accordance with.” This “in accordance with” corresponds with the same words in 4:22. (The same Greek preposition, *kata*, is used in both verses.) Whereas the old

man was corrupt in accordance with the lusts of deceit/deception (which traces back to the lies of the devil, not the truth of God), the new man is a righteous and holy new creation in accordance with God and His truth, with the emphasis here on “the righteousness and holiness of [His] truth.” Colossians 3:10 speaks of Christians being renewed “according to [in accordance with] the image of the One who created him.” Genesis 1:26 shows that man was created in the image of God. 1 Corinthians 15:44-49 show that (through salvation in Christ) we are caught up into an existence much higher than what Adam had before the fall. Many aspects of this existence are yet future, but we are enabled, and required, to live/walk in the righteousness and holiness of God now.] **God has been created** [Compare the new creation of Eph. 2:5-10; 2 Cor. 5:17; and Col. 3:10, 11).] **in righteousness and holiness of the truth.** On truth, cf. Eph. 4:21. Ephesians 4:24 demonstrates the close relationship between holiness (and righteousness) and the truth of God, especially referring to the truth of the gospel of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ; the truth very much includes holiness (and righteousness). All truth, holiness, and righteousness come from God, as do all things that are good, including life, light, true love, and order. In John 17:11 Jesus prays to the Father, “Sanctify them in the truth; Thy Word is truth.” Christians must be set apart to, and living in line with, God’s truth. His truth (which includes His gospel/moral law/commandments) regarding holiness (and righteousness) derives from God’s character, from what He is. Before leaving Eph. 4:22-24, I should point out that as chapter 4 continues, and on into chapters 5 and 6, Paul continues his exhortation to put off the sinful things of the old man and to put on the righteous and holy things associated with the new man. These following verses (see 4:25-5:7) confirm that Paul really believed, and taught, that Christians are enabled, and required, to once-for-all put off the old man and to live in the righteousness and holiness of God. Ephesians 4:25 starts, “Therefore, laying aside falsehood [using the same Greek verb for “lay aside/put off” that he used in 4:22]. It is clear that Paul wasn’t exhorting his Christian readers to gradually put off falsehood/lying. The same truth applies to all sin.

**7. CHRISTIANS ARE ENABLED, AND REQUIRED, TO DO THE WORKS REQUIRED ACCORDING TO GOD’S WORD/LAW/COMMANDMENTS** by His grace/Spirit through faith; the works aren’t optional. For one thing, it’s significant that we’ll be judged according to our works. (See on Rom. 2:6-13, especially under 2:6, in the discussion of Rom. 2:1-16 earlier in this paper.) Those “Christians” who are characterized by sinful works will not inherit eternal life (cf., e.g., Matt. 7:21-23; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21; and Eph. 5:3-7).

Acts 26:20. **but [the apostle Paul] kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds [works] appropriate to repentance.** [Cf. Matt. 3:7-10.]

Ephesians 2:10. **For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.** [Our good works/righteous works (which go with our walk in righteousness and holiness) can be considered the bottom line of Christianity (cf., e.g., Rom. 8:4 and all the verses listed in

this section); however, it must be understood that our good works are, in a very real sense, the work of God, since “we are His workmanship,” through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the work of the Holy Spirit, and He must receive all the glory for our good works. Our part is faith, faith in God and faith in the gospel; there is no such thing as saving faith in Christ that doesn’t work (yielding good works) by God’s grace/Spirit (cf., e.g., Gal. 5:6; James 2:14-26). Ephesians 2:1-10; Gal. 5:6; and James 2:14-26 are discussed in my *A Paper on Faith*.]

**Titus 1:15, 16. To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving [Faith/believing without righteous works (a life of righteousness) is dead; it isn’t real faith.], nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. (16) They profess to know God, but by their deeds [works] they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient, and worthless for any good deed [work].**

**Titus 2:14. who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed [or, from all lawlessness] and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds [works].** This verse is discussed with Titus 2:11-13 (important verses for this study) on pages 123-125 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

**Revelation 2:1-7; 3:1-6, 14-22.** These verses are of awesome significance. In these verses the Lord Jesus Christ is speaking to literal churches about AD 95. (What He says to these Christians is applicable to every Christian of every generation that is in the same situation.) Much of what He says to those Christians is so negative it’s shocking. He says to many of them that if they don’t repent and do the proper/necessary works, they will cease being His people. For a discussion of these awesome verses see pages 11-14 of my paper, *Once Saved, Always Saved?* I’ll quote a few key verses here, Rev. 2:4, 5; 3:1b-3a, 15, 16: **(Rev. 2:4) But I have this against you, that you have left your first love, (5) Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds [works] you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place – unless you repent. [If He removes the lampstand from a church, that church will no longer be His church.] ... (3:1b-3a) I know your deeds [works] that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead [The next verse shows that they weren’t quite dead yet, but that they had a gigantic need to repent at once.] (2) Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds [works] completed in the sight of My God. (3) So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you [in judgment]. ... (15) I know your deeds [works], that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. (16) So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.**

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and do the proper/necessary works, they will cease being His people. For a discussion of these awesome verses see my paper “Once Saved, Always Saved?”

Some Other Verses that Will Help Us Understand Works: Matt. 5:16; 23:5; Mark 13:34 (“task” equals “work”); Rom. 8:13; 15:18; 2 Cor. 11:15; Gal. 3:10; Phil. 1:6; Col. 1:10; 3:9; 1 Tim. 6:17-19; 2 Tim. 2:21; 3:17; Titus 3:1-3, 8; Heb. 6:1; 9:14; 10:24; James 2:14-26; 1 Pet. 2:11, 12; 1 John 3:8 (see pages 210-213 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* on 1 John 3:5, 8.); and Rev. 14:13.

**8. DOESN'T THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACH THAT THE MOSAIC/OLD COVENANT LAW HAS BEEN SET ASIDE AND THAT CHRISTIANS AREN'T UNDER THIS LAW? AND DOESN'T IT TEACH THAT NO ONE WILL BE JUSTIFIED/SAVED BY DOING WORKS OF THE LAW?** It is desperately important that we have balanced Biblical answers to these (and similar) questions.

Quite a few verses show that the Mosaic/old-covenant Law has been set aside and that Christians aren't under this Law: See Rom. 3:21; 6:14, 15; 7:4, 6 [see my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* on all these verses]; 10:4 [see my *A Paper on Faith*]; 1 Cor. 9:20; Gal. 2:19; 3:25 [discussed in my *A Paper on Faith*]; Gal. 4:21; 5:18; Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 2:14; and Heb. 7:12; 8:1-13; and 10:1, 8, 9. Each verse listed here is from epistles by the apostle Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (with the exception of those from Hebrews; I don't believe Paul wrote Hebrews, but it apparently was written by someone associated with him [cf., e.g., Heb. 13:23]; Apollos and Luke, for example, have been suggested as possible writers; of the two, Apollos seems a much more likely candidate). Paul had to fully face the issue of the setting aside of the Mosaic/old-covenant Law before the rest of the apostles because of revelation he received from God and because of his particular ministry.

It's very important to observe that none of the verses listed in the preceding paragraph contain any idea of setting aside God's moral requirements (His moral law/commandments) for man, whether they are found in the Old Testament or the New. These requirements derive from the very character of God and reflect His viewpoint (the only important viewpoint) regarding how man is to think and live. When these verses are studied in their contexts (and in the light of the entire New Testament), they show that (rather than setting aside God's moral requirements for His people) now, in the new covenant, we have been set free from the authority and power of sin and spiritual death and have been enabled (by God's grace/Spirit) to live in the righteousness and holiness of God, thereby (through faith) obeying His moral requirements set forth in the Old Testament and the New Testament. The preceding six sections of this paper substantiate what I have said in this paragraph.

A dominant theme that permeates most of the verses listed in the first paragraph of this section is that the old covenant, which was established on the Mosaic Law, had to be set aside so the far-superior new covenant could replace it. Also, there were factors that required Paul (and the writer of Hebrews) to deal with the setting aside of the Mosaic/old-covenant Law and the works of the Law. For one thing, Paul had to face the fact that Israel, for the most part, continued to reject Christ Jesus and the new covenant and to cling to the Mosaic Law and the old covenant. He had to help Israel see that this wasn't a viable option

now that Christ had come and had been crucified and raised from the dead. One major point Paul made in the context of dealing with the Jews (and the Judaizers) was that no one will be justified/saved through doing works of the Law. (See Rom. 3:20, 28-30; 10:3; Gal. 2:16; and 3:10-14, 21. The main point Paul makes in these verses is that no one will be justified/saved by the works of the Law because no one [apart from God's saving grace in Christ] has the ability to fully keep God's moral law. As we have shown throughout this paper, Christians are enabled, and required, to keep God's moral law, clearly excluding the ceremonial/non-moral parts of the old-covenant Law.)

For another thing, Paul had to show that the Judaizers were wrong; they were substantially distorting the gospel and tearing up the Gentile churches (churches that contained Gentile Christians) by trying to bring ceremonial works of the Law (like circumcision) into the new covenant (cf., e.g., Acts 15:1-31; Gal. 2:11-21; 5:2-6; and Col. 2:16-23). Paul made other important points relevant to the setting aside of works of the Law/flesh. I'll list two such points in the following two paragraphs:

Paul was against man's doing works of the flesh (including works of Law), for the glory of man (instead of for the glory of God). (See Rom. 3:27, 28; 4:2; Gal. 6:14, 15; Eph. 2:9; and 1 Cor. 1:29-31.) All boasting in man is excluded by the new covenant, not that boasting in man was legitimate under the old covenant, but the emphasis on works of the Law under the old covenant, and, more importantly, the greatly reduced role of the grace/Spirit of God under the old covenant, rendered those under the Law/works of the Law more susceptible to boasting in man and what he has done. Even if we're not looking for our own glory, we'll fail in our Christian walk to the extent we're ignorant of the balanced truth of the gospel and to the extent we're not walking in the Spirit through faith.

Paul was against man's trying to earn/merit justification/salvation (or anything else) by doing works of the Law/flesh. See, e.g., Rom. 4:4; 11:6; Eph. 2:8-10; 2 Tim. 1:9; and Titus 3:5-8 (discussed on pages 125-128 in *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*). The New Testament makes it very clear that we are justified, saved, sanctified, healed, etc. *by grace* through faith. The new covenant is set up such that all our good works are produced by the grace/Spirit of God, as we walk after the Spirit through faith. God gets all the glory!

9. LEGALISM. As I mentioned in the Introduction, the charge of legalism is often a false charge coming from those who deny that Christians are required to keep God's moral law, or from those putting all the emphasis on forgiveness and right-standing with God. We also discussed some things that aren't legalism in the Introduction.

It's legalism for Christians to the extent we put the emphasis on the law/works of the law instead of putting the emphasis on God the Father, Christ Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the gospel, grace, and faith. The emphasis must be on our relationship with God (as His born-again children) and on our submission to the gospel in humble faith; we must love God and worship and serve Him from the heart (being enabled by His grace/Spirit). We're called to be children of God, not lawyers (spending all our time studying God's law); this doesn't mean, however that we aren't responsible to make it a top priority to learn what God requires of us in His law. The will of God typically isn't all that difficult to discern for born-again Christians who love God, who make Him and His Word top priority, and who walk in/by/after the Holy Spirit through faith. As I mentioned in my *A Paper on Faith*, I believe we could learn enough from hearing the apostle Paul for a few hours to live a

successful Christian life. Of course we want to continue to grow in knowledge, wisdom, and godliness.

It's legalism to the extent we try to be saved (we try to earn salvation) by law/works of the Law—by striving in the flesh—instead of being saved by the grace/Spirit of God. We must approach the law, the commandments, obedience to God and His law, righteousness, holiness, and works of the law from the solid foundation of being born again and knowing that we're enabled to live right (to live in the will of God) by God's grace/Spirit through faith (faith in God/Christ/the gospel). To the extent we're into legalism it's a sure sign we aren't walking in/by/after the Spirit through faith. However, we can't walk in faith and walk after the Spirit to the extent we don't know and understand the gospel, or to the extent we are doubting the gospel. I recommend studying the Chart (in my *A Paper on Faith*) that deals with the meaning of, and interaction between, key New Testament words and concepts like faith not works, promise not Law, grace not merit, Spirit not flesh, work of God not work of man, and boasting in God not boasting in man.

Legalism yields self-righteousness (cf. Phil. 3:9), pride, and boasting in man (because we are keeping God's law; that, is we think we are) instead of humility and a heart full of gratitude to God. (There's no doubt we can keep some of God's commandments without the grace of God in Christ, but before we congratulate ourselves and get into self-righteousness, we must understand that we are required to keep all God's commandments.) Self-righteousness demonstrates at least two things. For one thing, it demonstrates we're not adequately understanding and walking in the truth of the gospel. All true righteousness (and holiness) comes from God by grace (which includes all the work of the Spirit) through faith in God and His Son and the gospel (which teaches of God's saving gift to us through the atoning death and resurrection of His Son). God's righteousness is imparted to us, and we have absolutely nothing to boast about in ourselves; God must receive all the glory. Self-righteousness also demonstrates that we've lowered the standard for God's definition of righteousness (His definition is the only one that matters): To the extent we're self-righteous, we're deceived and we're not really walking in the truth of the gospel (as discussed under the first point); therefore the grace/Spirit of God won't be available (at least not fully available) to enable us to really be righteous; therefore, if we're self-righteous it demonstrates that we've somehow lowered God's standard of righteousness, and we just think we're righteous.

Self-righteousness is rather common amongst Christians, and we all need to check up on ourselves. (If we can have pride, for example, we can have self-righteousness.) We can have quite a bit of self-righteousness even if we're sincere born-again Christians and even if we're frequently bothered with feelings of guilt. One way that legalism (and self-righteousness) manifests itself is that a church (or an individual Christian) makes up a list of commandments (things to do and not to do), typically mostly dealing with external things (things like not going to movies, or watching TV, or dancing, or eating pork, or drinking wine, or coffee, tea, or soft drinks, or wearing jewelry, or using cosmetics, or going to sporting events on Sunday, etc.) rather than things like priorities, attitudes, motives, and walking in love. We are required to keep all of God's moral law before God, by His grace and for His glory.

Quite often some of the things on such lists (whether they're actually written down or not is beside the point; they're understood by the church, or the individual) aren't required according to the Bible. It's OK for Christians to decide that they'll do things before God

not required by the Bible, or give up legitimate things, but it's wrong if it leads to self-righteousness and pride, or to the judging of other Christians who don't follow their rules/laws. Many things that become part of lists of things to do and not to do are often commendable, even though they're not required according to the Bible; I assume God is pleased with such acts when they're done for His glory with right motives.

#### Quotations Dealing with Legalism and a Few Other Matters Relevant to This Paper.

First I'll quote from George E. Ladd, from his chapter titled "The Law" (*Systematic Theology* [Eerdmans, 1974], pages 495-510). The first quotation is from a section titled "The Background of Paul's Thought About the Law." "The heart of Old Testament religion cannot be characterized as legalism, nor was the Law given as the means of achieving right relationship with God by obedience. On the contrary, the context of the Law was the covenant that preceded and underlay the Law; and the covenant was initiated by the gracious act of God. Israel was constituted God's people not because of merit gained by obedience to the Law, but because of God's free election. ... The Law was given as the means of binding Israel to her God. Obedience to the Law did not constitute Israel God's people; rather, it provided Israel with a standard for obedience by which the covenant relationship must be preserved. ... The reward for obedience to the Law was preservation of the positive relationship to Yahweh. ... Furthermore, the obedience demanded by the Law could not be satisfied by a mere legalism, for the Law itself demanded love for God (Deut. 6:5; 10:12) and for neighbor (Lev. 19:18). Obedience to the Law was an expression of trust in God; and only those who offered God such trust were really his people."

I'll also quote a few sentences from his last section titled "The Permanence of the Law" even though he's not dealing with legalism. "It is clear that the Law continues to be the expression of the will of God for conduct, even for those who are no longer under the Law [Christians]. It is quite clear, however, that the permanent aspect of the Law is the ethical and not the ceremonial. ... the law as the expression of the will of God is permanent; and the man indwelt by the Holy Spirit and thus energized by love is enabled to fulfill the Law as men under the Law never could."

Now I'll quote from Thomas R. Schreiner (*The Law and Its Fulfillment: A Pauline Theology of Law* [Baker, 1993]). I just read this book for the first time, and I am quite impressed with it. First I'll quote from his chapter titled "The Fulfillment of the Law by Christians." The first quotation from this chapter comes in the section titled "Do Concrete Commands Squelch Love and the Holy Spirit?" (pages 147, 148). "Some scholars have described the ethical statements of Paul in misleading terms. They trumpet love as the center of the Pauline ethic, and suggest that any focus on ethical norms or law somehow diminishes love or squelches spontaneous dependence upon the Spirit. ... The exhortation to obey specific commandments is not contrary to love. Neither do the commandments quench life in the Spirit, for the Spirit uses the commandments to inform believers about what is required. ...."

I'll also quote from his next section titled "The Call to Fulfill the Law" (pages 149, 150). "Love must remain the priority so that obedience to commandments does not degenerate into external fulfillment without the transformation of the heart by the Holy Spirit."

Nevertheless, specific commandments are necessary. People tend to be sentimental so that love is shaped to fit whatever lifestyle they prefer.” In a footnote here he says, “Charles E. B. Cranfield...perceptively says that we ‘need the particular commandments into which the law breaks down...to save us from the sentimentality and self-deception to which we all are prone.’ ”

Next I’ll quote a few sentences dealing with legalism from pages 211, 212. “... Some people view any call to obedience and righteousness as legalistic. The Gospel writers do not criticize the religious leaders of Judaism for their concern with keeping the law in the particular areas of everyday life. They rebuke them because relatively minor matters take on more significance than do major issues. In addition, the religious leaders demanded obedience to laws not contained in the Scriptures but in their traditions.”

Then on page 243, “the attempt to gain right-standing before God on the basis of good works is a fundamental human problem. Human beings often think they deserve eternal life because they are fundamentally good, or at least good enough to deserve entrance into the kingdom. The root problem in legalism is pride. Pride and egocentricity are characteristic of all peoples and racial groups.”

Lastly I’ll include an excerpt from Schreiner not dealing with legalism but with the Mosaic Law and Christianity (pages 170, 171), “... The most reasonable conclusion is that the moral norms or absolutes of the law still obligate Christians. When Paul speaks of ‘keeping God’s commandments’ (1 Cor. 7:19) or the ‘ordinances of the law’ (Rom. 2:26), he thinks of the moral norms of the law, which believers are enabled to keep by the power of the Holy Spirit. ...

On the other hand, Paul still insists that the Mosaic covenant has passed away, even though the moral norms or absolutes of that covenant remain in force. The Mosaic covenant was intended for an interim period in salvation history....”

## APPENDIX

LAW AND GOSPEL. I’ll quote from *A History of Christian Thought*, Vol. 3 (Abingdon, 1975) by Justo L. Gonzalez. (I’m just including a small part of the quotations here that I had in the original paper.)

Martin Luther (AD 1483-1546). This first quotation is from pages 46-48 under the heading “Law and Gospel.” “... The gospel liberates us from the law, not by enabling us to fulfill the law, but by declaring it fulfilled for us. [I consider this to be a serious misunderstanding of the gospel, as this paper demonstrates.] ‘The gospel proclaims nothing else but salvation by grace, given to man without any works and merits whatsoever.’ [[Yes, but to the extent we really understand the gospel and walk in the Spirit by faith, we will produce the works of righteousness. We are made holy by God’s grace, even as we are forgiven by His grace. There is, therefore, no merit in the works of a Christian. I should mention, as Gonzalez does at the end of this quotation on Luther, that Luther did speak of a transformation that takes place in regenerated Christians through the Holy Spirit, but nothing close to the idea of Christians living with victory over sin in this life.]] ... Although justified, we are still sinners, and the word of God still shows us our condition. The difference is that now we need not despair, for we know that, in spite of our

wretchedness, God accepts us. We can then truly repent of our sins without attempting to cover them up, either by denying them or by trusting in our own nature. [I can appreciate some of this, but how about trusting in God's saving/sanctifying power to stop sinning?] ....”

Before leaving Gonzalez on Luther, I'll include an excerpt from page 52. “The notion of imputed justification results in the assertion that a Christian is at once justified [righteous] and a sinner—simul justus et peccator [in Latin]. ... Justification does not mean that we are made perfect or that we cease to sin. This Luther takes to be Paul's experience, as described in Romans 7. [In this is a serious misunderstanding of Romans chapter 7. See pages 104-115 in my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin* on Romans 7, and see my paper on the interpretation of Romans chapter 7.] ... ..this does not mean—as has often been claimed in caricatures of Luther's thought—that justification means nothing for the actual life of the Christian. ....”

Ulrich Zwingli (AD 1484-1531). Here I'll quote part of what Gonzalez says regarding Zwingli and the law and gospel from pages 70, 71. (On page 63 he calls Zwingli the earliest theologian in the Reformed tradition. The section in this Appendix titled the “Reformed Tradition” will help the reader understand this tradition, and Calvin's place in it.) “... [Zwingli] insists much more than Luther on the objective result of the gospel, making us whole and able to obey the law. ‘It would have been laughable if He to whom everything that is ever to be is seen as present had determined to deliver man at so great a cost, and yet had intended to allow him immediately after his deliverance to wallow in his old sins. He [God] proclaims, therefore, at the start, that our lives and characters must be changed.’ [It seems clear that Zwingli put more emphasis on the transformed life than Luther did; however, Zwingli did not teach that Christians are so transformed that they stop sinning in this life. See R. Seeburg (*History of Doctrines*, Vol. 2 [Baker, 1977], page 311).]

... The will of God is always the same, and it has been revealed in the law. The function of the gospel, then, is to liberate us from the consequences of our having broken the law and to enable us to obey it.”

John Calvin (AD 1509-1564). On page 93 Gonzalez says Calvin became heir to Zwingli's reformation, and the two may be said to be the founders of the Reformed tradition. Calvin was young (about twenty-two) when Zwingli died. Here I'll quote part of what Gonzalez says regarding Calvin and the law from pages 133, 134 and 143.

“... In truth, the law cannot be abolished, for it expresses the will of God, which never changes. What has been abolished, besides the curse of the moral law, is the ceremonial law. ....”

Then on page 143 Gonzalez says, “Thus we see once again...how Calvin's understanding of law and gospel, being different from Luther's, produces in him a greater emphasis than Luther's on the kind of life that a Christian must lead. ....”

#### More on the Lutheran and Calvinistic Views of the Law

I'm quoting from Bengt Hagglund (*History of Theology*; translated from the Swedish edition by Gene Lund); the English edition (1968) was published at the Lutheran (Missouri

Synod) Concordia Publishing House in St. Louis. The first two excerpts deal with Luther's theology.

"The Mosaic law, in the jurisdictional [having authority] sense, was abolished through Christ" (page 222). This doesn't mean that Luther didn't see any present use for God's law, as the preceding quotation regarding Luther (from Gonzalez) and this next quotation (from Hagglund) demonstrate: "The Law tells what we are to do, under the threat of punishment. ... One task of the Law is to compel men to act, to promote the good and prevent the evil. As such it therefore includes all public order and activity on the different levels of life. Luther called this the civil use of the Law.... But when it comes to a man's relation to God.... ...the function of the Law is simply to reveal sin and to make the threat of wrath real – the wrath under which man stands because of his sinful nature. [The Law thus points men to the Gospel, through which forgiveness is provided.] Luther called this the theological or the spiritual use of the Law..." (page 224).

Next I'll include an excerpt regarding Melancthon (a key Lutheran leader, AD 1497-1560) on the Law and the third use of the Law: "The Law has a somewhat different position in Melancthon's theology than in Luther's. [Melancthon] looked upon the Law as a divine, unchangeable order, to which man is obligated. ... Melancthon added a third [use of the Law to the two uses mentioned by Luther (the civil and theological uses)]. By this he meant that even the regenerate are under obligation to the Law, and in the preaching of the Law find a norm and rule of conduct for their lives. They need the Law for support and guidance, for they are afflicted with weakness and fall easily" (page 252). Luther left some room for Christians to use the Mosaic Law to learn the will of God. (See R. Seeburg, *History of Doctrines*, Vol. 2, pages 249, 250.) As I understand it, Lutherans in our day accept the third use of the law, but they typically put less emphasis on this use of the law (and especially this use of the Old Testament law) than Calvinists do.

Where I differ with the typical Calvinistic viewpoint is that they (with the Lutherans) put great emphasis on imputed (but not imparted) righteousness, and they insist (with the Lutherans) that Christians cannot stop sinning and live in righteousness in this life. They typically speak of a sanctifying process (where the amount of sin is decreasing) but not of Christians actually living in an abiding state of holiness by God's sufficient grace. The Calvinists, with the Lutherans (back to Martin Luther and John Calvin) typically use several passages of Scripture (starting with Rom. 7:14-25; 1 John 1:8; and Gal. 5:17) to try to back up the idea that victory over sin is not possible for Christians in this life. See the section titled "A Discussion of the Three Most Important Passages of Scripture Often Used To Try To Prove that Christians Cannot Walk in Victory Over Sin During This Present Age," starting on page 194 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

REFORMED TRADITION. I'll quote again from Hagglund, from his first paragraph in a chapter titled "Reformed Theology to and Including the Synod of Dort, 1618-19." "Only gradually did John Calvin become the dominant figure in the Christian tradition which is often named after him. The expression 'Calvinist,' in fact, was coined by the Lutheran opposition during the 16th century, while the church groups which accepted a Calvinistic confession usually called themselves 'Reformed.' ... Many of the Reformed theologians

were relatively independent of Calvin. Heinrich Bullinger, for example, Zwingli's successor in Zurich, was influenced in particular by Zwingli and by the Wittenberg theologians [Lutherans], and he combined elements from both sources. ..." (page 267).

DISPENSATIONAL ANTINOMIANISM. In this section I'll quote from two books by John MacArthur that deal with the lordship salvation debate. First I'll quote from *Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles* (Word, 1993).

"Appendix 2 explains dispensationalism and why it is at the heart of the lordship debate. ...one arm of the dispensationalist movement has developed and defended no-lordship doctrine. [MacArthur, by the way, is a dispensationalist.] Their influence on the evangelical culture has been widespread. ... Every prominent figure on the no-lordship side descends from Dr. Chafer's spiritual lineage. Though Dr. Chafer did not invent or originate any of the key elements of no-lordship teaching, he codified the system of dispensationalism on which all contemporary no-lordship doctrine is founded" (pages 34, 35). I don't have the dates for Dr. Chafer, but his books that I know of are dated from 1918 through 1947. He was a founder of Dallas Theological Seminary.

"Contemporary no-lordship doctrine is nothing but latter-day antinomianism. [[MacArthur points out that most no-lordship advocates object to being called antinomians because the term, as understood by many, includes the ideas of disregard for moral issues and a disdain for holiness. However, as we continue, this quotation will show that MacArthur, by using the term antinomianism, doesn't infer a necessary disregard for moral issues or a necessary disdain for holiness.]] ... Most antinomians [at least the antinomians MacArthur is dealing with] vigorously appeal for Christians to walk in a manner worthy of their calling [Dr. Chafer was part of the Victorious Life/Higher Life movement of his day.]; but at the same time they minimize the relationship between obedience and faith. [True Christian faith includes obedience; see my *A Paper on Faith*.] Antinomians typically believe Christians *should* yield to the lordship of Christ; they just do not believe surrender is a binding requirement in the gospel call to faith. Antinomians do not necessarily despise the law of God; they simply believe it is irrelevant to saving faith. ... Clearly, no-lordship theology *does* make obedience optional. And that is what makes no-lordship theology antinomian.

... Antinomians minimize sanctification or even render it noncompulsory. Antinomian discussions of salvation typically omit any consideration of practical holiness. They emphasize justification by faith and Christian freedom to such an extent that they become unbalanced, fearful of talking about personal righteousness, obedience, the law of God, or anything but the purely forensic [legal; right standing before God the Judge] aspects of salvation" (pages 94-96).

"Most dispensationalists who have bought into no-lordship doctrine imagine...that law and grace are mutually exclusive opposites.... Grace becomes the antithesis of law, providing the basis for a system that is inherently antinomian. [As we have discussed, the grace of God enables Christians to fulfill God's moral law. From this point of view, grace and law certainly aren't "mutually exclusive opposites."] ...Chafer believed grace delivers the child of God 'from every aspect of the law—as a rule of life, as an obligation to make himself

acceptable to God....’ ‘Grace teachings are not *laws*; they are *suggestions*. They are not *demands*; they are *beseachings*,’ he wrote” (pages 225-227).

More on Dispensational Antinomianism and the No-Lordship Viewpoint. I’ll quote again from John MacArthur, from a different book, *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Zondervan, 1988).

“...I have become acutely aware that most of modern evangelism...falls far short of presenting the biblical evangel in a balanced and biblical way. ... The gospel in vogue today holds forth a false hope to sinners. It promises them they can have eternal life yet continue to live in rebellion against God. ... It offers false security to people who revel in the sins of the flesh and spurn the way of holiness. [Very often they haven’t even heard of the “way of holiness,” but ignorance of the truth isn’t a valid excuse; however, those in leadership are responsible before God to learn, and teach, the full truth.] ... This new gospel has spawned a generation of professing Christians whose behavior often is indistinguishable from the rebellion of the unregenerate” (pages 15, 16).

“...loud voices from the dispensational camp are putting forth the teaching that it is possible to reject Christ as Lord and yet receive Him as Savior [hence, “no-lordship salvation”]. ... They make the incredible claim that any other teaching amounts to a false gospel ‘because it subtly adds to the clear and simple condition set forth in the Word of God [speaking of the condition of faith, but faith understood in a shallow, unsatisfactory sense that doesn’t include submission to God/Christ and obedience to the gospel]’ ” (pages 27, 28).

“Much of contemporary evangelism is woefully deficient in confronting people with the reality of their sin. ... Evangelism must...measure [the sinner] against the perfect law of God so he can see his deficiency. A gospel that deals only with human need, only with human feelings, only with human problems, lacks the true balance. That is why churches are full of people whose lives are essentially unchanged after their supposed conversion. Most of these people, I am convinced, are unregenerate and grievously misled” (pages 83, 84).

“The teaching that Christians are freed from observing any moral law is rampant in today’s evangelical community” (page 190).

“Everyone who receives Him [as Savior] must surrender to His authority [as Lord], for to say we receive Christ when in fact we reject His right to reign over us is utter absurdity. It is a futile attempt to hold onto sin with one hand and take Jesus with the other. What kind of salvation is it if we are left in bondage to sin?” (page 210).

It is necessary for me to mention at least two further points that MacArthur makes in these books to adequately present his viewpoint. First, throughout these books, MacArthur (a Calvinist) repeatedly states that he doesn’t believe Christians can ever stop sinning during this age, and he refers to several passages of Scripture to (supposedly) prove this point, including 1 John 1:8 and Romans chapter 7, especially Romans 7. (See the last paragraph

in the section above in this Appendix titled “More on the Lutheran and Calvinistic Views of the Law.”) And, second, MacArthur makes the point that the faith of Christians is a gift of God. (I believe this view misses the balance of what the Bible teaches; see my *A Paper on Faith*.)

FURTHER QUOTATIONS DEALING WITH THE STATE OF THE CHURCH IN OUR DAY. I’ll quote from another book by John MacArthur, *The Vanishing Conscience: Drawing the Line in a No-Fault, Guilt-Free World* (Word, 1994).

“We live in a culture that has elevated pride to the status of a virtue. Self-esteem, positive feelings, and personal dignity are what our society encourages people to seek. At the same time, moral responsibility is being replaced by victimism, which teaches people to blame someone else for their personal failures and iniquities. ... The church has been far too willing to embrace the fads of worldly opinion—particularly in the area of psychology and self-esteem. ....

Nowhere has the damage registered more than in the way professing Christians deal with their own sin. ... The church as a whole is growing less concerned with sin, and more obsessed with self-exoneration and self-esteem. ... More and more are attempting to explain the human dilemma in wholly unbiblical terms: temperament, addiction, dysfunctional families, the child within, codependency, and a host of other irresponsible escape mechanisms promoted by secular psychology” (page 11).

“Twenty years ago [1973] psychiatrist Karl Menninger wrote a landmark book titled *Whatever Became of Sin?* Menninger...saw clearly the folly of treating social and behavioral problems as if their causes were all utterly non-moral. He pointed out that modern psychology’s approach—making guilt an aberration and treating self-blame as a fallacy—in effect absolves people from any moral responsibility for their behavior. That, Menninger said, eats at the fabric of the soul and society. He added that we desperately need to recover the conviction that certain behavior is *sinful*. ...” (pages 32, 33).

“We don’t hear much about fearing God these days. ... How much easier it is to speak of God’s love and infinite mercy. But longsuffering, kindness, and such attributes aren’t the truths that are missing from most people’s concept of God. The problem is that most people don’t think of God as Someone to be *feared*. They don’t realize that He hates the proud and punishes evildoers. They presume on His grace. They fear what people think more than they care what God thinks. ...” page 100).

May God’s will be fully accomplished through this paper!

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