

**Some Comments on *Destined to Reign* by Joseph Prince
and a Discussion on the Topic of Righteousness
Holiness and the Victory Over Sin**

by Karl Kemp; May, 2011

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I recently decided that I should order a copy of this book, which was published by Harrison House, copyright © 2007, after talking with a Christian friend who has been watching Joseph Prince's TV program. I have seen parts of his TV program several times over the past several years. The sub-title of this book is "The Secret to Effortless Success, Wholeness and Victorious Living." It's true that God carries the load by His grace, but I believe it goes rather far beyond the teaching of the New Testament to speak of these things being "effortless." We are in a war zone with the world, the flesh (the old man that still wants to live in sin), and the devil and his hosts against us. To the extent we put God first and walk in His righteousness and holiness (which we are enabled, and required, to do), we will meet opposition, but we are called to victory, and we can have peace (a supernatural peace) even while living in a war zone.

I definitely am not writing this paper to attack Joseph Prince, not at all. I respect him as a sincere evangelical Christian pastor, who loves God and His Word, who wants to live for Him and to be a great blessing to the members of his very large church in Singapore and to Christians around the world. I am quite sure that he has helped many people become Christians and to grow in Christ. He will especially help people who are legalistic and have little understanding of the magnificent, super-abounding grace of God in Christ. He has a great desire to bless such people because, for one thing, he came from a Christian background that left him afraid that he had committed the unpardonable sin and afraid that he would lose his mind. His background undoubtedly had a very strong influence on what he is teaching now.

I will interact with Joseph's book throughout this paper, very often disagreeing with things that he says (and many of these things are quite important), but my primary goal for this paper is to demonstrate that the New Testament teaches the good news that God has called, enabled, and requires us to walk in His righteousness and holiness, by His sufficient, saving, purifying, grace in Christ, with the victory over all sin. (My highest goal for this paper is that it be pleasing to the One who sent His Son to save us.) This is the ideal, and the New Testament doesn't present it as an unrealistic or unattainable ideal. I have been studying this topic more than any other for more than forty-five years, and I have been making it a priority to try to live in the righteousness and holiness of God by His grace. The desire of my heart is that this paper will prove to be a great blessing to a large number of Christians, as many as possible, hopefully including many of the people Joseph has influenced and Joseph himself.

The end result that Joseph wants is right, and I totally agree with him on that point. He says quite often in this book that he is against all sin and that he believes that if we walk in the grace of God, we can walk with the victory over sin.

Even if you think I am overstating the case that God has called, enabled, and requires us to walk in His righteousness and holiness with the victory over all sin by His sanctifying grace in Christ by faith, that will not prevent your being able to follow the important discussions throughout this paper where I interact with quite a few things that Joseph says in this book, especially the interpretation of key passages of the New Testament and the meaning of the word “righteousness.” Also, I suspect you might just begin to see that God—according to the Bible—has provided more sanctifying grace, and called you to a higher level of victory over sin, than you had realized. The fact that God has set us free from spiritual death and bondage to sin, and calls, and enables, us to walk in His righteousness and holiness through the atoning death of His Son, and by His Holy Spirit, is very good news! This is transformation by grace, not condemnation!

What true Christian wants to continue in sin? All of us must humble ourselves and make it a top priority to seek God for the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches on every topic, and some topics are more important than others. The topics we discuss in this paper are very important. Every wrong interpretation of the Bible hurts, and some are catastrophic.

One primary reason I decided to write this paper is that, from my point of view (and very many others), Joseph quite often misinterprets key passages of the New Testament and substantially confuses the issue. I realize that many will agree with Joseph some of the places where I disagree with him. All of us must seek God for the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. We are all going to have to answer to Him, and especially ministers. We desperately need to rightly divide God’s Word and to teach the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. One big problem we have in the body of Christ (and among mankind in general) is that when Christians react to a teaching that is out of balance in one direction, they very often overreact and end up going out of balance in the other direction, sometimes farther out of balance in the other direction. (We must be aware of this tendency and to do everything we can do to avoid doing it.) It seems clear to me that Joseph has unintentionally done quite a bit of this.

One major problem that comes up again and again throughout this book is a super-strong emphasis on positional righteousness and holiness. Many Christian ministers go way too far with positional righteousness in our day, but Joseph seems to go farther than most of them. I’ll briefly list in this paragraph some of the teachings in this book that I have a problem with. We will discuss these teachings in some detail throughout this paper. I consider some of these teachings to be extreme and far from the balanced truth of what the New Testament teaches. I believe most Christians will agree that at least most of these teachings are extreme. Joseph says Christians (true Christians) are automatically righteous and holy.¹ He argues against what “conventional theology” teaches, that the New Testament speaks of a “practical righteousness,” where the word righteousness is used of doing right and keeping God’s law. “You are either righteous or you are not. There is no such thing as first having ‘positional righteousness’ and then having to maintain that through ‘practical righteousness.’ You are the righteousness of God in

¹ “When you receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you are made holy and righteous by His blood once for all” (page 12). “God sees you as righteous as Jesus himself” (page 18).

Christ, period!” (page 27).² Joseph says the Holy Spirit never convicts of sin; He convicts us our righteousness (positional righteousness).³ Joseph says that the New Testament teaches that Christ fulfilled the law for us; it does not teach that we are required to keep God’s moral law.⁴ He doesn’t think we should preach on the need for Christians to repent,⁵ and he teaches that the prodigal son did not repent.⁶ When you became a Christian, you were perfected forever, and God is necessarily well pleased with you because you are in Christ.⁷ Joseph says it produces negative results to preach a series on the Ten Commandments, and he says “the Ten Commandments have been made obsolete” (page 122).⁸ Joseph doesn’t believe that Christians need to confess their sins to be forgiven.⁹ He quotes from D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, a well respected evangelical scholar, to confirm what he says in this book, but as I demonstrate, if you keep on reading in Lloyd-Jones book, you find out that he actually disagreed with a big part of what Joseph says.¹⁰

Frequently when I have seen Joseph on his TV programs, which I haven’t watched very much, I have winced. I had the same feeling quite often as I read this book. But now I at least have a better understanding of where he is coming from. For one thing, he is very honest about his background. His Christian background had a lot of legalism, and he was a very sensitive young man. He was desperately striving, mostly in his own strength, to be righteous; he was always confessing sin; and he lived for a time under the terror of believing that he had committed the unpardonable sin and being convinced that he was going to hell (pages 89, 90). I’ll quote a few sentences from page 90, “I felt like I was losing my mind and was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. My mind literally felt like it was about to snap, and I became so afraid that I would be committed to a mental institution.” I’ll quote a sentence from page 160, “I was relentlessly bombarded with feelings of guilt and condemnation until I felt like my mind was about to snap.”

² See pages 22-24 of this paper.

³ See pages 34-37 of this paper.

⁴ “Christianity cannot be reduced to an impersonal list of do’s and don’ts [commandments of the law]. Jesus’ death has fulfilled the righteous requirements of the law of the old covenant. The Word of God tells us that the ‘handwriting of requirements’ has been nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14). Jesus came to fulfill all the requirements on our behalf, so that the way to God is now opened. Hallelujah! ... Jesus did not sweep the law under the carpet. He came and fulfilled every requirement of the law perfectly on our behalf. All that we were unable to do, His did on our behalf. So by Jesus, the law has been fulfilled” (page 13). I agree that in most ways we are not under the Mosaic Law, but Joseph includes the idea that Christ has fulfilled God’s (moral) law for us, so we aren’t required to do it. I believe the New Testament teaches that we are required to keep God’s moral law as I demonstrate in this paper.

⁵ See pages 8, 9 of this paper.

⁶ See pages 33, 34 of this paper.

⁷ “Right now [God] is well pleased with you because you are in Christ” (page 295).

⁸ See pages 30-32 of this paper.

⁹ See page 9 of this paper. On page 107 Joseph says, “If you really believe that you need to confess all your sins to be forgiven, do you know what you would be doing? You would be confessing your sins ALL THE TIME! [his emphasis] ...” I can’t imagine Christians sinning all that much. For one thing, Christians often call things sin that God doesn’t consider to be sin, and that doesn’t work for good. Having wrong thoughts or desires, which we reject and cast down in the power of the Holy Spirit, for example, are not sin. More importantly, like the apostle Paul said in Gal. 5:16, if we walk by the Holy Spirit, which we are called, enabled, and required to do, we won’t be sinning at all.

¹⁰ See pages 44-46 of this paper.

Joseph found the answer to his problem in the grace of God, but as it so often happens, he overreacted and missed the balanced truth of what the New Testament teaches by putting the emphasis on positional righteousness.

I'll give quite a few examples in this paper where it is clear to me that Joseph is misunderstanding what the New Testament teaches, at least in part because of his zeal to help people avoid what he faced as a young man. And he knows from experience as a pastor that many Christians in our day have similar problems: guilt feelings, feeling condemned, etc. I want to make it clear that I assume that Joseph lives a righteous life by the grace of God in spite of the errors. And I believe that many Christians, especially the type of people who are fully committed to God and His Word in their hearts and really do love Him and want to do His will at all times, will be blessed by Joseph's teaching.

On the other hand, I am confident that some (many) Christians (for example, those who tend to be worldly, fleshly, and it seems that a large number of Christians in our day are in that category) will be hurt by his teaching. From my point of view, Joseph is (unintentionally) offering them a low road to take, a road which is not authorized by the New Testament, a dangerous road to take. I suspect that most of the people in Joseph's church will understand that they are expected to avoid the low road and make it a priority to live for God by His grace, in accordance with His Word, and they will support one another in that direction, but I'm afraid that many of the people reading the book won't have that support and understanding.

Instead of being taught, with a strong, necessary emphasis, that the New Testament teaches that "[Jesus] bore our sins (with the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin) in His body on the cross, so we might die to sin and live to righteousness..." (1 Pet. 2:24), and that we are required to repent and walk by the Holy Spirit on a continuous basis in the righteousness and holiness of God, they are being taught that they are already righteous and holy and that they are not required to keep the commandments of God's law because Christ fulfilled it for them; they are not even required to confess their sins to be forgiven if they sin, and the Holy Spirit never convicts of sin; He convicts them of their (positional) righteousness; and preachers should not preach on the need for Christians to repent or preach a series on the Ten Commandments. Throughout this book Joseph spends most of his time teaching such things, which greatly confuse the issue, but from time to time he mentions that the goal of his teaching is to help Christians walk with the victory over sin by God's grace. I am trying to fairly and accurately report what Joseph says in this book. Admittedly, I am responding almost entirely to areas where I disagree with Joseph. I will not be able to cover all of those areas, and this paper is long enough as it is.

Essentially all Bible-believing Christians understand that Jesus died for us so that we could be forgiven, but one of the primary things that we are lacking in the gospel that is often being preached today is the strong emphasis in the New Testament on the fact that, because the Lamb of God died for us, bearing our sins with the guilt and the penalties (especially the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin), we have the privilege, but also the requirement, to be dead to sin and alive to God and His righteousness. Living in the righteousness and holiness of God by His grace *is required* of Christians. It is about ninety percent of what the gospel is all about.

God hates sin, and He has paid an infinite price in the sacrifice of His Son to set us free from spiritual death and bondage to sin. Through the sacrifice of His Son, He has poured out the promised Holy Spirit into our hearts, and as we walk by the Holy Spirit by grace through faith, in accordance with His Word, we will walk with the victory over all sin. As I mentioned, this is about ninety percent of what Christianity is all about. We desperately needed forgiveness, but that is about ten percent of what Christianity is all about. Joseph would agree that Christians can and should always walk in the grace of God, but he doesn't make it an obligation; he greatly confuses the issue and misinterprets *many* passages of the New Testament.

Joseph is right that God's commandments, if we are trying to keep them in our own strength, will keep us from the victory in Christ, but we are required to walk in the *imparted* righteousness and holiness of God, which includes living according to the commandments of His moral Law. God's commandments aren't an enemy or burdensome for those who are walking by the Holy Spirit. And again, walking by the Spirit in the righteousness and holiness of God on a continuous basis is part of what we sign up for (in faith) when we submit to God's plan of salvation. We cannot change the covenant! This isn't an optional matter! But this is good news (it isn't bad news) for those who want to come into divine order and stop being rebels against God's will. (Sin is rebellion against God.) The true gospel is good news indeed!

I don't doubt that Joseph wants to live in the center of God's will and that he wants to influence all Christians to do the same. On page 30, for example, he says in bold print, "I, Joseph Prince, am vehemently, completely, aggressively, and irrevocably, AGAINST SIN!" I believe he means it, but I am confident that his out-of-balance teaching will help a large number of Christians be content to take the low road and put all the emphasis on positional righteousness, even though this isn't an acceptable option for Christians, according to the New Testament. Most of the emphasis in this book is telling Christians what they want to hear, things like you are forgiven, you are righteous, you are holy, you are perfect by virtue of your being a Christian. And, besides that, there in no way you could lose your salvation.

There is no obligation for you to walk by the Spirit. There is no obligation for you to obey God and keep His commandments. Such things have nothing to do with God's love for you or your salvation. There is nothing you could do to increase His love for you, or to decrease it. I have been observing for many years the effect such teaching has on many Christians. More importantly I have been studying this topic more than any other topic for more than forty years, and I will go on record that frequently Joseph misses the balanced truth of what the New Testament teaches.

I'll make one more preliminary comment before turning to Joseph's book. I was somewhat surprised to learn, based on a few things that Joseph said in the book (and I confirmed it on the internet), that he doesn't believe that Christians can lose their salvation. (I wasn't expecting that.) Learning that about him helped me to better understand some of the things he says in the book, but the misinterpretations and out-of-balance teaching are still there.

Everyone I knew as a young Christian believed that true Christians could not lose their salvation, and to me that was a very important part of the gospel. After I spent a year or two studying what the Bible has to say on the topic, I had to change my opinion and agree that the New Testament makes it quite clear that true Christians can lose their salvation,¹¹ but I can fully appreciate those who believe once saved, always saved, as long as they are not abusing the doctrine.¹² If we don't take God's warnings about the serious need for Christians in sin to repent, we are abusing the doctrine, or if we don't have a proper, necessary fear of sinning against God (which the Old Testament and New Testament require). Most of the Christians I have known who believe that Christians cannot lose their salvation agree that true Christians must continue to have faith in Christ, and that they must *make Him Lord* and to live for Him, which includes the requirement to keep His commandments. And they agree that if Christians should fall into sin they must make it a top priority to repent, which includes the obligation to make things right as far as it is possible and to do everything possible to avoid sinning.

I can also say (and I trust Joseph would appreciate this comment) that many Christians who believe they cannot lose their salvation are closer to the balanced truth than many who believe they can lose their salvation. For one thing, some who believe they can lose their salvation end up striving (very sincerely striving) in the flesh trying to walk in the righteousness of God. They end up striving because they don't adequately understand the grace of God, which includes all the enabling grace that comes through the indwelling

¹¹ See my paper titled "Once Saved, Always Saved?" on my internet site (Google to Karl Kemp Teaching). I very much tried to give the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches on this topic in that paper. We desperately need the balanced truth. I have learned over the years that very large numbers of Christians are not really looking for the balanced truth on this topic and many other important topics, because they believe that they (and their group) already have it. They have their special verses that they cling to, and they find it easy to ignore or explain away all the verses that don't fit their viewpoint, and they think the issue is closed. In many cases they don't even adequately understand what "their special verses" are saying. For one thing, there is a lot of pride at work, and it's not hard for Christians to manifest pride and other manifestations of the flesh (of the old man that still wants to live). We all (and especially ministers) must humble ourselves before God and seek Him, with a very high priority, for the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches.

¹² I'll give an example of what I mean by abusing the doctrine that Christians cannot lose their salvation from the book of one of the most respected Bible teachers in the world today. I respect him and typically agree with what he teaches, but certainly not on this topic. I was shocked (and having seen and heard some of the things I have seen and heard the past 45 years around Christianity it is hard to shock me) when I read several things that Charles Stanley said in his book *Eternal Security* (published by Thomas Nelson in 1990). I'll give a few brief excerpts. "If abandoning the faith [he means Christians stop having faith in Christ and the gospel] or falling into sin short-circuits [terminates] salvation, I have the ability to demonstrate unconditional love to a greater extent than God. If there is a condition [including the conditions that we must continue to have faith in Christ and the gospel and to live for God]—even one—attached to God's willingness to maintain a relationship with His children, it is not unconditional" (page 5). "Can God declare me 'guilty' after He has already declared me 'not guilty'?" (page 28). "If Christ took upon Himself every single one of your sins, what is going to cause God to reverse His verdict of not guilty? Hallelujah, not a thing!" (page 29). "The Bible clearly teaches that God's love for His people is of such magnitude that even those who walk away from the faith have not the slightest chance of slipping from His hand" (page 72). "Consequently, God does not require a *constant attitude* of faith in order to be saved—only an act of faith" (page 77). "Forgiveness or salvation is applied at the moment of faith. ... And its permanence is not contingent upon the permanence of faith" (page 78). And (also on page 78), "You and I are not saved because we have enduring faith. We are saved because at a moment in time we expressed faith in our enduring Lord. Notice how Paul ends this passage: 'It [our salvation] is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast (Eph. 2:8-9).'"

Spirit of God. As I mentioned, Joseph was very much in that category when he was sincerely striving to please God without knowing much about of God's enabling grace. Some such Christians literally end up in mental hospitals, etc. For one thing, the devil likes to torment such Christians. Of course the devil does what he can get by with against all Christians.

Many things that Joseph says in this book miss the balanced teaching of the New Testament, and I am sure that that teaching will hurt many of his readers, but hopefully many of his readers will mostly hear him say that Christians have the privilege to live with the victory over sin by God's grace and run with that truth.

Let's start with pages 7, 8. Joseph quoted Heb. 10:12, 14. I'll quote Heb. 10:10, 12, 14 from the *New King James Version* (NKJV), since Joseph uses this translation throughout his book, unless otherwise indicated. I'll quote from the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB), 1995 edition, when I quote the Bible apart from Joseph's quotations. In this paper I will frequently make comments in the middle of quotations in brackets []. Sometimes I will put the brackets in bold print [] to make them more obvious.

“By that will [the will of God spoken of in verse 9] we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*. ... (12) But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, ... (14) For by one offering, He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.”

I'll quote a few sentences from what Joseph says as he discusses these verses. “His finished work on the cross was offered as one sacrifice FOREVER, and when you received Jesus Christ into your life, you were PERFECTED FOREVER! ... You may be surprised to find out that there are many believers today who do not believe that they have been perfected forever by the finished work of Jesus Christ. They are still depending on their self-efforts to qualify themselves. Perhaps you yourself are wondering, *How can I be fully assured that all my sins have already been forgiven?* Good question! Notice that after Jesus offered His life as a sacrifice and payment for all our sins, He ‘sat down’! ... Jesus sat down to demonstrate to us that the work is indeed finished.”

The truth of the matter is that we are *perfected*, in the sense this word is used in Heb. 10:14, only to the extent that we understand the gospel, to the extent that we are committed to the gospel in our hearts and are walking in the truth of the gospel and by the Holy Spirit on a continuous basis, by God's sufficient grace through faith, as we are enabled, and required, to do by the new covenant.¹³ Signing up to become a Christian includes all of that, and we don't have the option to change the gospel. This has nothing to do with “self-efforts to qualify [ourselves]” that Joseph mentioned. This is just a matter of submitting to God and His Son and receiving, and cooperating with, His super-abundant, fully sufficient grace, all in accordance with the requirements spelled out in the covenant He has made with us.

This isn't self-effort! But we do have a very necessary role to play as we work out our salvation BY GRACE, THROUGH FAITH. God's grace makes all the difference, and

¹³ This is the ideal, and the New Testament does not present is as an unrealistic or unattainable ideal. We must be aiming at this target. We certainly won't hit the target if we are not aiming at it. We must not focus on our weaknesses but on God's sufficient grace.

He gets all the glory. We still have a free will, and we (His born-again children) must cooperate with, and appropriate, God's grace on a continuous basis. God doesn't live our lives for us while we are passive. Faith is active. We must continue to live for God and His righteousness and resist temptation, etc., by His grace, which includes all the work of the Holy Spirit.

What does it mean for Christians to be *perfected* (or, we could translate "He has completed") here in Heb. 10:14? It does not mean to be perfected in some limited positional sense, where we are considered to be perfect because we are in Christ and have been forgiven, even though we may be walking mostly in the flesh and living in sin, for whatever reason. To be perfected here does not speak of some way-out absolute perfection, where there is no need for growth, or where we cannot be tempted, or cannot sin. To be perfected, or completed, here (with a relative perfection) includes three basic items: We have been totally forgiven in Christ; we have been sanctified (made holy) in Christ; and we have access to God, beyond the veil, as His born-again children, on the basis of Christ's atoning death and our union with Him, and by the Holy Spirit.

Christians are perfect (or complete), in the sense the word is used here, if we are living in this reality, which we are enabled, and required, to do. Let's not say that God's grace isn't sufficient for us to do His will, and let's begin to fully cooperate with, and appropriate, this sufficient grace, even though it is understood that we still have much room to grow. We will continue to grow throughout our lives on the earth, and probably also in the age to come. Let's discuss the first two items that I listed further:

Number one. We are totally forgiven through new-covenant salvation. Forgiveness was provided through sacrificial offerings under the old covenant, but there were very definite limits to that forgiveness. There were no sacrifices to take away the sin of Adam and Eve with the penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin that were passed on to all their descendants, or to take away the willful and defiant sins of the people of Israel. Note, for example, that Heb. 9:7 speaks of "the sins being committed in ignorance" being atoned for (and taken away) on the Day of Atonement. A person under the old covenant might seek God for forgiveness and be forgiven after very serious sins, as David was after his two very serious sins involving Bathsheba and her husband, but he did not offer any sacrifices, and there were consequences that resulted from those sins. Sin is a serious matter! If it really is sin in the eyes of God, it is a serious matter!

The new-covenant sacrifice of the Lord Jesus had no such limitations. Total forgiveness (and a whole lot more) is provided in the new covenant, including the fact that we can be forgiven for any sins we should commit after we become Christians, when we repent (see 1 John 2:1, 2, for example).

Joseph says that he disagrees with the idea that we should preach on repentance and with the idea that we must confess our sins to be forgiven: On page 232 (in chapter 18) Joseph says, "nevertheless, there are still people who insist that we have to preach on repentance [to exhort Christians in sin to repent]. Well, I disagree. I think we should do it God's way—preach the goodness of God and allow the goodness of God to lead people to repentance." Joseph makes some valid points in that chapter, but he certainly overstates the case and misses the balanced truth of what the New Testament (and the Old Testament) teaches about repentance here. God (and His spokesmen) frequently calls Christians to repent throughout the New Testament. In Revelation chapters 2, 3, for

example, the Lord Jesus powerfully called for the majority of the Christians in several of the seven cities to repent, or lose their salvation. And Jesus made it quite clear that He still considered them to be part of His church when He called them to repent, or else. He told the Christians at Ephesus, for example, that He would remove their lampstand if they didn't repent. The fact that they still had their lampstand showed that they were part of His church (see Rev. 1:20).

Joseph makes some valid points in his chapter 9, "The Waterfall of Forgiveness." But he certainly misses the balanced truth of what the New Testament teaches when he says on page 104 that "we don't have to confess our sins *in order* to be forgiven. We confess our sins because *we are already forgiven*." This fits perfectly with Joseph's teaching that we are already perfect, righteous, and holy, but I believe I effectively demonstrate in this paper that the New Testament does not teach that we are automatically perfect, righteous, and holy just because we are Christians, and it does not teach that we are forgiven before we ask for forgiveness, and significantly, repentance is required too, which includes the necessity to make things right to the extent we are able to, and the commitment to do everything we can do to avoid sinning again. If it really is sin it is a serious matter, and we should not just consider ourselves forgiven before we repent and confess our sins.

I'll quote a little more of what Joseph says here, "When I was growing up as a young believer, I was taught that unless I confessed all my sins, I would not be forgiven. ... Such teachings made the forgiveness of sins man's responsibility, instead of something that was dependent on what Jesus' blood had already accomplished. [The fact that we are responsible to confess our sins does not at all detract from the fact that our forgiveness and full restoration is 100 percent based on the shed blood of the Lamb of God. The fact that we must appropriate God's grace in many areas does not lessen the fact that these things come 100 percent by the saving grace of God in Christ. We certainly don't earn forgiveness by asking for it.] My friend, such teachings are based on man's traditions and not the Scriptures. [I don't agree with that.] Such teachings put me in severe bondage when I was a teenager. ... I was really sincere and wanted to always be 'right with God' and not have any sin that was not forgiven. I did not want fellowship with God to be broken. So everywhere I went, I would confess my sins, and I mean EVERYWHERE!" (pages 104, 105). On page 107 he says, "If you really believe that you need to confess all your sins to be forgiven, do you know what you would be doing? You would be confessing your sins ALL THE TIME!" I can't imagine Christians sinning all that much. Statements like this one certainly don't promote the idea that Christians can walk with the victory over sin by God's grace.

Number two. And this is a lot more important than number one, though total forgiveness is a totally necessary and a very important part of the gospel. I believe forgiveness represents about ten percent of the gospel and being born-again, transformed, and sanctified represents about ninety percent of the gospel. God hates sin and He paid an infinite price to set us free from sin and make us holy. (To be holy, to live in a state of holiness, and to be sanctified mean the same thing.) The sin problem certainly isn't solved to the extent we are still living in sin.

Hebrews 10:10 says that "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once *for all*." This was something that the old covenant was powerless to

do. Mankind had been under the penalty of Adam's sin since the fall, and that penalty included spiritual death and bondage to sin. The old-covenant sacrifices couldn't begin to take away spiritual death and bondage to sin and make us righteous and holy with the very righteousness and holiness of God. But that is a big part of what new-covenant salvation is all about (see Romans chapter 5,¹⁴ for example), and that is what the writer of Hebrews is speaking about here.

The atoning death of the Lamb of God has dethroned spiritual death and sin for all who submit (who really submit) to God's plan of salvation by faith. We have been born again, and we have been sanctified. We have been called, enabled, and required to live in a state of holiness by God's sufficient grace. In the ideal case (and the New Testament doesn't present this ideal as being unrealistic or unattainable), all true Christians would be living in a state of righteousness and holiness. It is dangerous to live outside the will of God, and the New Testament is full of warnings (very serious warnings) regarding this matter.

The New Testament makes it clear that to the extent we are not living in God's will in a state of holiness, we need to make it a top priority to change by the grace of God in Christ. God knows our hearts. My book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*, deals extensively with the meaning of the words, holy, saint, sanctify, and holiness¹⁵; the last chapter deals almost entirely with this topic, and many key verses from the book of Hebrews are discussed in the book, including Heb. 10:8-18 (on pages 156-163). For an introduction to the topic of holiness and victory over sin, I recommend my 28 half-hour broadcast audio series titled, "Holiness and Victory Over Sin." The written text behind those audio recordings is included on my internet site (Google to Karl Kemp Teaching). You could also order the audio series there. Also, some of the articles are available at "Christian Article Bank"; "Christian Articles Resource"; and "FaithWriters" on the internet.

One of the primary points I make in the last chapter of my book is that there are at least two ways in which the words saint, holy, holiness, and sanctify are often misunderstood: Some reduce holiness to the mere positional or ceremonial. From this point of view, Christians are automatically holy, even if they are living in sin. I'm not saying that these words are never used in a positional or ceremonial sense in the New Testament, but this is not the typical new covenant use of these words. Others agree that holiness means that Christians are actually to be set apart from sin, but they deny that Christians can be holy now, during this present life. According to this viewpoint, the best a Christian can hope for (can have faith for) is to be in a process (a sanctifying process) where the amount of sin is decreasing as the years go by. I agree that Christians must be growing (2 Cor. 3:18, for example), but in the ideal case Christians won't be growing out of sin, because they will be living in a state of holiness with the full victory over all sin. The New Testament

¹⁴ Romans chapter 5 is discussed verse-by-verse in my book *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*. And these super-important things are discussed in substantial detail in my book and in my papers that deal with this topic. Most of my papers are located on my internet site (karlkempteachingministries.com).

¹⁵ One important detail that you would not expect based on these English words is that in the Greek the words, *holy*, *saint*, *holiness*, and *sanctify* all have the same root. The Greek adjective behind the words *holy* and *saint* is *hagios*. The Greek nouns often translated *holiness* are *hagiasmos* and *hagiosune*; sometimes *hagiasmos* is translated sanctification. And the Greek verb often translated *sanctify* in some form is *hagiazō*. It can also be translated *make holy*. These Greek words are closely related: the verb was derived from the adjective; *hagiasmos* was derived from the verb; and the noun *hagiosune* was derived from the adjective.

repeatedly speaks of Christians actually being set apart from sin. This is good news, very good news! This is what all true Christians want.

I should comment on Heb. 10:14 because some translations (needlessly) confuse the issue by translating, as does the NKJV used by Joseph here, “For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.” That is one way the Greek present participle could be translated, but I believe it is clear that the NASB gives the intended translation with the words, “those who are sanctified.” The KJV is similar, with the words, “those that are sanctified.” One reason I’m totally confident that the intended meaning is “those who are sanctified” (in other words, “those who are living in an abiding state of holiness”) is because of the words, “we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*” in Heb. 10:10. Although the Greek present participle that is used in verse 14 is ambiguous and could be translated either way, the Greek *perfect* tense verb that is used in verse 10 demonstrates that the writer of Hebrews is speaking of an abiding state of holiness. As I demonstrate in my book, this is a very common use of the words saint, holy, holiness, and sanctify/sanctification in the New Testament. It is very important that we get this right! This is at the heart of Christianity! And, like I said, this is very good news!

To be sanctified means to be *set apart* for God from sin and everything that is unholy and defiling. This is accomplished 100 percent by the saving grace of God in Christ, but it is not accomplished in us to the extent we don’t know the truth, or are not walking in the truth and in the Holy Spirit on a continuous basis by faith. The fact that we must receive and walk in God’s grace by faith does not at all detract from the fact that our salvation is 100 percent by grace, and God must receive all the glory for our holiness (and every other aspect of our salvation).

It isn’t surprising that so many Christians do not have a solid faith for holiness and victory over all sin. Our faith must be based on the Word of God, and more often than not, they haven’t been taught that they have been called to such a walk, and that God’s sufficient grace has been provided. We can’t cooperate with God’s grace that we don’t know about (clearly know about), and even if we accurately understand God’s sanctifying grace, we still have to resist the world, the flesh (the old man who wants to live in sin), and the devil and his hosts, including the temptation to doubt these glorious truths. We must work out our salvation on a continuous basis by grace through faith. In our day a large number of Christians will consider you a fanatic (or a heretic) if you talk about having the victory over all sin. The devil has won a major victory here. The real question we need to consider is whether God has called us to such a walk and whether His grace is sufficient for us to do His will. The New Testament repeatedly says that He did and it is.

I certainly am not saying that we should attack Christians who are having problems with sin. Quite the opposite! All of us have to face temptations, and it is rather easy to sin. The world, the flesh (the old man that still wants to sin), and the devil and his hosts (which includes a very large number of very committed demons who hate us and want to get us into sin and keep us in sin) are formidable opponents.¹⁶ However, we cannot change the gospel. We need to rightly divide God’s word and make it top priority to do everything we need to do to help one another come into divine order, with the victory

¹⁶ It won’t work to try to hide and hope these enemies will go away. We must face these enemies in the name of Jesus, in faith and by the Holy Spirit. There is no other reasonable alternative.

over all sin by God's sufficient grace (through faith), which includes all the work of the infinite Spirit of God, who is well able to give us the victory in every battle against our (and God's) opponents (see Rom. 8:12-14; Gal. 5:16, 17, for example). Also—thanks be to God!—forgiveness is provided for Christians who fall into sin through the blood of Christ when we confess our sins and repent.

I believe it is clear that the writer of the book of Hebrews was speaking of Christians actually being set apart from all sin and living in a state of holiness. He certainly wasn't thinking of his readers only living in a state of positional righteousness and holiness. In Heb. 8:10 and 10:16, for example, the writer of Hebrews quoted from the words of Jer. 31:33 about God's writing the Law on the hearts of His people through new covenant salvation. What God was saying through Jeremiah was that He was going to change their hearts through the new covenant (which was mentioned in Jer. 31:31) and that they would then live according to His moral Law from their hearts in His righteousness by His saving grace in Christ.

The writer of the book of Hebrews strongly and repeatedly warned his Jewish Christian readers that they must resist the temptation to turn from the gospel. (We are required to believe the truth of the gospel, and to keep on believing the truth of the gospel, and to live the truth of the gospel that was delivered to us.) They were being tempted to turn back toward the old covenant. That might relieve them from some temporary trials, but as the writer of Hebrews says in Heb. 10:29, they would have to trample underfoot the Son of God and regard as unclean the blood of Christ that had sanctified them if they turned from the gospel. (Note that the blood of Christ *had sanctified them*. The writer of Hebrews wasn't speaking of a sanctifying process, where the amount of sin decreases as time goes by.) The book of Hebrews is packed with strong warnings of the need to stay faithful to God, by His grace, and to live in His truth and righteousness (see Heb. 3:7-4:16; 6:1-8; and 10:26-39, for example).

I'll quote Heb. 10:26, 27, "For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth [of new covenant salvation], there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES."¹⁷ We must not leave any room for sin! You open some doors a crack, and you just might get overwhelmed with what forces its way into your life. We must not leave any room for sin!

I'll make a few more comments about the words "He has perfected" of Heb. 10:14 before finishing this discussion. The writer isn't speaking of some way-out absolute perfection (where Christians cannot be tempted, or cannot sin, or don't have a need to keep on growing, or to be glorified), but he is speaking of a relative perfection that includes living in an abiding state of holiness (a state where Christians have been sanctified) that includes the victory over all sin. The book of Hebrews, along with the rest of the New Testament, also makes it clear that Christians will be forgiven and restored if they should fall into sin when they repent. The book of Hebrews includes repeated exhortations for his readers to repent

¹⁷ The Bible (including these verses in the book of Hebrews; also see Heb. 6:1-8; 1 John 5:16) warns that Christians can get to a place that there is no more room for repentance. However, in our day the devil has convinced many Christians that they have committed the/an unpardonable sin when they haven't. I would always encourage Christians *who have a desire to repent* that I don't believe they have committed the/an unpardonable sin.

Hebrews 11:39, 40 and 12:23 are important verses to see how the writer of Hebrews uses the words *made perfect* and *perfect*. I won't discuss these important verses here, but they are discussed in my book.

Now I'll quote part of what Joseph says in chapter 2, "The Law Has Been Fulfilled."

"When you receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you are made holy and righteous by His blood once for all" (page 12). Joseph is using the words "holy and righteous" in a positional sense here, like he used the word *perfected* in Heb. 10:14. He does not mean that we are (necessarily) living righteous and holy lives. It isn't that we are (necessarily) fulfilling the righteous requirements of God's law; rather, the total basis for our being "holy and righteous" (according to Joseph) is that Jesus blood washes away the guilt of our sin and He "came to fulfill all the requirements of the law on our behalf..." (page 13). "God sees you as righteous as Jesus himself" (page 18). "Right now [God] is well pleased with you because you are in Christ" (page 295).

You hear teaching like this a lot, but it is wrong, seriously wrong. It's true, of course, that we couldn't become righteous by trying to keep God's law in our own strength. But the very heart of what new-covenant salvation is all about is that God solved the sin problem through the sacrifice of His Son and His promised outpoured Holy Spirit, which enables His people to live in His righteousness and holiness, keeping His moral law (but not the ceremonial law of the old covenant). That was a big part of what the prophecy in Jer. 31:31-34 about the new covenant was all about. As I mentioned, a key part of those glorious prophetic words dealt with the fact that God puts His laws into our hearts (by His saving grace in Christ), thereby enabling us to fulfill them. That prophecy also included forgiveness.

And then there was the glorious prophecy of Ezek. 36:25-27. I'll quote these verses, "**Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols** [This is a whole lot more than forgiving them for the sin of idolatry; this includes cleansing them from committing idolatry, and all other sin. Otherwise the sin problem would not be solved. God hates sin! The next two verses confirm that the heart of new-covenant salvation is to change His people in their hearts and to cleanse them from sinning and enable them to keep His commandments and live in His righteousness.] **(26) Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. (27) I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.**" Verse 27 confirms that the heartbeat of Christianity is that His people live in line with His will for them from their hearts (by His saving, sanctifying grace in Christ), truly loving Him and walking in line with His righteous statutes and ordinances (commandments).

I'll also mention three passages in the New Testament (Rom. 8:1-4; Rom. 2:26-29; and 1 Cor. 7:19) that speak of Christians keeping the requirements of God's moral law in their daily lives. I'll quote Rom. 8:1-4 and discuss these super-important verses. In Rom. 8:1, 2 Paul said, "**Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (2) For the law [or, governing principle] of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law [or, governing principle] of sin and of death.**" We know what the apostle meant by being set free from the governing principle of sin and of

death, because he discussed these things earlier in Romans. In Rom. 5:21, for example, Paul spoke of *sin reigning in death*. In context he was speaking of sin reigning (where sin reigns, people are serving sin by sinning) over those who were in spiritual death, which all the descendants of Adam were, as Paul demonstrated earlier in chapter 5. However, we Christians have been set free from the governing principle of sin and of death by the Spirit of life we received in, and through, the Lord Jesus and His atoning death.

Like Paul said in Rom. 8:9, for example, the Spirit of God dwells in every true Christian. Instead of being under the governing principle of sin and death, the “Spirit of life” enables us to be born again (canceling spiritual death) and He, the *Righteous, Holy* Spirit, enables us to live in the very (imparted) *righteousness* and *holiness* of God. As we walk by the Spirit (which we are enabled and required to do), we walk with the victory over all sin (see Gal. 5:16 for example.) I trust that it is obvious that this is something *very* far beyond a mere positional righteousness and holiness.

In Rom. 8:3 Paul said, “**For what the Law could not do** [What the Mosaic Law (which was the foundation for the old covenant) could not do was set believers free from being in spiritual death and in bondage to sin.], **weak as it was through the flesh** [They were in “the flesh”; the Spirit had not yet been given. He couldn’t be given until after Jesus had been crucified and glorified (see John 7:39, for example). And people in the flesh (without the new-covenant gift of the Spirit) do not have the power to fully keep God’s Law], **God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh** [God condemned sin (and spiritual death) through the incarnation, sinless life, and the sacrificial atoning death of His beloved Son. Paul goes on in verse 4 to show that Christians are privileged, enabled, and required to fulfill the righteous requirement of the Law in their daily lives, having been set free from sin and spiritual death in Christ and by the indwelling Holy Spirit.], **so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**” The only way we can avoid walking according to the flesh is to be born again and then walk by the Holy Spirit. It is necessary to understand, however, that a walk by the Holy Spirit is far from being automatic, and it isn’t always easy. There is opposition from the world, the flesh (the old man who wants to live in sin), and the devil and his hosts. That’s why the apostle exhorted his Christian readers to always walk by the Spirit (we are obligated to always walk by the Spirit, but this is a great blessing), so that they would not fulfill the sinful desire of the flesh in Gal. 5:16. The desire of the flesh is to sin, to do the sinful works of the flesh, some of which are listed in Gal. 5:19-21.¹⁸

Paul makes it very clear in Gal. 5:17 that it involves warfare to always walk by the Spirit and not fulfill the sinful desire of the flesh. The world, the flesh (the old man that still wants to manifest itself in sin), and the devil and his hosts are against us, but God’s grace is sufficient for us to always walk by the Spirit and do His will. And the apostle made it clear in Gal. 5:16-25, for example, that we are required to walk by the Spirit on a continuous basis; this isn’t an optional matter. In Gal. 5:24 he said, “Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh (the old man) with its passions and desires.” When we become Christians, we sign a contract (so to speak), agreeing, for one thing, to always walk by the Holy Spirit by faith. Paul said (in Gal. 5:19-21 and other

¹⁸ Galatians 5:16-25 are discussed on pages 195-200 of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

places, including Rom. 8:12-14¹⁹) that those who continue to walk by the flesh and do the sinful works of the flesh will not inherit the kingdom of God.

It's true that the Law cannot save us, and we need to emphasize that point (as Joseph does), but we are privileged, enabled, *and required* to fulfill the requirements of God's moral law in our daily lives by His saving grace in Christ (Joseph doesn't agree with that). And that certainly doesn't happen automatically. Christians must understand (based on God's Word) that they are enabled, and required, to walk by the Spirit and fulfill the requirements of God's moral law, which equals walking in His righteousness. His moral law cannot change; it derives from His nature, and He hates sin. That's one reason He paid an infinite price to sanctify His people. There is a gigantic difference between positional righteousness and our actually walking in the imparted righteousness of God by His grace. In some ways, putting all the emphasis on positional righteousness makes me think of a smoke and mirror religion. We need reality! We need truth! And the truth includes God's righteousness and holiness (see Eph. 4:24).

Another passage where the apostle Paul spoke of Christians keeping the requirements of God's Law through the Holy Spirit is Rom. 2:26-29. I won't discuss these important verses here, but Rom. 2:26, 27 are discussed on page 74 of my book and Rom. 2:26-29 are discussed in my paper titled, "The Christian, the Law, and Legalism." That 61 page paper demonstrates that Christians are required to keep God's moral law, but it also guards against a misuse and overuse of God's Law. We desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches! So often Christians have their special verses, but fail to seek for the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. And quite often they don't even understand their special verses very well.

We must understand that the Mosaic Law cannot save us. We are saved 100 percent by the grace of God in Christ; we must put the emphasis on God's gospel (including His promises), Christ, the Spirit, grace, faith, and make sure all the glory goes to God; we are not Law oriented (but we understand that we must walk in line with God's moral law), and we must avoid trying to earn God's salvation (in any of its aspects) by doing works of the flesh, or trying, one way or another, to get the glory for ourselves, which man in the flesh (which includes Christians when they are walking in the flesh) often tries to do. We must do all things by God's grace (which includes all the work of His Spirit) and for *His* glory.

First Corinthians 7:19 is another verse where the apostle Paul shows that Christians are required to keep God's commandments (the commandments of His moral law) by His grace. This isn't an optional matter. **"Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but *what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God.*"** It is very clear that the apostle was not including the commandments that deal with the ceremonial law of the old covenant. "Circumcision" was at the top of the list of *ceremonial* laws that the Judaizers were requiring Gentile Christians to keep.

Now back to Joseph's chapter 2. On page 13 he has a heading, "Jesus Fulfilled the Law." I'll quote the first sentence Joseph has here and comment on the meaning of the word righteousness. "The moment you place the law of Moses between you and God

¹⁹ These super-important verses are discussed in my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

again, you are negating the finished work of Jesus, for if righteousness could come through the law, ‘then Christ died in vain.’ [Joseph was referring to Gal. 2:21 here. I’ll quote Gal. 2:20, 21. **“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me, and the *life* which I now live in the flesh** [Here the apostle meant the life he was living in this world in his physical body; he did not walk in the flesh; he walked in the Holy Spirit] **I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (21) I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.”**

Joseph wrongly understands “righteousness” here (in a positional sense) to mean only that we have been forgiven and have a righteous standing with God through Jesus’ fulfilling the Law for us and His atoning death.²⁰ It is reasonable (from a scriptural point of view) to include positional righteousness here, but the emphasis here (as it so often is) is on the fact that God actually makes us righteous²¹ through setting us free from spiritual death and bondage to sin and demons and imparting His righteousness and holiness to us through the blood of Christ and by the power of the infinitely powerful Righteous Holy Spirit of God, who dwells in every true Christian, as we walk by the Spirit through faith, in accordance with the terms of the new covenant.

As Paul frequently says, righteousness did not (and could not) come through the Mosaic Law (the old covenant) because man in the flesh (man in spiritual death; man without the indwelling Spirit of God) doesn’t have the ability to fully keep the Law, so we cannot be saved by the Law (see, for example, Acts 13:39; Rom. 3:9-20, 23; Gal. 2:16, 21; 3:19; Gal. 4:5, 24, 25). Paul is using the word *righteousness* here (in Gal. 2:21) as he typically does (along with the rest of writers of the New Testament) in the sense that righteousness is something we do. We must continually emphasize, however, that we are able to be righteous and do righteousness because of the saving grace of God in Christ, which includes all the work of the Spirit of God. Another way to say it is that God pours out His righteousness upon us and imparts His righteousness to us, even as He prophesied that He would do in the Old Testament (see, for example, Isa. 32:15-18; 45:8; 46:12, 13; 53:11²²; 60:21; 61:1-3, 10, 11; and Jer. 23:5, 6). This is extremely important!

Since this point is of crucial significance, I’ll quote several key verses from the New Testament where the context makes it easy to see that actual righteousness (not just a positional righteousness) is being spoken of.²³ What else would you expect when

²⁰ On page 12 in chapter 2, for example, Joseph mentioned our being “made holy and righteous by His blood once for all,” and he meant the same thing when he spoke of our being perfected in Heb. 10:14, which we discussed above. Many Christians agree with Joseph. As far as I am concerned, limiting these words (and similar words) to a positional meaning is one of the most serious errors we have in the evangelical church of our day.

²¹ Note that Gal. 2:20 (also see Gal. 5:24; 6:14) demonstrates that Paul is speaking of God’s saving grace in Christ that enabled him to be crucified with Christ (which included his being dead to the old man and to sinning, as in Romans chapter 6, for example) and that Christ was living in Him now by the indwelling Holy Spirit, which enabled the apostle to actually be righteous and live in the righteousness and holiness of God.

²² See pages 26-29 of my book on this super-important verse.

²³ It is also significant that the large number of the uses of the words righteous and righteousness in the Old Testament are typically used of an actual righteousness. The “righteous” person is the one who lives for God, doing “righteousness,” according to His ways. We must realize, however, that the righteousness of a righteous person in the Old Testament (Noah, for example, who was called righteous in Gen. 6:9) was a *relative* righteousness: All of the “righteous” believers of Old Testament days will confess that their

Christians are born again by the Spirit of life and enabled to walk in the righteousness of God by the Righteous Spirit of God, and we know that God hates sin and has paid an infinite price to set us free from bondage to sin. What else would you expect when the apostle Paul, in Rom. 6:1, 2 says, **“What shall we say then: Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase [or, abound]? (2) How shall we who died to sin still live in it?** And in Rom. 6:11 he says, **“Even so consider [or, reckon] yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”** And there are very many similar passages.

And what else would you expect when the Bible is packed with serious powerful warnings that Christians cannot continue to live in sin and have a place in His Body, or inherit His eternal kingdom. See, for example, Matt. 7:21-23; Gal. 5:19-21; 6:8; Eph. 5:1-6; Heb. 10:26-31; and when you read what Christ said to a large number of the Christians in five of the seven churches that He spoke to in Revelation chapters 2, 3: He told those Christians (who clearly were still part of His church at that time) that if they did not repent, He would cast them out of His church. He loved them and wanted them to repent, but He required them to repent, or else; and there are very many more such warnings throughout the New Testament. I am totally sure that God requires us to take such warnings seriously. (We will discuss Luke chapter 15 and the parable of the prodigal son who came to himself and repented on page 33, 34 of this paper. One primary reason why I wanted to discuss this parable is because Joseph says that the prodigal son did not repent.)

Romans 5:19. **“For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.”** As Paul shows in Rom. 5:12-21, Adam’s *disobedience* led to his descendants being born outside the Garden of Eden in spiritual death and in bondage to sin; they were made sinners (*disobedient*). Even so the *obedience* of the Lord Jesus, especially referring to His voluntary, obedient atoning death, overthrew spiritual death and sin and makes believers righteous (*obedient*).

Romans 6:16. **“Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one who you obey [We are required, by covenant, to be obedient to God and His Word.], either of sin resulting in death [The apostle is writing to Christians. If they turn from God and go back to serve their old master of sin, by living in sin, the result will be spiritual death and ultimately the second death.], or of obedience to God, resulting in righteousness.”** When we obey God and His word by His saving grace in Christ, the result is a life of righteousness (by God’s imparted righteousness) and ultimately eternal glory. It clearly isn’t correct to say that we are righteous just because Christ fulfilled the law of God for us. We, by His grace, must (we have the privilege to) obey God and His word.

Romans 6:18. **“and having been freed from sin [having been freed from being slaves of sin; slaves of sin serve sin by sinning], you became slaves of righteousness.”** Slaves

entrance to God’s eternal kingdom comes by grace through His salvation in Christ, which includes His imputed *and* His imparted righteousness. They did not *earn* heaven by their faith or their relative righteousness. I should also point out that God’s enabling grace was available to some extent to those who looked to Him in Old Testament days.

of righteousness serve righteousness (and the God of righteousness) by living righteous lives, by grace. (We are not slaves of positional righteousness. What would those words even mean?) Also see the use of the word righteousness in Rom. 6:13, 19, 20; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22, 3:16. I could also list most of the other verses where the apostle Paul used the word righteousness,²⁴ but I'll just mention 2 Cor. 6:14, where Paul contrasted righteousness with lawlessness. To live in righteousness is to live in accordance with the will of God, which is spelled out in His moral law; to live in lawlessness is to live in rebellion against God and His law. Hebrews 1:9 speaks of God the Son's loving righteousness and hating lawlessness.

1 Peter 2:24. “**and He Himself bore our sins** [with the guilt and the penalties, including the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin] **in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.**” To “die to sin” (as in Rom. 6:2, 11) is to stop sinning. To “live to righteousness” speaks of living in the (imparted) righteousness of God, which is a big part of what salvation in Christ is all about.

2 Peter 2:21, 22. “**For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. (22) It has happened to them according to the true proverb, ‘A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT,’ and, ‘A sow, after washing, returns to its wallowing in the mire.’**”

1 John 2:29. “**If you know that He [God] is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness [or, who is doing righteousness] is born of Him.**” As God is righteous in all His ways, those who are born of Him are enabled, and required, to practice (or, to do) righteousness in all their ways, on a continuous basis, by His enabling grace, and for His glory. The way the words *righteous* and *righteousness* are used in this verse (certainly not of a positional righteousness) is the way these words are normally used throughout the Bible.

1 John 3:7. “**Little children, make sure that no one deceives you** [In this context, John means that they would deceive you into thinking that you can be righteous apart from keeping God's commandments (cf. 1 John 2:3-6) and doing righteousness.]; **the one who practices righteousness [or, the one who is doing righteousness] is righteous, just as He [God] is righteous.**” To be righteous as God is righteous certainly includes the victory over all sin, doesn't it? This verse, by itself, should suffice to show that we need something more than positional righteousness.

1 John 3:10. “**By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice [or, anyone who does not do] righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.**”

The righteous ideal presented in the last three verses I quoted from the First Epistle of John is spoken of throughout this epistle. This is quite important; these verses, by

²⁴ Most of these verses have been discussed in by book and/or my papers.

themselves, should suffice to demonstrate that Christians are called, enabled, required, and privileged to actually live in the righteousness of God, by His sufficient grace. See, for example, 1 John 2:1-6, “**My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin** [The Greek aorist tense would be better translated, “so that you may not commit an act of sin,” or the equivalent.]. **And if anyone sins** [aorist tense], **we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous** [We can be very thankful that forgiveness is provided if we should fall into sin, when we repent.]; **(2) and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for those of the whole world.** **(3) By this we know that we are in Him, if we keep His commandments** [Loving God and keeping His commandments (by His saving grace in Christ) is what righteousness is all about.] **(4) The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth of God is not in him;** **(5) but whoever keeps His word** [which includes keeping His commandments], **in him the love of God has truly been perfected. 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** [in righteousness and holiness, without any sin].” 1 John 3:3, “**And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him** [the hope of the glory to come, which was just mentioned in verse 2] **purifies himself** [by the sufficient grace of God in Christ], **just as He is pure** [that purity certainly includes the victory over all sin].”; 1 John 3:9, “**No one who is born of God practices sin** [“Whoever is born of God does not sin” NKJV; in the ideal case there won’t be any sin at all, but the apostle John has already informed us (in 1 John 2:1, 2) that Christians can commit acts of sin and be forgiven through the Lord Jesus and His atoning death.], **because His seed abides in him; and He cannot sin** [In the light of what I just said, it would be better to translate “is not able to continue in sin,” or the equivalent.].” 1 John 5:2-4, “**By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.** **(3) For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.**”

In John 14:15 Jesus said, “**If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.**” In John 14:21 He said, “**He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.**” In John 14:23 He said, “**If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word** [which includes keeping His commandments], **and My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make Our abode with him.**” And in John 15:10 He said, “**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.**” These last few verses by themselves should suffice to show that Joseph was wrong to say in chapter 2 that since Jesus fulfilled the righteous requirements of the Law for us, we are not required to fulfill the commandments of God’s moral law. We have the privilege, and the requirement, to fulfill them, and to live as He wants us to live, by His saving grace in Christ. This is a big part of what Christianity is all about. As 1 John 5:3, which we just read, says, “His commandments are not burdensome.”

1 John 5:4. “**For whatever is born of God** [All true Christians are born of God.] **overcomes the world** [Overcoming the world includes overcoming sin.]; **and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith** [We cooperate with, and appropriate,

the sufficient saving grace of God in Christ by faith.].” 1 John 5:18, 19, **“We know that no one who is born of God sins** [In the ideal case there won’t be any sin at all, and that is the emphasis in this epistle (and throughout the New Testament, in general), but as I mentioned, we know that John is not saying that it is impossible for a true Christian to commit acts of sin (1 John 2:1, 2). The fact that the Greek verb for sin here is in the present tense (not the aorist tense, as in 1 John 2:1) leaves room for an occasional act of sin, but really any sin (if it really is sin) is too much sin. The NIV translates, “does not continue to sin.”]; **but He who was born of God keeps him** [I believe the translation of the NKJV gives the intended meaning here, **“but he who has been born of God keeps himself.”**]²⁵ Quite often the New Testament shows that we are responsible to keep ourselves from sin by the grace of God in Christ (see 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 John 3:3, for example).], **and the evil one does not touch him. (19) We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”**

Revelation 22:11, 12. **“Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and the one who is righteous, still practice [or, do] righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.** [These words emphasize the important point that Jesus was coming very soon, but it is clear that Jesus was not saying that no one could repent after that time. Many have repented since that time, and the book of Revelation calls people to repent.] **(12) Behold I am coming quickly, and my reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.** [A translation like **“recompense”** would be better than “reward.” The Lord Jesus is speaking of positive *and negative* rewards (we often use the word *reward* only of positive rewards), based on whether the people did wrong and were filthy, or whether they practiced righteousness and kept themselves holy (by God’s sanctifying grace). Quite a few verses in the New Testament speak of the fact that all people, including all Christians, will be judged according to their works. We Christians cannot earn salvation by our works—we are saved by grace through faith—but the righteousness and holiness of our lives will manifest that our faith was real. Again, it seems to me that these two verses, by themselves, should suffice to demonstrate that we are enabled *and required* to actually live in the righteousness and holiness of God, which is a whole lot more than a legal, positional righteousness. This is a great privilege! This is reality in God!

Before leaving this discussion dealing with the typical meaning of the word righteousness in the New Testament, we should consider Romans chapter 4.²⁶ Romans chapter 4 is different²⁷ because it is based, in large part, on Abraham. Abraham was a perfect example for Paul to use to illustrate (especially to Jews, since he was the father of Israel/the Jews) the concept of righteousness being reckoned to Abraham because of his

²⁵ This epistle puts some emphasis on the fact that true Christians have been born of God. Some Greek manuscripts have readings for “him” and others for “himself” in 1 John 5:18.

²⁶ I discussed Romans chapter 4 on pages 85-89 of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

²⁷ It leads to considerable confusion if you go to a passage where the word you are studying is used in a way that is different than the way it is typically used in the New Testament to determine the meaning of the word. The meaning of words is very much influenced by the context in which the words are used. This is probably true to a significantly greater extent than most of my readers have realized.

faith, not because of his works²⁸ (see Rom. 4:2-5, 9-11; Gal. 3:6). The apostle Paul applies this concept to Christians, to Gentile Christians in verse 11, and to Jewish Christians in verse 12, and he continues with this theme in the following verses.²⁹ I'll quote Rom. 4:22-24. "Therefore IT [Abraham's faith] WAS ALSO CREDITED [or, reckoned/imputed] TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS. (23) Now not for his sake only was it written that it was credited [or, reckoned/imputed] to him, (24) but for our sake also, to whom it will be credited [or, reckoned/imputed], as those who believe in Him [God the Father] who raised our Lord from the dead."

It is unusual for the New Testament to speak of God's crediting (or, reckoning/imputing) righteousness to Christians, because (for one thing) He does so much more than that for Christians: He *imparts* His righteousness to them; he *makes them righteous with His righteousness*, through the atoning death of the Lamb of God and by His outpoured Spirit. Abraham was a perfect illustration of a person's being accepted by God because of his faith in God (believing in God), but Abraham could not serve as an illustration of a person being made righteous through new-covenant salvation. The new covenant makes all the difference

Abraham lived in the days before new-covenant salvation became available through the all-important atoning death of the Lamb of God, some two thousand years before new-covenant salvation became available. God couldn't *impart* His righteousness to Abraham when he lived on the earth, but He does impart His righteousness to every true Christian, as He promised He would in many prophecies in the Old Testament (as I documented on page 16). After the Lord Jesus had conquered spiritual death, sin, and Satan and his hosts in His atoning death, He was resurrected and exalted to the right hand of God the Father. He received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit; then He poured forth the Spirit, starting on the Day of Pentecost (see Act 2:33, for example). The atoning death of Christ combined with the fact that the Infinite, Holy, Righteous Spirit of God dwells in every true Christian makes all the difference.

Now the Holy Spirit dwells in every true Christian, and as we walk by the Spirit by faith, which we are enabled, and required, to do by covenant, we will manifest the righteousness of God in our daily lives. That is a *whole lot* more than having Christ's righteousness (the righteousness He had because He fulfilled the law) reckoned/imputed to us. "Imputed" is a legal, positional term. It is biblical to speak of Christ's righteousness being imputed (or, reckoned/credited) to us. That's about ten percent of the glory of the

²⁸ The apostle Paul had to wage considerable warfare against the idea of the Judaizers that Gentile Christians were required to submit to the Mosaic Law and keep the ceremonial *works* of the old covenant, like circumcision, in order to be saved. For one thing, Paul was strongly against the idea that Gentile Christians were required to do those "works" to be saved (see, for example, 1 Cor. 7:19; Gal. 5:3, 4; 6:15). He was also against Christians doing "works" of the flesh for the glory of man (see, for example, Rom. 3:27, 28; 4:2; 1 Cor. 1:29-31; Eph. 2:8-10) and against Christians trying to earn, by their "works," what God had freely given them by His grace (Rom. 4:4; 11:6; Gal. 5:4; Eph. 2:8-10; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:4-7). Paul considered the "gospel" of the Judaizers to be a totally unacceptable modification of the gospel that he had received from the Lord Jesus Christ (see Gal. 1:6-10, for example).

Paul (but not only Paul) also had the assignment to help Israel see that they must set aside the old covenant with its "works" in order to be saved through submitting in faith to God's promised new covenant plan of salvation. God set up the new covenant in a way that puts all the emphasis on promise, grace, faith, the Spirit, and making sure that God gets all the glory for His saving work. There is no room for man to try to earn salvation, or for man to boast in self (pride is at the root of sin).

²⁹ Romans 4:16-21 are discussed in my "Paper on Faith."

gospel. The ninety percent is God's setting us free from spiritual death and bondage to sin and actually imparting His righteousness to us and making us righteous. As we have discussed, however, His righteousness will not be manifested in our lives to the extent we don't understand the gospel, and/or to the extent we don't walk by faith and walk by the Holy Spirit on a continuous basis, which we are enabled, and required, to do.

It is totally necessary for us to understand that when we walk in/by/after the Holy Spirit and manifest God's righteousness in our hearts and lives, this is accomplished 100 percent by the grace of God in Christ. This is not accomplished through the "self-effort" that Joseph frequently mentions. This is not us being righteous by *our works*. But we are required to manifest *works of righteousness* in our daily lives. These works are wrought by the grace of God (which includes all the work of the Spirit of God) as we walk by faith, and faith isn't a work. Romans 4:16 starts out with the words, "For this reason [for the reason that the Law and the old covenant could not solve the sin problem] *it is* by faith, in order that *it may be* in accordance with grace." We receive by faith the things that God has made available by His grace. "For we are His workmanship, created [by God as new creations] in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." God, the Creator of us new creations in Christ, gets all the glory for what we are, and what we do, as His new creations, and by His grace. Also, He is robbed of glory (and worse) when Christians, for whatever reason, live to some extent in sin. The only proper place to live is in the center of God's will by His grace through faith. That's real righteousness!

Now I'll quote part of what Joseph says on pages 27-29 in his chapter 3. "Today, conventional theology teaches you that not only is there such a thing as 'positional righteousness,' there is also something known as 'practical righteousness.' [As I have discussed to a significant extent already, what "conventional theology" calls "practical righteousness" and I sometimes call "actual righteousness" is by far the more basic meaning of the word righteousness throughout the New Testament than "positional righteousness."³⁰ We don't have to apologize for seeing actual righteousness in the Bible. That is the more basic meaning of the word.] They are saying that even though you were made righteous by grace [Joseph means made righteous by grace in a *positional* sense. It is biblical to speak of our positional righteousness, starting at the time we become Christians. The primary reason why it is reasonable to speak of our positional righteousness, which is straining the meaning of the word righteousness, is because at the same time God, the Judge, forgives us and declares us righteous in a legal, positional sense, He also declares that spiritual death has no more authority over us (and we are born again) and He declares that sin and Satan have no more authority over us and He calls, enables, and requires us to walk by His Spirit and manifest His righteousness in our daily lives, since we have entered into new-covenant salvation through the blood of

³⁰ This is also true for the meaning of the Greek word translated righteousness as it would have been used by those speaking Greek in a non-biblical setting. And it is true for the Hebrew word translated righteousness. Essentially all the uses of that word in the Old Testament refer to an actual righteousness. The same thing is true for the word "righteous" in the New Testament, in the Old Testament, and in the Greek speaking world of Paul's day. And the same thing is true for the early Christian writers. I have read many of the writings of those writers up until about AD450.

Christ by faith.], you now have to do right and keep the law to continue being righteous. They call this having ‘practical righteousness.’

My friend, this is something that Apostle Paul never taught! [As I have demonstrated to a significant extent already in this article, this is exactly what the apostle Paul (and the apostle Peter, and the apostle John, etc.) did teach. See the apostle Paul’s five uses of the word righteousness in Romans chapter 6, for example; see the apostle Peter’s use of the word in 1 Pet. 2:24, for example; and see the apostle John’s use of the word in 1 John 2:29; 3:7, 10, for example. This teaching permeates the New Testament, as my book and other writings demonstrate. I’ll quote some more from what Joseph says here; it is extremely important that we get this right:] There is only one righteousness in Christ Jesus. [Joseph means positional righteousness. He is wrong.] Let’s see what Paul says about those who are ignorant of this righteousness. He said, ‘For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness [that’s what some people term ‘positional righteousness’ (This bracket and the following bracket were written by Joseph.)], and seeking to establish their own righteousness [now that would be what they call ‘practical righteousness’], have not submitted to the righteousness of God’ (Rom. 10:3). So it is clear that Paul is against any teaching that says that you have to earn and merit your own righteousness. You are either righteous or you are not. There is no such thing as first having ‘positional righteousness’ and then having to maintain that through ‘practical righteousness.’ You are the righteousness of God in Christ, period!”

One problem here is that Joseph has misunderstood Rom. 10:3. As Rom. 10:1, 2 demonstrate, Paul was speaking here (as he was throughout much of Romans chapters 9-11) about the large number of Jews who had not become Christians. (This was about AD 55, some twenty five years after the Day of Pentecost.) When Paul said that they were “ignorant of God’s righteousness,” he was speaking of the righteousness of God that was provided to those who submit (by faith) to God’s new-covenant plan of salvation, which those Jews had not done. As we have discussed, the righteousness that the apostle was speaking about here was not at all limited to a positional righteousness. The gospel that the apostle Paul preached dealt, for the most part, with God’s actually making Christians righteous with His righteousness, through the shed blood of His Son and by the outpoured Spirit of righteousness. The old covenant could not begin to do this, but as I have mentioned, God often prophesied through the old covenant prophets that He was going to do this. He did it!

And when Paul spoke of them “seeking to establish their own righteousness,” he was speaking of those Jews who were rejecting the gospel and seeking to establish their own righteousness by trying to keep God’s commandments apart from the grace of God in Christ. When Paul said that those Jews “have not submitted to the righteousness of God” he meant that they have not submitted (by faith) to new-covenant salvation in Christ. To submit to the righteousness of God in Christ, you have to give up trying to keep the Law apart from the sanctifying grace of God in Christ. When you live in God’s righteousness, keeping His moral law, through the grace of God in Christ, God gets all the glory. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).

As I have demonstrated, Paul’s bottom line of Christianity is that our lives manifest the actual righteousness of God as we walk in faith and in the Holy Spirit by grace, which is required of all Christians. It’s true, as Joseph says here, “Paul is against any teaching that

says that you have to earn and merit your own righteousness.” But we must understand that when Christians manifest the actual righteousness of God in their daily lives by the saving grace of God in Christ, this has nothing whatsoever to do with *earning or meriting your own righteousness*. This is God’s righteousness that we receive and walk in by grace through faith. This actual, imparted righteousness comes as a gift by God’s grace just as much as His imputed, positional righteousness comes as a gift by His grace. It is totally unearned, and it is not “your own self-righteousness,” which Joseph mentions on page 28.

Although the apostle Paul wasn’t dealing with this problem in Rom. 10:3, Christians must understand, of course, that to the extent they walk in the flesh and strive in the flesh to keep God’s moral law, they will not find the authority or power to live in the righteousness of God. Furthermore, they will not be giving God the glory for any victories they might achieve on their own. If we could be righteous while walking in the flesh, that would be self-righteousness; but as we have discussed, we never will find the authority or power to overcome sin in the flesh. That’s why we need more than the old covenant. We are totally dependent on the saving grace of God in Christ.

I’ll quote a few sentences from page 29 and make a few comments. “Your righteous standing or right standing before Him can be received only as a gift. Today, your right to be righteous is a blood-bought right! [Joseph is speaking, of course, of positional righteousness.] There is nothing you can do that will make God love you more, and there is nothing that you can do that will make Him love you less. He loves you perfectly and He sees you clothed with Jesus’ righteousness. So begin to see yourself clothed with Jesus’ righteousness.”

Teaching like this, which is very common in our day, can and is being abused by many Christians. And, in my opinion, much of the blame must be laid at the feet of many of those in the ministry. For one thing, God never sent any apostles (or anyone else) to offer people forgiveness and positional righteousness or right standing with God by itself. They would only be preaching about ten percent of God’s gospel. We are obligated to submit (in faith) to all the terms of God’s covenant that are spelled out in the gospel. We are required to humble ourselves before God, to repent, to make Him our Savior and our God.

This includes our agreeing to make it a top priority to walk by His Spirit on a continuous basis in His righteousness and holiness—all by His sufficient enabling grace that cost Him greatly. This isn’t an optional matter! It is required of us by covenant! But this is good news! Who wants to stay in bondage to sin? God doesn’t give us the option to take the part of the gospel that we like while rejecting the rest of the gospel. But, again, once we really understand the rest of the gospel, we find that it is very good news, very good news indeed! And God’s grace is sufficient for us to be, and to do, what He requires of us. He certainly gives us the grace to do what He requires of us.

It is true that we didn’t deserve and we can’t earn God’s love. But God, by His grace, has imputed and imparted His righteousness to us. That’s the heartbeat of the gospel. I’m totally sure that if we are living in sin, God sees it, and it is big deal. (I’m not speaking of our past sins, including any past sins we may have committed as Christians that have been forgiven when we repented of those sins.) We must make it a top priority to repent and to do everything we can do to walk in victory in every area, by God’s sufficient grace in Christ.

Let me ask a question. If the Christians at ancient Ephesus did not repent when Jesus told them that He would remove their lampstand (their lampstand which showed that they were part of the worldwide Body of Christ) if they did not repent; and if the majority of the Christians at ancient Sardis did not wake up and repent when Jesus warned them that He would come after them like a thief in judgment, and indirectly stated that He would erase their names from the book of life, if they did not repent; and if the Christians at ancient Laodicea did not repent when Jesus told them that He would spit them out of His mouth if they did not repent, do you think that God would continue to love those “Christians” forever the same as He did before if they did not repent? (See Revelation chapters 2, 3. The New Testament is filled with similar warnings, and many of them came directly from the Lord Jesus.) Love, for the most part, is an action word. God’s removing unrepentant rebels from His presence forever into an eternal lake of fire isn’t a manifestation of love. God and His love and wrath aren’t on trial! Rebels are on trial! God greatly manifested His love in the sacrifice of His Son and in offering us salvation, but what will be the outcome if we don’t submit (in faith) to His salvation on His terms and continue in faith on His terms?

God is merciful, and He wants His children to repent where repentance is required. We must repent and do things His way, by His grace. There is no reasonable alternative. God knows our hearts. He knows if we love Him and want to be His people on His terms. He knows if we truly want to come into, and stay in, divine order and to live for Him in His righteousness and holiness, and He knows how to help those who humble themselves before Him and begin to cooperate with His saving grace in Christ by faith. God knows how to forgive and restore those who humbly yield to Him and His Word in faith. But how can He restore unrepentant rebels, who are not interested in living in His divine order? God cannot allow rebels into heaven. They wouldn’t want to be there on God’s terms (not that they will want the alternative) and they would bring chaos to heaven.

We must not listen to the lying accusations of the devil and his evil, lying hosts (which, as Joseph knows) are very active in accusing God’s people. When God forgives us we are forgiven, and His grace is sufficient to bring us into, and keep us in, the victory over sin. We certainly must be aiming at the right target!

Joseph’s chapter 10 is titled, “The Ministry of Death.” In this chapter Joseph rightly shows the powerlessness of the old-covenant Mosaic Law to save us from spiritual death and sin and why we need the new covenant to save us. But he significantly misses the balanced truth of what the apostle Paul was saying and confuses the issue by communicating the idea that since we are not under the old covenant, we are not required to preach, or to keep, God’s (moral) law. This doesn’t mean that Joseph thinks Christians are free to sin whenever they feel like it, but he certainly confuses the issue.

It is true that the New Testament shows that we are not under the Mosaic Law in most senses, but significantly, I have already demonstrated in this paper that Christians *are enabled, and required, to keep the commandments of God’s moral law*. See Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:25-27; Rom. 2:26-29; 8:1-4; 1 Cor. 7:19, and John 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10; 1 John 2:3-6; 5:2-4 (all these passages are quoted above, or quoted and discussed). These passages (and there are more such passages) demonstrate that we have the requirement, and privilege, to live in line with God’s moral law in His righteousness. What true Christian wants to live outside of the will of God? Keeping God’s commandments and

living in His righteousness and holiness, by the saving grace of God in Christ, which includes all the work of the Holy Spirit, is a big part of what new-covenant salvation is all about.

This is so important I'll quote some more verses from the New Testament to show that we are required to keep the commandments of God's moral law. This isn't bad news! This is good news! God is enabling us to come into divine order. I am not saying that God's moral law can save us, but His law, which comes from His very nature, cannot change. His commandments give us His definition of what is right and wrong, and His definition lines up with reality and defines divine order.

I'll read what the apostle Paul said in 1 Thess. 4:2-8, **“For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.** [The apostle goes on to show that keeping God's commandments equals living in a state of holiness, by God's sanctifying grace in Christ.] **(3) For this is the will of God, your sanctification** [I prefer the translation, **“your holiness.”**], **that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality** [Paul undoubtedly dealt with the sin of immorality here because he knew that immorality was a problem in the newly founded church at Thessalonica (see 1 Thess. 3:6-10), but all sin, by definition, is incompatible with living in a state of holiness.]; **that each of you know how to possess his own vessel [his own body] in sanctification [in holiness] 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 because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you.** [A man would transgress and defraud his brother by getting involved with his daughter, or his wife, for example.] **(7) For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity but in sanctification** [“in a state of holiness”]. **(8) So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.”** The apostle was exhorting, and requiring, the Christians who were living in sin to repent, by the sanctifying grace of God in Christ, which included all the work of the Holy Spirit who had been given to them. There was no other satisfactory answer for the Christians at ancient Thessalonica, or any other Christians! And the apostle certainly wasn't exhorting those Christians to gradually decrease their sexual immorality, or any other sin.

I quoted 1 John 2:3-6 earlier in this paper, but I'll quote these super-relevant verses again here with a little more comment. **“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; (5) but whoever keeps His word** [which includes keeping His commandments], **in him the love of God has truly been perfected.** [1 John 4:12 says, “No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.” God's love is perfected in us when we walk in His love (being enabled by the indwelling Spirit; love is a fruit of the Spirit [Gal. 5:22]). John is not speaking of some way-out unattainable level of love, but of the love Christians will manifest as they walk by the Holy Spirit, instead of walking in the flesh.] **(6) the one who says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same manner as He walked.”** I trust we can all agree that Jesus walked with the victory over all sin.

1 John 3:21-23.³¹ **“Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us** [*condemn us* in the sense that it knows something against us; or we could translate, “does not convict us.” The Greek verb used here is made up of two words: a verb meaning *know* and a word meaning *against*], **we have confidence before God** [If we (in our heart) know that we are living in sin, our heart will condemn (or, convict) us, and we should thank God for this. We have a conscience, and the Holy Spirit will be convicting us in His concern for the glory of God and for our well being.] **(22) and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.** [It is very important to see that we don’t earn/merit the answer to our prayers by keeping God’s commandments. Our prayers are answered because of the grace of God in Christ. But we must keep His commandments, which is a privilege, not a burden, and our living in sin will block the flow of God’s blessings to one degree or another. For one thing, God, in His love for us, is greatly concerned with our need to repent if we are living in sin. If we are living in any sin, God knows it, and He hates sin. It won’t suffice for us to meditate on the supposed fact that God sees us as righteous and holy and we are pleasing to Him. We must repent! We have the privilege to repent and to be fully restored by the saving grace of God in Christ.] **(23) This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as He commanded us.”** These verses, and this entire epistle (not to mention a very large number of verses throughout the New Testament) make it clear that *we are required to keep all the commandments of God’s moral law by His grace through faith*. It all starts with repenting and believing (having faith) “in the name of His Son Jesus Christ.” To believe in His name includes believing all that the Bible reveals about Him. The requirement to “love one another” doesn’t leave any room to sin against one another in any way. Also, the requirement to love God, which is more foundational and important, doesn’t leave any room to sin against Him.

1 John 5:2, 3. (I quoted 1 John 5:2-4 earlier in this article, but I’ll quote verses 2 and 3 again here because they are so relevant to the requirement, and privilege, for us to keep God’s commandments.) **“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. (3) For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.”** If we see things right, we will see that God’s commandments are a blessing for Christians. We need them for direction and correction (see 2 Tim. 3:16, 17, for example).

Revelation 12:17; 14:12. **“So the dragon [Satan] was enraged against the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children** [The rest of her (true Israel’s) children refers to the Christians that Satan will attack throughout the second half of Daniel’s 70th week.], **who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus** [They testify that Jesus is their Savior and their Lord, etc.]. **... Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.”** All Christians are required, and privileged, to keep God’s commandments by His sufficient grace through faith.

Keeping God’s moral law from our hearts is what righteousness is all about; this is the dominant use of the word righteousness in the New Testament (and in the Old

³¹ 1 John 3:16-23 are discussed in my “Paper on Faith.”

Testament). If we are not keeping God's moral law, we are, by definition, sinning. I suppose the primary reason Joseph is against the need to preach the commandments of God's moral law is that doesn't fit with the positional righteousness that he emphasizes so strongly. If we preach the commandments of God's moral law and go beyond positional righteousness, someone might get convicted of their sin and the devil might get them feeling condemned. From Joseph's point of view, Christians feeling condemned must be avoided at all costs.

With this in mind, Joseph says that the Holy Spirit never convicts us of sin, he doesn't believe ministers should preach about repentance, he believes it would be a negative thing to preach a series on the Ten Commandments, he doesn't believe we need to confess our sins to be forgiven, etc. However, if we repent and confess our sins, we will be forgiven according to the Word of God. And then we can, and we must, totally reject the condemnation of the devil. (And, of course, if the devil is falsely accusing us of sin when we haven't sinned, we can, and we must, totally reject his lying accusations.) If we really are living in sin, the only satisfactory answer is to repent, to be forgiven, and to make walking in the actual righteousness and holiness of God a top priority by His sufficient grace, which includes dying to sin. That's the heartbeat of the new covenant.

It isn't that Joseph isn't against sin, but he thinks that his radical form of God's grace, which includes a radical emphasis on positional righteousness and holiness, is the biblical way to get the victory over sin. As I am demonstrating throughout this paper, I have to strongly disagree with many of the details in his radical grace, positional righteousness and holiness package.

I'll quote several sentences from pages 117, 118 (still in chapter 10) here. "This book is about the good news of Jesus Christ. He did not come to condemn you. He came to take your condemnation upon Himself, so that you will never be condemned again. [He took our condemnation, but things aren't going to work right if we don't understand the gospel and submit to the gospel (in faith) on a continuous basis, and work out our salvation day by day. As I have demonstrated, we don't adequately understand the gospel if we are putting all the emphasis on positional righteousness, which is about ten percent of what the gospel is all about. There is no condemnation, as Rom. 8:1-4 show, if we are fulfilling the requirement of God's moral law by the sufficient sanctifying saving grace of God in Christ by faith. That's God's answer to the sin problem.]

Has Jesus died on the cross for us? Has His blood been shed for our forgiveness? [Yes, for our forgiveness; for our new birth; to enable us to live in His righteousness and holiness by His Spirit; etc.] Then why is it that so many believers are still living in condemnation even though He has already been punished for their sins. Did the cross make a difference or not? [Certainly the cross makes a difference; it makes all the difference; but we must understand the fullness of what was accomplished in the cross and what is required (by covenant) of those who become Christians. He died so we could die to sin and live in His righteousness, as Romans chapter 6 and 1 Pet. 2:24, for example, clearly demonstrate. Christians should not think that everything is OK, that God is well pleased with them and sees them as being righteous and holy while they go on living in sin. Something is big time wrong with this picture. The only satisfactory answer for Christians living in sin is to repent and receive God's forgiveness and then make it a top priority to begin to cooperate with His sufficient, purifying, sanctifying grace by

faith, a faith that is based on the balanced truth of what the New Testament teaches. We shouldn't want to make Christians feel good about themselves when they are living in sin, but we should encourage them with the facts that God will forgive them when they repent and that He will enable them to press in to the full victory over sin. He is not trying to get rid of them. Quite the contrary!

It will be helpful for us to consider what we mean by the words *condemn*, *condemnation*. There is a gigantic difference between God's condemning us to hell (which is the typical meaning of the word in the New Testament) and God's convicting Christians with the need to repent. And there is a gigantic difference between God's condemning us to hell and the devil trying to get us feeling condemned, even if we haven't even sinned.

One primary reason for all the feelings of condemnation among Christians in our day is all of the sin that continues and is even increasing. Even if there is repentance and a confession of sin (and that isn't always the case), the heart of true Christians will never be satisfied with all of the sin taking place among Christians, and especially if it is *our* sin. We know in our hearts that something is wrong, big time wrong. No generation of God's people gets by with sin; "be sure your sin will find you out" (Num. 32:23). And that's true for new-covenant believers too.

It is also true that the devil and his hosts work overtime trying to get Christians feeling condemned; trying to get them to doubt God and His Word, trying to get them to despair and give up even trying to live righteous lives; trying to get them to think that God would not forgive them no matter what they do, etc. When the problem is the devil's false accusations and lying words, we must resist his false accusations. Jesus said Satan is a liar. But the most important things we must do is to rightly divide God's Word, to begin to put a strong emphasis on the fact that Jesus died so we could stop sinning and live in the righteousness and holiness of God, and to begin to live it by His sufficient grace and for His glory. There is no other satisfactory answer. To minimize or deny this good news is to deny 90 percent of what new-covenant salvation is all about. No wonder so many Christians feel guilty and that something is wrong. Something is big time wrong.]

Jesus Christ has already delivered all believers from the covenant of law which condemns. [Yes, the old covenant has been set aside; it has been nailed to the cross, so that we could receive new-covenant salvation. We needed a whole lot more than just being set free from the covenant of law which condemns. As Rom. 8:1-4, for example (which we discussed earlier in this paper) show, the primary basis for our being set free from condemnation centers in the fact that we have been set free from being slaves of sin in the kingdom of spiritual death through the atoning death of the Lamb of God, with the end result being that we fulfill the righteous requirements of God's moral law in our daily lives, as we walk in line with what the new covenant provides and requires of us, by grace through faith.

As I mentioned, God's moral law cannot be taken away. And His moral law cannot be changed. It derives from the very nature of God and gives His definition of what is right and what is wrong. The Ten Commandments are part of God's moral law. At least nine of the Ten Commandments are part of God's moral law. The commandment about the Sabbath is different to some extent.

There is no way we can limit what the apostle Paul said in Rom. 8:1-4 to a positional righteousness, where all the emphasis is placed on the fact that Jesus fulfilled the law for

us, and where we are automatically righteous, even if we are living in sin. (And there are very many more such passages in the writings of Paul and throughout the New Testament; many of these passages are discussed in this paper.) The bottom line of Christianity is that the sin problem really has been solved in new-covenant salvation and Christians are called, enabled, required, and privileged to walk in the righteousness and holiness of God. It is also clear that forgiveness is provided for Christians if they should fall into sin when they repent.] But there are believers who choose to continue living under its [the law's] condemnation instead of receiving the grace that has been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. Rather than put their trust in the unmerited goodness of God through Jesus Christ, they have chosen to put their trust in their ability to abide by the Ten Commandments. Simply put they have chosen the ministry of death.”

We put our trust in God, His plan of salvation, and His saving grace in Christ, which sets us free from spiritual death and bondage to sin and enables us to live as God requires us to live by His saving, sanctifying grace in Christ. We do not, and we must not, put our trust in *our* ability (apart from the sanctifying grace of God in Christ) to keep God's moral law. We are His new creations. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). God gets all the glory as we fulfill the requirements of His moral law in our daily lives. As God's new creations, who have been set free from spiritual death and bondage to sin, we fulfill the requirements of His moral law in our daily lives. God paid the price to set us free from bondage to sin because He loves us and He hates sin. Another reason He sent His Son to die as the Lamb of God was to overthrow Satan and all who continue to follow him (see John 12:31; 16:11, for example).

I'll quote part of what Joseph further says in chapter 10 on pages 120, 121. “Now that you know that the Ten Commandments is the ministry of death [Since Christians are enabled to keep God's moral law by the sanctifying grace of God in Christ, the Ten Commandments do not minister death; they do not intensify the sin problem for Christians who are walking in the life and righteousness of God, as they did for man in the flesh. However, we must see the law from the right perspective. The law cannot save, and God must receive all the glory for the righteousness that is manifested in our daily lives, as we walk by the Holy Spirit.], think with me: What do you think happens when the church remains bound by the law? What happens when we preach a series of sermons on the Ten Commandments? Can you see why the body of Christ is sick and depressed today, or why believers don't have the power to overcome sin? [Believers aren't lacking the power to overcome sin because they heard a series of sermons about the Ten Commandments, or the moral law. The primary reason why believers are lacking the power to overcome sin is because the good news that Christians have been set free from bondage to sin and been called, enabled, and required to walk in the righteousness of God by the indwelling Holy Spirit, as we walk by the Spirit by faith on a continuous basis, hasn't been widely understood, proclaimed, or accepted by very large numbers of Christians. The moral law is needed, and it doesn't cause any problems unless it is separated from (or substituted for) the reality of new-covenant salvation. The law cannot impart life or set us free from bondage to sin and make us righteous,³² but it does give

³² See Gal. 3:21, for example, “Is the Law 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

God's direction to our lives in Christ, which we need, and God uses it to help show Christians living in sin where they need to repent.

To the extent Christians are satisfied to live on the edge of God's kingdom instead of living for Him as He requires, they will not find the "power to overcome sin" that Joseph mentioned. We must make it a top priority to learn what God's Word says and then to live it by His grace through faith. And we must understand that these things don't just happen automatically while we are passive. Faith is active! And we must understand that the world, the flesh (the old man who still wants to live in sin) and the devil and his hosts are against us, but God's saving power is much greater than our enemies. We are required to believe that, aren't we?]

For generations, the church has believed that by preaching the Ten Commandments, we will produce holiness. [I don't believe that large numbers of Christians have been so misinformed that they think that preaching the Ten Commandments will produce holiness. Joseph is certainly right that preaching the law (by itself) will not make us holy. If we try to keep the law in *our* strength (or, for *our* glory) we are doomed to failure, and if we could keep the law in our strength, we could be proud of ourselves, and pride (with unbelief) is at the root of sin.] When we see sin on the increase, we start to preach more of the law. But the Word of God actually says that 'the strength of sin is the law' (1 Cor. 15:56). [What the apostle Paul meant in 1 Cor. 15:56 was that the Law intensified the sin problem for those who were in the flesh, not for Christians who are walking by the indwelling, sanctifying Holy Spirit, which all Christians are enabled, and required, to do. The cross and resurrection of Christ Jesus, backed up by the infinite Spirit of God, changes everything. What the apostle said in other verses enables us to understand what he meant in 1 Cor. 15:56 (see Rom. 4:15; 5:13; 7:5, 8-13).³³ For one thing, it was a lot more serious to sin against God's commandments, after they had been given, than it was to sin before the Mosaic Law was given. For those under the Mosaic Law sin became full scale rebellion against God and His laws. Also, the law tends to arouse the desire for sinful fruit for those who are in the flesh.

As I have already demonstrated in this paper, the thought never entered Paul's mind that he should refrain from teaching God's moral law or from exhorting Christians to keep the commandments of God's moral law, and he himself exhorted Christians that they were enabled, and required, to keep the commandments of God's moral law. The apostle also had to show why all people (including the people of Israel) needed God's new-covenant salvation. The old covenant, which was built on the foundation of the Mosaic Law, could not solve the sin problem. And Paul had to deal with the Judaizers, who were requiring Gentile Christians to keep the ceremonial laws of the old covenant if they wanted to be saved. And, of course, Paul would have corrected any Christians who were putting the emphasis on the Mosaic Law (or any other law), instead of on God's grace, Jesus Christ, His atoning death, His resurrection, and His ascension and on all the

life then righteousness [the imparted righteousness of God] would indeed have been based on law." The Mosaic Law, or any other law, did not have the authority or power to dethrone the spiritual death and bondage to sin that has reigned over mankind since the fall (see Romans chapters 5, 7, and 8, for example). But that is at the heart of what new-covenant salvation is all about through the atoning death of the Son of God and the outpoured Spirit of God.

³³ These verses are all discussed in my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

work of the promised, outpoured Holy Spirit. We are saved by *grace*, not the law, but we need God's moral law.

As I mentioned, the law doesn't cause problems for Christians who walk by the Spirit of God and keep the requirements of God's moral law in their daily lives, as we are enabled, and required, to do. We must understand the balanced truth of what the New Testament teaches about the commandments of God's law, so we can keep His law in the right perspective. Some Christians eliminate the requirement for Christians to keep God's (moral) law. Some Christians have done this in the past, and some are still doing it. Other Christians end up striving to keep the commandments of the law in their own strength (and sometimes for their own glory), but the law isn't responsible for that, and the answer isn't to do away with the commandments of God's moral law. Sometimes "Christians" are totally walking in the flesh because they have not been born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit yet, for whatever reason. But it is also true that born-again Christians can be quite fleshy, as the Christians of ancient Corinth demonstrated, for example, but that is a dangerous, unacceptable state to be in. One more time, we desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches!] It also says that 'sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace' (Rom. 6:14). So the power for the church to overcome sin is actually found in being under **grace** and not in reinforcing the law. [We must put a very strong emphasis on God's purifying, sanctifying *grace*, which often is *not* the case in our day. Based on things Joseph says in this book, he does believe in God's purifying, sanctifying grace, but as I have mentioned, he substantially confuses the issue with a large number of the things he says in this book. There is absolutely no reason for us to stop teaching the commandments of God's moral law or for us to limit righteousness to positional righteousness, for example, in order to put the emphasis on *grace* when we understand what the New Testament teaches. Keeping God's commandments and walking in His righteousness is fully compatible with totally emphasizing God's grace in Christ. A big part of what God's grace in Christ does is to enable us to keep His commandments, which is included in what it means for us to walk in His righteousness and holiness. I don't want to "reinforce the law" at the expense of the heart of the gospel, but I don't want to eliminate it either. We don't have that option, and we need it!] Preaching more of the law to counteract sin is like adding wood to the fire!" It's true that preaching more of the law to people who don't understand the gospel will not solve the sin problem. The sin problem can never be solved by anything other than seeing (with the eyes of our hearts) that because of what Jesus did on the cross, we are called, enabled, and required to walk by the Holy Spirit and fulfill the requirements of God's moral law. The commandments of God's moral law are not the problem; they are not the enemy; we need them!

Before leaving this chapter, I'll quote another statement from Joseph that I trust (I hope) at least most of my readers will reject, "In other words, with the advent of the new covenant of grace, **"the Ten Commandments have been made obsolete"** [Joseph's emphasis].

I want to recommend my paper titled, "The Christian, the Law, and Legalism." The paper is located on my internet site (Google to Karl Kemp Teaching). I'll list the major headings included in this 62 page paper; under most of these headings, I quote and discuss the key passages from the New Testament that are relevant to that heading: (1)

Introduction; (2) Christians Are Enabled and Required, to keep the **Law** of God, Including the Law Contained in the Old Testament, Excluding the Ceremonial Law; (3) Christians Are Enabled, and Required, to Keep the **Commandments** of God/Christ; (4) Christians Are Enabled, and Required, to **Obey** God/Christ (including His Word, Law, and Commandments); (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; (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; (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 Are Not Optional; (8) Doesn't the New Testament Teach that the Mosaic Law/Old Covenant Has Been Set Aside and that Christians Are Not under this Law? And Doesn't it Teach that No One Will be Justified/Saved by Doing Works of the Law?; (9) Legalism. Discussions in the Appendix include: Law and Gospel; More on the Lutheran and Calvinistic Views of the Law; Reformed Tradition; and Dispensational Antinomianism.

Joseph spent some four pages (pages 153-156) discussing the prodigal son of Luke 15:11-32. His heading here is "The Father's Heart of Grace," and he starts his discussion with the words, "Do you want to see how your heavenly Father responds when you have failed?" I appreciate his emphasis on the Father's heart of mercy, compassion, love, etc, but I believe Joseph misses a major point in what this glorious parable is about: *He denies that the prodigal son repented.* I'll quote part of what Joseph said, "We all know that the son was not returning to the father's house because he had realized his mistake. He was returning home because he was hungry! ... But the father did not care what his son's intentions were."

It's true, of course, that the prodigal son was hungry, for one thing; many (or most) of us who are Christians now began to consider the gospel because we got to a place where we needed big help, but ultimately we repented and returned to the One who created us and has called us to repent and submit to His plan of salvation. I think almost all Christians agree that the prodigal son repented. I would be surprised by Joseph's interpretation, but I have already shown that Joseph doesn't agree with the idea that we should preach repentance (and he believes that God always sees us as being righteous and holy, and He is always pleased with us, and we don't have to confess our sins to be forgiven, and the Holy Spirit never convicts of sin, but He convicts us of our righteousness, etc.). So I'm not all that surprised. As far as I am concerned it is totally necessary for us to see that the prodigal son repented. We'll discuss the basis for this as we continue.

Luke chapter 15 contains three parables given by the Lord Jesus. All three parables effectively make the same point: (The third parable, dealing with the father [representing God] and the prodigal son, *powerfully* and effectively makes the point.) God (and his angels, etc.) greatly rejoices when His children repent. He cares very much for the eternal welfare of each one of His children. I'll read the two verses at the end of the first parable about the man who lost one of his hundred sheep, but then found it. "And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' (7) I tell you that in the same way, there will

be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”

I’ll read the second parable; it is only three verses. “Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? (9) When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!’ (10) In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

And I’ll read the last verse of this chapter, at the conclusion of the parable of the prodigal son. “But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and *has begun* to live, and *was* lost and has been found.” The prodigal son came to himself, recognized that he had made a gigantic mistake (had sinned greatly), humbled himself, and went to his father hoping to be accepted by him, but not with the same privileges he had before. He was dead, but he came back to life; he was lost, but now he was found. He was found like the lost sheep and the lost coin were found. And remember that the point of the first two parables was that in the same way that there was rejoicing when that which had been lost was found, there is great joy in heaven (centering in God Himself) over one of His children repenting (see verses 7, 10).

And the parable of the prodigal son puts a strong emphasis on the loving mercy and generosity of the father who was greatly rejoicing that his son had repented and come back to his father. Jesus was, of course, teaching that God the Father longs to receive His children who repent and come to Him. In other words the problem isn’t on God’s end. The problem is that God’s people are very often slow to repent, or never do repent at all. One of the dominant messages of the New Testament (and the Old Testament too) is that if we need to repent, we must repent. There is no substitute for repentance, when repentance is required. It won’t suffice to keep telling ourselves how much God loves us; or that He already considers us righteous; or that He doesn’t see our sin because He is looking at us through the blood of Christ. And repentance is something *we* must do, but not independent of the grace of God.

I’ll discuss what Joseph says under the heading, “Does the Holy Spirit Convict You of Sin?”³⁴ I’ll quote the first few sentences Joseph has here (on pages 134, 135) and make some comments in brackets. “*But, Pastor Prince, how can I differentiate between the Holy Spirit convicting me of sin and the accuser hurling condemnation at me?*”

That is a very good question and the answer is really simple. Now, pay attention to this because it will liberate you. The bottom line is that **the Holy Spirit never convicts you of your sins** [Joseph’s emphasis]. He NEVER comes to point out your faults. [Joseph makes some valid points in this chapter, but this certainly isn’t one of them. Joseph doesn’t back off from making extreme statements; I suppose that goes along with his desire to teach “radical grace.” I believe (I hope) most Christians disagree with what Joseph says here. Convicting Christians who are in any sin is surely one of the primary things the Holy Spirit does (whether the Christians are aware of that sin, or not). That conviction is a great blessing. God’s purpose is not to bring condemnation, but to avoid condemnation (the condemnation of the lake of fire that was prepared for the devil and

³⁴ This heading is in Joseph’s chapter 11, which is titled, “Unearthing the Deepest Root.” He says that condemnation is the deepest root.

his angels). His purpose is to lead the Christian to repent and to begin to fully live in the righteousness and holiness of God, by His sufficient grace. As we have discussed, Christians must walk by the Holy Spirit, so that they will not fulfill the sinful desire of the flesh (the old man who still wants to live in sin; see Gal. 5:16, for example.) I challenge you to find a scripture in the Bible that tells you that the Holy Spirit has come to convict you of your sins. You won't find any.³⁵ [Please don't skip this footnote. I often

³⁵ Joseph deals with John 16:8-11 on the following pages (136-139). These verses, which were spoken by the Lord Jesus on the night before He was crucified, are quite important, and the meaning isn't all that obvious. I don't believe Joseph understands them. I'll quote a small part of what Joseph says there, then I'll quote John 16:8-11 and give what I am confident is the right interpretation of these important verses. "But when people take John 16:8 out of its proper context, they start to believe erroneously that the Holy Spirit is here to convict believers of their sins. ... If the Holy Spirit never convicts you, the believer, of your sins, then what does He convict you of?" Joseph goes on to say that He convicts us our righteousness, "not **right doing**, but **right standing** before God because of your right believing" [Joseph's emphasis]!

I'll quote the verses from the NKJV and make some comments. (I discussed these verses in some detail in my paper titled "A verse-by-verse Study of John chapters 13-17," which is available on my internet site.) **"And when He [the Holy Spirit] has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment [condemnation]: (9) of sin, because they do not believe in Me; (10) of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; (11) of judgment [condemnation], because the ruler of this world is judged [condemned]."**

In verse 8 Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit convicting of sin when He comes, which is quite relevant to the question whether the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, or not. I agree with Joseph that the context here is not dealing with the Spirit convicting Christians of sin, but this verse does show that He convicts of sin, and He certainly does convict Christians of sin as required. If there is one primary thing the Righteous Holy Spirit is interested in throughout this present age, it is the (actual) righteousness and holiness of Christians.

Verses 8-11 deal for the most part with the Jews who lived when Jesus ministered on the earth, but they have much application for all people. If the Jews were guilty, so were the Gentiles! People must be convicted of their sin before they see their desperate need for new-covenant salvation. I'll quote part of what I said under verse 9 in my paper, "The Spirit of God, when He comes (starting on the Day of Pentecost), will use the fact that the Jews did not submit to Christ (in faith) to prove that they (though they thought of themselves as being the people of God) were far from God and quite sinful. He will also convict many of the people of the world (all who have ears to hear) of the fact that they are sinful and need to repent and submit in faith to God's new-covenant salvation in Christ Jesus. People aren't interested in the gospel (the good news) of salvation until they see their need (their very desperate need) for the only Savior from sin, spiritual death, and from their being part of the world system whose god is the devil [knowing that the devil and his world system has been condemned at the cross and is doomed]."

You often hear Christians say that the only really important sin, the sin that condemns people, is the sin of rejecting and not submitting to the gospel in faith. That viewpoint is faulty. For one thing, it minimizes the seriousness of the other sins that men have committed back to Adam. There can be no doubting the fact that the sin of rejecting Christ and the gospel is a unique, super-serious sin, but it isn't the only sin that condemns people. One reason that it is such a serious matter to reject Christ and the gospel is because rejecting Him means rejecting God's only plan of salvation and *dying in your sins*. I'll quote what Jesus said in John 8:24, 'Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins.' In John 8:21 he said, 'you will die in your sin.' The Bible frequently speaks of people, including Christians, being judged according to their works/what they have done (see, for example, Matt. 16:24-27; Rom. 2:5-16; 2 Cor. 5:9-11; and Rev. 22:10-12, 14, 15). Our works must demonstrate that our faith was/is real.

Words like those of John 3:18 ('he who does not believe [in Christ] is judged [condemned] already') demonstrate the seriousness of the sin of rejecting Christ and the gospel. John 3:19, 20 go on to tell why many people rejected Christ, the Light: 'men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds [works] were evil. [Their works showed where their hearts were; their hearts were far from God; such people typically did not repent.] For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds [works] will be exposed.' [These words about being condemned already speak

include very important information in the footnotes. Although there aren't any other verses, beside John 16:8, 9, that specifically mention the Holy Spirit *convicting* of sin, there are many other verses that speak of the Holy Spirit doing things that include convicting us of sin (as required). God hates sin and the heartbeat of the new covenant is our being set free from bondage to sin and living in a state of righteousness and holiness through Christ Jesus and by the Holy Spirit. The New Testament speaks of our being sanctified by the Spirit; of the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit; of the Spirit (in us) waging warfare against sin; of the Spirit of truth, who will guide us into all truth (the truth includes righteousness and holiness [see Eph. 4:24]); of our being renewed by the Spirit in our thinking; of the righteous and good fruit the Spirit produces in us; of the word of wisdom and word of knowledge by the Spirit; of our being taught by the Spirit; led by the Spirit; directed by the Spirit; walking by the Spirit; thinking by the Spirit; of our being strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell (fully dwell) in our hearts by faith; and of our not grieving the Holy Spirit by sinning.] The body of Christ is living in defeat because many believers don't understand that the Holy Spirit is actually in them to convict them of their **righteousness in Christ** [Joseph's emphasis]. Even when you fail, He is ever present to remind you that you are continually cleansed by the blood of Jesus [my underlining]. That's the Holy Spirit." Joseph means that they are continuously cleansed in the sense they are automatically and continuously forgiven and are righteous in the eyes of God; they have been perfected and they are righteous forever, period (with a positional righteousness).

I won't quote any more from what Joseph says here, but I'll comment on his point (on page 135) that Christians don't need the Holy Spirit to convict them of their sins, because they know when they have sinned. The New Testament demonstrates that many Christians are not aware of many of their sins, even with the Holy Spirit convicting them of sin. Revelation chapters 2 and 3 provide a prime illustration of this fact. It seems that

of the fact that these people have their final judgment (in a very real sense) at the time they reject God's only plan of salvation." In a footnote I went on to discuss the glorious fact that when people submit (in faith) to the Lord Jesus Christ and God's plan of salvation, they too (in a very real sense) have already had their final judgment (John 5:24), but we must stay faithful to Christ by God's enabling grace.

Now I'll read part of what I said under John 16:10. "The primary idea here is that, even though the Jews (the world) had condemned Jesus to death for His supposed *sinfulness* against God, the fact that He was resurrected and went back to the Father, to sit at His right hand, effectively demonstrated His righteousness, His righteousness according to the verdict of the ultimate Judge, God the Father. [I pointed out in a footnote that God made known the resurrection of Christ in many ways, and subsequent events, like the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, starting on the Day of Pentecost, and the start of the Christian church, with the transformed lives and all of the miracles testified loudly to the fact that Jesus was indeed at the Father's right hand.] If He was righteous, which He certainly was, then they must have been seriously blinded by the god of this world and in serious bondage to sin (and in desperate need of the Savior) since they rejected the Righteous One as a sinner (see, for example, Acts 2:14-42; 3:13-15; and 7:51-60). Satan, the god of this world, was actively involved in the murder of Christ Jesus (see Luke 22:3-6; John 13:2, 27; 14:30; and 1 Cor. 2:8)."

Rather than quote what I said under John 16:11, I'll just briefly mention, that Satan has been condemned/judged at the cross. His condemnation will be fully manifested at the end of this age, but even now it is obvious that he cannot stop people from becoming born-again righteous new creations in Christ. He cannot stop the miracles, the demons being cast out, etc. And if the god of this world has been condemned and is headed for the lake of fire, it must be understood that those who continue to be aligned with him will be condemned along with him. The Holy Spirit has come to convict people (all who will listen) of these super-important facts.

the Christians at Ephesus, who had so much right (much more than most Christians do today), didn't realize that they (according to the Lord Jesus) had a very serious need to repent of the sin of having left their first love (their love for God and His Son) and to do the works they did at first. He said that if they didn't repent He would come and remove their lampstand (the lampstand that showed that those Christians were part of His church).

And I'll give another illustration from the letters to the seven churches, it is clear that most of the Christians at Sardis were (at least to some significant extent) unaware of their very serious need to repent (see Rev. 3:1, 2), at least until the Lord Jesus informed that if they didn't repent, He would come upon them in judgment like a thief, and He indirectly stated that He would erase their names from the book of life.³⁶ For one thing, the more that Christians are walking in the flesh, like so many of the Christians at ancient Corinth were doing, for example, the more they tend to be unaware of their sin. And it is easy for Christians to walk in the flesh to a significant extent (even though this is incompatible with what we are called to in Christ, and it is dangerous). I have the impression that much of the Christianity of our generation is more fleshly than the Christianity of ancient Corinth. Like people in general, it is rather easy for Christians to see the sin in others, but not to see it in themselves. We desperately need to be convicted by God, and we need to have our hearts open to hear His convicting voice, as we make it a top priority to walk in His righteousness and holiness by His grace, through faith, in humility. It certainly will not help us listen to His convicting voice if we are being taught that **“the Holy Spirit never convicts you of your sins** [Joseph's emphasis].”

I have some very important things to say (some very good news) about the words “continually cleansed by the blood of Jesus” (page 135). Joseph was undoubtedly referring to 1 John 1:7, which he discussed on pages 108, 109 in his chapter 9, “The Waterfall of Forgiveness,” which we have discussed to some extent already. I'll read the verse from his page 108, “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and **the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.**” Joseph interprets these glorious words to mean that we are continually cleansed by this waterfall of forgiveness. It automatically and continually keeps us forgiven and cleansed from all unrighteousness [in a positional, legal sense]. And that's at least one reason why we don't have to even confess our sins to be forgiven, according to Joseph. You will remember that (according to Joseph) we Christians are also automatically and continuously righteous because Christ fulfilled the law for us, which makes us righteous

³⁶ It is clear that the Christians at Sardis that Jesus called to repent, or forfeit their salvation, were true Christians. What Jesus said to them in verse 2 about the need to wake up and strengthen the things that remained, which were about to die confirmed that were still in the Body of Christ. So too what Jesus said to them about having “soiled their garments.” They wouldn't have had garments to soil if they hadn't become true Christians. (Jesus said there were a few Christians at Sardis who had not soiled their garments.) I'll read Rev. 19:8, which shows that the clean/white garments of Christians goes with their living righteous lives on the earth, “It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.” And their names wouldn't have been in the book of life if they weren't true Christians. At the time Jesus spoke to the seven churches, all seven churches were part of the Body of Christ. They all had lampstands for one thing (see Rev. 1:20). Revelation 3:17 makes it clear that the Christians at Laodicea were not aware of the fact that they had a very serious sin problem, but Jesus made it clear that they had a very serious need to repent, or else.

(with a legal, positional righteousness). I'll quote a few sentences from page 109, "Beloved, confessing your sins all the time will make you only more sin-conscious. But knowing that you are under Jesus' waterfall of forgiveness will keep you forgiveness-conscious. And knowing that you are forgiven of all your sins will give you the power to reign over every destructive habit and live a life of victory!"

We must make sure we repent and confess our sins and be forgiven and fully restored if we should sin, but, in general, knowing we are forgiven and have a right standing with God isn't where "the power comes from to reign over every destructive habit and live a life of victory." Knowing that you are forgiven (assuming that you really are forgiven, however, is a whole lot better than the totally unacceptable state of not knowing that you are forgiven. One of the most important things (if not the most important thing) we need to live with the victory over sin is to understand (clearly understand in our hearts with no room for doubting) that God has actually called us to such a walk and provided the enabling grace for us to do it. Quite a few times Joseph speaks of that grace, and I am sure that teaching proves to be a significant blessing to many in his church and others that hear him; but as I have mentioned, much of what he says in this book seriously confuses the issue.³⁷

Now let's discuss these super-important words at the end of 1 John 1:7, "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light...**and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.**" These words say much more than what Joseph, and very many others, think they say. This verse, like so many other verses in the First Epistle of John (and so many other verses throughout the rest of the New Testament), speaks of Christians actually walking in the light of God, and His light includes His truth, His righteousness, and His holiness.³⁸ We cannot fellowship with God in the light while we are walking in the darkness, which is what the Gnostic heretics that John wrote this epistle against were trying to do, while they denied that sin was the problem and that the blood of Jesus is the answer.

The most important thing we need to see here is that the verb *cleanses* here means a whole lot more than being forgiven and maintaining a positional righteousness before God. A big part of what the apostle John was saying here is that **we are cleansed—with a sanctifying, purifying cleansing—from sinning**, which enables us to come into the light and continue to fellowship with God in the light. This sanctifying, purifying cleansing is a big part of what new-covenant salvation is all about. This sanctifying, purifying cleansing is appropriated by grace through faith, in accordance with the terms of the new covenant. This cleansing is essentially the equivalent of our being sanctified

³⁷ I'm not saying that Christians couldn't follow everything Joseph says in this book and live righteous and holy lives, but he certainly confuses the issue. (Of course Joseph isn't the only one confusing the issue; there is plenty of confusion going around.) God is merciful and he helps those who are looking to Him as much as He can, even if they don't rightly divide His Word on every topic. Nevertheless, it stands true that every error hurts. How desperately we need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches! I have observed over the years that one prominent reason why so many Christians don't make it a top priority to seek God for the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches is that most Christians wrongly think they have it already. Somehow, they are the ones who have it right, even if everybody else is wrong. It's amazing! For one thing, it's rather easy for sincere born-again Christians to be motivated to some extent by sinful pride and not even be aware of it. That's one reason we must make it a top priority to humble ourselves and walk by the Spirit all the time, as we are enabled and required to do.!

³⁸ I have already mentioned a large number of such verses from the First Epistle of John and other books of the New Testament in this paper, and there are many more such verses. This is a dominant theme of the New Testament.

and living in a state of holiness; of our walking by the Holy Spirit with the victory over all sin; of our walking in the (imparted) righteousness of God, which includes our being dead to sin; etc.

The Greek verb translated “cleanses” here is *katharizo*, a very important verb. Quite often in the New Testament this verb is used of a sanctifying, purifying cleansing, including this verse (1 John 1:7) and Acts 15:9; 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 5:26; Heb. 9:14; James 4:8; and 1 John 1:9. All these verses are discussed in my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*, except for Acts 15:9 and James 4:8. I’ll take the time here to quote and discuss 2 Cor. 7:1 and James 4:8. This is very important!

2 Corinthians 7:1. “Therefore, having these promises [referring to the promises spelled out in the three verses at the end of chapter 6], beloved, let us cleanse [*katharizo*] ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting [or, completing] holiness in the fear of God.”

The context shows that the apostle Paul was speaking of cleansing/purifying ourselves from sinning here. The blood of Jesus—backed up by the infinite Righteous Holy Spirit of God—is that powerful! This is God’s power and He gets all the glory for our holiness.

The New Testament speaks of God’s cleansing, sanctifying, purifying His people, but it also speaks, on occasion, of Christians cleansing themselves, purifying themselves, etc. The only way we can do these things is by the saving grace of God in Christ, by faith. God doesn’t cleanse us, sanctify us, etc., or keep us clean and holy, apart from our cooperating with His saving grace by faith. That’s the way God set it up.

Note that the apostle Paul was speaking to born-again Christians. To the extent they still needed to be cleansed (and the Christians at Corinth tended to be quite fleshly and sinful), Paul exhorted them to once-for-all cleanse themselves from all sinful defilement of flesh and spirit [heart/inner man]. Many Christians say Christians cannot be defiled in their spirits; you often hear it said that if a Christian sins, their spirits are not involved in any way. As far as I am concerned, this verse suffices to prove that view is wrong. We are not just automatically cleansed in our spirits, or kept clean in our spirits. In Mark 7:14-23, for example, Jesus said that sin is of the heart.

By cleansing themselves from everything that is sinful and defiling, they will be perfecting, or completing, holiness. In other words, they will come into the state of holiness in which all Christians are called, enabled, and required to live. It is very good news to learn that God was willing to pay an infinite price to call, and enable, us to live in a state of holiness through His sufficient saving grace in Christ. The apostle Paul knew all too well that there was sin in the church at Corinth, and he wanted to see that unacceptable situation rectified at once. He was not thinking (like so many Christians think in our day) of a gradual, lifelong cleansing from sin, where we never stop sinning this side of glory. He did, however, teach of a lifelong process of growth (2 Cor. 3:18, for example). In the ideal case we will be living in a state of holiness and growing too, growing in wisdom and knowledge, growing more like the Lord Jesus Christ every day, etc. The need for such growth is not sinful.

Paul’s last words, “in the fear of God” are quite important too. We should be afraid to be living in any sin. Any sin, if it really is considered to be sin by God, the Judge, is a serious matter. (Many Christians call things sin that God doesn’t consider to be sin. This

further confuses the issue.³⁹) This should motivate us to make God and living in His righteousness and holiness (by His grace) top priority. We are called, by covenant, to make God and His will top priority in every way. We must be aiming at this target! What I am sharing is good news, very good news! Based on my studies and observations, a large number of Christians don't believe such a walk is possible; they don't believe (have faith) that they can stop sinning and live in the righteousness and holiness of God.

Now, let's look at James 4:8, **“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse [*katharizo*] your hands you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”**

The context makes it very clear that James is using the Greek verb *katharizo* of a sanctifying, purifying cleansing here. He means *stop sinning* with your hands (or anything else). A different Greek verb for *purify* is used for “purify your hearts, you double-minded.” It is clear that James was exhorting his readers (including us), to stop being double-minded in their hearts through the powerful, sufficient saving grace of God in Christ. It is good news to learn that God provides the enabling grace for us to do these things.

I'll read James 1:5-8. **“But if any of you lacks wisdom [especially wisdom that will enable us to live in the center of God's will, in His righteousness and holiness], let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach. [He wants us to ask! He knows we are totally dependent on His grace.], and it will be given to him. (6) But he must ask in faith without any doubting [God will enable us to walk in faith without any doubting in our hearts, as we walk by His Word and by His Spirit, appropriating His enabling grace.], for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. (7) For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, (8) being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”** We must not be divided in our hearts. We must be sold out to God and give him all of our heart; it is not acceptable for our hearts to be divided, with part of our heart devoted to God and part of it devoted to something else. He requires us to live *for Him*, which includes doing things His way, which includes living in His righteousness and holiness on a continuous basis, by His grace and for His glory. He is, after all, our Creator, our Savior, and our God!

On page 141 (in chapter 11) Joseph has a heading, “His Grace is Greater Than Your Addictions.” “Are you overwhelmed by an addiction today? It may be smoking, pornography, alcohol, drugs, or gambling. Whatever it may be, my friend, God's grace is greater than any addiction in your life. His grace will swallow up your addiction.” I'm thankful that Joseph teaches that God's grace is greater than addictions and that he is helping Christians break addictions.

This chapter is titled, “Unearthing the Deepest Root.” And Joseph goes on to tell us that condemnation is the deepest root, and that the deepest root represents “the fundamental tactic that the devil uses against man.” That helps explain why Joseph goes on on page 142, 143 emphasizing positional righteousness. Emphasizing positional righteousness is a dominant theme in this book. Joseph believes that if he can get you to believe that you are righteous [with a positional righteousness that has nothing to do with your works (how

³⁹ I discussed this topic to some extent under the heading “What is Sin?” starting on page 214 of my book.

you are living)], then “the voice of the accuser who comes to condemn you will have no more dominion over your life.”

I assume that Joseph’s teaching will help some Christians who are overwhelmed with condemnation. His putting all the emphasis on positional righteousness probably helps some Christians cast off the lies of the devil and begin to see that God really does care about them and wants to help them have the victory over their addictions (and all sin). And Joseph really does believe, along with many other Christians, that positional righteousness is all that the Bible is talking about when it uses the word righteousness. As I demonstrated earlier in this article, however, it is important to see that the more basic meaning of the word righteousness deals with actual righteousness. For one thing, God’s grace is not at all limited to the positional, legal dimension. Confusion in this area greatly distorts the gospel. Every error hurts and this is a big error. Positional righteousness, positional holiness, positional cleansing (cleansing from the guilt of sin), positional redemption (just being forgiven), positional salvation (saved from the guilt of sin), etc. If we aren’t careful we may end up in a positional heaven. We need some heavenly reality NOW and in the future. Joseph says that God’s grace covers everything that we need, but as I have said, his teaching substantially confuses the issue.

We don’t have to wrongly limit the word righteousness to positional righteousness to help people cast off the lies of the devil. (We desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible, especially the New Testament, teaches!) We don’t have to listen to the devil. We must not listen to the devil. The New Testament makes it clear that we are forgiven through Christ when we repent and ask for forgiveness, and even more important, the New Testament is literally packed with teaching that God has already paid an infinite price so we can actually be righteous and holy in our daily lives.

Our faith for victory over all sin must be based, not on the fact that we are forgiven and have right standing with God, but on the fact that holiness and victory over sin is about 90 percent of what the gospel is all about. Study Romans chapter 6, for example, and there are hundreds more similar verses, including 1 Peter 2:24, which shows that Jesus died for us so that we could stop sinning and live for God in His righteousness. That sounds good, doesn’t it? “and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds [referring to all that Jesus bore for us in His atoning death] you were healed [referring to Isa. 53:5].” Isaiah 53:11 is one of the most important verses in the Bible which shows that victory over sin has been provided through the atoning death of the Lamb of God: The Righteous One (Christ Jesus) makes righteous the many⁴⁰

The dominant reason that so many Christians do not have faith to walk in holiness with the victory over sin is that it isn’t being taught very much, or on a consistent basis. The majority of Christians in our day, including a large number of ministers, don’t know (for one reason or another) that the New Testament makes it clear that God has called, enabled, and required us to walk by His Spirit on a continuous basis with the victory over all sin. One of the primary problems is that so many put all, or most, of the emphasis on positional righteousness. And rather than being taught and encouraged that we can have faith for holiness and victory over sin, we are often told that the New Testament teaches that we cannot have the victory over sin during this age. That is a gigantic error! I deal with this topic quite a bit in my book and other writings.

⁴⁰ Isaiah 53:11 is discussed on pages 26-29 of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

For one thing, I deal with the three passages most often used to teach that Christians cannot have the victory over sin in this life in my book (starting on page 194). The three passages are Rom. 7:14-25; 1 John 1:8; and Gal. 5:17. I don't believe any of these passages teach that we cannot walk with the total victory over sin. This is very good news! I also have a paper dealing with the interpretation of Romans chapter 7. An abbreviated version of the paper is on my internet site. You could get a copy of the original version of the paper by contacting me.

I'll briefly comment on Rom. 7:14-25 here. It would be difficult to overstate how much damage has been done to the cause of righteousness, holiness, and the victory over sin through a serious misunderstanding of this passage. This is the passage where the apostle Paul said, "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold [having been sold] into bondage to sin. (15) For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate [namely sin] ... (19) For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want." About half the Christians in our day interpret the apostle Paul to be speaking of himself as a Christian here, and if he was in such bondage to sin, the rest of us Christians certainly cannot expect (cannot have faith) to walk with the victory over sin.

For one thing, that erroneous viewpoint glaringly contradicts what the apostle Paul just taught throughout Romans chapter 6 and the first part of chapter 7 and what will go on to say in Romans chapter 8. When Paul spoke of *having been sold into bondage to sin*, he was speaking, as Romans chapter 5 shows, of what happened to mankind with the fall of Adam. However, the New Testament clearly and repeatedly shows that Christians have been redeemed out of that pitiful state through the Lord Jesus, "the last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45). The apostle could not say as a Christian that "I am of flesh, sold [having been sold] into bondage to sin" without contradicting what he (and the other writers of the New Testament) so often said elsewhere, including Romans chapter 6 and the first part of chapter 7 and what he will go onto say in Romans chapter 8.

Paul was not speaking of himself as a Christian here. He was speaking for fallen mankind, especially that part of mankind that was under the Mosaic Law. While you are considering that idea, you should know that very few early Christian writers understood the apostle Paul to be speaking about himself in this passage before about AD 400; and the few writers who understood him to be speaking of himself as a Christian did not think he was saying that he was sinning. I'll comment on this important point as we continue.

The primary thing that Paul was demonstrating in Rom. 7:5-25 was that the Mosaic Law (the old covenant) was powerless to solve the spiritual death, bondage to sin problem. He showed, in fact, that the Law intensified the sin problem. As many scholars have pointed out, Paul was expanding here on what he said in Rom. 6:14, "For sin shall not have dominion over you [you who are saved in Christ Jesus], for you are not under law but under grace [the sufficient saving, sanctifying grace of God in Christ]." One of the primary things the apostle was doing in Romans chapter 7 was showing that the people of Israel needed new-covenant salvation. And the Gentiles needed to know that the Mosaic Law could not save them; they too needed new-covenant salvation. God only has one answer for the sin problem. He had that glorious plan before He created the world (1 Pet. 1:20).

It is very significant that there was very widespread agreement in the early Christian church up until about AD 400 that Paul was not speaking of himself as a Christian in Rom.

7:14-25. And it is very significant that the few Christian writers of those days (all such writers that I am aware of) who thought the apostle was speaking as a Christian in those verses made a very significant qualification in their interpretation. They said that those verses (like Rom. 7:14, 15, 19, which I quoted above) which speak of not doing the good he wants to do, but doing the very thing he hates, did not refer to Paul (the Christian) actually sinning, but of his having wrong thoughts and desires. It isn't sin to have wrong thoughts and desires if the Christian resists them by the grace of God in Christ. In other words, those few early Christian writers who wrongly thought that Paul was speaking as a Christian in those verses still had enough contact with the reality to know that the apostle Paul wouldn't say that Christians are still under the spiritual death and bondage to sin that came as a result of Adam's transgression. See my book and paper for more details.

I'll include one more detail here. You often hear it said that the one speaking in Rom. 7:14-25 has to be a Christian because that person spoke of wanting to do good and to live in line with God's Law. That statement surprises me. The Old Testament (some of the Psalms, for example) frequently spoke of the people of Israel, and not just a few, who loved God and His Law and very much wanted to live in line with His Law. You don't have to be born-again through Christ to have a desire to please God and live in line with His Law.

I should also mention that some Christians who wrongly think Paul was speaking as a Christian in Rom. 7:14-25 believe we can walk with the victory over sin. They say things like, Paul was speaking of himself when he was under conviction before he was born again, or when he was a young Christian and had not yet learned to walk in victory. Those views don't fit the context, but at least they are a great improvement over the very widespread viewpoint that these verses *prove* that Christians cannot come close to walking with the victory over sin during this age. One thing you will notice is that the notes in many study Bibles wrongly interpret Rom. 7:14-25. Every error hurts, and that error has caused great damage to the Christian church.

I'll quote what Joseph says that involves Romans 7 on pages 147, 148 (also see page 167). "The law stirs up sinful desires in man's flesh. Let me tell you that as long as you are in your current body, you will have the propensity to sin. [My dictionary defines "propensity" as "a natural tendency, or tendency; bent." I agree that Christians certainly have a very real potential to sin, and that to the extent we don't know that we are called, enabled, and required to walk with the victory over all sin, and to the extent we are not walking by the Holy Spirit on a continuous basis by faith, we will be sinning. The flesh (the old man) certainly has a propensity to sin.] I did not come up with this. It was Paul who said, 'For what I will to do, that I do not practice, but what I hate, that I do' (Rom. 7:15).

What does it mean? It means that as long as you are in this body, even though you hate to lose your temper and be angry, trust me, you will. No matter how hard you try not to, you will fail. [Trying harder typically won't get the job done. Typically when we try harder, we strive in the flesh. However, we won't fail if we walk by the Spirit, which we are called, and enabled, to do on a continuous basis. I'm not going to say that we cannot do it. God's grace is sufficient for us to do what He has called us to do. Also, I should mention that being angry isn't always sinful, but we certainly must be careful because

anger can lead to great sin.] And when you fail, the devil will be ready to use God's law as a weapon to condemn you. [He can't condemn us if we repent and confess our sin. And it is super-important for us to know that we don't have to commit this sin (or any other sin) again. I didn't say it would always be easy, but we must begin to think in line with God's Word in our hearts (that God's sanctifying, purifying grace in Christ is sufficient) and aim at the target of not sinning at all. As we have been discussing, the New Testament shows that God's sanctifying, purifying grace is sufficient.] He knows that if he is able to put you under condemnation, you will start to fear. That fear will bring stress, and then all kinds of psychosomatic sicknesses and oppression can start to make inroads in your life. This is no joking matter—condemnation kills.” The primary thing that kills is sin. *Sin, not feeling condemned, is our primary enemy!* And if we walk according to the New Testament, we will walk with the victory over all sin and over feeling condemned too. God has us covered, but we must do what is required of us (in accordance with the covenant He has made with us) by His grace. And, of course, we must know what is required of us. As I have mentioned, we have a desperate need to learn the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. All of us are responsible before God to do this.

On pages 252-254 Joseph spoke of his rejoicing that he had been led, while in a bookstore in New York, to a book written by Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones on Rom. 7:1-8:4.⁴¹ The book “fell open to [his] teaching on Romans 8:1, which says, ‘There is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.’ He said, ‘The apostle [Paul] is asserting that if we are Christians, your sins and mine—past sins, present sins, future sins—have already been dealt with once and forever!’ Wow, I was excited because this sounded like what I had been preaching, and there had been a dearth of such teachings. You don't hear much preaching like this these days.” Joseph went on to give a lengthier quotation from Lloyd-Jones. I'll read that quotation and quote a little more from Joseph. This discussion will help us discern the balanced truth of what the New Testament teaches.

The apostle [Paul] is asserting that if we are Christians, your sins and mine—past sins, present sins, and future sins—have already been dealt with once and forever! Had you realized that? Most of our troubles come due to our failure to realize the truth of this verse. ‘There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus’ is so often understood to mean nothing more than that past sins have been dealt with. Of course it means that; but it also means your present sins; even more, it means that any sin you may ever chance to commit has already been dealt with. You will never, you cannot ever come under condemnation. [Lloyd-Jones doesn't mean that you cannot ever feel condemned. He means you cannot ever lose your salvation and be condemned to the lake of fire.] This is what the apostle is saying—nothing can ever bring the Christian again in a position of condemnation. ... The Christian can never be lost, the Christian can never come under condemnation. ‘No condemnation’ is an absolute word, and we must not detract from it. To do so is to contradict and to deny the Scripture. [I'll quote the sentence that Joseph skipped here, “This is the Apostle's the way, at this point, of

⁴¹ “Romans; An Exposition of Chapters 7:1-8:4; The Law: Its Functions and Limits” (Zondervan, 1973), pages 272, 273. D. M. Lloyd Jones was born in 1899 and died in 1981. He was born in South Wales.

teaching the doctrine of the ‘Final perseverance of the saints.’ ” This is another way of saying that true Christians cannot lose their salvation.]

But why does the apostle say this, and on what grounds does he say it? Is it not a dangerous thing to say? **Will it not incite people to sin? If we tell Christians that their past sins, their present and their future sins have already been put away by God, are we not more or less telling them that they are free to go out and sin? If you react in that way to my statements I am most happy, for I am obviously a good and true interpreter of the apostle Paul [Joseph’s emphasis].”**

I have a lot of respect for the ministry of Lloyd-Jones, but I don’t appreciate what he said here. I agree that what he said here seems to confirm much of what Joseph says in his book. One of my first thoughts when I read this quotation from Joseph’s book was that Lloyd-Jones must have been saying these things in large part because he believed, as does Joseph, that Christians cannot lose their salvation.⁴² I understand that doctrine pretty well, having been converted in a Calvinistic (Presbyterian) church, having strongly believed that doctrine myself for a couple of years, having graduated from a Calvinistic (Presbyterian) seminary, and having studied many books written by Calvinists. I have a lot of respect for born-again Calvinistic scholars who respect the Bible, and I have learned a whole lot of truth (biblical truth) from them.

My thought that Lloyd-Jones must have been saying the things he said here in large part because of his belief that Christians cannot lose their salvation was confirmed when I read the sentence that Joseph skipped, which I quoted above in brackets. It is obvious that IF you could not lose your salvation, your past, present, and future sins have to be dealt with somehow. You never could be condemned to hell.

I need to make two important points. In the first place, I think Lloyd-Jones has significantly overstated the case here, at least in part because of his belief that Christians cannot lose their salvation. When the Lord Jesus Christ (or the apostle Paul, or other writers of the New Testament) dealt with Christians living in sin, they made it clear that repentance was required with a high priority and that their salvation was at stake. I have given many examples to demonstrate this point in this paper. What the Lord Jesus said to the Christians in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 who needed to repent should suffice to make that point clear. He didn’t tell them that they were secure because their present and even their future sins were already dealt with. Far from it!

And the second point I want to make here is very important to the topic of this paper. I will show, for one thing, that, although this quotation makes it sound like Lloyd-Jones would agree with much of what Joseph teaches in his book, he wouldn’t agree. I’ll give some quotations from later pages in Lloyd-Jones’ book as we continue to show that he didn’t believe we can put all the emphasis on positional righteousness, like Joseph does. He wouldn’t say that Christ fulfilled the law for us and that’s all there is to it, like Joseph does. He believes we must also walk in the (actual) righteousness of God. He believes

⁴² At that time, I was surprised because I didn’t know, or had forgotten, that Lloyd-Jones held that viewpoint. See pages 5, 6 of this paper on the idea that Christians cannot lose their salvation. One point that I made there is that I’m not too bothered by that doctrine if it isn’t abused, but it very often is abused. True Christians shouldn’t lose their salvation. It isn’t the will of God for them to lose their salvation; however, the will of God isn’t always done: He doesn’t will for His children to rebel and sin, but....

that Christians need the law of God, for one thing, to “remind us of the life God demands of us” (page 302). And, with those facts in view, I don’t believe he would tell Christians that the Holy Spirit never convicts of sin or that ministers don’t need to preach the Ten Commandments (God’s moral law) or to preach on the need for Christians in sin to repent, or that Christians don’t need to confess their sins to be forgiven, as Joseph does in this book.

I’ll include some excerpts from Lloyd-Jones to demonstrate much of what I said in the preceding paragraph: “What the Law could not do [Rom. 8:3], then, was to secure that the righteousness which it demanded was fulfilled in us. That leaves us with the question, What does this mean? ... The Law has two objects, the first and foremost being to provide a representation of God’s demand of righteousness from man. Secondly, it punished and condemns. ... We must never forget the two aspects of the purpose of the Law; it is to indicate the way of righteousness, the way of life, to remind us of the life God demands of man, as well as to condemn. Indeed our condemnation arises out of our failure to live according to the Law [my emphasis]. ...” (pages 301, 302).

“I need something further [than being delivered from guilt and punishment]. I need a positive righteousness [by living in accordance with God’s moral law]. I cannot stand in the presence of God by means of the forgiveness of sins only; I need a positive righteousness [an actual righteousness; and as I have mentioned, this is the dominant use of the word *righteousness* in the Bible], the righteousness that the Law postulates [demands, requires]. The second element in salvation, therefore, is that I am clothed with the righteousness [the actual righteousness] of Jesus Christ. ... In verse 3 [Rom. 8:3], the Apostle tells us how God delivers us from the guilt of sin [Verse 3 definitely includes His setting us free from the authority and power of sin, from the kingdom of sin.]; in verse 4 how He gives us the positive righteousness, and how He will go on doing this increasingly through the work of the Spirit in sanctification until we are ultimately glorified, and free from sin altogether” (pages 302, 303).

“In other words, the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us in two ways. The righteousness of Christ is ‘imputed’ to us [positional, legal righteousness]; but, thank God, the righteousness of Christ is also ‘imparted’ to us [my emphasis]” (page 304). Lloyd-Jones goes on to speak of progressive sanctification.

I knew that Lloyd Jones included (actual) righteousness and holiness as a big part of what Christianity is all about. I had included the following quotation in my audio series titled “Holiness and Victory Over Sin.” I’ll read part of what D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said under Ephesians 1:4. I’m quoting from his book, *God’s Ultimate Purpose, An Exposition of Ephesians Chapter 1*, published by Baker in 1978. “So we must always start with holiness, as the Scripture does, and therefore the preaching of holiness is an essential part of evangelism. I stress this matter because there are certain quite different ideas about evangelism, some indeed that say the exact opposite. They maintain that in evangelism the preacher does not deal with holiness. [Lloyd-Jones is speaking of actual holiness, where the Christian is set apart for God from sin.] The one aim is ‘to get people saved,’ then later you can lead them on to holiness. But what is salvation? To be saved is to be rightly related to God, and that is holiness. The whole purpose of evangelism is primarily to tell men what sin has done to them, to tell them why they are what they are, namely, separated from God. It is to tell them what they need above everything else is not to be

made to feel happy, but to be brought back into a right relationship with the God who is 'light and in him is no darkness at all.' But that means preaching holiness. To separate these two things, it seems to me, is to deny essential biblical teaching. We must start with holiness, and continue with it, because it is the end for which we are chosen and delivered." Amen!

There are many more passages and topics we could discuss, but I believe this would be a good place to stop.

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

Karl Kemp