

# **Some Powerful (Rather Shocking) Statements in 1 John: Christians being Pure and Righteous just as the Son of God is Pure and Righteous; God's Love Perfected in Us; etc.**

**by Karl Kemp December, 2013**

I'll always quote from the New American Standard Bible, 1995 edition, unless I mention otherwise. Sometimes I'll make comments in the middle of quotations in brackets [ ] or [[ ]] to make them more obvious. cf. means compare; e.g. means for example

INTRODUCTION. 1 John probably has more verses (percentage wise) dealing with the call, enablement, requirement, and privilege for Christians to keep the commandments of God and walk in His righteousness with the victory over all sin than any other book of the Bible. And some of the verses of this epistle are rather shocking; speaking, for example, of US PURIFYING OURSELVES AS THE LORD JESUS IS PURE in 1 John 3:3; of OUR BEING DOERS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND BEING RIGHTEOUS AS HE IS RIGHTEOUS in 1 John 3:7; and of THE LOVE OF GOD BEING PERFECTED IN US AS WE MANIFEST THE LOVE OF GOD IN OUR DAILY LIVES in 1 John 2:5; 4:12, 17, 18.

We will discuss 1 John 1:8; 2:3-6; 4:7-21; 3:3; and 3:7 in that order in this paper. I will discuss 1 John 4:7-21 in more detail since I have not discussed those verses to any extent in my previous writings.

The call, enablement, requirement, and privilege for Christians to walk in the righteousness of God with the victory over all sin is widespread in the New Testament. We desperately need to understand, to emphasize, and to believe (to have faith in) these things in the Christian church in our day. Righteousness, holiness, and the victory over sin can only come by grace THROUGH FAITH, FAITH IN GOD AND IN HIS WORD. We cannot be righteous/live in righteousness without being committed in our hearts to God and His Word. We have to do the right things for the right reasons (motives), by His enabling grace, and for His glory.

We have a serious problem with Christians, including many leaders, sinning in our day, and the problem seems to be getting worse all the time here at the end of this age. Sin destroys divine order and causes every kind of problem. God wants to transform us, not condemn us! WE WILL NEVER GAIN THE VICTORY OVER SIN WHILE WE THINK, AND BELIEVE IN OUR HEARTS, THAT THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHES THAT WE CANNOT HAVE THE VICTORY OVER SIN, WHICH IS THE DOMINANT VIEWPOINT IN OUR DAY! It doesn't surprise me much when I see all the sin, because (for one primary thing) so many Christian leaders have been teaching that we cannot have the victory over sin in this life for a long time.

We certainly will not hit the target of victory over all sin if we aren't even aiming at the target! And most of us tend to take the path of least resistance; if some sin is OK (but it isn't), then we don't have to make it a top priority to walk in the righteousness of God with the victory over all sin, which is far from always being easy, and it certainly isn't automatic. I'm not concerned about Christians who are totally committed to God and to His Word in their hearts, and who are making it a top priority to walk in His righteousness and holiness by His grace—they are aiming at the target.

If we believe the New Testament teaches that we cannot have the victory over all sin (which is the majority view), we will not have the victory. That's the thing that concerns me the most. I'm concerned because I believe God is concerned. The world, the flesh (the old man who wants to continue to live in sin), and the devil and his hosts are against us, and they are formidable opponents, but they are no match for the extremely powerful saving grace of God in Christ. Things aren't going to improve until many Christians (especially ministers) reconsider what the Bible—especially the new covenant—teaches about righteousness, holiness, and the victory over sin.

Another gigantic problem is that many (or most) of us haven't made nearly enough room for the Holy Spirit and all of His work, fruit, and gifts. We will never walk in much victory over the evil angels and large numbers of demon spirits who are arrayed against us without understanding the Word of God and walking by the Holy Spirit on a continuous basis (by grace through faith). Our enemies (God's enemies) work full time trying to keep us from the truth, or to get us out of the truth that we have; trying to keep us in bondage to sin, or to get us into sin and ever deeper into sin; trying to destroy us physically, financially, etc., but especially spiritually.

I suppose one reason the apostle John emphasized the requirement for Christians to be totally righteous, pure, etc. as the Lord Jesus is righteous (which certainly excludes all sin) to such an extent in this epistle was to emphasize the contrast with the "gospel" (and lifestyle) of the Gnostic heretics that he wrote this epistle against. More importantly, the apostle John understood that the victory over sin is far from being automatic or always easy, since we are engaged in intense warfare against the world, the flesh (the old man who still want to live in sin), and the devil and his multitudinous, organized, and committed hosts.

Even though John emphasized the high call to walk in the righteousness of God with no sin in this epistle, he made it clear that Christians can be tempted and they can sin (see 1 John 2:1, 2); these verses also make it clear that we will be forgiven and restored through the blood of Christ when we repent. This is good news, but we cannot put the emphasis on forgiveness (as it so often happens in our day); we must put the emphasis on victory over all sin through the saving grace of God in Christ. God hates sin! And He paid an infinite price to set us free

from bondage to spiritual death and sin! WE WILL NEVER HIT THE TARGET IF WE AREN'T AIMING AT IT!

I have already discussed many key passages of 1 John in my book, "Holiness and Victory Over Sin: Full Salvation Through the Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ," including verse-by-verse studies of 1 John 1:5-2:6 and 2:28-3:12 on pages 200-216, and many other verses from that epistle (including 1 John 2:19, 22, 23; 4:1-6; 5:5, 6) are also discussed on those pages. (The book is available on my website and at amazon.com.) Articles #s 15-17 of my "Twenty-Eight Articles on Holiness and the Victory Over Sin" discuss these passages.

**HOW ABOUT 1 JOHN 1:8?** I'll quote the verse, **"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us."** I devoted much attention to the interpretation of 1 John 1:8 in the writings I just mentioned. It would be difficult to overstate how much damage has been done to the Body of Christ through a very widespread misinterpretation of 1 John 1:8. Although 1 John puts such a strong emphasis on Christians living in the righteousness of God with the victory over all sin, and in very strong terms (which I will demonstrate in this paper more than I demonstrated it in my previous writings), the majority of Christians believe that 1 John 1:8 proves that Christians cannot walk with the victory over all sin in this life, and that any Christians who believe they are walking with the victory over all sin are deceived and the truth is not in them. This is extremely important because, as I mentioned, it is impossible for Christians to have faith for victory over sin if we believe the New Testament teaches that such a victory is impossible. Based on my observations some 80 to 90 percent of Christians in our day (who have an opinion on the meaning of 1 John 1:8) think this verse proves that Christians cannot walk with the victory over all sin. Can the majority be wrong? Very much so!

1 John 1:8 has been one of the two primary passages that have been used by many Christians for many hundreds of years to argue for the idea that Christians will not be able to walk with the victory over all sin until after we are glorified. ((The other primary passage is Rom. 7:14-25. That passage is discussed in some detail in my writings. See my book, "Holiness and Victory Over Sin: Full Salvation Through the Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ"; my paper on the Interpretation on Romans Chapter 7; and my paper "Twenty-Eight Articles on Holiness and Victory Over Sin." They are all available on my internet site (Google to Karl Kemp Teaching).)) Many Christians have a list of verses that supposedly prove that we cannot walk with the victory over all sin. Some even say that we all sin daily in thought, in word, and in deed. When Christians (like John Wesley or Charles Finney, for example) came on the scene preaching that Christians are called, enabled, required, and privileged to walk with the victory over all sin they were attacked with 1 John 1:8 and Rom. 7:14-25, which supposedly proved that they were wrong.

On page 194 of my book I have the heading "A Discussion of the Three Most Important Passages Often Used to Try to Prove that Christians Cannot Walk in Victory Over Sin During this Present Age." I'll quote the first paragraph: My studies indicate that the three most important such passages are Rom. 7:14-25; Gal. 5:17; and 1 John 1:8. [These verses are all discussed in this book.] Of these three, the first and third are the most often used. From my point of view, much damage has been done to the Body of Christ through a serious misunderstanding of these passages. I don't believe any of them suggests that Christians cannot walk with total victory over sin. In fact, each of these passages is set in a context that clearly teaches victory over all sin. In my opinion, the New Testament consistently teaches that Christians can and should live above (without) sin. (It also clearly demonstrates that some of the Christians back then had serious problems with sin, but that doesn't change God's call, enablement, requirement, and privilege for us to walk in His righteousness with the victory over all sin.) The call, and enablement, to walk in victory over sin is a big part of what salvation in Christ is all about!

One primary goal I have for this paper is to convince as many readers as possible that there is no way that the apostle John could have exhorted his readers to such a high level of righteous living (PURIFYING THEMSELVES TO BE PURE JUST AS THE LORD JESUS IS PURE and BEING DOERS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND BEING RIGHTEOUS JUST AS HE IS RIGHTEOUS, for example), and have also taught (in 1 John 1:8) that if any of his Christian readers thought that they were walking with the victory over all sin, they were deceiving themselves and the truth was not in them. I believe it is past time to set aside that serious misinterpretation of 1 John 1:8. The correct way to understand 1 John 1:8 is briefly discussed as we continue. See the writings I mentioned for more detail.

1 John 1:8 must be understood in the context in which the apostle John wrote this epistle: There is very widespread agreement that he was dealing with early forms of the Gnostic heresy throughout the epistle. The Gnostics claimed to be Christians, but they denied that they were sinners who needed to be saved through the atoning sacrifice of Christ. They denied that sin is the problem (they denied that they were sinners [1 John 1:8]; they said that they had not sinned [1 John 1:10]), and they denied that the blood of Christ is the answer (1 John 5:6; they even denied that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh [1 John 4:2, 3]); they totally rejected the all-important atoning death of the Son of God.

Nevertheless, this epistle makes it clear that they were living in sin and not keeping God's commandments, no matter how they tried to justify their sin, which very much included their heretical doctrines. They rejected what the Bible teaches about God the Father and God the Son (cf., e.g., 1 John 2:22-24; 4:14, 15; and 5:5). We should be careful with how we use the word "heretic," but the "Christians" that John wrote against in this epistle certainly needed to be called "heretics." John mentions in 1 John 2:19 that these particular heretics had left the Christian community, and in 2:26 he says that he was writing these things to his

Christian readers "concerning those who are trying to deceive you." See my book and Articles #s 15-17 of "Twenty-Eight Articles on Holiness and Victory Over Sin" for more details. And you can learn more about the Gnostics from the Bible commentaries, Bible encyclopedias, Bible dictionaries, etc. You will never understand 1 John if you don't understand that every chapter of this epistle was written in large part to refute the teaching of those heretics.

**1 JOHN 2:3-6. "And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. [The Gnostics claimed that they knew God, but they did not keep His commandments. No matter how skillfully the heretics tried to explain why they didn't (and were not supposed to) keep the commandments, John expected his readers to understand that God's people will keep His commandments, in line with the teaching of the Old and New Testaments.] (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 [my emphasis]. By this we know that we are in Him: (6) the one who says he abides in Him OUGHT TO WALK IN THE SAME MANNER AS HE WALKED [my emphasis]."** Did you hear that? "The one who says he abides in Him [in the Lord Jesus Christ] ought to walk in the same manner as He walked." True Christians will all agree that the Lord Jesus Christ did not sin.

These verses strongly confirm that Christians are called, enabled, required, and privileged to walk in the righteousness and holiness of God, with the total victory over sin (by grace through faith). This is good news! Very good news! No true Christian wants to commit even one sin. These verses also further demonstrate that the heretics didn't really know God, no matter what they claimed for themselves. The Gnostics did not regard the God of the Old Testament, who was the creator of this physical world and who gave the commandments, to be God; to them He was an inferior being. For one thing they believed that physical matter is evil. That is at least one reason they denied that Jesus Christ had a real physical body; they said He just seemed to have a body [docetism]. No problem, because they didn't believe in His atoning death either. The different Gnostic groups didn't agree on every detail.

The apostle John makes it clear in 1 JOHN 2:3, 4 that true Christians do keep God's commandments. They walk in His righteousness (see, for example, 1 John 2:5, 6, 29; 3:3-12, 22-24; 5:2-4, 18, 19; John 14:15, 21; 15:10; Rom. 8:4; and 2:26, 27). Surely John had the heretics in mind in verse 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." The heretics claimed to know God, but the fact that they didn't keep His commandments (along with their heretical doctrines) demonstrated that they didn't really know Him.

I'll quote 1 JOHN 2:5 again, **"but WHOEVER KEEPS HIS WORD, IN HIM THE LOVE OF GOD HAS TRULY BEEN PERFECTED** [my emphasis]. **By this we know that we are in Him.**" To keep God's word here in verse 5 is probably the equivalent of keeping His commandments in verses 3 and 4. (Compare the use of the words "word" and "commandments" in 1 John 2:7, 8 and in the Gospel of John 14:15, 21, 23, and 24.) The primary commandment is to walk in love (the love of God), and walking in love (being enabled by the grace of God, which includes all the work of the indwelling Spirit of God) is the equivalent of keeping God's law/commandments (see, for example, 1 John 2:7-11; 3:10-12, 14-24; 4:7-21; 5:1-3; Matt. 22:34-40; John 13:34, 35; 15:12, 17; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:13-15; and James 2:8). Christians must love God, but they must also love the other Christians. This epistle of John emphasizes both of these aspects of love. We are to have a special love for the other members of the born-again family of God (see 1 John 1:3, 7; 2:9-11; 3:10-23, especially verses 10, 14, 16, 17, 23; 4:7, 11, 12, 16, 20, 21; 5:1, 2), but the New Testament makes it clear that we are obligated to love non-Christians too.

I'll quote 1 John 5:1, 2 (which were the last verses listed at the end of the preceding paragraph), "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ [which was being denied by the heretics John was writing against (1 John 2:22)] is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the *child* born of Him. [[The NASB has the word "child" in italics; we could translate "loves the one born of Him"; this is a perfect participle in the Greek. The one born of God the Father refers to every child of God born again into the family of God; it refers to the ones called "the children of God" in verse 2.]] (2) By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments."

I'll quote two sentences from what Donald W. Burdick says under 1 John 5:1 ("The Letters of John the Apostle" [Moody Press, 1985], pages 342, 343). "Although the verse begins a new chapter, it does not mark a change in thought. John continues to insist, as he does in 4:20-21, that love for God, if it is genuine, will be accompanied by love for fellow believers. It is clear from this verse that in this epistle John has restricted his discussion to the love of those who have been born again." Quite a few commentators make the point that the apostle John restricted his discussion to the love for those who have been born again in this epistle.

**"IN HIM THE LOVE OF GOD HAS TRULY BEEN PERFECTED"** (1 JOHN 2:5). 1 John 4:12 helps us understand the meaning of these words: "if we love one another, God abides in us, and HIS LOVE IS PERFECTED IN US." (We'll discuss 1 John 4:12-19 in the following section of this paper; I'll quote 1 John 4:7: "Beloved, let us love one another, for LOVE IS FROM GOD [my emphasis]; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.") God's love is in Christians by His indwelling Spirit. The first "fruit" that is produced in the hearts and lives of Christians by the Holy Spirit listed by the apostle Paul in Gal. 5:22, 23 is love.

To the extent Christians walk by God's Word and by His Spirit (which we are called to do on a continuous basis), we will manifest God's love; John says His love is perfected in us. For God's love to be in us is one thing. To speak of His love being perfected in us is another thing! For God's love to be perfected in us includes our walking with the victory over all sin, as do the words of 1 John 2:6 and several other verses in 1 John that we discuss in this paper. To me it is rather shocking that the apostle John says it this way, but such terminology is rather common in 1 John and many other places in the New Testament (cf., e.g., Matt. 5:48 ["Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect"; in Matt. 5:43-48 Jesus was speaking of our loving others]; Romans chapter 6 and 8:1-14; Phil. 3:15; Col. 4:12; and 1 Pet. 1:13-19).

God's love has always been perfect, but it is not perfected in the Christian until the Christian walks in love on a continuous basis. (A walk by the Holy Spirit is far from being automatic, and it is not always easy: We face significant opposition from the world, the flesh [the old man who wants to continue in sin], and the devil and his hosts.) In Gal. 5:16 the apostle Paul exhorts His born-again Christian readers (including us) to always walk by the Holy Spirit, so they will not sin. When we become Christians we are enabled, and required, by covenant (the new covenant) to always walk by the Spirit through faith. (We have signed a contract, so to speak.) The apostle John is not speaking of some unattainable level of love (he is speaking of a relative perfection; not of an absolute perfection that cannot be increased; where we are fully like God in our loving), but of a level that even a newly converted Christian can walk in, being enabled by God's grace/Spirit. This walk in love is a major part of the ideal state of righteousness and holiness that we are called (and enabled) to walk in.

It is very important that we understand these words (and all the teaching like this in the New Testament) to be good news! GOD DIDN'T HAVE HIS APOSTLE SAY THESE THINGS TO CONDEMN US, BUT TO GIVE US A SUPER-SOLID BASIS FOR FAITH FOR VICTORY OVER ALL SIN, AND TO EXHORT US TO WALK IN THE FULLNESS OF WHAT GOD HAS PROVIDED FOR US AND REQUIRES OF US. No true Christian wants to rebel and sin against God (and all sin is against God), not even one act of sin.

I'll read 1 JOHN 2:6 again, "**the one who says he abides in Him** [and every true Christian is obligated to abide in Him on a continuous basis] **ought** [or, better, "must" with the NIV, or, **IS OBLIGATED**] **TO WALK IN THE SAME MANNER AS HE** [THE LORD JESUS] **WALKED** [my emphasis]." The apostle John undoubtedly wrote these words (at least in part) to help show that the heretics were not really abiding in God, no matter what they claimed for themselves (see, for example, 1 John 1:6; 2:3-5; and 3:6). It would be difficult to imagine a higher call to holiness and righteous living, with the victory over all sin, than the call expressed in this verse. It is somewhat shocking to say it this way. Every true Christian is called to abide in God (God the Father and God the Son [1 John 2:24]) and to walk in the same manner that Jesus Christ walked. (See, for

example, 1 John 3:3-7; 4:17.) All true Christians will agree that Jesus walked above all sin.

What a powerful statement of the fact that Christians are called, enabled, and required to walk with total victory over sin! This one verse (1 John 2:6) by itself should suffice to show that the apostle John was not saying in 1 John 1:8 that if Christians say they are walking with the total victory over sin they are deceiving themselves. And, significantly, this epistle is filled with quite a few similar verses, including 1 John 2:5; so too is the rest of the New Testament.

We desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches. For one thing, when the apostle John speaks of God's love being perfected in us (in 1 John 2:5; 4:12, 17); of our walking as Jesus walked (in 1 John 2:6); of us purifying ourselves as Jesus is pure (in 1 John 3:3); of our doing righteousness and being righteous as the Lord Jesus is righteous (in 1 John 3:7); and as the Lord Jesus is, so also are we in this world (1 John 4:17) some qualifications are required: For one thing, John made it clear in 1 John 2:1, 2 that, although we are called, enabled, and required to walk in the righteousness of God with the victory over all sin now, true Christians can sin. (Also see 1 John 5:16, 17.) The fact that true Christians can sin is confirmed many places in the New Testament. The epistles to the Corinthians, for example, contain many examples; many of the Corinthian Christians were quite fleshy; they thought they were spiritual, but they were not walking in line with God's word and by the Holy Spirit on a consistent basis by faith; there was a lot of sin. The apostle Paul continually exhorted them with the serious need for them to repent and become what Christians are called, enabled, required, and privileged to be.

The New Testament makes it clear that we are not called to manifest some kind of absolute perfection now. Even if we are fully living in the ideal state of the righteousness of God with the victory over all sin (by grace through faith), with a relative perfection, we will continue to grow and be changed from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18) throughout this life. As far as I can see, the apostle John didn't include any idea of growth, or being changed from glory to glory, in this life (it didn't fit with his emphasis throughout this epistle of Christians living in the ideal state of the righteousness and holiness of God with the victory over all sin), and I believe that includes 1 John 2:12-14. (I discussed 1 John 2:12-14 on the last few pages of my paper on John chapters 13-17, which is available on my internet site.) Throughout 1 John we are informed that we are CALLED, ENABLED, and REQUIRED to walk in the righteousness of God, with the victory over all sin, in accordance with God's new-covenant salvation plan. It's rather amazing (in a sad way) that so many Christians think that the apostle taught in 1 John 1:8 that if any Christians think they can live with the victory over sin they are deceived and the truth is not in them. The apostle John was "guilty" of believing and teaching that himself.



The apostle John makes it clear in 1 John 3:2 that we will experience a major transformation at the end of this age. We will be glorified! This demonstrates that any relative perfection we can have in this life is far from an absolute perfection. And, after we are glorified, even though we will have some form of absolute perfection (for one thing, we clearly won't be tempted to sin, or sinning at all after we are glorified), there still will be a gigantic difference between us and God the Father and God the Son. Besides that, even if we continue to grow after we are glorified (and I assume that we will), there always will be a gigantic difference between us and God the Father and God the Son. They are deity! We won't be! We will be worshipping the triune God!

So, I believe that John clearly believed and taught that Christians are called, enabled, and required to walk in the righteousness and holiness of God, on a continuous basis, with the victory over all sin, but he wouldn't want to teach any kind of absolute perfection, or to overstate our likeness to God. As I mentioned, at least one reason the apostle spoke in such high-level terms of true Christians being righteous as God is righteous throughout this epistle was because he was refuting the false gospel of heretics who called themselves righteous while living in sin and denying the reality of, and their need for, the all-important atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ. They said that they were not sinners who needed to be saved from sin. They were saved by their secret knowledge, they said. (The Greek word "gnosis" means knowledge.) It was totally necessary for the apostle John to refute those early forms of Gnostic heresy. Gnosticism proved to be a powerful opponent of true Christianity for a long time. For one thing, many people don't want the truth.

**1 JOHN 4:7-19.** I haven't discussed these important verses hardly at all in previous writings, so I will get into more detail here. We are discussing these verses here because they speak of God's love being perfected in us (see above regarding 1 John 2:5), but the interpretation of these verses is quite important for other reasons too.

**1 JOHN 4:7, 8. "Beloved, let us love one another** [The apostle John is exhorting all true Christians (but especially those to whom this epistle was originally sent) with the need for us to love one another.], **for love is from God** [God is the only source for true love, life, truth, righteousness, holiness, divine order, peace, etc.]; **and everyone who loves is born of God** [cf. 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 5:1, 4, and 16] **and knows God. (8) The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.**" Since God is the only source for true love, we must be born of Him to have this love in our hearts (by the indwelling Holy Spirit) so we can manifest it. So too for His righteousness, for example (see 1 John 2:29: "If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices [who is doing] righteousness is born of Him."). The Gnostics, against whom the apostle wrote this epistle, claimed that they knew God, but John demonstrates that they

didn't know Him (cf., e.g., 1 John 2:3-6; 3:8-12; 4:4-6); their "gospel" must be totally rejected.

This viewpoint that we walk in the love of God, or we don't (or that we walk in the light of God, which includes His truth and righteousness, or we walk in the darkness, etc.) is so typical of the New Testament. The New Testament doesn't have much to say about walking in the grey area, with a mixture of light and darkness, righteousness and sin. We are not supposed to live in the grey area.

We must not misunderstand the apostle John here when He says that "God is love." The Bible (very much including the writings of the apostle John) has much to say about the wrath of God, very much including hell. God's wrath is not incompatible with His love. Those who persist in rebellion against God, without repenting and submitting to Him (in faith), which destroys divine order and hurts those who God loves, will ultimately be confronted with His wrath. John mentions the "day of judgment" and "punishment" in 1 John 4:17, 18, and John's Gospel and Book of Revelation have a lot to say about the wrath of God against those who persist in rebellion without repentance. It is clear that those who continue in rebellion cannot have a place in heaven.

**1 JOHN 4:9. "By this the love of God was manifested in us** [The KJV and NKJV translate the last two words "toward us"; the NIV has "among us." These same two Greek words (a prepositional phrase), which are also used in 1 John 4:12 and 17, are not easy to translate, but I believe the meaning is clear enough. We have to understand that John is including two (glorious) ideas here and in verses 12 and 17. The love that is manifested "in us" is the very special love that God has "for," "toward," His born-again children, each one of us. And this really gets exciting when we incorporate what Jesus said in John 17:23 about the Father loving us with the love He has for His beloved Son.], **that God has sent His only begotten** [In the margin the NASB says, "or, 'unique,' only one of His kind." I would translate "**unique**," or the equivalent. Angels are called sons of God in the Bible, and so are we, but Jesus is The Unique Son of God. See under John 1:14 in my paper that includes John 1:1-18.] **Son** [His Son who was with Him in the beginning, before any creating had taken place, through whom all things that were created were created (John 1:1-3)] **into the world** [through the virgin birth] **so that we might live** [starting with the new birth] **through Him."** One reason the apostle John emphasized the unique Son of God and His all-important atoning death was that the Gnostic heretics were denying both essential doctrines. God the Father's sending His unique Son into the world and His atoning death were part of the outworking of His salvation plan that manifested His love for us. His salvation plan included making us alive spiritually (starting with the new birth; formerly we were spiritually dead [cf. 1 John 3:14]) and giving us the fullness of eternal life at the end of this age, when we will be glorified and begin to reign with Christ.

**1 JOHN 4:10. "In this is love, not that we loved God** [It is clear that God took the initiative in love (cf., e.g., Rom. 5:6, 8, 10; 1 John 4:19)], **but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."** The NIV translates "atoning sacrifice for our sins"; the Amplified Bible has, "the propitiation (the atoning sacrifice) for our sins." In 1 John 2:2 the apostle John speaks of Christ's atoning death being "the propitiation for our sins [the atoning sacrifice for our sins], and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." The Greek noun "hilasmos" that is translated "propitiation" here and in 2:2 could be translated "the means of propitiation."

A big part of what new-covenant salvation is all about is God's releasing us from our sins with the guilt and the penalties (including releasing us from the major penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin that started with the transgression of Adam) through the all-important atoning sacrifice (atoning death) of the Lamb of God. As 1 John 2:2 shows, it is Christ's atoning blood that also enables Christians who have sinned to be restored when they repent. Christ died for all (as 1 John 2:2 shows; cf. 1 Tim. 2:4-6), but we must repent and submit to the gospel of grace in faith, and continue by grace through faith, to partake of new-covenant salvation.

**1 JOHN 4:11. "Beloved** [This is the last of the six uses of this word in 1 John.], **if [or, since] God so loved us, we also ought [or, "must," "are (enabled and) obligated] to love one another."** We are enabled, and required, to love the other members of the born-again family of God. There is a strong emphasis on the need for Christians to love one another in this epistle (for one thing, the lack of love among the Gnostic heretics demonstrated that they were not true Christians), but it was understood that we must love God first and foremost. The more we understand, and participate in, what God the Father has done for us in the sacrifice of His Son, the more we will be motivated to love the Father, His Son, and the other members of the born-again family of God, and we are commanded to love the brethren (with the love of God that dwells in our hearts).

**1 JOHN 4:12. "No one has seen God** [God the Father] **at any time** [cf., e.g., John 1:18; 1 Tim. 6:16; but we will see Him after we are glorified (cf., e.g., 1 John 3:2; 1 Cor. 13:12; and Rev. 22:3-5)]; **if we love one another** [The apostle John was speaking of loving other Christians in this context.], **God abides in us** [God abides in all true Christians; His love is manifested in our hearts and lives as we walk by the Spirit and in accordance with the Word of God (which we are called, and required, to do on a continuous basis) by faith.], **and HIS LOVE IS PERFECTED IN** [Greek preposition "en"] **US** [my emphasis]." To speak of God's love being perfected in us is a very strong way (rather shocking way) to speak of Christians walking in love (it is God's love being manifested in us in a relatively perfect/complete way), but the apostle John says it this way in 2:5; 4:12, and he says essentially the same thing in 4:17 and 18.

As I mentioned under 1 John 2:5, God's love has always been perfect, but it is not perfected in us until we walk in His love on a continuous basis. We are enabled to love one another because God's Spirit dwells in us and because of our personal relationship with God the (our) Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, enabling us to manifest the very love of God, as we walk by the Spirit and in accordance with the Word of God by faith. True love and everything else that is good comes from God (including life, truth, righteousness, holiness, goodness, divine order, peace, health, etc.).

The emphasis here is on God's imparted, indwelling love enabling us to love the brethren; but we need to understand (as I mentioned) that HIS LOVE WHICH IS IN US IS HIS LOVE FOR US: GOD LOVES—WITH A VERY SPECIAL FAMILY LOVE—THE ONES THAT WE ARE BEING EXHORTED TO LOVE WITH THE LOVE OF GOD. His very special love for those in the family of God includes His love for us as individuals. If we don't experience God's love for us as individuals, we will never be able to adequately manifest the love of God for the other members of the family of God (or others), and our knowing that God has a special love for the other Christians will definitely help motivate us to yield to, and walk in, His love toward the other Christians. It is very important to understand that the love of God in us by God's abiding in us (especially through the indwelling Holy Spirit) very much includes His very special love for those in His born-again family.

Romans 5:5 (with verses 6-8) is an important cross-reference which demonstrates that the love of God, which has been poured out into our hearts through the love-gift of the Holy Spirit, enables us to experience God's love, not just to walk in love. (See under Rom. 5:5-8 in my book, "Holiness and Victory Over Sin" on page 90.)

If we are truly manifesting God's (supernatural) love for God, for the other members of the body of Christ, and for those outside the body of Christ on a continuous basis, there is no room for sin (cf., e.g., Matt. 7:12; 22:36-40; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14; 6:2). Galatians 6:10 (and a large number of other verses in the New Testament) show that we have a special responsibility to love other Christians.

For God's love to be perfected in us yields the same result as our being righteous as the Lord Jesus is righteous, which includes our being doers of righteousness (1 John 3:7); and of our walking in the same manner that Jesus walked (1 John 2:6); and of our being pure as the Lord Jesus is pure (1 John 3:3). All of these glorious expressions certainly communicate the idea that we are called, and enabled, to live as God requires us to live with the victory over all sin.

**1 JOHN 4:13. "By this we know that we abide in Him and He in [Greek preposition "en"] us [the born-again Christians], because He has given us of His Spirit."** 1 John 3:24b says, "We know by this that He abides in us, by the

Spirit whom He has given us." Knowing that the Spirit of God dwells in us (and every Christian must know this), we know that we have an abiding experiential (Person to person and person to Person) relationship with God. For one thing, Rom. 8:16 says, "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are the children of God." Romans 8:15 shows that the indwelling Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:9) enables us to cry out "Abba! [an intimate Aramaic (which was the primary language spoken in Israel in those days) word for Father] Father!"

We see the Trinity in verses 13 and 14, for example. The Gnostics totally denied the Trinity. On the Trinity, see my articles/papers "Who Do We Worship?"; "Who Do We Pray To?"; "The Name Yahweh and God the Father and God the Son"; and "More on the Trinity" on my internet site.

**1 JOHN 4:14, 15. "We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. ["We" here refers to the apostle John and the others who had been chosen to testify of the Lord Jesus and lay the foundation for Christianity (cf. 1 John 1:1-4; 4:6).] (15) Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in Him, and he in God."** The apostle John emphasized the Persons of God the Father and God the Son in this epistle because the Gnostic heretics were denying what the Bible teaches about God the Father and God the Son (see, for example, 1 John 1:3, 7; 2:22-24 [especially 2:22b-24: "This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. (23) Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. (24) As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you will abide in the Son and in the Father."]; 3:8, 23; 4:9, 10, 15; 5:5, 9-13, 20). The Gnostics believed that the god of the Old Testament (who created the world and gave the commandments) wasn't God the Father (God the Father who sent His Son into the world through the all-important incarnation), but an inferior being. We must believe all that the Bible teaches about God the Father and God the Son.

Cerinthus, who was a Gnostic who lived at the same time as the apostle John, denied that Jesus was/is the Christ (cf. 1 John 2:22a). His view was that Jesus was born of Joseph and Mary (no virgin birth), and after the Christ descended upon him at his baptism, he had a powerful ministry, but the Christ left Him before he died (no atoning death of Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God). The Gnostics were not at all unified in what they believed, but they all departed in very serious ways from the true gospel. It isn't all that important for us to know all the details regarding the various views of the Gnostics. We know enough from this epistle to understand the seriousness of their departures from true Christianity.

**1 JOHN 4:16. "We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for [Greek preposition "en"] us. [We could translate "the love which God has in us," which I prefer. The Greek here is the same as the Greek**

translated "in us" in 4:12 and 13 ("en hemin"). However we translate these words here in verse 16, we must understand (as I mentioned) that God's love in us is God's love for us.] **God is love [see 1 John 4:8], and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.**" It is also true that the one who abides in God abides in God's love, which includes our being loved by God and our loving the members of His family that He loves with His very special love. It is also true that we must love God Himself first and foremost with His supernatural love. And it is also true that those who abide in God (or we could say those who walk by the Spirit on a continuous basis) will abide in the righteousness and holiness of God. There isn't any substantial difference between our abiding in God and His love, and His abiding in us, and His love being perfected in us.

Regarding the words "abides in love" of 4:16, see John 15:9, 10: "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; ABIDE IN MY LOVE. (10) IF YOU KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS, YOU WILL ABIDE IN MY LOVE [my emphasis]; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."

It is significant that 1 John 4:9 shows that God manifested His love for us by sending the Lord Jesus (the eternal Son of God [cf., e.g., John 1:1-4]) into the world to save us from spiritual death (and the attendant bondage to sin). What Jesus said in John 17:23 is rather shocking: "I in them [the true Christians] and You [God the Father] in Me, THAT THEY MAY BE PERFECTED IN UNITY, so that the world may know that you sent Me, and LOVED THEM EVEN AS YOU HAVE LOVED ME [my emphasis]." Through new-covenant salvation, we are enabled to share in the very love that God the Father has for His unique Son. We are discussing some super-special, rather-shocking, glorious truths from the Word of God in this paper, are we not? These things seem too good to be true, but they are true! This is God's Word we are discussing! The heretics had no part in any of this.

**1 JOHN 4:17.** "By this [by our abiding in God and in His love and His abiding in us, which was just mentioned in 1 John 4:16b, which very much includes our walking in love on a continuous basis], **LOVE IS PERFECTED WITH US** [my emphasis. See above under 1 John 2:5; 4:12; compare "perfect love" in 4:18. I don't believe there is any substantial difference between God's love being perfected IN US (as in 2:5; 4:12) and being perfected WITH US here in 4:17. As I have mentioned, God's love is perfected in us (and with us) when (in the ideal case) we walk by the Spirit in accordance with God's Word, by grace through faith, on a continuous basis, which includes the victory over all sin. There is no room for sin when we are walking in God's supernatural love toward God and people.

It is clear to me that the apostle John clearly taught the victory over all sin throughout this epistle. He did, however, make it clear that the victory over all sin is not automatic, and that, although Christians are called, enabled, required, and privileged to walk with the victory over all sin on a continuous basis, Christians

can sin. In 1 John 2:1, 2 he said that IF Christians should sin, they will be restored through the shed blood of the Lamb of God (when they repent).], **so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment** [We will have confidence in the day of judgment (and NOW as we look forward to the day of judgment, when all people will be judged according to their works) if we are believing, thinking in our hearts, and living in line with the truth of God in His righteousness and holiness. (Our good works are produced by the grace of God through faith; our righteous lives demonstrate that our faith is real.) Or, as John says it here, "if God's love is perfected with us."

The apostle John clearly expected Christians to live this way on a continuous basis, by God's sufficient grace through faith, based on the will of God presented in the Word of God. I'll quote 1 John 2:28, "Now little children, abide in Him [which includes abiding in His love, truth, righteousness, and holiness], so that when He appears, **WE MAY HAVE CONFIDENCE AND NOT SHRINK AWAY FROM HIM IN SHAME AT HIS COMING** [my emphasis]." On having confidence before God, see 1 John 3:11-22, especially verses 18-21.

Even if we haven't fully walked in that ideal sense, we still can have confidence regarding the day of judgment if we are making it top priority to live for God, in accordance with His Word and by His Spirit, on a continuous basis, and have repented of our sins and been forgiven. God has promised to forgive our sins through the blood of Christ when we repent (1 John 2:1, 2).]; **because AS HE** [The Greek word ("ekeinos") translated "He" here is not the word that would typically be translated "He." "Ekeinos" could be translated "that One." This helps show that Jesus in being referred to here, not God the Father. This same Greek word is also used for the Lord Jesus in 1 John 2:6; 3:3, 5, 7, 16. There is widespread agreement, including the BAGD Greek Lexicon, that "ekeinos" in all of these verses refers to the Lord Jesus (God the Son).] **IS, SO ALSO ARE WE IN THIS WORLD** [my emphasis]." Compare John 17:22; 1 John 2:6, for example. These last words fit the rather shocking pattern of the verses from 1 John that we are highlighting in this paper. I trust we can agree that if we are as the Lord Jesus is in this world, we will be living as we are required to live, in the love, truth, righteousness, and holiness of God, by grace through faith, and there won't be any sin. In the ideal case, we are as the Lord Jesus is because we are walking in God's love, His Spirit, His truth, His righteousness, His holiness, His salvation, etc.

This doesn't mean that we won't keep growing more like God all of the time—we are being changed from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18)—and our glorification is still future (e.g., Rom. 8:17, 18; 1 John 3:2), but we are called, enabled, required, and privileged to walk with the victory over all sin NOW, even though this idea is rejected by most Christians in our day. We will never walk with the victory over sin until we see (from God's Word) that we are called to such a walk, by God's sufficient grace through faith. **WE MUST AIM AT THAT TARGET!**

I'll quote part of what Adam Clark, who was an associate of John Wesley, said under this verse in "Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible," abridged by Ralph Earle (Beacon Hill Press, 1967), page 1324. " 'As he is—pure, holy, and loving. 'So are we in this world,' being saved from our sins, and made like to himself in righteousness and true holiness. No man can contemplate the day of judgment with any comfort or satisfaction but on this ground, that the blood of Christ hath cleansed him from all sin [including being cleansed from sinning]; and that he is kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. This will give him boldness in the day of judgment."

**1 JOHN 4:18. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear** [[In this context it is clear (I believe) what the apostle John means here. "Fear" here is the opposite of "confidence" in verse 17. I'll quote 1 John 2:28, "Now, little children, abide in Him [which includes abiding in His love, truth, righteousness, and holiness], so that when He appears, WE MAY HAVE CONFIDENCE AND NOT SHRINK AWAY FROM HIM IN SHAME AT HIS COMING [my emphasis; shrinking away from Him in shame goes with fearing to stand before Him when He judges]." Those who are walking in the love of God (with the emphasis on loving the brethren in Christ) have nothing to fear when they think of standing before God on judgment day, or when they finally stand before Him, because they have been living as God enables, and requires, them to live, in His love, truth, righteousness, and holiness, by grace through faith. The "perfect love" (which equals "God's love being perfected in [and with] them" of 1 John 2:5; 4:12, and 17) casts out (does away with) any need to fear standing before God in judgment.

The apostle John is not dealing with a situation where Christians are fearing to stand before God because they have been accepting lying accusations of the devil. The only answer for that problem is to reject the lies of the devil and submit to the truth of God's Word. For one thing, we must believe that we are forgiven when we repent. What about Christians who have not been living as God enables, and requires, them to live? The only satisfactory answer is repentance and submission to God and His enabling grace with top priority, based on what the New Testament teaches. God knows our hearts; He knows if we are making it top priority to live for Him by grace through faith.

I would estimate that I have heard ministers teach on these words from 1 John 4:18 some thirty times, and that they misinterpreted what the apostle John said about twenty-seven times out of the thirty. And there is a popular song that misinterprets this verse. For one thing, they typically take the words out of the context in which John wrote them. The scholars who write the commentaries rightly interpret this verse more often than not. They see the necessary connection between Christians walking in love (living in the righteousness of God, by grace through faith), and their having confidence to stand before God in judgment.



A typical wrong interpretation goes something like this: If we can convince ourselves, one way, or another, and really believe that God has accepted us into His family AND LOVES US with the special, unconditional love He has for His born-again children - even if we are living in sin, without making it a top priority to repent and begin to walk in the righteousness and holiness of God by grace through faith (We are all sinners aren't we? God understands our sin doesn't He? We are saved by faith and what we do doesn't really matter that much does it? God didn't really provide the grace for us to walk in His righteousness and holiness with the victory over all sin did He?) - WE CAN GET RID OF (CAST OUT) ALL FEAR.

Misinterpretations like this are very common with many verses throughout the New Testament in our day. Rather than putting the priority on making sure that we are rightly dividing God's Word; repenting, as required; and walking in the love, truth, righteousness, and holiness of God, BY HIS ENABLING GRACE IN CHRIST, WHICH INCLUDES ALL THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO INDWELLS ALL TRUE CHRISTIANS, in accordance with God's Word, the emphasis is put on things like forgiveness and positional, legal righteousness and trying to convince ourselves that God loves us and that we are saved (assurance of salvation). Assurance of salvation is a major problem in our day.]], **because fear involves punishment** ["fear has to do with punishment" (taken from the "Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament" in the back of the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament) under "kolasis, eos"; the only other use of this Greek noun in the New Testament is Matt. 25:46, where the goats go away to eternal "punishment."], **and the one who fears IS NOT PERFECTED IN LOVE** [my emphasis. On being perfected in love, see 1 John 2:5: 4:12, 17.]. **(19) We love** [In this context John is concerned with our loving the other members of God's born-again family (see under 1 John 2:5 above), but it is understood that our love for God Himself must always be our top priority, and the Bible shows that we are required to love all people (to desire the ultimate good and well being for all people).], **because He first loved us.** [The apostle John emphasizes the point that we are able to love because God loved us first (cf. 1 John 4:10); He sent His Son to save us; we have been born again of God the Father, and the Spirit of God indwells us; God's love for us has been poured into our hearts, and as we walk by the Spirit of God and in line with the Word of God, by grace through faith, the love of God (and His righteousness and holiness) is manifested in our hearts and lives. God must be given all the glory for our salvation, including His enabling us to walk in His love (even as He enables us to walk in His truth, righteousness, and holiness).] **(20) If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar, for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. (21) And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.**" These last two verses fit the strong emphasis in this epistle on the need for Christians to love one another (with the very love of God that indwells all true Christians). They were undoubtedly directed against the heretics.

**1 JOHN 3:3.** 1 John 2:28-3:12 are discussed in my book, "Holiness and Victory Over Sin: Full Salvation Through the Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ" and in Article #s 17, 18 in my paper "Twenty-Eight Articles on Holiness and Victory Over Sin." We will just discuss 1 John 3:3 and 7 in this present article, but quite a few other verses from 1 John 2:28-3:12 (also see 1 John 5:18, 19; these verses are discussed in my paper on John chapters 13-17 on my internet site) also make it quite clear that Christians are called, enabled, required, and privileged to walk in the righteousness of God with the victory over all sin. Again, this is good news if we hear it right! Believing (having faith in) the truth will set us free through the powerful saving grace of God in Christ; we will be sanctified by grace through faith, and in the ideal case we will begin to dwell in an abiding state of righteousness and holiness. God didn't say these things to condemn us, but to transform us. We cannot have faith to walk in the righteousness of God with the victory over all sin unless we can see (clearly see) in God's Word that He has called and enabled us to walk this way. This is what every true Christian wants. No true Christian wants to rebel against God and continue in sin, any sin.

**"And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him** [hope fixed on the Lord Jesus. The apostle is speaking of the hope of being glorified, which will enable us, for one thing, "to see Him [the Lord Jesus] just as He is" (1 JOHN 3:2; cf., e.g., John 17:24). (The word "hope" does not infer doubt; all true Christians will inherit the promised salvation, but the things hoped for are still future for us.) After we are glorified we will be "conformed to the image of His Son [Christ Jesus]" (Rom. 8:29; cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 15:49-53; Col. 1:5, 27; 3:1-4; and Phil. 3:20, 21). After we are glorified at the time of Christ's return, we will be able to see the Lord Jesus just as He is, and we will begin to reign with Him in a never-ending reign. (We will be conformed to the image of God the Son and reign with Him, but we will not become deity in any sense. We will worship God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.) It is also true, and very significant, that we will be able to see God the Father (cf., e.g., Matt. 5:8; 1 Cor. 13:12; and Rev. 22:3-5).] **PURIFIES HIMSELF, JUST AS HE IS PURE** [my emphasis]." "He" in this verse (Greek "ekeinos"; it could be translated "that One") refers to the Lord Jesus; ekeinos also refers to the Lord Jesus in 1 John 2:6; 3:5, 7, 16 and 4:17. The same Greek verb for purify ("hagnizo") that is used here is used in James 4:8 ("Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse [Greek "katharizo"] your hands you sinners; and purify [hagnizo] your hearts, you double minded.") and in 1 Pet. 1:22 ("Since you have in obedience to the truth purified [hagnizo] your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart."). I'll also quote 2 Cor. 7:1, which is another powerful verse that uses katharizo for cleanse, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves [as required] from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting [or completing] holiness in the fear of God [we should be afraid to sin against God]." Katharizo is used in a few other verses with the same powerful meaning,

including 1 John 1:7 and 9 (see my book and Article #s 15 and 16 of my "Twenty-Eight Articles on Holiness and Victory Over Sin" on these verses).

I believe the apostle John was speaking (at least for the most part) of an ideal, once-for-all purification that is available at the beginning of the Christian life. That is the ideal: We stop sinning and begin to walk in the truth, purity, righteousness, and holiness of God when we become Christians. What a glorious ideal! And God's grace is sufficient! WE MUST AIM AT THAT TARGET! We must understand, of course, that we are totally dependent on the grace of God in Christ to make ourselves pure (or holy, righteous, clean, etc.). God must receive all the glory for every aspect of our salvation. The fact that we are required to appropriate and cooperate with God's saving grace in Christ doesn't do away with the Bible fact that we are saved 100 percent by the grace of God in Christ. We do not earn salvation in any of its aspects by our faith, or by the works the grace of God (which includes all the work of the Holy Spirit) enables us to do, and which we are required to do.

We walk in the truth, purity, righteousness, and holiness of God by walking in accordance with His Word (by faith) and by walking in and after His Spirit (by faith). At conversion the Christian is born of God and begins to practice (or, to do) righteousness (see, for example, 1 John 2:29 and 3:6-12). The heretics that John was refuting when he wrote this epistle did not purify themselves; they did not walk in the truth or the righteousness of God. This proved that they were not children of God. Their "gospel" must be rejected.

The apostle tells us here that we Christians are required to purify ourselves (by the grace of God in Christ Jesus) and TO BE PURE JUST AS THE LORD JESUS (GOD THE SON) IS PURE. How could you have a more powerful (somewhat shocking) call to righteousness and holiness, with the victory over all sin? This verse (1 John 3:3) by itself, should suffice to demonstrate that the apostle John was not denying that Christians are called, enabled, required, and privileged to walk with the total victory over all sin in this present life in 1 John 1:8.

**1 JOHN 3:7. "Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness [or, THE ONE WHO IS DOING RIGHTEOUSNESS] IS RIGHTEOUS, JUST AS HE [Greek "ekeinos," referring to the Lord Jesus, as in 1 John 2:6; 3:3, 5, 16; and 4:17] IS RIGHTEOUS."** 1 John 2:29 is an important cross-reference, "If you know that HE [[God the Father; it is possible that "He" refers to Christ here [some believe it does]; but if so, it seems clear that "Him" at the end of the sentence refers to God the Father]] IS RIGHTEOUS [my emphasis; and we do know that the Lord Jesus and God the Father are totally righteous (with no sin), don't we?], you know that everyone also who practices righteousness [or, EVERYONE WHO IS DOING RIGHTEOUSNESS] IS BORN OF HIM [my emphasis]." On being born of God the Father, see 1 John 3:1, 9;

4:7; and 5:1, 4, and 18. God imparts His righteousness to His born-again children. The heretics (who were not doing righteousness) were trying to deceive John's readers (see 1 John 2:26; cf. 1 John 1:8; 2 John 1:7).

The heretics, who had been deceived by the evil one (one way, or another), thought that they were believing the truth and that they were righteous, but they were wrong, and if you listened to them you would be deceived and abandon the truth, like Eve was deceived and abandoned the truth. There are many deceivers in our day too; we must be very careful who we listen to; in the worst-case scenario, it could cost you your soul.

For the Christian to be righteous, just as God is righteous doesn't leave room for sin (see, for example, 1 John 1:5-7 and 9; 2:5, 6; 3:3; and 4:12, 17, 18). This is the Christian ideal, and it is very important for us to understand this ideal. This verse makes it very clear that John is not speaking of a mere positional, legal, imputed righteousness. He is speaking of Christians actually living in (doing) righteousness through the powerful saving grace of God in Christ. Again, this is good news! THE NEW TESTAMENT GIVES US A SUPER-SOLID BASIS FOR FAITH FOR VICTORY OVER ALL SIN! WE MUST AIM AT THAT TARGET! We greatly distort the gospel if we put most of the emphasis on positional, legal, imputed righteousness, as it so often happens in our day. Furthermore, the apostle is not speaking of a gradual growth out of sin into righteousness while never attaining a state of righteousness or holiness with the victory over all sin this side of glory, which is the most common view taught in our day. This is what most Christians mean by "process of sanctification." We need to keep growing, but in the ideal case we will be living in an abiding state of righteousness and holiness. That sounds good, doesn't it? That's what we want, isn't it? WE MUST AIM AT THAT TARGET!

I'll quote a paragraph from "The Letters of John the Apostle," by Donald W. Burdick (Moody Press, 1985), page 241. "It may well be that John wrote this warning because the Asian [referring to the Roman province that included the city of Ephesus] believers were threatened by heretical teachers who claimed to be righteous simply because of professed esoteric knowledge. [It is clear that some heretical teachers were trying to deceive John's original readers (cf. 1 John 2:26, for example) and that they were not living righteous lives (not according to the righteous requirements presented in the New Testament). The Gnostics believed they were saved by their secret, esoteric, knowledge. The heretical viewpoints that John was combating probably included the ideas that it doesn't matter what we do with our bodies (for one thing, physical matter is evil), and that keeping the commandments in the Bible is child-play religion (their high-level spirituality did away with such mundane requirements).] Theirs was not a righteousness of life; instead their conduct was marked by continual sin. John's warning against being led astray seems to suggest that this was the case. In response to such teaching he points out what genuine righteousness is. It is more than position or standing: it is conduct. The one who is truly righteous is the

one who is consistently performing righteous deeds. [The apostle is speaking of our doing righteousness and not sinning, by the saving grace of God through faith!] Righteousness is not merely a matter of position; it is of necessity also a matter of life." We must believe (have faith in) the truth, and we must live the truth by the saving grace of God in Christ, on a continuous basis.

How we live is totally relevant to what Christianity is all about, along with believing the truth! In our day you often hear that we just need to believe (to have faith in) the truth of the gospel. For one thing, you don't really believe the gospel if you aren't living in line with the gospel. Believing in God, Christ, and the gospel includes a commitment to live for God, Christ, and in line with the gospel (by God's enabling grace in Christ). This is extremely important! And there is much confusion on this topic. I'll quote what I said under 1 Peter 1:17 in my recent article on 1 Peter 1:13-19; 2:24, 25:

**1 PETER 1:17. "And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay *on earth*."** We Christians do address God as Father; we are His born-again children. In 1 Pet. 1:3, 23 Peter spoke of our being "born again"; and in 1:14 he spoke of our being "children of obedience." Knowing that God will judge us according to our "work" should provide very strong motivation for us to live in His righteousness and holiness (by His sufficient grace through faith).

God does not just overlook our sin because we are Christians. It is a serious matter for God's born-again children to rebel and sin against Him. If it really is sin, it is a serious matter! He expects more from us because of the grace He has given us. The righteousness and holiness of God are imparted to us through the saving, sanctifying grace of God in Christ, which includes the work of the Spirit of God who dwells in all born-again Christians (Rom. 8:9); we receive and walk in these things by faith. (See Eph. 2:8-10; Gal. 5:16-18, 22-25; and Titus 2:14, for example.)

Since God will impartially judge each person according to their work, He will not show partiality to any, including Christians. The "work" we do, shows what is in our hearts. Faith without works is dead; it isn't saving faith. It must be understood that the good "work" we do as born-again new creations and by the indwelling Spirit of God is the "work" of God, and He gets the glory for the righteousness and holiness that is manifested in our lives. "For we are His [God the Father's] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). It is true, of course, as I mentioned, that forgiveness is provided for Christians when we repent, but Christianity is about much more than forgiveness. If "Christians" are characterized by sin, they will be condemned (see Matt. 3:1-12; 7:13-27; 16:24-27; John 5:28, 29; Rom. 2:1-16; 6:21-23; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal. 5:19-21; 6:7-9; Eph. 5:5-7; Col. 3:5-7; Rev. 21:7, 8; and 22:12-15, for example).

I'll quote **REVELATION 22:12-15**, which is the last passage I just listed. I'll quote these verses from the NIV. The Lord Jesus Christ is speaking here. **"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward [My recompense] is with Me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done [according to his works]. (13) I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.** [These words strongly confirm the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Son, along with verses like John 1:1-5; 20:28; and Heb. 1:1-3, 8-10.] **(14) Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city** [the city of God's new Jerusalem]. **(15) Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood."** "Those who wash their robes" are the ones who cleanse themselves and become sanctified through the sanctifying blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, in accordance with the Word of God, which is backed up by the all-powerful Spirit of God (see Rev. 7:14; 19:8, for example).

I'll also quote **REVELATION 2:5**, where the Lord Jesus was speaking to the Christians at Ephesus about AD 95 (what He said to those Christians applies to all Christians who are in the same situation): **"Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and DO THE DEEDS [WORKS.** The Greek noun used here ("ergon") is translated "work" or "works" 96 times by the NASB and as "deed" or "deeds" 65 times, and other ways; "ergon" was used in Rev. 22:12 (which was quoted in the last paragraph): a more literal translation of the last words of 22:12 would be "to each as his work [ergon] is." **] YOU DID AT FIRST; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent."** (my capitalization for emphasis) If the Lord Jesus removes the lampstand from a church, that church is no longer part of the Body of Christ.

THESE VERSES CERTAINLY DEMONSTRATE THAT GOD TAKES NOTE OF OUR WORKS; WORKS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS ARE REQUIRED; IN OTHER WORDS A RIGHTEOUS LIFESTYLE IS REQUIRED. As the apostle James (not one of the twelve; see Gal. 1:19) said, "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26). Saving faith will necessarily result in righteousness and holiness, as we walk by the Word of God and the Spirit of God, which we are required to do on a continuous basis.

The apostle Paul would agree that Christians must have the righteous works (a righteous lifestyle) that the grace of God (by the indwelling Spirit of God) enables us to do. (See Eph. 2:10; 5:1-21, for example.) Christians are required to live in the righteousness of God, which includes thinking right in our hearts and doing righteous works (by His grace through faith).

I frequently hear Christians (including ministers) say that we are not required to have works, but they are wrong! How desperately we need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches! The apostle Paul said we are saved by faith, not works,

but he didn't mean that we can be saved without the works that the grace of God enables us to do. The apostle was against works (very much including works of the Mosaic Law) without faith in Christ. He didn't leave any room for salvation that was not built on the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning death and resurrection (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 3:10, 11). He was against bringing the ceremonial works of the old covenant into the new covenant, ceremonial works like circumcision, or dietary laws, for example (cf. e.g., Rom. 2:26-29; Gal. 2:16; 5:1-12; 6:12-15). He was against works of the flesh being done for the glory of man or to try to earn/merit the salvation that God freely gives in Christ; God must receive all the glory for our salvation, including for the good works that we do as His new creations in Christ and by His grace, which very much includes the work of the indwelling Spirit (cf., e.g., Rom. 3:27, 28; 4:2, 4; 11:6, 33-36; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-10; Phil. 1:6; 2:12, 13; 3:9; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:4-7). Salvation in all of its aspects is of grace (by faith), not what is earned/merited/owed.

I recommend reading my foundational paper "The Christian, the Law, and Legalism" that is available on my internet site. I'll list the section headings of that paper: 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/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 TO DO THE WORKS that Are Required According to God's Word/Law/Commandments, by His grace/Spirit through faith; the works aren't optional; 8. Doesn't the New Testament Teach that the Mosaic Law/Old Covenant Has Been Set Aside and that Christians Aren't Under this Law? And Doesn't it Teach that No One Will Be Justified by Doing Works of the Law?; and 9. Legalism. Romans 2:1-16 are discussed in that paper. Romans 2:6 says "who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS [WORKS]." I recommend reading what I said under Rom. 2:1-16, especially under verse 6. I also recommend reading my foundational "A Paper on Faith" that is available on my internet site.

I'll quote **1 PETER 1:17** again, **"If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth."** Those who know that they will face the judgment of God must "conduct themselves in [reverent] fear [before Him; we should fear rebelling and sinning against God]," living in His righteousness and holiness, always staying fully ready for the return of Christ and the day of judgment. Such things as correct doctrine (though necessary), godly parents, or the externals of religion will not prepare us to stand before God any more than

they sufficed for the children of Israel (see Matt. 3:7-10; John 8:31-47; and Rom. 2:1-29, for example).

"Christians" could be rejected on the day of judgment (see Matt. 7:13-27, for example). It is also true that a Christian could make it to heaven but lose rewards because of living by the flesh in certain areas (see 1 Cor. 3:5-15, for example). It is a serious matter for Christians to be unfaithful to God, and we must have a reverent fear regarding this matter. We will all have to answer to God (see Rom. 14:10-12, for example). The Bible shows that we must have a healthy fear of all sin (see Matt. 10:28; Luke 1:50; 12:5; Acts 9:31; 2 Cor. 7:1; Phil. 2:12; Heb. 4:1; and 1 Pet. 2:17, for example).

May this paper accomplish all the purposes of God and be a significant blessing to the Body of Christ. In Jesus' name!

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