

**A Review of Dennis Rokser's
"ANOTHER LOOK AT INHERITING THE KINGDOM OF GOD"**

(Pastor Kelly Sensenig)

In many ways the recent article by Dennis Rokser is an excellent article when it comes to positional truth and hermeneutical observations from various Biblical texts. I appreciate many of his conclusions. I must commend him for his thorough exegesis. He is a diligent student of the Word (2 Tim. 2:15) and we can learn from many of his teachings. "Iron sharpeneth iron" (Prov. 27:17). It's certain that Rokser has not adopted some of the errant teachings and positions within the Grace Evangelical Society (GES) on entering the kingdom which are riddled with faulty exegesis. I congratulate him on this.

My analysis of his conclusions in this study in no way detracts from the many valuable studies Rokser has written for our learning and which I have benefited from myself. He has many important writings which are grace-oriented and needful for the body of Christ. Also, it is not my goal to misrepresent Rokser's beliefs as I seek to counter one of his primary conclusions in his new study. His quotes are seen in red and my comments follow.

In this review, I will not only comment on what Rokser states but also look beneath the surface of what he is teaching and assuming in his writing, which correlates with other Grace Evangelical Society writers of today. In this study one will discover that Rokser still embraces a primary interpretive problem. According to his findings, the only difference between unsaved sinners and saved sinners is belief or unbelief - not habitual sinning. But this conclusion is an errant position. It still is the same erratic teaching of the Free Grace Movement. Essentially, a person can live like the devil his entire life, be an atheist, bear no fruit, and still go to Heaven. In this case, a hell raiser who never reveals any transformation in his life can enter the kingdom.

Rokser concludes: "Nor is this passage stating that you never really possessed salvation (LS Calvinistic view) if you have committed any of these sins or a pattern of them, for the Corinthians were guilt of these very sins (ongoing fornication 1 Cor.5:1-5; drunkenness, even in church 1 Cor. 11:21) yet were still viewed as "saints." Also, if the LS Calvinist view is correct, it leaves one in a terrible quandary wondering how many sins constitute a pattern? How many times must you fornicate before you are a fornicator? Usually the answer would be ONCE."

Elsewhere he restates: “But let’s be clear that the reason these unbelievers have **NO INHERITANCE** is not because they have committed these sins individually or as a pattern, but because while Jesus Christ died for their sins, they have never trusted in Him alone in order to be justified and forgiven.”

Rokser disavows the “pattern of sin view” presented in these texts. You will notice that Rokser (not Paul) raises the argument about how many sins of fornication make a person into a fornicator. *It should be noted that Paul is concerned about the habitual and therefore unregenerate practice of sin – not believers flirting with varying amounts of sins throughout their lives.* This is indicated by “**such were some of you**” which means their unchanging position in Christ keeps them from total and final abandonment (apostasy) from God in both doctrine and living (Heb. 10:39). It keeps them from continually practicing sin without evidencing transformation in their lives. When a person is truly saved, they do not abandon God and permanently return to the vomit like a dog or as a pig would return to the mire (2 Pet. 2:22). God’s people are not dogs or pigs, they are sheep who follow the Lord (John 10:27-28).

When Paul states, “**And such were some of you,**” he indicates that they used to live this way in their unsaved state when they were under the constant power and pattern of sin and positioned in Adam. But now they are positioned in Christ and therefore are to live differently. There will be an unmistakable difference between their former and present lives and Paul is urging them to demonstrate this difference in a greater way through sanctification of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25).

Essentially, they were to practice their position in Christ through the Spirit’s sanctifying ministry. This would keep them from being enslaved by sin as they formerly were in their unregenerate life. Even though some of the Corinthians struggled with various sins not all of them were fornicators, drunkards, idolaters, sorcerers, and such like. Paul mentioned one fornicator in 1 Corinthians 5:1 where discipline was enacted. But on a whole the Corinthian church had ex-fornicators, ex-adulterers, ex-thieves, and so on. “**And such were some of you.**”

John Phillips correctly summarizes:

“Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, and so on. These were the very kind of people Paul evangelized when he came to Corinth. He had seen lives transformed. People had been picked up out of the gutter and turned toward heaven. As someone has

said, punning Hebrews 7:25, the Lord Jesus can save ‘from the guttermost to the uttermost!’ And so He can.”

Rokser seems to miss the point that when sinners along with their lists of sins are mentioned in Scripture the authors are creating a basic tenant or principle of belief that non-Christians (the unsaved) live different than Christians (the saved). The writers do not talk about degrees of sinfulness between Christians and non-Christians. They talk about the facts. Christians do live a different way of life than the unsaved. Floating the argument around that Christians can at times live like the unsaved is missing the point (as Rokser does in his article). The authors of Scripture are stating the simple fact that Christians will live differently than those who are unregenerate, and which do not possess God’s life and nature.

The general and overall pattern of the lives of Christians will not consist of enslavement to sin, practicing sin without evidencing regeneration, and living like the unsaved without manifesting Christian character, fruit, and good works (Eph. 2:10). There is a dichotomy between the saved and unsaved. A line is drawn in the sand and a stark contrast is made between the two in the epistles. **You are either on the lists of unsaved sinners or removed from these lists. Degrees of sin are not in question but the general pattern of sin and depravity in an individual’s life is put on the table as proof of their unregenerate state.**

For instance, it should be understood that James in chapter 2 and John in his first epistle are looking at things through the prism of a Christian obeying the new nature and being controlled or dominated by the Spirit. They are presenting things in black and white terms to show how a Christian acts when dominated by the new life, nature, and Holy Spirit. In the end they are teaching that when a person has passed from death unto life (1 John 3:14) there will be a noticeable difference between those who are genuinely saved and those who are counterfeit (1 John 2:3-4, 17; 3:8-10, 14-15, 24; 4:7-8; 5:18). Their faith and life will manifest some fruit and transformation of living which gives evidence of their salvation (James 2). They will not continually and habitually live in sin without manifesting some signs of regenerating life.

The epistles which include catalogues of sins that unsaved people commit are giving a stark contrast between children of God and children of the devil. Jesus did the same thing (John 8:44) to illustrate that God’s children will in varying degrees and

at different times in their lives manifest a spiritual difference from the unsaved who do not possess God's life and nature. Of course, this is not to say Christians do not sin. John, James, and Paul all concluded that no Christian is without sin and perfectly righteous (1 John 1:8; 2:1; James 4:1-10; Phil. 3:13-14).

James and John are not ignoring the fact that Christians can temporarily and even for an extended time lapse into sin, living on the carnal side of life instead of the spiritual (1 Cor. 3:1-3; 11:28-32; 2 Tim. 4:10; James 4:1-4). On the other hand, the epistles never teach that Christians can live without ever showing any signs of regeneration and fail to demonstrate they have God's life and nature indwelling them. Christians do not live like the unsaved. Their lives are not patterned after sin in the same way the unsaved are permanently enslaved and unable to stop sinning. In essence, God's children must live differently because of the indwelling life of God and new nature which prompts them to a different way of life (1 John 3:8). Of this we can be sure, the one who has the divine nature does not go on practicing sin without the manifestation of God's life in their heart and actions.

Notice the emphasis on “do” or “practice” in another similar list (**Gal. 5:21**) which does speak of a *pattern of sin*, and such is the case with the list in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. Boice is correct when stating: “The tense of the verb (present) indicates a habitual continuation in fleshly sins rather than an isolated lapse, and the point is that those who continually practice such sins give evidence of having never received God's Spirit.”

Ephesian 5:5 is another list or catalogue of sins representative of unsaved people: “For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”

W. E. Vine states:

“Ephesians 5:5, the apostle does not speak merely of persons doing or practicing certain things, he presses home the danger even more closely by speaking of persons to whom such things have become so habitual that a man can be characterized by the name of the vice he practices, so yielding himself to it that he has become its slave, Romans 6:16.”

Ephesians 5:6 concludes:

“Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.”

Paul reaffirms that these unsaved sinners are being judged for their sinful acts of disobedience – not merely for their unbelief as Rokser emphasizes.

Again, Rokser dismisses the whole idea that “a pattern of sin” is proof of an unregenerate life. He claims it is the Lordship Salvation/Calvinistic view (*a person must persevere in good works to confirm his salvation*) – not a grace-oriented view. Of course, those who believe in free grace and who opposes Rokser’s conclusion are not denying a person is saved by grace alone and that they must only look to Christ for salvation – not works (Eph. 2:8-9). At the same time, we should not deny the Biblical reality that when Christ is living within a person there will be evidences of new life (Rom. 6:22; John 15:1-3; 1 John 3:7-9). It is also evident that a person must not embrace the basic tenants of Lordship Salvation to believe that God-defying atheists and hell-bent, unrepentant sinners do not go to Heaven as stated in two other lists of sinners (Rev. 21:8, 27), but only those who manifest some change or transformation in their lives (Rev. 22:14).

Rokser creates a straw man argument and then knocks it down by making the claim that no Christian can know how many times they must sin to become a liar, fornicator, or drunkard. According to Rokser, this makes salvation based on human works. But his argument is not a Scriptural for several reasons. First, salvation is not by works (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5). Second, Paul is not referencing believers but unbelievers in the lists mentioned above. Third, the Bible does place unsaved sinners in at least five different lists (1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:5; Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 21:8, 27) and boldly declares they will not enter the kingdom or Heaven based upon their sinful lives. The final roster of unbelievers appears at the Great White Throne Judgment where the lost will be judged for their sinful deeds (Rev. 20:12-13).

Yes, God does judge people for their sins – not just unbelief as Rokser seems to conclude. If their sins are named, it confirms that these people are going to hell because of their sins and sinful depravity which they have practiced (Rom. 3:10-19). It’s not merely because they have not believed, which is true, but also because they have not repented of their sins and continued to commit these sins without any regard for God and holiness (Rev. 9:20; 16:9, 11).

Rokser is still not ready to conclude that an alleged believer who continually practices sin and shows no signs of regenerating life is unsaved. In other words, we should never question one's profession of faith. However, the Bible does not agree with Rokser's conclusion (Titus 1:16). Yes, there is a difference between questioning one's profession and concluding, "I know this person cannot possibly be saved." Ultimately, only God knows this (2 Tim. 2:19). But a person's consistent unchristian and un-Christlike living should be cause for questioning. Of course, some can readily be seen to be "dogs" as both Peter (2 Pet. 2:22) and Jesus taught (Matt. 7:6). We should not try and fool ourselves. Certain people cannot be saved by what they reject, say, and do.

Hebrews 12:14 declares: "Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." This verse does not mean that we earn Heaven by our righteous behavior. It means that those whose hearts have been regenerated by God's grace will in some measure pursue a course of purity or holiness (1 Cor. 6:9–11; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:3–11; Col. 3:5–8; 1 John 3:7–10). They may sin often, but they do not permanently remain in sin. They will in some measure despise sin, confess their sins to God, and turn away from their sins to seek a different way of life.

Rokser apparently wants to keep the door open that atheists, God-defying people, and even apostates are potentially saved even though the Bible condemns them to an everlasting hell (2 Pet. 2:1-3). The Bible teaches that sinners who commit sins without any signs of regenerating life, as represented by the lists of sinners found in 1 Corinthians, Galatians, and elsewhere in the Bible, prove that they are unsaved. The first epistle of John confirms that people who continually practice sin (like the people mentioned in the above lists) are not born again. They do not possess regenerating life, and this can be proven by their wicked and fruitless lifestyle.

1 John 3:8 declares, "**He that committeth sin** (*continually and habitually practices sin as characteristic of one's life – as the present-tense participle indicates*) **is of the devil** (*is the devil's child*); **for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil**" (*the sinful works generated by the devil that are used to control our lives*).

If someone is "of the devil" and people are "children of the devil" (1 John 3:10) it can mean only one thing, they are not of God (John 8:44). Their persistent pattern of sinful living proves this to be so. There is no other sensible and exegetical way to

look at this verse. These verses in 1 John do not relate to fellowshiping with God but being born of God and possessing regenerating life. They are tests of life.

1 John 3:9 goes on to say: **“Whoever is born of God (possesses God’s life and nature) doth not commit sin (literally, “every one having been born of God sin not is doing” – as a pattern or habitual practice or way of life as the present-tense verb indicates); for his seed (God’s life and nature) remaineth in him: and he cannot sin (literally – “not he is able to go on sinning” – a life in which sin is not the permanent state), because he is born of God.”**

1 John 3:10 adds this: “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness (*does not practice righteous living*) is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.”

There are not three classes here! You are either God’s child or the devil’s child based upon the way you live. Of course, John is not teaching sinless perfection but is drawing a line of demarcation. He is saying that God’s children cannot totally and forever give themselves to the devil and continually and habitually practice sin without manifesting signs of regenerating life. In essence, they must live differently because of the indwelling life of God and new nature which prompts them to a different way of life (1 John 3:8). James argues in a similar way: “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (James 2:17). Genuine faith in Christ results in a new way of life (good works and transformation of living).

It seems impossible to view these verses as “tests of fellowship” between the believer and God. There is too much language that contrasts the unregenerate way of life (children of the devil) versus the regenerate lifestyle (children of God) which reflects the new birth (1 John 3:6-9, 10-12; 5:18-20). The expressions of passing from death unto life and abiding in death (1 John 3:14) lend further support for this understanding of John’s teaching. Furthermore, if someone is “of the devil” (1 John 3:8) who sinned at the beginning of his fall to the present time, they are not of God and cannot be saved, since (like the devil) their life is only characterized by sin. If someone is like Cain, “who was of that wicked one” (1 Jn. 3:12), then they cannot be “of God” (1 Jn. 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18).

Regarding the verses in 1 John 3, the scholar Edmond Hiebert appropriately remarks: “In seeking to understand the teaching here, one must keep in view the

force of the present tenses, 'doing sin' and 'cannot sin,' as suggesting the habitual practice of sin. John insists that the believer's inability to continue in the practice of sin is due to the fact that he has been born of God."

Steven Cole correctly observes:

"John uses the present tense throughout this section, and while the Greek present tense does not necessarily emphasize continuous action, it certainly allows for it."

1 John 5:18 speaks to the same truth: **"We know that whosoever is born of God (possessing God's new life and nature) sinneth not (literally - "that every one having been born of God not is sinning" as a pattern of life and in a permanent way - as the present-tense verb indicates); but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself (from an unbroken pattern of sin and way of life), and that wicked one (the devil) toucheth him not"** (does not overcome the believer's life and keep him bound to sin because of the new nature residing in him).

In short, God's children are no longer overcome by the "wicked one" since in Christ they have positionally overcome the world (1 John 5:4-5) and no longer are bound to the "works of the devil" (1 John 3:8) as they once were in their unregenerate and lost state. In other words, God's children have been taken off the lists of unsaved sinners who always practice sin and have been placed on the list of God's redeemed saints who demonstrate varying amounts of fruitful and transformed living.

Romans 1:32 also teaches that unsaved people live in a pattern of sinful depravity: "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit (prasso - keep on committing) such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do (prasso - keep on doing) them." According to W. E. Vine, "prassō signifies, as a rule, the habit that results from continually repeating the action... but prassō appears here because not an isolated act but a course of conduct is intended."

God's Word does teach the "pattern of sin" analogy in many Bible texts, including 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and Galatians 5:19-21, to prove the unsaved character of lost people. It also teaches the "pattern of righteousness" (transformed living) analogy to authenticate the saint's salvation. John Phillips concludes: "The point is that the people whom Paul here excludes from the kingdom of God make a habitual practice of some or all of these terrible sins. He says the same thing in 1

Corinthians 6:9–11, where he gives a similar list of sins. He differentiates there between the genuine believer and the unregenerate person, who makes a practice of these sins.”

“He breaks the power of cancelled sin
And sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood avails for me.”

We should not muddy up the waters concerning the teaching of Scriptures on this subject. Paul, James, John, and Jesus all taught that God’s children live different than Satan’s children. Yes, there will be many flareups of sin and failures along the way (Matt. 26:75; Rom. 7:14-25; 2 Tim. 4:10; 1 John 1:8-10) but when looking at the overall snapshot or picture of the lives of God’s children, they will manifest a difference in their living. The New Birth results in change but where there is no change there can be no life.

“When I started out on my journey,
I had such a long way to go;
It was just a start when I gave Him my heart,
There was such a lot I needed to know.
Now, I'm looking back over my shoulder
I can see that I have come a long way;
Oh, I'm not what i want to be,
But, thank God I'm not what I was.”

Paul in both texts (the list of sinners in 1 Corinthians and Galatians) is contrasting unbelievers, whose lives typically bear the marks of these vices, with believers, whose lives typically manifest the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5: 22–23). He said that those who practice these vices will not inherit the kingdom.

Rokser correctly states they are sinners still engaging in their sins and I appreciate his honesty in declaring this. “Thus, verses 9-11 are not referring to believers who are living unrighteously and will lose out on the reward of “inherit[ing] the kingdom of God” as some have supposed. The “unrighteous” in this context refers to the unsaved unbelievers whom God still sees in their sins (fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners) having never been totally forgiven by God.”

But if God still sees them in their sins, it's because they are still committing them! Naming their sins means they are practicing their sins as a pattern and way of life. An unsaved sinner keeps sinning for he does not possess God's life and nature. **“And such were some of you.”** Is this position or practice? Both! Rokser believes the phrase only relates to a positional change but not a practical change in conduct and living. But Paul is clearly pointing out that their position in Christ has made a significant spiritual transformation in their personal lives. They were unsanctified sinners enslaved to sin but now they are no longer bound to sin in a permanent way for they have been given a new position in Christ that has delivered them from the old way of life.

The implication is that their position should be reflected in their practice. They should maintain cleanliness, sanctification (2 Cor. 7:1), and righteousness (1 Cor. 15:34) which is represented in their positional standing before God. In this instance, Paul is not separating their position from their personal living for their new position is to be mirrored in their transformed living. **“And such were some of you”** (1 Cor. 6:11). Paul is looking back to the ugly list of sins when they were unsaved sinners (1 Cor. 6:9-10) enslaved to the power and dictates of the sin nature. But now they have been emancipated and delivered from the power of sin to live a new life that is no longer bound to sin as in their previous unregenerate lives. They have been removed from the list of unsaved sinners and like the Colossians they have been “delivered ... from the power of darkness, and “translated ... into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13). This means they entered a new realm of life which to be a reflection of their position in Christ.

In this context, *position presumes practice* as it does in other Scriptural texts (Eph. 1:3-4; Rev. 2:26). Our positional overcoming in Christ, our acceptance and salvation in Christ naturally results in a certain degree of transformation of living. It is absurd and impossible to live as we once did without any signs of regenerating life and transformation because of our union and position in Christ. “God forbid” or perish the thought, let it never be! (Rom. 6:1). We are no longer what we were in Adam since we are in Christ. Our saving and life-transforming position makes the difference.

The “heavenlies” (Eph. 1:3) reach down to the “earthlies” where we live! Position eventually turns into practice. Paul teaches that one's position makes a difference in a person's living. You cannot have regeneration (the infusion of spiritual life)

without transformation (the practice of spiritual life). **Life begets life.** Position without practice, regeneration without transformation is like having a car without wheels or an airplane without wings! In a general and a nonspecific way, there will always be some fruit in the life of a genuine believer that confirms their saving and sanctifying position in Christ (John 15:1-4; 1 John 2:13-14; 5:18). This is why both Paul (1 Cor. 6:11; Gal. 5:21) and Jesus (Matt. 8:12; Luke 13:28; 18:24) conclude that sinners will not inherit the kingdom of God. Why? Because they are sinners enslaved to sin, manifesting no change in their lives, which gives clear evidence that they do not possess God's life.

Paul is teaching that these saints have now received a positional standing before God which included a total deliverance from both the penalty and power of sin. By this positional statement, Paul is telling the saints that he does not expect the Corinthians to keep living like they did in their unregenerate state. **“And such were some of you”** (1 Cor. 6:11) would imply a positional pardoning and victory (**1 John 5:4**) with an emphasis on practicing one's position in Christ as in Ephesians 2:2 - **“Wherein in time past ye walked.”** Our practice flows out of our position in Christ and if a person NEVER practices their position in Christ, he cannot be a believer in Christ, since a pattern of unrighteousness living without fruitful living confirms that a person cannot be a child of God (**1 John 3:8-10**).

Let me reiterate something at this point. **Paul is not talking about degrees of failure in the Christian life, as Rokser concludes, but unbelievers failing to ever start living the Christian life – remaining in an unsaved and unregenerate state without God's life and nature (2 Pet. 1:3-4).** This is why he says, **“And such were some of you”** which means that in their unsaved and unregenerate state some of them practiced these sins, but others practiced various sins of the same nature (“such like” – Gal. 5:21). Neither of these lists are meant to be exhaustive. The point is that these Christians were to live differently because of their positional deliverance. They cannot live as they once did in a permanent state of sin under sin's enslavement. This is because they now possess God's life and nature (1 John 3:9-10).

Yes, as Rokser would agree, there may be failures in the Christian life (*a winter season where no fruit is produced*). However, the saints could no longer live as they once did continually and habitually practicing sin without eventually manifesting some change and transformation (*a spring season eventually comes where fruit is produced*). This is because of the believer's positional deliverance which includes

victory over sin and the sin nature (1 John 5:4). This occurs through identification with Christ and the implantation of a new life and divine (Godlike) nature (2 Pet. 1:4) because of one's union with Christ (**Romans 6**).

A Christian's position in Christ keeps them from living as they once did – **“And such were some of you.”** There is a sanctifying distinction presented between the saved and unsaved world of sinners. What they had *been* (6:11a) is exchanged by what they had *become* in Christ (6:11b). To some degree, practice flows out of position. The one presupposes the other. The position never changes but the practice does vary among God's people. However, to habitually sin without manifesting the “new creation” position (2 Cor. 5:17) is to only prove that you do not have a position of salvation and deliverance (Titus 1:16). This is not Reformation doctrine, it's a repeated Biblically teaching. The Bible was here before the Reformation and Reformed Theology!

“But let's be clear that the reason these unbelievers have NO INHERITANCE is not because they have committed these sins individually or as a pattern, but because while Jesus Christ died for their sins, they have never trusted in Him alone in order to be justified and forgiven.”

At this point, Rokser shoots himself in the foot. He creates a very weak argument that in my opinion is full of holes. Rokser is dancing around the obvious. The reason these unsaved people will not inherit (enter) the kingdom is because they are sinners! Yes, unbelieving sinners but still sinners. Immediately after speaking of their sinful lives, he declares – **“And such were some of you.” This would obviously include their sinful acts of degradation.** To overlook this is to miss the obvious intent of Paul's teaching. A person's position in Christ frees them from the way they used to live as sinners who were continually bound and enslaved to sin (John 8:31-32, 36; Romans 6:1-14). Grace results in freedom (Titus 2:11-12) and not a continual life of habitual enslavement to sin without Christ's delivering power.

In this context, you cannot separate their sins from their unbelief. God views their practice of sin as evidence of their unbelief. In fact, their continuance in sin proves they are still in Adam and not in Christ (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:22). Paul specifically spells out their sins which they have committed against God and continued to commit in their unsaved state, accumulating greater wrath as he declares elsewhere (Rom. 2:5). As previously stated, the pattern of sinfulness in the life of

unsaved people does serve as proof of their unbelief and lack of repentance (Rev. 16:9, 11).

The sinners in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 kept practicing these sins as in Galatians 5:21 without belief and regeneration. Thus, Paul is talking about a pattern of sin developed in their lives which can only be overcome through “repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18) and faith in Christ (Luke 24:47), which results in the Gospel believer receiving a new victorious position in Christ. This is what brings about transformation and new life – **“And such were some of you.”**

Again, the position presumes the practice (1 John 2:13-14). We are blessed with all the spiritual blessings in the heavenlies through our positional standing in Christ (Eph. 1:3) but out of this flows transformation and a new way of life “that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (Eph. 1:4). This is what Paul is bringing out in the 1 Corinthians 6:11 and Galatians 5:21 texts. You were once like this, enslaved to sin, but your new position has changed your way of living so that you no longer live in continual bondage to sin without God’s life, nature, likeness, and fruit being produced in your life.

Rokser again comments: **“This verse is not teaching that if a believer ever commits these sins or has a pattern of these sins that he loses his salvation (Arminian view), or that he was never saved (Calvinistic view), for the Scriptures set forth several examples of believers who committed these very sins (it does happen) and how they lost their testimony, fellowship with God, joy, etc. but NEVER THEIR SALVATION!!! (John 10:27- 30; Romans 8:31-39).”**

Again, Rokser creates the self-made argument that believers can also commit these sins to prove that a pattern of sin cannot be in Paul’s thinking regarding unbelievers. However, this is Rokser’s argument – not Paul’s belief. Rokser is guilty of creating an argument from silence. **Sinners do prove they are unsaved by the continued practice of sin as this text clearly reveals for they that “do” (practice) these things do not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:21).** How much clearer can you make it?

Homer Kent correctly observes:

“However, the listing was sufficiently broad to illustrate Paul’s point that those who habitually practice such deeds as these will not inherit the kingdom of God. This sort of conduct is characteristic, to a greater or lesser degree, of unsaved persons, ones who are limited to ‘the flesh’ as their sphere of action. The continual exhibition

of these works is evidence of the unregenerate nature undisturbed by the Spirit. Christians, it is true, may fall into some of the sins mentioned here when they fail to walk by the Spirit, for they still have an old nature which sometimes entices persuasively, but such will not be the general pattern of their lives.”

Paul speaks of the same pattern of sin in other texts of Scripture that relate to the believer’s position in Christ. After speaking of the believer’s position in Christ (“If ye then be risen with Christ” - Col. 3:1), Paul then concludes that our lives will in some measure be different than the unsaved: “For which things’ sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them” (Col. 3:6-7).” The idea is not that they never struggle with sin in their Christian lives, but they no longer consistently walk in the same pattern of life as they once did when they were children of disobedience.

In a similar way, Paul is declaring in 1 Corinthians 6:11 that one’s position changes their practice. They don’t live under the domain, power, and enslavement of sin as they once did as a pattern of life. The Bible says the “wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience” (Ephesians 5:6) because they are practicing sinners who do not possess salvation. The unsaved are judged for their sins (Rev. 20:11-15) and unbelief (John 3:36). This is why Christ died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3). So an individual’s practice of sins certainly enters into the picture, not just their unbelief, as Rokser asserts.

In the above verses (lists) Paul is addressing unbelieving sinners (not believers). Therefore, their continual practice of sinning proves the reality of their unbelief. However, Rokser does not want to go down this road for fear of embracing the teaching that a person who is a true believer must look at how many good works or deeds he performs (and the number of sins he commits) to prove he is saved and have the assurance of salvation. But nothing could be further from the truth. We look to Christ for our salvation (John 3:15-17) and the general transformation of our lives is only a secondary confirmation of our salvation (2 Cor. 13:5; Pet. 1:10).

Our *primary* confirmation is our belief in Jesus Christ and His promise of eternal life (John 6:47; 1 John 5:10-12). That God is now working in our lives, and we are not what we used to be is only secondary to our salvation. But it gives us an added bonus to know that Christ lives within us (Gal. 2:20) and He’s still working on us! Our faith alone in Christ is what saves us and gives us the assurance of eternal life

(1 John 5:13). The overall snapshot or picture of our lives will give us added evidence (a secondary confirmation and assurance) that God has saved us by His grace and is now doing a continuing work of transforming grace in our lives (Phil. 2:12-13).

Rokser is correct when stating: **“But notice again, like 1 Corinthians 6 and Ephesians 5, the stark contrast between the “YOU” in reference to all the Galatian BELIEVERS and the “THOSE” of the UNSAVED who “will not inherit the kingdom of God.”**

So what axe is Rokser grinding? He correctly assumes that the lists do talk about unbelievers or unsaved people who commit these sins, but in the same stroke on his computer keyboard he refuses to embrace the reality that they are referencing a pattern of sin in their lives. However, the texts are meant to spell out the continual sinfulness and depravity in their lives by the revealed statements **“such were some of you” (1 Cor. 6:11)** and **“they that do or practice these things.” (Gal. 5:21).**

Charles Spurgeon put it like this:

“The grace that does not change my life will not save my soul.”

This is because the grace that saves us is also the grace that transforms us (Titus 2:11-12; Rom. 6:1-14). The idea isn't that a Christian could never commit these sins in the lists, but that they could never stay in these sins, fail to confess their sins, repent of them, and fail to demonstrate both inwardly and outwardly fruit unto holiness (Rom. 6:22).

Rokser avoids the obvious for he seems to assume that believers can live like unbelievers (pagans all their lives) and still inherit the kingdom. He suggests this by repeatedly emphasizing in his article that nothing is about sinning but only believing or disbelieving. But it's also about sinning for even Rokser correctly assumes that these unbelievers **are sinners (yes, they are practicing these sins!)** and they do not enter the kingdom. He cannot get around it unless he puts on his Grace Evangelical Society eyeglasses.

This is the weakest link in his chain and train of thought. **He suggests that unbelievers can live like unbelievers and go to hell (missing the kingdom) but believers can live as unbelievers and enter the kingdom.** In this case, you cannot have your cake and eat it too! Paul is telling the Corinthians, if you live like hell

raisers all your life, then you are going to hell (you will not inherit the kingdom). It's very clear. If you continue to practice sin without manifesting God's life and nature, then you are not entering the kingdom. This is because you don't possess a saving and sanctifying position in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

Rokser's argument about degrees of sin and how much sin it takes to be considered a fornicator and drunkard *as believers* is strange for in the lists Paul is dealing with unbelievers who practice these sins – not believers. Again, this is the author's argument – not Paul's argument. Paul never brings up this question. He is saying in Galatians 5:21, if a person lives without manifesting spiritual life – they don't have a position of washing, sanctification, and justification in Christ (1 Cor. 6:11). And they certainly won't enter the kingdom. Paul was not talking about engaging in degrees of sin in the Christian life to determine or figure out one's salvation and eternal destiny. He was referencing the constant practice of sin in unbelievers who live without any signs of regenerating life, which ultimately identify them as not being of the fold of Christianity (1 John 2:19).

Paul is not speaking about believers dabbling in degrees of sin but unbelievers never leaving sin and continually practicing sin because they do not possess regenerating life. When a person lives like the devil as Jesus and John taught (John 8:44; 1 John 3:10) then they are the devil's children. This means that if a person claims to be a believer but never reflects in his life a new position of salvation and deliverance in Christ, then he is not a believer, but an unbeliever who will not inherit the kingdom. But there is no need to fear – **“And such were some of you.”**

Paul is looking back to their past identity in Adam, along with their sinful and unregenerate state, which was exchanged for their positional forgiveness, sanctification, and justification in Christ, resulting in a new way of life. This is because practical fruit follows the grace position (Eph. 2:8-10). In a similar way, Paul states: **“Wherein in time past ye walked** according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2). The Ephesians like the Corinthians were to walk in accordance with their position (Eph. 1:3-4). They were not to keep sinning away their days like they previously did as sinners in union with Adam.

Paul's main point in mentioning these lists of unsaved sinners is so genuine Christians would not reflect the unsaved way of life (1 Cor. 3:3) by developing these

same sinful practices and patterns that mark unbelievers. He is saying that we (believers) should become what we are in Christ. Paul is teaching, “**Practice your position in Christ.**” But realizing the imperfections in all believers (Phil. 3:12), he is not merely chiding them for sinning, he is challenging them to live up to their *positional potential* in Christ. But the final analysis is this. If one does not manifest any change in their life, then they have never been truly identified with Christ, positionally saved, and will not enter the kingdom.

Our new position has given us pardon, sanctification, and justification in Christ (union with Him) which results in a new beginning and way of life that reflects Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). In sharing Christ’s life (our union with Him), a person begins to experience a Christ-wrought transformation in his life that bears fruit (John 15:1-5) in varying degrees (Mark 4:20). There will be evidence of practical change that occurs throughout a person’s Christian life. People whose lives are totally characterized or patterned by these sample lists of sins are not saved and therefore unrighteous and without justification. This is why Paul states, “**And such were some of you**” – unforgiven sinners, unsanctified sinners, and unjustified sinners whose lives were patterned after sin. But God has given you a washing, sanctification, and justification before His throne which not only changes your position before God but also your daily practice in life through identification or union with Christ’s saving and sanctifying work (Rom. 6:12; Gal. 2:20). Your position will be reflected in your practice. The effects which their position has upon their lives cannot be underestimated. Their new identities in Christ required that they live no longer like the wicked, but like believers.

Once again, what God gives to us in the heavenlies (a positional salvation) reaches down to earth where we live and translates into shoe leather (Col. 3:1-5). Position assumes practice. Although there is a marked difference between our *standing* in Christ which never changes and our *state* which does change, our lives as Gospel believers will manifest varying amounts of growth in grace (2 Pet. 3:18) because of who we are in Christ. As 1 Corinthians 6:11 declares, we have been freely given a positional washing (*eternal forgiveness before God’s throne*), sanctification (*an instantaneous and permanent standing of holiness before God’s throne*), and justification (*an unchanging legal declaration of righteousness before God’s throne*).

The believer’s position should make a great deal of difference in what he is like after salvation. The believer is to live a life that corresponds to his cleansing, his

sanctification, and his justification. His Christian life is to be pure, holy, and righteous. The new position produces and requires a new kind of life. Paul is teaching that this “so great salvation” (Heb. 2:3) will be reflected in our lives because of our salvific position and calling (2 Pet. 1:10). These great positional truths are placed as a backdrop against unrighteous living. God does not save us to keep us the same. When we express faith in Christ, we are never really the same again! This is because the Holy Spirit has come to indwell us, guide us, convict, and conform us to Christ’s image (2 Cor. 3:18). In fact, our positional sanctification in Christ (1 Cor. 1:2) becomes very practical and applicable to our daily living through our identification with His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-14). No genuine Christian can possess a new creation position in Christ and only reflect the old creation throughout his life (2 Cor. 5:17).

Paul is seeking to convince these Christians to live differently (as Rokser correctly observes). Paul is teaching that they were to live differently in view of their positional identity and union with Christ, since this new positional union with Christ transforms people’s lives and does not keep them bound to their old sins and ways of living without manifesting change, new direction, and a new creature emphasis (Eph. 2:10). You cannot live as a caterpillar when you are a butterfly! Your wings and flight will eventually be seen and should be witnessed because of your heavenly identity in Christ (Eph. 1:3. Col. 3:1). With such an exalted position it is inconceivable that the saints can constantly live like the unsaved, never demonstrating holiness, righteousness, bearing no fruit in their lives, and committing apostasy against Christ.

A sharp contrast is drawn between their past practice and their present position – “And such were some of you” to drive home the truth that a person’s position in Christ is life-altering. Paul was challenging the Christians to practice WHAT they have in Christ and WHO they are in Christ based upon their complete deliverance from the penalty and power of sin. In a greater way, through progressive sanctification (1 Thess. 4:3-4; Phil. 2:12-13), they were to act like believers who will one day inherit the kingdom for they have been positionally delivered from sin’s power. Elsewhere Paul concludes: “Who gave himself for our sins (*through substitution*), that he might deliver us from this present evil world” (Gal. 1:4). Although the believing sinner has been redeemed from the future judgment of the Lake of Fire, he has also by virtue of his position in Christ been rescued from the present satanic world system which is characteristic of the present age.

The Bible speaks of this as “having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Pet. 1:4) and “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness” (Col. 1:13). Jesus’ death was a rescue operation! The implication is that the positional deliverance which occurs at the time of our salvation through the implantation of God’s divine life and nature has life-changing results. **“And such were some of you.”** Don’t forget this. You have been positionally delivered from the world system and should therefore live differently than the unsaved.

Rokser correctly asserts: **“If we live in the Spirit [positionally], let us also walk in the Spirit [practically]. (Galatians 5:25)”** And yet, Rokser apparently believes (as many free-gracers do) that a person can be saved and never walk in the Spirit and manifest this regenerating position which is made possible through the work of the Spirit. Christians can become atheists and God-defying people who want nothing to do with righteous living and still be saved. If this is what Rokser believes then Paul, James, John, and Jesus disagree with him.

Paul’s point is that a born-again person will walk in the Spirit, howbeit, his yielding to the Spirit and filling of the Spirit will occur in varying degrees throughout his Christian experience (Eph. 5:18; 1 Thess. 5:19). A person will in some measure keep in step with the Spirit. But there is no such thing as cookie cutter Christians. Paul’s point in the above lists is that no person will live like an unregenerate person and be without some marks of regeneration (1 John 3:8-10, 14). We can be confident that a new position in Christ results in a new way life in Christ.

“And such were some of you.” Now get on with living the new life. As the writer of Hebrews says, “let us go on” (Heb. 6:1). But how do we go on to greater sanctification? It’s not through the law system (as Rokser correctly observes) but the new grace system of the working of the Spirit which is “not under the law” (Gal. 5:18) and where “there is no law” (Gal. 5:23). It’s not legalism but grace (yes free grace!) that frees us from the power of sin (Titus 2:11-12) as the Holy Spirit empowers us to live righteously (Gal. 5:18, 22-23) through our identification with Christ (Rom. 6:14-15). Our salvation and victory are outside legalism, ourselves, Lordship Salvation, and every other system man invents. It’s only found in grace working in relation to our hearts and lives (1 Cor. 15:10).

What is Paul’s argument here? It is simply this, as so aptly expressed by Godet: “Such a fathomless depth of grace is not to be recrossed.” In other words, we should

not pass over the wonder of grace that we have received through our position in Christ. Yes, His grace is still amazing! And we should demonstrate it in our lives through sanctified living which is reflective of our position in Christ.

In conclusion, there is a new freedom that grace brings into every person's life who has believed and received a new position in Christ (1 Cor. 6:11). We are washed, sanctified, and justified freely in Christ (Rom. 3:24-25). Everything is free! This new position includes a sanctifying position of deliverance from the world that is ultimately reflected in the believer's life (Rom. 6) unless they are an illegitimate child ("bastards and not sons" - Heb. 12:8). It's a new position that removes them from the "lists of sinners" who "do" or continually practice these sins (Gal. 5:21) without Christ's emancipating life and nature, and places them on another list, the roster of the redeemed (the scroll of life) whose sins are forgiven and will never again be resurfaced to condemn them (Rev. 20:12). To this we can all agree and say, "Amen and Amen!"