

Joseph Prince: Apostle of Grace or Deception?

Joseph Prince is simultaneously lauded as one of the great Bible teachers and labeled as a false teacher. Why is there such an extreme response when it comes to his teachings? I would listen to You Tube videos portraying him as a false teacher with their Satanic background music and descriptions of his Satanic hand signals, presentations that didn't ring true. His ideas need to be examined, not just tossed out or embraced. The ministry of Joseph Prince has troubled me for some time. I know that whenever I listened to him I would get squirmy and uncomfortable. But why?

I have to admit that I didn't hear anything that could be condemned as heresy. Heresy may be defined as omitting or opposing of one of the central doctrines of Christianity. One very unjust video criticizes his teaching on the Passover as sorcery. More Christians need to meditate on the Passover, on Isaiah chapter fifty three and on the Last Supper for a foundation in the power of the blood. Prince's teaching is important. If *the type* of things to come produces so much power that the children of Israel went out without sickness, how much greater *the substance* in the New Covenant?

Prince finishes that message with: *If you take communion tonight, you will go to work stronger tomorrow.* I agree that a revelation of Passover and Communion can produce healing. Personally, I am skeptical of the *if you do this, then this will happen.* However, one might sincerely believe in that power and be in line with the Bible. I am wary of formulas to produce results, but a woman I know regularly takes communion at home and testifies of greater strength and wellness.

His teaching on repentance and the confession of sin and his use of the terms: God-consciousness vs. Sin-consciousness are what I will examine in this paper. Simply put, I don't agree with his use of these terms.

My discomfort with his ministry hinged on one of his most repeated ideas that “**Christians don't have to confess their sins.**” And, “If you confess your sins, he is faithful and just to forgive you your sins and cleanse you from all iniquity” (1 John 1.9) is a verse that Prince insists was written to the Gnostics, the “unbelievers” that were present in the body of the early church. To that, I can only remark, John wrote a letter. He did not divide it into chapters with notes. Also, I believe *church* meant the body of believers in those days, not a meeting place.

I felt that confession of sins was a good thing, yet I had to agree that salvation didn't depend on our confession of sin in as much as we could never confess all sins, all the time, to keep us in right standing. Or, we might easily forget sins of fear (anything that is not of faith is sin), or pride, or gossip, or bad thoughts. In other words, there would be no end to that road of unconfessed sin. Prince is absolutely right in that respect.

Another phrase also troubled me: **God-consciousness vs sin-consciousness.** It comes across as psychological jargon. Prince implies that the confession of sin is **sin consciousness and its opposite is God-consciousness.** Of course we all want to be in the camp of the God conscious. But are we to accept that dichotomy on face value? I had to get to the bottom of these phrases in order to shake off the unsettled feeling.

Also his teaching on **repentance** niggled me. In the Greek, Prince says correctly, the word for repentance is metanoia which means to change your mind or to turn around. Prince's abbreviated definition would be followed by, *Some of you are changing your mind right now listening to this.* I knew it had to be more than a change of mind between chocolate or vanilla ice cream. In this particular

presentation there seemed to be a discouragement of the act of repentance.

So, let's begin with the *confession of sin*. Prince puts forward truth when he says that the confession of sin does not save you. Salvation is the work of God in your life which causes you to become His child (John 1.12). You are saved when you believe in your heart that Jesus is the Son of God, that He died for your sins, and rose again from the dead. That by believing in him, He made it possible for you to have eternal life with him in heaven (Romans 10. 9-10). It is knowing that there is no other way to God (John 14.6). Paul says, "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: old things have passed away; behold all things have become new" (2. Cor. 5.17). This gift of God is called The New Birth (John 3.3)

It is entirely possible to confess your sins in a liturgy or even alone to a priest in a confessional and not know anything about Christ as God or even having an interest in God beyond that of fulfilling Church requirement. Nothing happens in the heart and soul of that person. There is no changed life.

Liturgies and confessions in church bulletins that are read on Sundays do not save you unless there is an Eureka moment, an Aha: *Christ died for me. I love him. Thank you for forgiving my sins*. All a possible scenario, but more than likely the bulletin confession of sins is no more to the reciter than a familiar buzzing in the ear. The two extremes are confession of sin with no thought or confession of sin out of fear.

Many have been caught up in cults, including Christian cults, that stress confession of sin without the assurance of salvation. Perhaps many in Prince's audience have been to a church that continuously stresses their sinfulness. The women forego makeup and slacks; there is a policing system of reporting to elders and deacons. There is the "get in line or lose fellowship." These are all the mark of a cult. And some churches are so deficient in the teaching of grace that they are legalistic.

This may be Prince's own background, his own dilemma that he confessed sin so much yet never felt saved. Much teaching is required to bring these cultist mind-sets to freedom. But they must be brought to freedom through truth, not a subtle change in wording to effect pleasing the ear. We have words of freedom aplenty in the Bible. Consider the great truth in Romans 8.1 "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Again, it is the issue of freedom.

And Prince is also right that if you believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, the forgiveness of sins is in that gift package. So why does he caution against confession and repentance so much? "Me thinks he doth protest too much." So I had an AHA moment of my own.

Repentance is a response in the heart of a person who has experienced the new birth. Does it come immediately or in due course? Yes and Yes. But it does come. We cannot help but respond with joy that we are saved and respond in great sorrow to the sin in our lives, to the evil that we have done to others. So repentance may be an ongoing response in the life of a believer. We understand our failure and we repent. We understand our violation of the law of the love, and we repent. We understand how fully we have missed the mark. We understand the terribleness of sin and our blithe underestimation of its effects in our lives and to our family. We understand our close calls, our brush with death, our cruel behavior towards those we love. The Hebrew word for repent is *Nacham*, *to grieve and lament*. So, too, we grieve and lament. We fear, for the first time, the Lord. We believe the proverb, "The fear of the Lord is His treasure" Isaiah 33.6. What inscrutable words those are.

So now we come back to *sin-consciousness*, a psycho-babble word if I ever heard one. What does Prince mean? Are we sin conscious because we repent? As children we have a conscience. But, it can become seared with conformity to the world. We may live our lives with no thought of sin or sinfulness, but when we become **born again** we have a new realization of the terribleness of sin. God gave the Mosaic Law to the Jews because *until Christ we can't understand either sin or grace*.

The rich young ruler said to Jesus “Good Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus answers. “Why do you call me good? There is none good but God” That is what a man under the law can never grasp. He is forever doing good works, washing the outside of the cup. But the heart remains deceived and terribly wicked.

God had to write down all that was right and wrong. The law was our school master until we had a new heart and His law written on our hearts (Jr. 31.33; Romans 2.15). Likewise, we realize that the law cannot save us. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph.2.8).

Salvation is our gift just for believing. It is being made righteous with Christ's righteousness and not our own. So, perhaps for the first time we are *sin conscious and God-conscious* simultaneously. We realize how narrow our escape having glimpsed ourselves dangled over the pit of hell. I remember when I was in the world I thought the way the world thought. Whatever the world deemed good, I accepted. I thought I was a good person. When I got saved, I knew I was not a good person. I have watched TV shows where parents allow their children access to drugs and sex and think they are good parents. They have no consciousness of God at all.

So some Prince devotee's may conclude from his emphasis on sin-consciousness that it does no good to confess sins. And, that such confessions may even work against understanding God. Danger! What if a person in his audience desires to be **God-Conscious**? And, what if he believes that thinking of past wrong-doings goes against the goal of God-Consciousness? So he stuffs the sin down and gives it no thought, or tries not to. That same man is bound to that sin by a chain that has not been severed.

Sometimes the Holy Spirit will cause a sinful memory to resurface because He wants us to deal with it. The Holy Spirit is calling for repentance and restitution. What if a Prince disciple hardens his heart to even a little prick of conscience? If Satan is behind this doctrine, what can he accomplish? Bondage. He excels in bondage. Perhaps Prince, with all good intentions, has it just backwards enough to begin the slippery slide to deception.

Whom the Lord loves, he chastens (Hebrews 12.6) Chastening is dealing with us as sons!

Paul teaches Timothy to “**reprove, rebuke, and exhort**” (2.Tim.4.2). Notice the cheering up comes after the scolding. The Holy Spirit keeps us in line because He loves us. Whom the Son makes free is free indeed. What a wonderful gift to acknowledge our sin and be set free from its memory, its effects. Perhaps that is the real truth, “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and CLEANSE us from all iniquity” (1John 1.9). We need the **cleansing**. We need the chains to be broken. What a breath of fresh air to say:

“I did it.

It was wrong.

I am really sorry

Can you ever forgive me.”

That sequence is a right attitude towards God and our fellow man?

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us **cleanse ourselves** from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, *perfecting holiness* in the fear of God” (2. Cor. 7.1). Paul goes on to say in the same chapter : “Now I rejoice . . . *that ye sorrowed to a repentance*: . . . For godly sorrow works repentance to salvation, but the sorrow of the world worketh death.” (9.10)

John the Baptist begins his ministry with “Repent: Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord.” Jesus begins his ministry with the same: “Repent” (Matt.4.17). Oh, this is old covenant, one may argue. But Peter finishes his sermon at Pentecost the same way:

“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts.2.38). Again Peter says “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness: but he is long suffering to us, not willing that any should perish, *but that all should come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3.9).

Maybe sin and hell are just too unpleasant for the post-modern crowd so let's say very little about both, think some preachers. Prince has a strange interpretation of the following verse:

Enter in at the straight gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many be which go in therat:
Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” (Matt.7.13-14).

Prince argues that this Scripture does not refer to hell, but applies to the health, healing, and prosperity that God intends but few find. True, many are not taught that health is a covenant promise. But aren't there many other texts that teach health and healing? He argues that the *narrow way* is **not** a reference to eternal punishment and quotes Revelation regarding the great multitudes that are in heaven (Rev. 19), but doesn't bother to reconcile the Scripture in Isaiah that says the mouth of Hell has enlarged itself (Is. 5.14). In another gospel reference, the disciples ask “So not many will be saved? And Jesus once again says to “strive to enter in at the straight gate”. . . (Luke 13.23).

I would say Jesus seals the argument. Even though Prince agrees that Jesus is the gate. Why not admit that it is a gate to avoid hell? Well, that is not a nice topic.

Another Prince teaching that troubles is: *The Holy Spirit never convicts anyone of sin.**

Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will be given after he departs:

“And when He has come, He will **convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment**” (John 16.8). I believe this verse to be a succinct presentation of all the biblical doctrines. What is Prince's interpretation of this verse?

Prince also joins the rash of Bible teachers who say that **God has poured all of his wrath out on Christ at the cross**. Prince calls it a “cup of abominations and filthiness.” Now this idea really does border on heresy as it ignores “the wrath to come” (Matt.3.7). And nowhere in the Bible does it say that God poured **wrath** on Jesus on the cross. “He became sin with our sinfulness” (2.Cor.5.20). I am not sure if it is semantic carelessness or the work of Satan. Let's grant that it is a sloppy use of terms, still the Cross is not an end of wrath.

There is a judgment coming that is the most terrible the world has ever known and it would take pages to recite all the verses spoken by the prophets and Jesus himself. This judgment is called *The Day of the Lord* or *The Great and Terrible Day of the Lord* and we are very near to it and to the end of this Age. TV preachers repeat each others slogans so much that they begin to sound like truth. The remedy? Read your Bible without filters. Fast TV preachers for about a year and see what happens when you get alone with God and the Bible. If we don't **study** our Bibles we are candidates for deception.

I am also wary of Prince's term "Mother Grace." And that we "walk in grace." I believe the Bible says we are to walk in the Spirit. Using terms like Mother Earth and Mother Grace is **Goddess mentality**, a reintroduction to paganism. Another Prince-ism: "God is continually bringing new revelation to Christians." Yes, but is such revelation within the bounds of the Bible? Beware of higher light and deeper truth.

What do we make of such a mixture of truth and partial truths? Has Prince become a preacher who has loved the world too much? He is a reported billionaire. Can one serve God and Mammon?

Does he emanate the Spirit of the World? He dresses in provocative street clothes with leather jackets and tight pants and chains, but no judgment should be made on that basis. Correct? Likewise, a grossly overweight preacher seems to love the flesh. Is it fair to judge Prince on his clothes and hair style? He changed his name to be more commercial (last name Singh). Is that significant? Maybe he wants watchers to confuse him with the great scholar /teacher, Derek Prince.

Let us look at the warning of Timothy:

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (6.4).

But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

. . . Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly to enjoy, O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the **profane and idle babble** . . ." 1 Tim. 6.17

In this same chapter, Paul exhorts Timothy that teachers must consent to wholesome words, "even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness" (4). So, New Covenant teachers are to heed the words of Jesus.

If he does not, "He is proud, . . . knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words . . . Useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that **godliness is a means of gain**. From such withdraw yourself" (5-6).

What if Prince's slant is to his gain? What if he feels the need to supplement the wholesome words of God? It is risky business in an audience of broken hearts and ruined lives. Only the pure milk of the Word can deliver.

We must continually examine all who preach in the light and truth of the Bible. There used to be an old Pentecostal saying, "Eat the meat and throw out the bones." No, we must not accept mixture because its ultimate end is deception. Prince, for now, you remain an enigma. And may the fear of the Lord guide you and guard you in all wisdom and understanding,

Work Consulted

Prince, Joseph. Designed to Reign. Harrison H. Tulsa, 2010. p.134.

Important Link:

<https://youtu.be/QpTRSioRIfw> Derek Prince on Deception

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