

So You Don't Sin Anymore? (All Scriptures are NKJV, some emphasis added)

If you've ever been asked this question, or asked it yourself to another in unbelief, I pray this article may edify and clarify some things. When we share the gospel and freedom available in Christ, many ask this question. I will answer briefly with what we **are** saying, what we are **not** saying, and expound.

What we are saying. Yes, we, by the very definition of those naming Christ as children of God, do not sin (1 John 3:9). Christ is our foundation (1 Cor 3:11), and *"the solid foundation of God stands with this seal: 'The Lord knows who are His' and 'let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity'"* (2 Tim 2:19). Part of this foundation is **"repentance from dead works and of faith toward God"** (Heb 6:1), meaning we "think differently" and "turn back to starting point" (**repentance**) which is the acknowledgment of our sin with the **forsaking** of it (Prov 28:13), not committing it over and over again or merely feeling bad about it. We believe and are faithful (**faith toward God**) meaning "moral fidelity", "firmness", "morally to be true or certain", "moral conviction, especially reliance upon Christ for salvation; constancy in such profession" "faithful (of long continuance)", "to turn to the right."ⁱ We've come to the end of ourselves, been born again of God, and Christ lives through us as we live for God doing all for His glory.

We warn and teach others and ourselves to be/stand perfect in Christ in all the will of God (Col 1:28, 4:12). We actually believe Christ's command *"be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect"* (Matt 5:48) is attainable and expected of us in this life, meaning we've been cleansed from our past sin (Rom 3:25, 2 Pet 1:9), are not currently sinning (John 8:34-36, Rom 6:2, 14, Gal 2:17), but practice righteousness and keep Christ's commands which are not burdensome (1 John 3:7, 5:3). We are led by the Spirit, have awoken to righteousness and do not sin, but plan and purpose in our hearts to keep His statutes/commands forever to the very end (Rom 8:14, 1 Cor 15:34, Ps 119:112)! We believe Christ commanded an **achievable, realistic** expectation to *"sin no more"* (John 5:14, 8:11). God is not some cruel monster or mad scientist who has set us a burdensome task with no hope of accomplishing it in the way He tells us to conduct ourselves while about His work. Though tempted, we take the way out God **always** gives, taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, not letting temptations or desires conceive giving birth to sin (1 Cor 10:13, 2 Cor 10:5, Jas 1:13-16). We use such terms in the scriptural sense, in biblical context under the New Covenant, as literally defined by the Spirit of God (Heb 10:16), with the help of Greek and Hebrew dictionaries easily available today. **Perfect** as "without blemish", "entire (morally)", "undefiled", "upright", "complete or consummate (in moral character)", and **sin** as "offense", "miss the mark (and so not share in the prize)", "especially morally", as scriptures imply; things done not of faith where one knows to do good but fails to do it in unrighteous lawlessness - Rom 14:23, Jas 4:17, 1 John 3:4, 5:17.ⁱⁱ

What we are NOT saying. We don't claim we've never sinned, nor do we claim sin is a physical impossibility for us, nor do we claim to know for a fact we will never sin again. We do not claim to "no longer need Christ or forgiveness" (as some accuse), nor do we claim we can do it on our own or have done it on our own without God. We do not use worldly or false religious definitions of "perfect" or "sin" or other terms above, and don't claim to be without mistakes, physical accidents (like knocking something over or stubbing toes), or odd/annoying habits (like leg-bouncing, finger drumming, or snoring). We don't claim our waste matter doesn't stink, nor claim we have no weaknesses or shortcomings (defined below), nor claim we have no need for correction, growth, instruction, or learning. We don't state we've "arrived" as if we cannot be taught, or as if we have all expertise in our realm, or as if we have no need to be on this earth. We do not claim we have all knowledge, wisdom, discernment, or many other attributes; nor do we understand every situation or scripture with exact clarity, or have impeccable memory. We do not claim to not need the Church/body of Christ. We are not saying we are saved merely by our repentance apart from God and Christ's mercy, nor do we claim we are saved by our works (neither of Old Testament law nor good deed). We don't claim to have every spiritual gift nor do we state we can no longer grow in fruit of the Spirit. We are not saying we have no emotions or feelings as human beings, nor are we saying we always agree with each other on every issue. We do not claim we no longer suffer or endure temptation, trials, or tribulations, and we are not saying we no longer have physical ailments, illnesses, or injuries. We don't claim the Way to be super easy. Sometimes people perceive our words or actions as offensive or feelings are hurt by what we say or do (even our own); we don't claim otherwise. Finally, we don't claim we are no longer being sanctified nor do we state we are no longer convicted of righteousness.

Difficulties people have. At this point, you may be confused, irritated, or in agreement, joy, and peace with the above. Is it so difficult to believe we can actually love God with all our heart, soul, mind, strength, and our neighbor as ourselves? To many, it is because their faith in sin, or in themselves, or their flesh is so much stronger than any faith in Christ and God. Many do not understand how in the New Covenant God writes commands on our hearts and minds. Far too many are taught a false gospel with twisting of scripture by false teachings their entire lives. They hear *"everyone sins, it is impossible to not to"*, or *"we won't be perfect this side of heaven."* One man concluded *"I've never met anyone who can stop sinning."* Really? Have you met Christ? Or have you determined in your mind no one could cease from sin even with His help, therefore they do not exist even if they stood before you?

If these sayings were true, it would mean Christ's power and influence have only freed us from the eternal consequences of sin, rather than its power in this life; it would mean we just have to believe Christ saves us in a "sinful state we just cannot break free from", and promises us eternal life solely for our belief in His atoning death, so "just try your best, but no one can do it." Is that the gospel? No! The above paragraphs help show the difference between false and true definitions, and below are examples we've heard from those denying or confused about truth.

Miss the mark, fall short, shortcomings or weaknesses. Clearly part of the definition of sin, but many apply it to anything they choose (or are told) rather than how scripture and the Spirit of God apply it. If I miss an attempt to throw trash in a trashcan, I've "missed the mark" but is it sin before God? If I fail to notice proper timing of arrival of 4 cars at a 4-way stop sign, have I sinned? Did God or Christ, any apostle or prophet ever define sin so broadly? God can write any small details for specific commands on hearts if He wishes, but for us to just make everything sin or define it so broadly as to make it unavoidable does nothing but promote falsehood. A man struggled weekly in his mind wondering if freedom from all sin was possible, and during a bad week, he tried to justify himself saying "sin is anything we do that falls short of God's glory." Certainly sin causes one to fall short of His glory, but *anything we do that falls short?* If I pass gas, run late for a meeting, or trip over a toy, one could easily argue these all fall short of God's glory. Are they sin? If I make a simple typo mistake, or lack knowledge at work to get the best results, or score below 100% on a test, or due to lack of understanding or forgetfulness, I make a decision about something when God is silent, is any of this sin? Christ **asked** God to **glorify Him** with God **with the glory** He **had** before the world was (John 17:5); was it sinful of Christ to not have that glory again yet? No!

Weaknesses are often used interchangeably by many justifying sin. Weak can mean "moral frailty", "feeble", "without strength", "powerless", "infirm in the body", "feeble-minded", "faint-hearted", "strengthless."ⁱⁱⁱ In some cases these could apply to sin, as Paul implies in 1 Corinthians 11:29-30. There are certainly disadvantages (especially moral frailty) to those with weak consciences as they may easily be defiled (1 Cor 8:7-12, Rom 14:1-2, 21, 15:1). We become weak to the weak (1 Cor 9:22) not with frail consciences, but by emplacing further restrictions on ourselves so as not to lay a stumbling block before them or make things more difficult for them (Rom 14:13, 1 Cor 8:9). The law was "weak through the flesh" (Rom 8:3), although Paul calls it holy, just, and good (Rom 7:12, 1 Tim 1:8). Let us remember even Christ's spirit was willing, but flesh weak (Matt 26:41, Mark 14:38), and the weakness of God is stronger than men (1 Cor 1:25). Not as if God's *Spirit* has weakness, but He chooses things low, without strength, faint-hearted, or powerless to show His power (2 Cor 12:9).

The word 'shortcoming' doesn't appear in scripture. We have many physical limitations or injuries; we may say "I am not the best cook", "I'm terrible at math", "I'm not a great basketball player", "I have an injury or get sick sometimes." Me too! Are these sins before a holy God? I imagine newborn Jesus in Bethlehem may have had difficulty with Trigonometry, and his injuries on the cross caused many to doubt Him (Matt 27:43). Let us think of Christ before we just apply the term sin to anything, lest we be found accusing Him of sin! Poor memory, forgetfulness, or clumsiness might be shortcomings. "I don't always remember to say 'thank you', though I am grateful", "I forgot to take the trash out last night", or "oops, I'm sorry I spilled your drink." Sadly, we've heard scoffers snap at a child of God "I guess you aren't perfect after all" for such things. Are these things lawlessness against a holy God?

Thoughts, Emotions, Temptations; one offended. Some people's emotions stir more easily than others. Some may be nearly emotionless. "I'm feeling anxious, that's sin", or "I can't be free from sin, I get angry at my kids", or "I was tempted with the impure thoughts about him/her, I'm so sinful" some say. They read Jesus' and Paul's words on 'anger' in Matthew 5:21-26, Colossians 3:8, "look at a woman **to lust**" in Matthew 5:28 for 'adultery', or 'worry/anxiousness' in Matthew 6:25-35 and Philippians 4:6, claiming how sinful they (or "we all") are. But how did Christ feel in Gethsemane (Matt 26:35-45, Luke 22:44)? If you examine this closely, he fulfilled what Paul later wrote in Philippians 4:6 to a 'T'! The agony and weakness He felt in the flesh, He turned into prayer and supplication to God, and the peace of God (and an angel) came to Him. People today fulfill this same example He gave us, accusing themselves or others of sin. We may debate if Jesus was angry cleansing the temple (Matt 21:12-17) or rebuking Pharisees (Matt 23) since the word "anger" does not appear (I cannot imagine a smile on His face during these times). But Mark 3:5 clearly states Christ's anger (at their hearts). If all anger were a sin, Christ would not have had it, nor would Paul and David exhort "Be angry, and do not sin" (Ps 4:4, Eph 4:26). We may be legitimately angry at an injustice, or when someone (kids are good at this) or something (electronic device) wastes our time because they have an accident, lack knowledge, or a thing doesn't work properly. There is a righteous and an unrighteous anger, but growth in patience and wisdom help us control the anger and deal wisely with the situation. We must guard our hearts and examine ourselves to ensure it is not without a cause (Matt 5:22), does not lead to us to be unforgiving (Matt 6:14-15), we do not hold on to it for too long (not letting the sun go down on it – Eph 4:26), it doesn't allow a root of bitterness to spring up in us (Heb 4:15), and it never leads to hate (1 Jn 3:15).

As for our natural attraction to certain members of the opposite sex, are you feeling desires and taking them captive or actually looking **to (in order to/for the purpose of) lust (to set your heart upon her/covet)**? One *“drawn away by his own desires and enticed”* is not sinning, but it is when such desires “conceive” or are given “aid” to or “capture” us (Jas 1:14-15). Remember Christ was *“tempted in all points as we”* (Heb 4:15), so he really experienced these same challenges, and so shall we, but we must take the way out God always gives (1 Cor 10:13). Such thoughts or emotions come and go, but a brother once stated of such thoughts, *“If a bird lands on your head you swat it away, but you don’t let it build a nest up there.”*

Sometimes people disagree and argue, or accuse themselves or others of sin. *“I didn’t say ‘hi’ to someone who passed me today”* or *“What you just said/did offended me.”* Remember the Pharisee’s were offended by what Christ said (Matt 15:12). It may have hurt Peter’s feelings when called “Satan/adversary” in Jesus’ rebuke (Matt 16:23). We try not to offend people, but neither are we to be “men-pleasers.” I have no problem apologizing if someone’s feelings are hurt, but I will not apologize if I examine myself before God and neither He nor I find fault, especially if I’ve shared the truth in love (though at times people do not perceive it to be so). If sin or lack thereof is determined by others’ perceptions and feelings, we must falsely accuse Christ of sin for offending people, and are all hopeless.

Growth, instruction, correction; bad habits. There is much in this area. One man told me if he ate a chocolate covered nut candy, it was possibly sin (he wasn’t strongly committed to the idea), because sin could be just *“things not good for me”* or *“bad habits”* like eating a cupcake or watching too much TV. My friends, if God writes commands on your heart to refrain from such things for a season or permanently, do so! IF this has occurred and such a thing has become a sin “to him” (Jas 4:17 – or “to you”) don’t do it! But make it clear in your own heart with God first, and don’t dare teach others such things are blanket sins all must avoid! Many add bad habits of *“You wasted food”, “I’m wasting water (aka “I took too long in the shower”)*, and *“you wasted electricity and left the lights on.”* These things can indeed drain our **resources** (money, time, abilities or focus), and I certainly cannot stand wasting such things in my own house, but are these things faithless and lawless violations of commands of God written upon our hearts? Scriptures speak of things lawful but “not beneficial” or “helpful”, or do not “edify” (1 Cor 6:12, 10:23). Paul even referred to being married and pleasing a spouse as a **distraction** (1 Cor 7:33-35). Neither marriage nor pleasing your spouse is a sin, but it can certainly cause distraction in your service to the Lord, as resources are poured into domestic affairs in the home. These can even be good things in themselves for the spouse and family, but can of course hinder other work for God’s kingdom. We cannot be everywhere and do everything. **Weights** (Heb 12:1), can be things that slow down our walk/run or waste time. Hebrews exhorts us to lay them aside, as well as sin. Whereas sin entangles and halts completely a person’s walk with Christ, a weight, by definition in this verse, is a mass, hindrance, or burden. You can still walk the narrow path or run the race set before you, but with extra baggage you aren’t walking or running as fast as you could be. None of these things are sin in and of themselves.

Often after a situation, whether at home with our kids, at school or work with a colleague, a conversation with a friend or relative, or sharing the gospel or spiritual truths with a stranger, the Spirit will offer us correction or instruction. We heed what the Spirit tells us, and it results in growth. Just like we as parents may correct a child walking into a street without looking, or reading a book while descending stairs, our heavenly Father (and Older Brother – Rom 8:29), advise us in areas we can improve. Just as Christ grew in wisdom and in favor with God, and He learned obedience from the things He suffered (Luke 2:52, Heb 5:8), so do we. Growing in wisdom and favor with God, and learning obedience are obviously not sin if Christ did them, and it doesn’t mean He or we have some “substance” of foolishness in us, are unfavorable in God’s eyes, or are disobedient. The very fact that we endure chastening (just as Christ did), is partial evidence of us being legitimate sons (Heb 12:5-8). People today think of chastening as *“bad child, you get a spanking for what you’ve done”* when in reality, it’s definition in Greek and Hebrew include concepts of tutorage, education or training, disciplinary correction, nurture, warning/instruction, correction, discipline, doctrine, rebuke. Whereas rebuke and disciplinary correction could be applied to sin (and at times are in scripture), these concepts are not the primary point in mind of the author of Hebrews in context.

Again, growth in patience and wisdom helps us control anger at an injustice wisely. We may talk too much or other times say too little when more could be said. Sometimes weights or burdens can affect others. If in my excitement, I share a blessing with a brother or sister, and didn’t give them time to share about their struggles I didn’t even know about, the Spirit will offer me correction afterwards. I could attempt to avoid strife or contention so much, that I don’t preach with enough conviction as I could to effectively reach a person; the opposite could also happen. Imagine if every time a kid came up to talk to you and other adults, you immediately stopped all conversation mid sentence to satisfy the demands of the kid. Though sometimes this could be necessary (injury, danger, etc.), if consistently unnecessary, it could result in a spoiled child and frustrated adults, killing what may have been an edifying conversation. Rather than unlawful, sin, or evil, these things are not beneficial or edifying, or are “less than ideal.”

Often there is a “good” thing that could be “better.” Many view scripture in a western mindset and say “*I could improve here or learn there, oh I must be sinning, and I’m so sinful*”; they fail to understand how God works in the new covenant. Christ spoke of the Spirit convicting the **world of sin** because they **do not believe** in Him, and of **righteousness** because He went to His Father, taking what is His and His Father’s, declaring it to us (John 16:8-15). Christ, as the last Adam became a life-giving spirit (1 Cor 15:45), being given all authority on heaven and earth (Matt 28:18), seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb 1:3), fulfills His word from John 14:21-23 when He and His Father make their home with the one who keeps Christ’s commandments. Rather than a list of rules written in stone/scroll, this new covenant results in God and Christ putting/writing laws into our minds and hearts. We have the father-son relationship with the Father-Son as they desire. What good parent wouldn’t prefer a **relationship** with kids versus giving their kids a list of “do’s” and “don’ts” to follow at a distance? Constant conversation with our heavenly Father and His Son through the Spirit, to guide us in everything in life; how awesome! The lessons and instruction we receive are **true sanctification**, as we are made more holy and set apart further for His service. This is conviction of righteousness, which is **not** sin, but part of our growth, and we produce even more love, wisdom, peace, patience, and other fruit of the Spirit, in addition to what we are instructed to add to our faith in 2 Peter 1:5-7.

When people see a need for more self-control and patience and other growth in the fruit of the Spirit as sinful in and of itself, **their** definition of sin is so broad, it truly is impossible in their minds to “*sin no more*.” If eating bison is sinful because I could have eaten filet mignon, and filet mignon is sinful because I could’ve had a New York strip steak, which is sinful because I could’ve had lunchmeat, which is sinful because I could’ve eaten a salad, but that “nice” salad was sin because I could’ve had just bread and water, or I used too much salt or butter, then we’ve made a mockery of sin; it’s the same with spiritual growth. Many assume anything that feels good (emptying my bladder?) is sin, but God’s kingdom is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17).

Regarding bad habits, many questions come up about smoking, profanity, and speeding (and other violations of laws). Most know such things are wrong or sin but make excuses for them, whilst others add so many ridiculous examples (like saying “ouch”) or details making them impossible to avoid (like the speedometer going ½ mile an hour above the speed limit). Scriptures condemn vulgar language but don’t provide a list. Many using profanity apologize around certain people, avoid using it around children, refrain from using it in an interview, on a resume, or in a speech at a high visibility event, and some never use it when talking to their mother or father. With modifications, similar things could be said about smoking. People usually reveal through such inconsistencies the fact that they personally know both to be wrong, but don’t consider God (who sees all) as important as these other people, places, or events. **It is sin to them**, but sin is also “*no big deal*” to them because in their minds, “*everyone sins*.” Others know it is wrong, want to please God and cease swearing or smoking, but lack diligence in self control over their own mouths, as old habits are hard to break. If this is you, keep fighting it! Christ can deliver you from **any** and **every** sin!

For speeding and other violations of the “law of the land” (an oft-repeated phrase based on Romans 13:5-7), it is vital to remember Paul’s focus. Verse 5 reveals his purpose as two-fold: “*because of wrath*” and “*for conscience’ sake*.” The wrath portion teaches to avoid evil works (verses 3-4), and conscience portion teaches to be mindful of honor and customs (verse 7). Obviously avoid evil, but regarding conscience, be very sensitive to this. He could mean conscience “*not your own but that of the other*” as he did with eating meats sacrificed to idols (1 Cor 10:29), or he could mean keeping our own conscience clear before God and men, desiring to live honorably (Acts 24:16, Heb 13:18). Either way, if you know of a law or custom, and it does not violate God or Christ’s commands or your own conscience, obey its **intent** if you **understand** the intent, and obey the **letter** of the law if you **don’t understand** the **intent**. It was difficult for me to find an exact count of federal laws in the U.S., but most estimates seem to range in the several hundreds of thousands, higher estimates could be closer to 1 million, and this is *just* federal laws! Could you imagine if God held you accountable to know all of these, plus state, county, and city laws in order to get to heaven? We can lump them all into “*constant sin*” blasphemously declaring ourselves “*saved sinners*”, or we can view sin for its scriptural definition as God views it: when one knows morally the right thing to do (or not do) and unfaithfully violates it. Submit yourselves to ordinances of man for the Lord’s sake to **put to silence the ignorance of foolish men**, honoring all, while fearing God, loving the brotherhood, and honoring the king (1 Pet 2:13-17).

Finally, part of our growth could be gifts. Some people actually mistakenly believe lack of a specific gift is sinful. A whole article could be written on gifts, but whether wisdom, knowledge, faith, healings, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, different kinds or interpretation of tongues, helps, administrations, teaching, leading, exhorting, giving, mercy, it’s important to understand “*one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills*” (1 Cor 12:11, also Rom 12:6-8, 1 Cor 12:4-30).

“Corporate sin.” I’ve heard this unbiblical term from a few people, usually pastors, some religious Pharisee types, and even an occasional non-Christian philosopher. The closest thing in the bible I can find even close to such a concept are when Daniel confessed his sin *“and the sin of my people Israel”* (Dan 9:20), or Josiah’s response to Hilkiah finding the book of the law in 2 Kings 22:11-20, before Josiah enacted reforms as king. It is fine to lament the sins of family or nation and the consequences or iniquity we bear for them (Lam 5:7-9). Bearing iniquity here, by the way, does not always mean one has committed sin (though it can), but bore the consequences of sin, just as Christ did *“who Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree”* (1 Pet 2:24). But scripture does not teach any term of “corporate sin” nor imply we are guilty of sin as individuals merely for something a relative or nation does, even if we share in some consequences. In Ezekiel chapter 18, God really hammers this point home starting with the proverb He hates. If you are in a position to make major reforms on a community like Josiah or Daniel, prayerfully and faithfully do so! But don’t lump everyone into constant individual sin because a larger community is at fault for something. The community may bear consequences and God will help leaders narrow down where sin comes from, but the individual dies for his own sin in the end (see Israel’s defeat at Ai for Achan’s sin in Joshua 7:10-26).

A street preacher once tried to condemn me for serving in the military after I agreed with him that all of our nation’s wars were not just. He claimed this meant I was sinning by being in a military of unjust wars. Did John the Baptist, Christ, and later Peter ever accuse centurions or soldiers of such “corporate” injustice or sin? No. They applauded their faith, warned against certain sinful behaviors, and promoted fear of God and working righteousness (Mt 8:5-13, Lk 3:14, Acts 10:1-2, 34-45). So what about certain professions that could possibly contribute to sin or increase sinfulness in a land or in the world? Some suggest working for the government or simply paying taxes to our nation makes us guilty of sin; if they insist upon this, they also accuse Christ of encouraging sin. Did he not promote giving unto Caesar what is Caesar’s, and also condone paying the temple tax (Mt 17:24-27, 22:15-22, Mk 12:41-44)? Do we believe those in charge of the temple and of the Roman government in His day always used money justly and righteously? If God reckons sin in this manner, then even giving to the poor would be sinful if the poor use what they are given for evil. God would be accusing even Himself of sin if this were true, because the very breath He gives all humans is too often used for wickedness. Working in a beer factory or bottling company, as a candy-maker, baker, or television repair person in no way encourages drunkenness, gluttony, or idolatry. Though I might not feel comfortable bottling beer because I do not drink alcohol, it would be wrong for me to accuse brethren of “sin” if they do either, even if I throw the term “corporate” in front of it.

“Unintentional, Unconscious, Ignorance/Forgetfulness, Inherited Sin” I won’t go too deep on this here, as God has led me to write an entire article on this topic. Most preaching “unconscious” or “unintentional” or “sins of ignorance” have an incorrect definition of sin, viewing what is mentioned in categories above as “types” of sins (Shortcomings/weaknesses, Thoughts, Emotions, Temptations; one offended, Growth, instruction, correction; bad habits; conviction of good to better, corporate, etc.). Many fail to understand New Testament epistles were written to a group of followers in a specific city, and contain exhortations to share with all to encourage faithfulness and growth. Every sentence is inspired by God, and Paul wanted us to know the things he wrote are commandments of Lord (1 Cor 14:37), but it doesn’t mean you are sinning if you haven’t read his second epistle to a certain city or group, or don’t understand what a particular sentence means. Some things he even spoke *“not by commandment”* (2 Cor 8:8). One is not sinning merely because they recognize *“I can do better at this particular verse.”* Paul was not adding 13 epistles of precise letter-of-the-law condemnatory requirements, but rather exhortations of the law of Christ in accordance with intent of the Spirit of God. As noted the section above, our sanctification and growth continue. It is a lifelong process. We’ve heard so many say *“If you no longer sin, then how are you being sanctified?”* as many pastors teach sanctification is *“constantly being separated from sin in us as we submit our bodies and minds to the Lord”* all to imply we are constantly sinning so sanctification can continue. This is hogwash. Whereas initially sanctification is separation from sin, it continues as further growth and dedication to service of the Lord; continuously set apart more, and **in more areas**, not from continuous sin. The tabernacle was sanctified (Ex 29:44), Christ sanctified Himself (Jn 17:19), and food is sanctified (1 Tim 4:5), do we accuse them of sin? No!

If one willfully forgets (2 Pet 3:5), rejects knowledge (Hosea 4:6), or an old covenant Israelite did something commanded not to be done by the law even without knowing it, it could possibly be reckoned as sin (Lev 5:17, Heb 9:7). Yet these facts do not make all forgetfulness or lack of knowledge a sin. In the law and in the Hebrew language, the term *shagag* or *sh’gagah* implies inadvertent error or ignorance or a “double burden” which some translations interpret “unintentional sin” (Lev 4:2, 13, 22, 27, 5:15, Num 15:22, 24, 28-29, Eze 45:20). This concept fell under roughly 613 commandments to the nation of Israel; it is not defined under the new covenant anywhere as “sin” even if certain things we do can create a “double burden” for ourselves or others. Prior to the law, God did hold people accountable for displeasing Him by violating known customs (Gen 38:8-10). We may think one’s intent or action pure and innocent, but God may still be angry with them for doing something He said should not be done (see Uzza in 2 Samuel 6:6-9, 1 Chronicles 13:9-12). We must remember God looks not at outward appearance but at the

heart (1 Sam 16:7). He and His Son will judge righteously. People can sin in ignorance like the men of Israel ignorant of murdering the Messiah (Acts 3:17), or Paul's self-proclaimed blasphemous insolence in ignorant unbelief (1 Tim 1:13), and before we walked with Christ, we certainly had plenty of lusts or sins in our former ignorance (1 Pet 1:14), but not all ignorance is sin.

As far as "Inherited Sin" or "Original Sin" doctrines or teachings go, God has led me to write multiple works on the subject. All I will say here is not a single verse in the bible teaches all human babies are born with a sinful nature or condition (as if it were some genetic disease or defect) regardless of how often people twist Psalm 51:5, 58:3, Romans 5:12, Ephesians 2:3 and other scriptures. A thorough examination of these in context along with other scriptures will help one with ears to hear (Gen 6:7, 12, Ex 4:11, Job 31:15, Ps 33:15, 100:3, 139:13-14, Ecc 12:7, Isa 42:5, 57:16, Jer 38:16, Zech 12:1, Jas 3:9). Christ came in the flesh to be made in every way like us (Heb 2:14-18, 1 John 4:1-3). Paul says the "likeness of sinful flesh" in Romans 8:3 because Christ never sinned while in the flesh, whereas we have; not because Christ had a different flesh from birth. If we have to struggle to overcome some "inherited sin" we all have but Christ never had, this means He wasn't made in every way like His brethren, and we have it much harder from birth than He. This false view is why many claim they cannot overcome, using the excuse "*well Christ didn't have inherited sin like us*" as if they are exalting Him; in reality, they are only lowering all of mankind (made in the image of God), twisting scripture, and denying Christ coming in the flesh (the flesh like us).

Past sins, Pride, Works, no victory. It is common for many to accuse us of pride or arrogance, as if we boast in our ability to overcome sin. "*You sound prideful*", "*It is hubris or arrogant to believe you don't sin*", "*you think you've arrived*", or the very common "*so you don't need God and Christ anymore, huh?*" Whereas there may be some who agree with our scriptural views and intellectually assent to sound doctrine but are prideful and arrogant, it is error to assume all who believe in freedom from sin are prideful. It is also complete error to assume the above quotes we often hear. Our duty is to obey all we are commanded to do as faithful servants, and when we have done all those things we are commanded, we will say "*we are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do*" (Luke 17:10). It is not boasting, but doing what God expects of all people, even if there are few who do it (Matt 7:13-14). If it is prideful to believe one can walk even a day without sinning, then we'd again have to accuse Christ of sinning (John 8:46). "*He's the exception*" they say "*you cannot do it.*" We are not above our teacher, but He'd be a pretty poor teacher if we couldn't be like Him as He perfectly trains us (Luke 6:40). If love is not perfected among us, what then would it mean "*as He is, so are we in this world*" (1 John 4:17)? The faithless and false teachers much prefer the unscriptural phrase "*as He is we try to be but never will be, because we constantly fail.*" If I teach my daughter to properly put her bowl into the dishwasher, and she no longer needs my help in that task, but needs it in others, it doesn't mean she never needed my help or no longer needs it. I wouldn't be sad or think her arrogant. If we are obedient, God gets the credit for teaching us, and we still need His help with many new lessons.

Just as Paul examined his former conduct and life and claimed Christ came to save "*sinners, of whom I am chief*" (1 Tim 1:15), we can view ourselves in the same manner for our past sins. As an atheist teenager, I personally used to attempt to convince people to abandon belief in God. I was a few of those things listed in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Paul mentions "*and such were some of you*" (11), and was even more of those mentioned in Romans 1:29-31, as I "*approved of those who practice them*" (32). Christ indeed died for the ungodly sinners (Rom 5:6-8), of whom I, like Paul, am chief. I could say in view of my entire life, my current obedience now after repentance pales in comparison with my former sinful life. But God has cleansed me from my old or past sins (Rom 3:25, 2 Peter 1:9), and I will not make Christ to be a minister of sin by presently committing sin; just as Paul said "*if we, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not*" (Gal 2:17)! In addition to being accused of not needing God's help (which the section on growth answers), many accuse us by saying "*you're saying you no longer need God's forgiveness.*" If after forgiving us, God were to once again remember our sins or make us accountable for them as the New and Old Testament's teach because we turn back to sin or fail to forgive others, we would absolutely need His forgiveness (Jer 14:10, Eze 21:23-24, Matt 6:14-15, 18:21-35). If I were to arrogantly boast "*I no longer need God's forgiveness*" or if God just arbitrarily removed forgiveness for my past sins, I would stand condemned. Even in eternity, we will need God's forgiveness for our past sins, but to claim we now must continue sinning today so we have continued forgiveness for current sins is absolute blasphemy and nonsense. The sad irony is many of those who accuse us of such things are among those who believe in Satan's lies of permanent salvation while continuously sinning. It is they who seem to believe they are kept permanently in God's kingdom regardless of their conduct or "forgiveness".

Many focus on their own experience or others they've known who fail to achieve victory when it comes to ceasing from sin. "*I/he/she/they failed and sinned, so it must not be possible*" they say. Their faith is based on experience, and they love to find examples of David, an Old Testament patriarch, or a New Testament disciple or apostle who sinned, to bolster their excuses. They refuse to believe anyone **has walked** in obedience, and deny anyone **can**

even with Christ and God's Spirit in them. Even for Noah, Job, David, and others whom scriptures speak of as righteous, blameless, perfect, and not sinning for a time, scoffers love to say "*ah, but see, they sinned here or there at some point.*" Even if true (as it is for David), this is not constant unavoidable sin, but **a sin or a season** of sin. It does not mean one today cannot cease from sin, especially with God and Christ in us. One man boasted "we all sin" and when countered with scripture he exclaimed "*I counted and yesterday I sinned 26 times*" as if this were proof "we all sin" and cannot cease. Some see the experiences of false teachers today who do many works "*in the name of Jesus*" but still sin, or others who claim to be without sin because they have certain doctrines correct or exalt their own works, or boast in Old Covenant laws they keep. Works of the Old Covenant law, or good charitable deeds today do not save us or free us from sin, but true repentance and true faith in Christ do as we practice righteousness (1 John 2:29). Yet as Jesus said, we do the **work** of God by believing in Him whom God sent (John 6:29), and as James emphasized, our faith is not dead by being faith without works (Jas 2:14, 20) or faith alone as many boast (Jas 2:24), because we walk in the good works God prepares for us (Eph 2:10, Titus 2:14). We could say faith and works are two sides of the same coin, and both are the result of a loving obedient heart, grateful for what God and Christ **have done for us**, and what **their Spirit** in us **continues** to empower us to do. To claim that complete repentance and obedience to the gospel and Christ's commands is "*preaching works salvation*" as false teachers accuse us of is absolutely ludicrous. Intellectual belief in God and Christ with occasional good works while still committing sin is not the gospel, nor is it any "good news" at all.

Finally, some mockingly say "*oh so you've arrived huh? Then why are you still here on earth?*" as if we have no purpose on the planet because we walk free from sin. Again, looking at Christ, He had a **major** purpose and never sinned. Ours is not to die as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world (1 Jn 2:2), but there is plenty of preaching and correcting to those in opposition unto repentance, instructing in righteousness, along with convincing, rebuking, exhorting, teaching, and many good works to do (2 Tim 2:25, 3:16, 4:2). We who maintain our loving faithful obedience to Christ in this life to the end enter the final Promised Land – heaven. Joshua commanded the tribes of Israel who settled East of the Jordan River "*you shall pass before your brethren armed, all your mighty men of valor, and help them, until the LORD has given your brethren rest, as He gave you, and they also have taken possession of the land which the LORD your God is giving them*" (Joshua 1:14-15). Christ has taken our **burden**; we have taken His **yoke** upon us and He gives us **rest** (Matt 11:28-30). As great as this rest is from our old wicked works of the flesh (Gal 5:19, Eph 4:19, Col 1:21), there yet remains a rest for the people of God, and we exhort one another and continue diligently to enter our final rest (Heb 4:1-3, 9-10). **If** one of us should sin at some point in the future, we must repent, confess, and be cleansed again. But the beginning, the very **foundation** of faith toward God is **faith** and **repentance from dead works, departing from iniquity**, in **Christ Jesus**, (1 Cor 3:11, Heb 6:1, 2 Tim 2:19). All else builds on this foundation, which the faithless do not even have right. We who do are thankful for what He's done in us, and it is not prideful to say so. It's not "*look what I did or we do*", it's "*look how God sent His Son, people, scriptures, and His Spirit to convict us of our sins, lead us to godly sorrow granting us repentance, and empower us to obey His commands.*" We chose to participate fully in this process as a an effort of perfect love, beginning, continuing, and ending with God and Christ, **which requires our free choice**, for which the ultimate credit goes to God and Christ, for any achievements and crowns we receive in the end (Rev 4:10)

Many of the excuses I've shared may seem ridiculous, but I kid you not, we've heard them from people attempting to justify constant and unavoidable sin in the life of a child of God. So where do you stand today? In the end, imagine how many people refused to believe that Jesus never sinned...we are not even claiming this for ourselves. We are simply claiming as a child of God, by the example of His Son, and their Spirit in us, we do not sin, as Scripture plainly teaches. Though like Paul, and Christ before the third day (Luke 13:32), we are not already perfected with glorified bodies nor fully finished with this life, but we **press on** toward the prize of the **upward** or heavenly call (Phil 3:11-14). We go far beyond what is sin and what is not sin, to constantly grow **more** in righteousness, do **more** for the Kingdom (and do it **more effectively**), and grow in **grace** and **knowledge** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18), as we partake in His sufferings (1 Pet 4:13), all for His and God's glory.

ⁱ Strong, James. *Strong's Complete Word Study Concordance: Expanded Edition*. Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2004. 1813, 1979, 2114, 2136. (Greek and Hebrew definitions of Repentance, Faith, Believe, and Faithful)

ⁱⁱ Strong, James. *Strong's Complete Word Study Concordance: Expanded Edition*. Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2004. 1987, 1999-2000, 2163, 1854, 2019-2020. (Greek and Hebrew definitions of Perfect and Sin)

ⁱⁱⁱ Strong, James. *Strong's Complete Word Study Concordance: Expanded Edition*. Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2004. 2036. (Greek and Hebrew definitions of Weak and Weakness)