

Why Do We Sin?

[Psalm 51:5](#)

Salvation begins the moment we receive, by faith, God's offer of forgiveness through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus [Ephesians 2:8–9](#); [John 1:12](#).

Jesus called it being "born again" [John 3:3](#). In repenting and giving up our old life, we receive the new life Jesus purchased for us with His blood [2 Corinthians 5:17](#), [21](#).

We are washed clean, and God chooses to remember our sins no more [Psalm 103:12](#).

But we soon notice that our propensity to sin is still part of us. How can that be, since we are [new creatures](#) in Christ? We still sin because we, though forgiven, are still fallen human beings. [1 John 1:8-2:11](#)

Upon surrendering our lives to the lordship of Jesus, we became God's sons and daughters [Ephesians 1:5](#); [Romans 8:15](#).

But just as children sometimes disobey their parents as they grow, God's children sometimes disobey Him. We rebel, get angry, or doubt for a while; the difference is, we can no longer live lifestyles of sin because our nature has changed [2 Corinthians 5:17](#); [1 John 3:4–10](#).

If we are honest with ourselves, we know we still sin. [Proverbs 20:9](#)

Sin can be defined as "any thought, action, or attitude that falls short of God's holiness" [Romans 3:23](#). Sin has many layers. There are specific actions or thoughts which are sinful. Murder, adultery, and theft are sins.

Sin goes deeper than that. We commit sins because we are sinners. Since Adam first sinned in the Garden of Eden every person born has a sin nature from him [Psalm 51:5](#); [Romans 3:23](#); [5:12](#)).

When Jesus died on the cross, He took upon Himself all the sin of the world [2 Corinthians 5:21](#); [1 John 2:2](#)).

By taking the punishment for our sin, He cancelled the debt that each of us owes God also reversed the curse of our old natures, which keeps us enslaved to sinful passions and desires [Colossians 2:14](#). [Galatians 3:10](#), [13](#).

What does it mean to be free from sin?

To be free from sin means that those who have made Jesus the Lord of their lives are no longer enslaved by sin. We have the power, through the Holy Spirit, to live victoriously over sin [1 Corinthians 15:56–67](#); [Romans 8:37](#).

In [Psalm 51:12](#), David pleads with God, "[Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.](#)" It is interesting to notice that he asks God for a return of the joy of his salvation.

[Joy](#) is key in our victory over sin. It is also important that we understand that God sustains us "with a willing spirit." God takes joy in saving us, and we should take joy in being saved.

God has saved us willingly, to display His grace, love, and strength. Our salvation does not depend on how much or how little we sin, how much or how little we evangelize or repent or do good works, how loving or unloving we are, or anything else about us. Our salvation is entirely a product of God's grace, love, and purpose ([Ephesians 2:8–9](#)). This is important to understand, because (ironically) believing that we are responsible to keep the law leads inevitably to the inability to stop sinning.

Paul explains this in [Romans 7:7–10](#). When we understand a law, like “do not covet,” our sin nature inevitably rebels against that law, and we covet. This is the plight of man—it is simply how we are. The law aggravates our sin nature. John Bunyan illustrates this truth in [The Pilgrim's Progress](#). In the Interpreter's House, Christian sees a very dusty room that had never been swept. First, a man with a broom tries to clean the floor, but the broom's only effect is to raise choking clouds of dust. The more he sweeps, the more the dust is stirred up; this is a picture of the law, Bunyan says, which cannot clean a sinful heart but only stirs up the sin. However, Christian watches as the broom is set aside and a young girl sprinkles the whole room with water. After that, the room is quickly cleaned; this is a picture of the gospel of grace and its ability to purify the heart. The grace of God can do what the law could never do: cleanse us from sin.

So, the way to stop sinning is *not* to add more rules. God knew this. In fact, He gave us the law so that we would be aware of our sin and turn to Him ([Romans 3:19-20](#); [Galatians 3:23-26](#)). The law is good. It is a reflection of God's nature and His perfection. But it was not given to us for our salvation. Christ fulfills the law for us ([Matthew 5:17](#)).

When we disagree with God and hang onto the idea that we must fulfill the law, we lose our joy in salvation and set ourselves up for failure. We labor under a terrible burden. We feel pressured to do something to secure salvation, but, at the same time, our sin nature renders us unable to obey the law. The more we focus on the law, the more our sin nature rebels. The more our sin nature rebels, the more frightened we become that we are not saved. The more frightened and joyless we become, the more tempting sin's promise of happiness is.

The only way to break the cycle and stop sinning is to accept the fact that we cannot stop sinning. This may seem contradictory, but if a person does not stop trying to save himself, he will never rest in the knowledge that God has saved him. The joy of salvation comes from accepting the fact that God's grace covers us, that He will change us and conform us to the image of Christ, and that it is His work, not ours ([Romans 8:29](#); [Philippians 1:6](#); [Philippians 2:13](#); [Hebrews 13:20-21](#)). Once this reality is truly grasped, sin loses its power. We no longer feel the impulse to turn to sin as a means of temporary relief from anxiety, because the anxiety and pressure has been relieved once for all by Christ ([Hebrews 10:10, 14](#)). Then, the good works we accomplish in faith are done because of love and joy rather than out of fear or duty.

“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain” ([1 Corinthians 15:56-58, ESV](#)).

[Something Needs to Change: A Call to Make Your Life Count in a World of Urgent Need by David Platt](#)