

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).¹ 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 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're 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 isn't a cruel monster or mad scientist who's 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 know for a fact we'll never sin again. We do not claim to "no longer need Christ or forgiveness" (as some accuse), nor claim we can do it on our own or have done it on our own without God. We don't use worldly or false religious definitions of "perfect" or "sin" or other terms above, nor claim to be without mistakes, physical accidents (like knocking something over or stubbing toes), or odd habits (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 say we've "arrived" as if we have all expertise in our realm, or as if we've no need to be on 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 nor impeccable memory. We don't claim to not need the Church/body of Christ. We don't say we're saved merely by our repentance apart from God and Jesus' mercy, nor claim we're saved by works (neither Mosaic law nor good deed). We don't claim to have every spiritual gift, nor state we need no growth in spiritual fruit. 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 don't say we no longer have physical ailments, illnesses, or injuries. We don't claim the Way to be super easy. Sometimes folks 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.

¹ Note: Although sin is possible for any human being, even Christians until we die, and many professing Christians have sinned since conversion, the moment a Christian chooses to be led by the flesh over the Spirit (Rom 8:13-14), committing sin instead of obedience to Christ, such a person is then presently a child "of the devil" and "not of God" (1 John 3:8, 10), and a slave to the sin they've obeyed (John 8:34, Rom 6:16), thus forfeiting their current salvation before God, and future place in the Kingdom of God, unless they confess, repent, and forsake the sin (Prov 28:13, 1 John 1:9, 2:1).

Difficulties people have. At this point, you are 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? Many say ‘yes’ because their faith in sin, self, or their flesh is much stronger than any faith in Jesus 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 Jesus? Or have you made up your mind no one could cease from sin even with his help, so they do not exist even if they stood before you?

If such sayings were true, it would mean Christ’s power and influence only free us from eternal consequences of sin, rather than its power in this life; it would mean we believe Jesus saves us in a “*sinful state we just cannot break free from*”, promising 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 sins definition, but many apply it to anything they choose (or are told) rather than how scripture and God’s Spirit apply it. If I miss throwing trash in a can, I’ve “missed the mark” but is it sin to God? If I fail to notice arrival timing of cars at a 4-way stop sign, is it sin? Did God, Jesus, any apostle or prophet ever define sin so broadly? God can write any details for specific commands on hearts if He wishes, but for **us** to make everything sin, so broadly defined to make it unavoidable, only promotes falsehood. A man struggled weekly, wondering if freedom from all sin was possible, and during a bad week 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, these easily fall short of God’s glory. Are they sin? If I make a typo mistake, lack knowledge for the best results at work, score below 100% on a test, or due to lack of understanding or forgetfulness make a decision on something when God is silent, is any of this sin? Jesus **asked** God to **glorify Him** with God **with the glory He had** before the world was (John 17:5); was it sinful of Jesus to not have the glory yet? No!

Those justifying sin often use ‘weaknesses’ interchangeably. 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 recall even Jesus’ 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).

‘Shortcoming’ isn’t in scripture. We have physical limitations or injuries; we may say “*I am not the best cook*”, “*I’m terrible at math*”, “*I’m not a good basketball player*”, “*I have an injury or get sick sometimes.*” Me too! Are these sins before 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 him before we just apply the term sin to anything, lest we be found accusing Him of sin! Poor memory, forgetfulness, or clumsiness may 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 such things lawlessness to a holy God?

Thoughts, Emotions, Temptations; one offended. Some people’s emotions stir more easily, others are nearly emotionless. “*I’m feel anxious, that’s sin*”, or “*I can’t be free from sin, I get angry at my kids*”, or “*I was tempted with impure thoughts of 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. How did Jesus feel in Gethsemane (Matt 26:35-45, Luke 22:44)? Examine it 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 request

to God, and God's peace (and an angel) came to him. People today fulfill this same example as he, 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" doesn't appear (I doubt he smiled such times). Mark 3:5 clearly states Jesus' anger (at their hearts). If all anger were a sin, Jesus wouldn't 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), doesn't lead to us to be unforgiving (Matt 6:14-15), we do not hold 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 12:15), and it never leads to hate (1 Jn 3:15).

As for our natural attraction to members of the opposite sex – do you feel desires and take them captive or actually look to **(in order to/for the purpose of) lust (set your heart upon/covet)**? One "*drawn away by his own desires and enticed*" is not sinning, but when such desires "conceive", are given "aid" to, or "capture" (Jas 1:14-15). Jesus was "*tempted in all points as we*" (Heb 4:15), so he really had the 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 as one said of such, "*If a bird lands on your head you swat it away - you don't let it build a nest up there.*"

People often disagree and argue, or accuse themselves or others of sin - "*I didn't say 'hi' to one who passed me today*" or "*What you just said/did offended me.*" Pharisee's were also offended by what Jesus 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 will not apologize if I examine myself before God, and neither He nor I find fault, especially if I've shared 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 Jesus of sin for offending people, and are all hopeless.

Growth, instruction, correction; bad habits. A man told me if he ate a chocolate covered nut candy, it could be sin (he wasn't very committed to the idea), saying sin could be "*things not good for me*" or "*bad habits*" like eating a cupcake or watching too much TV. Friend, if God writes commands on your heart to refrain from such things for a season or permanently, do so! If this occurs and something has become sin "to him" (Jas 4:17 – "to you") refrain! But make it clear in your heart with God first, and don't dare teach others it is a blanket sin all must avoid! Many add bad habits of "*You wasted food*", "*I wasted water - aka "I took too long in the shower"*", and "*you wasted electricity and left lights on.*" These drain **resources** (money, time, abilities or focus), and I certainly cannot stand wasting such things in my own house, but are these faithless, lawless violations of God's commands written on our hearts? Scripture speaks of things lawful but "not beneficial" or "helpful", or do not "edify" (1 Cor 6:12, 10:23). Paul even refers to being married and pleasing a spouse as a **distraction** (1 Cor 7:33-35). Neither marriage nor pleasing a spouse is a sin, but it can certainly cause distraction in service to the Lord, as we spend resources on 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 can't be everywhere and do everything. **Weights** (Heb 12:1) slow our walk or race, wasting time. Hebrews exhorts us to lay them aside, as well as sin. Sin entangles or halts completely one's walk with Jesus, but 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. Such things are not sin in and of themselves.

Often after situations at home with kids, at school or work with colleagues, conversations with a friend or relative, or sharing the gospel or spiritual truths with strangers, the Spirit offers correction or instruction. We heed what God tells us, and we grow. As parents correct a child aimlessly walking into a street, or reading a book while on stairs, our heavenly Father, and older brother – Rom 8:29, advise us in areas we can improve. As Jesus grew in wisdom and favor with God, learning obedience from what he suffered (Luke 2:52, Heb 5:8), so do we. This growth is not sin if Jesus did it – neither he nor we have a foolish 'substance' in us, nor are we unfavorable in God's eyes, nor disobedient. The fact we endure chastening as Jesus did is partial evidence of us being legitimate sons (Heb 12:5-8). Many see chastening as "*bad child, you get a spanking for what you've done*" when, its Greek and Hebrew definitions are tutorage, education, training, disciplinary correction, nurture, warning/instruction, correction, discipline, doctrine, rebuke. Rebuke and disciplinary correction could apply to sin (and at times do in scripture), but this is not the primary point of the Hebrew authors context.

Again, growth in patience and wisdom helps us wisely control anger at an injustice. We may talk too much or at times say too little when we could say more. Some weights or burdens can affect others. If in my zeal, I share a blessing with a brother, yet didn't give him time to share of his struggles I didn't even know of, 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 reach one effectively; the opposite could also happen. Imagine if every time a kid came to talk to you and other adults, you immediately stopped all conversation mid-sentence to satisfy the kids' demands. Though sometimes this is necessary (injury, danger, etc.), if often 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 a "good" thing could be "better." Many view scripture in a western mindset and say "*I could improve here or learn there, I must be sinning, I'm so sinful*"; they fail to understand how God works in the new covenant. Jesus 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). Jesus, 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 one who keeps Jesus' commands. Rather than a list of rules written in stone/scroll, this new covenant has God and Jesus putting/writing laws into our minds and hearts. We have the father-son relationship with the Father-Son as they desire. Good parents prefer a **relationship** with kids versus giving kids a list of "do's" and "don'ts" to follow at a distance. Constant conversation with our heavenly Father and His Son by the Spirit, to guide us in everything in life - awesome! The lessons and instruction we receive are **true sanctification**, as we're made more holy, 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 or other growth in fruit of the Spirit as sinful by 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 when I could've had a New York strip steak, which is sinful when I could've had lunchmeat, which is sinful when I could've eaten a nice salad, but the salad was sin when I could've had just bread and water, or I used too much salt or butter - we've made a mockery of both sin and 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, questions come up about smoking, profanity, and speeding (or other law violations). Most know these are wrong or sin but make excuses, while others add so many ridiculous examples (like saying 'ouch') or details making them impossible to avoid (a speedometer going ½ mile an hour above the speed limit). Scriptures condemn vulgar language but provide no 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 parents. With modifications, similar things could be said of smoking. People usually reveal by 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 by ceasing 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 "law of the land" (an oft-repeated phrase based on Romans 13:5-7), it's key to remember Paul's focus. Verse 5 shows his two-fold purpose: "*because of wrath*" and "*for conscience' sake.*" The wrath part 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 doesn't violate God or Jesus' 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's difficult to find an exact count of federal U.S. laws, but most estimates range in the several hundreds of thousands, higher estimates are closer to 1 million, and this is *just* federal! What if God held

you accountable to know all of these, plus state, county, and city laws to be in His kingdom! 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 mistakenly believe lacking 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 hear this unbiblical term from a few: mostly pastors, religious Pharisee types, and an a rare non-Christian philosopher. The closest to such a concept in scripture I can find is Daniel's sin confession "*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 King Josiah enacted reforms. It's fine to lament sins of family or nation and consequences or iniquity we bear for them (Lam 5:7-9). Bearing iniquity doesn't always mean one has committed sin (though it can), but bore consequences of sin, just as Jesus "*who Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree*" (1 Pet 2:24). Scripture uses no 'corporate sin' term nor implies guilt of sin on individuals for what a relative or nation does, even if we share consequences. In Ezekiel 18, God really hammers this point, starting with a 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. A community may bear consequences and God will help leaders narrow down sin's source, 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, Jesus, or later Peter 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 paying taxes to our nation makes us guilty of sin; if they insist upon this, they 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 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're given for evil. God would be accusing even Himself of sin if this were true, as 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” With an article on this topic, I'll not go too deep here. Most preaching 'unconscious' or 'unintentional' or 'sins of ignorance' define sin incorrectly, viewing shortcoming, weakness, thoughts, emotions, temptations, growth, instruction, correction, bad habits, etc. as sin. Many fail to realize New Testament epistles were written to a group of followers in a specific city, with exhortations to share with all to encourage faithfulness and growth. Each sentence inspired by God. Paul said what he wrote are commandments of Lord (1 Cor 14:37), but it doesn't mean you're sinning if you haven't read an epistle yet, or lack understanding of a particular verse. Some he even spoke "*not by commandment*" (2 Cor 8:8). It is not sin to recognize "*I can do better at this particular verse.*" Paul didn't add 13 letters 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 previously, our sanctification and growth continue lifelong. Many ask "*If you don't sin, how are you being sanctified?*" as many pastors teach sanctification is "*constant separation from sin in us as we submit our bodies and minds to God*" - implying constant sin so sanctification can continue. This is hogwash. Initially sanctification is separation from sin, but continues as further growth and dedication to service of God; continuously set apart more, and **in more areas**, not from continuous sin. The tabernacle was sanctified (Ex 29:44), Jesus sanctified himself (Jn 17:19), and food is sanctified (1 Tim 4:5), do they 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 this does not make all forgetfulness or lack of knowledge a sin. In the law and Hebrew language, the term *shagag* or *sh'gagah* implies inadvertent error, 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 is under roughly 613 commandments to Israel as a nation; it is not defined under the new covenant anywhere as "sin" even if an act creates a 'double burden' for ourselves or others. Before the law, God held people accountable for displeasing Him if violating known customs (Gen 38:8-10). We may think an intent or act pure or innocent, but God may still be angry for one doing what He said should not be done (Uzza in 2 Samuel 6:6-9, 1 Chronicles 13:9-12). Remember, God looks at the heart, not outward appearance (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 Jesus, we had plenty of lusts or sins in our former ignorance (1 Pet 1:14), but not all ignorance is sin.

I'm led to write many works against false doctrinal teachings on 'Inherited Sin' or 'Original Sin', but no scripture teaches babies are born with a sinful nature or condition (as if 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). Jesus was 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 Jesus never sinned while in the flesh, whereas we have; not because Jesus had a different flesh from birth. If we have to struggle to overcome some "inherited sin" we all have but Jesus 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 Jesus 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 Jesus coming in the flesh (flesh like us).

Past sins, Pride, Works, no victory. Many 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 common "*so you don't need God and Jesus anymore, huh?*" 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's also total error to assume the above quotes we hear. Our duty is to obey all we are commanded as faithful servants, and when we've done all things commanded, we will say "*we are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do*" (Luke 17:10). We don't boast, but do what God expects of all, even if few do it (Matt 7:13-14). If it's prideful to believe one can walk even a day without sinning, we'd have to accuse Jesus of pride (John 8:46). "*He's the exception*" they say "*you cannot do it.*" We are not above our teacher, but he'd be a 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)? 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 away, and she no longer needs my help in that task, but needs it in others, it doesn't mean she no longer needs me. I wouldn't be sad or think her arrogant. If we obey, God gets credit for teaching us, and we still need His help in many new lessons.

Paul examined his former conduct and life, claiming Jesus came to save "*sinners, of whom I am chief*" (1 Tim 1:15); we can view ourselves in the same way for our past sin. As a teen atheist, I personally tried to convince peers to abandon belief in God. I was a few of what Paul lists in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 "*such were some of you*" (11), and was even more of those listed in Romans 1:29-31, as I "*approved of those who practice them*" (32). Jesus indeed died for ungodly sinners (Rom 5:6-8), of whom I, like Paul, am chief. In view of my entire life, my current obedience after repentance pales in comparison with my former sinful life. But God 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 sinning; 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 (as the growth section answers), many say "*you're saying you no longer need God's forgiveness.*" If after forgiving us, God remembered our sins or made us accountable for them as the New and Old Testament's teach, because we turn back to sin or fail to forgive others, we'd need more forgiveness (Jer 14:10, Eze 21:23-24, Matt

6:14-15, 18:21-35). If I arrogantly boast “*I no longer need God’s forgiveness*” or if God arbitrarily removed forgiveness for my past sins, I’d stand condemned. Even in eternity, we’ll need God’s forgiveness for past sins, but to claim we must continue sinning for continued forgiveness for current sins is absolute blasphemy and nonsense. The sad irony is many who accuse us are among those believing Satan’s lies of permanent salvation in continuous sin. It’s they who really believe they are kept in God’s grace regardless of conduct or “forgiveness”.

Many focus on their own or others’ experiences who fail to have victory 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 Jesus and God’s Spirit in them. Scoffers love to say of Noah, Job, David, and others whom scriptures speak of as righteous, blameless, perfect, and not sinning for a time, “*ah, but see, they sinned here or there at some point.*” Even if true (in David’s case), 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 said “*I counted and yesterday I sinned 26 times*” as if this proved “all sin” and cannot cease. Some see 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, 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 Jesus do as we practice righteousness (1 John 2:29). Yet as he said, we do the **work** of God by believing in Him whom God sent (John 6:29), and as James stressed, our faith is not dead by being without works (Jas 2:14, 20) nor ‘*faith alone*’ as many boast (Jas 2:24), as we walk in good works God prepares for us (Eph 2:10, Titus 2:14). We could say faith and works are two sides of a coin, both the result of a loving obedient heart, grateful for what God and Jesus **have done for us**, and what **their Spirit** in us **continues** to empower us to do. To say repentance and obedience to the gospel and to Jesus is “*preaching works salvation*” as false teachers accuse us, is absolutely ludicrous. Intellectual belief in God and Jesus 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? Why are you still here?*” as if we have no purpose on the planet because we walk free from sin. Jesus, had a **major** purpose and never sinned. Ours isn’t to be an atoning sacrifice for sins of the world (1 Jn 2:2), but we must: preach the kingdom, correct those opposed to repentance, instruct in righteousness, convincing, rebuke, exhort, teach, and do many good works (2 Tim 2:25, 3:16, 4:2). We who maintain loving faithful obedience to Christ in this life to the end enter the final Promised Land – the kingdom of God. Joshua told 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). Jesus took 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** we sin at any 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). The kingdom gospel 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 an effort of perfect love, beginning, continuing, and ending with God and Jesus, **which requires our free choice**, for which the ultimate credit goes to God and Jesus, for any achievements and crowns we receive in the end (Rev 4:10)

The excuses are ridiculous, but I kid you not, we’ve heard them from those trying to justify constant unavoidable sin in the life of a child of God. So where do you stand? Imagine how many didn’t believe Jesus never sinned - we do not even claim this for ourselves – but simply claim as a child of God, by His Son’s example, and their Spirit in us, we sin no more, as scripture plainly teaches. As Paul (and Jesus before the third day - Luke 13:32), we are not **perfected** with glorified bodies nor finished with this life, but we **press on** toward the prize of the **upward** or heavenly call (Phil 3:11-14). We go beyond what is and is not sin, to 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)