

## DO CHRISTIANS STILL SIN?

Everybody sins, don't they? But when Christians sin, it can be a great source of doubt and confusion about the reality of their salvation. Imagine it. You've become a Christian and turned your life over to God. You've received forgiveness for your sins. You've exchanged your old habits for a brand new life in Christ. You don't fully comprehend this reality or know how it's supposed to work, but you're excited about the future. The old is over and gone; behold, the new has come. There's just one question. Why am I still sinning? Does that mean that it didn't take? Do I need to start all over? Will God continue to forgive me ... this time ... again?

If we're honest, all Christians struggle with sin. Frankly, it can be a great concern for everyone. Non-Christians often think it's hypocritical. After all, why can't religious people just practice what they preach? Or if you're a new believer, you may feel particularly defeated. Perhaps you were hoping to be finished wrestling with temptation. You were hoping that becoming a Christian would make all that go away.

But the reality is that while becoming a Christian instantly changes our eternal destiny, it can take some time to change the rest of us. Our future hope is secure, but God is still at work in our lives to transform us. So we live in a state of ongoing transformation until that day comes. We cling with faith to the hope of full restoration; meanwhile, we sort out the tension between the two worlds. The apostle Paul captured the struggle well: "For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing" (Romans 7:18b-19 TNIV).

Does that mean our lives will be hopeless and defeated this side of eternity? Heavens no. The Bible teaches that when someone becomes a Christian, he or she is no longer a slave to sin. In other words, Christians have the freedom and ability to choose *not* to sin. But we still choose poorly sometimes, don't we? Ignoring an inner conviction or the wise counsel of trusted friends, we simply opt for doing things our own way. And as the saying goes, some habits die hard. Perhaps this is why weakness, grace, and perseverance are central themes of the New Testament.

The important thing to remember in this dynamic is that being a Christian was never supposed to be about our ability to be good in the first place. In fact, the main message of Christianity is that it's impossible to be good enough to earn God's favor. That's why our motivation for not sinning shouldn't be grounded in how well we are performing. Instead, we must first recognize God's gracious willingness to overlook our waywardness, even when we know better. Then, our motivation and ability to change comes when we surrender our lives to him and allow his Spirit – in his timing – to work in and through us.

Becoming a Christian has never meant that a person will completely shed the human propensity to sin. This fact has been well established by followers of Christ for thousands of years. It's true that living in relationship with God results in improvements in character and behavior over time. But when Christians fail, it's just a reminder that only God is worthy of our full esteem. Our only righteous act is to cling humbly to the forgiveness God so graciously offers us through Christ.



*Genesis 1*

*Revelation 22*

