

Christian, Are You A Sinner?

What is your identity in regard to sin? How do you see yourself in regard to sin? Are you a sinner? I think most of us, with the exception of just a few, would answer, “Yes, I am a sinner. I identify as a sinner.”

What about the few who might answer otherwise? What if they said, “No I am not a sinner. Since becoming a Christian I have sinned, and I may sin again, but I am not a sinner and I do not identify as a sinner.”

Many of us might be taken aback by such an answer. We might even be tempted to think our brother or sister was being arrogant or self-righteous, or at the very least argumentative in wanting to split hairs over words.

Christians will often call themselves sinners, or say things like “After all, we are all just sinners.” Or, “We’re sinners and we sin many times a day.” Or, “You know the church is a hospital for sinners, not a country club for saints.” Is it biblical to call faithful Christians sinners? Is it biblical to say the church is made up of “sinners”?

It’s good that we want to be humble and acknowledge our human nature, but by saying such things repeatedly, we may be compromising and undermining the very identity that God wants us to have. How we identify ourselves is important to God, and has some important practical benefits for us.

How does the Bible use the word “sinner”?

The Hebrew word for “sinner” is “chatta.” According to the *Theological Wordbook of the O.T* the word “designates a habitual sinner who is subject to punishment because of his or her practices.”¹

The Greek word for sinner is “hamartolos.” The Greek-English Lexicon defines it as, “A person who customarily sins – ‘sinner, outcast.’”²

The Theological Dictionary of the NT states:

The sinner is the man who *does not allow God supreme authority over his life and who withholds from Him total dedication and obedience.*³ (italics added)

The word “sinner” is closely linked in Scripture with the terms “wicked” and “ungodly” and stands in contrast to the righteous:

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of *the wicked*, nor stands in the way of *sinners*, nor sits in the seat of scoffers (Psalm 1:1).

Therefore the *wicked* will not stand in the judgment, Nor *sinners* in the assembly of the righteous. (Psalm 1:5).

For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of *the wicked will perish.* (Psalm 1:6)

If the righteous is repaid on earth, how much more *the wicked and the sinner!* (Proverbs 11:31).

Understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for *the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane...* (1 Timothy 1:9) (all italics added).

In these verses the words “wicked,” “lawless,” “ungodly,” and “sinner” are used interchangeably.

All sinners, without exception, are wicked and ungodly. The scriptures present a contrast between the sinner and the godly, the faithful, the righteous, all those who trust in and serve God.

He keeps the feet of His *godly ones*, But the *wicked ones* are silenced in darkness. (1 Samuel 2:9 NASB).

But know that the Lord has set apart *the godly* for himself; the Lord hears when I call to him. (Psalm 4:3).

O love the LORD, all you *His godly ones*! The LORD preserves the faithful and fully recompenses the *proud doer* (Psalm 31:23 NASB).

The Lord knows how to rescue *the godly* from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment. (2 Peter 2:9).

“Sinners” are those who walk in rebelliousness to God’s will. They are the impious, the ungodly, the profane, the unholy, the wicked, the irreverent, the unfaithful, the lawless, those acting in opposition to God’s demands.

Does the NT contrast a godly person with a sinner?

- Jesus contrasted the actions of his disciples with the actions of sinners:

Luke 6:32-34 “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full.”

- Jesus was criticized for associating with Matthew the tax collector and other sinners:

Matthew 11:19 “The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’” (See Luke 5:30-32; 7:39; and 15:1-2).

- Jesus called the unbelieving Jews who came to arrest him “sinners”:

Matthew 26:45 “Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners (See also Mark 14:41).

- Peter asked, “If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?” (1 Peter 4:18).

- There is a contrast between sinners and those who worship God and do His will.

1 Peter 3:12 (ESV) ¹²For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

1 John 3:22 (ESV) ²²and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

- James said that if a believer wandered from the truth he was a “sinner” and had to be brought back to God through repentance:

James 5:19-20 My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

- Paul equates the ungodly with sinners.

Romans 5:6-8 (ESV) ⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the

ungodly.... ⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Paul uses the past tense - while we **were** still sinners. Paul addressed his letter to saints, not sinners: "To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints" (Romans 1:7).

Are faithful Christians ever called "sinners" in the Scriptures?

There are 28 uses of the word "sinners" and 13 of the word "sinner" in the New Testament Scripture. In every case the word refers to those who were living a sinful life.

- When Paul referred to himself as the chief of sinners, he was referring to his former life of blaspheming Jesus and persecuting Christians (1 Timothy 1:15-16).
- The Christians James called sinners were living an adulterous, impure, and double-minded life (James 4:8).
- The tax collector was a sinner (living a sinful life) who asked God to be merciful to him (Luke 18:13).

That is not to say that the faithful Christian never sins, but the believer who repents and confesses sin is not a sinner from a Biblical perspective.

1 John 1:7-9 (ESV) ⁷But if we **walk in the light**, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and **the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin**. ⁸If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we **confess our sins**, he is faithful and just to **forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness**.

"Sinner" is never used in the sense of one who commits a sin, but rather of one who practices sin or lives under the dominion of sin. A sinner habitually sins.

1 John 3:7-9 (ESV) ⁷Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. ⁸Whoever **makes a practice of sinning** is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹No one born of God **makes a practice of sinning**, for God's seed abides in him, and he **cannot keep on sinning** because he has been born of God.

A Christian can properly say, "I was a sinner, but I have been saved by grace."

So how are faithful Christians identified in the NT?

The righteous, a new creation, the new man, light, **SAINTS**.

Ephesians 1:1 (ESV) ¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, **to the saints** who are in Ephesus, and are **faithful in Christ Jesus**:

Ephesians 5:3-6 (ESV) ³But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, **as is proper among saints**. ⁴Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. ⁵For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), **has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God**. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things **the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience**.

PRACTICAL: At baptism sinners become saints. Do we fully identify with the idea of dying and being raised with Christ?

Acts 2:38 (ESV) ³⁸And Peter said to them, “Repent and **be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for the forgiveness of your sins**, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 22:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶And now why are you waiting? **Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins**, calling on the name of the Lord.’

Colossians 2:12-13 (ESV) ¹²having been **buried with him in baptism**, in which you were also **raised with him** through faith in the powerful working of God, who **raised him from the dead**.

¹³And you, who were **dead in your trespasses** and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God **made alive together with him**, having forgiven us all our trespasses,

Romans 6:1-11 (ESV) ¹What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ²By no means! How can we who **died to sin** still live in it? ³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were **baptized into his death**? ⁴We were **buried therefore with him by baptism into death**, in order that, **just as Christ was raised from the dead** by the glory of the Father, we too might **walk in newness of life**. ⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶We know that **our old self was crucified with him** in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷For one who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸**Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him**. ⁹We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹**So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus**.

CONCLUSION: Jesus’ death alone, without His resurrection, was of no avail. Just as His resurrection was His victory over sin, so is ours. Let us live a resurrected life!

1 Corinthians 15:17 (ESV) ¹⁷And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

Our resurrection in baptism is our victory over sin. We are saints now, not sinners. We are the godly. We are the righteous. We have died to sin. We are crucified with Christ and He now lives in us. Just as He is holy, so we can be holy through His blood. Just as he entered His Holy Father’s presence for all eternity, so will we.

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The church is not made up of sinners, but of righteous people, *made and kept righteous by the pardoning power of the blood of Christ....* They are humbly thankful that they have been made righteous by the power of the gospel of Christ..., thus saving them from being sinners (a people living a life of sin). In fact, if one in the church goes back to being a "sinner" (one dominated by sin) he is to be put away from "among you" if he will not repent and turn back to God (1 Corinthians 5:13).

"Sinners" will sometime do righteous acts, and the "righteous" will sometimes do sinful acts. I am happy and thankful to be counted among the "righteous" (by the grace of God) and no longer counted among "sinners."

<http://www.mightyisthelord.com/articles/2015/05/29/are-faithful-christians-still-sinners> —
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