

## **“Stop Sinning”**

That’s what Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth (1Cor.15:34), though it was preceded with the admonition to *“Become sober-minded as you ought,”* and added that such instructions even being necessary was *“to your (their) shame.”* Given these things, one of two things is possible: 1) Paul was speaking exclusively to Corinthians about the specific sins he previously outlined in the letter, and thus the command doesn’t apply to us; or, 2) we present-day Christians are far too comfortable with OUR sin(s), probably because we’ve been convinced or have convinced ourselves that *“stop sinning”* is a noble notion as a goal, but practically impossible to accomplish. (Pause for a minute or three if you want to think about it before proceeding.)

Some things on which we can ALL think further:

- We don’t “have to” sin, we **choose to sin**, or we **allow temptation to overcome us** rather than *overcoming temptation*, cf. 1Cor.10:12 and Jas.1:2-4,12. We do sin, all-too-often for most of us, and God lovingly and graciously makes provision for our forgiveness we do, 1John 1:7-10. And “yes” there are times when our *“spirit is willing”* but our *“flesh is weak”* (Matt.26:41), but we **can** and **should** do better, including me!
- Do we even **want** to “stop sinning”? Put another way, do we really want to *please God* (Eph.5:10), or are we content with just *pleasing ourselves*? Note Phil.3:18-19 in this connection, *“For many walk, of whom I have often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite* (lit. “belly” referring to ‘desires’), *and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.”* We won’t “stop sinning” as long as we want to *please ourselves* more than we want to *please God*.
- Are we willing to **avoid the people, places, and activities** that make it difficult to “stop sinning”? Put another way, are we willing to change our habits and associations that make *sinning* easy or at least “easier”? Consider what Paul wrote to Roman Christians, *“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts,”* Rom.13:14. We won’t “stop sinning” as long as we continue to make Satan’s job effortless for him by going places, doing things, and associating with people who make sin easy for us.
- Are we **actively working** to “stop sinning”? It’s not just a matter of “not doing” some things with some people. We need positive or pro-active people, places, and pursuits also. It’s the “not, but” principle. For instance, it’s easier to avoid the *“works/deeds of the flesh”* and *crucify “the flesh with its passions and desires”* if we’re actively pursuing the *“fruit of the Spirit,”* cf. Gal.5:16-24. “Not” these, “but” those. Likewise, it’s easier to rid our minds of sinful thoughts and desires if we’re filling them with *true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, (spiritually) attractive, excellent, and praise-worthy* thoughts, cf. Phil.4:8. We won’t “stop sinning” unless we start *living/walking “by the Spirit,”* Gal.5:16.
- Are you **getting better** at “stop sinning”? Progress is important. A baby doesn’t begin to walk and run without a few falls. But with *“practice,” growth and “maturity”* enable our “senses” to not only *“discern good and evil,”* but to do a better job of

*avoiding evil and doing good, Heb.5:14. But to get better, which in this context means making progress toward “stop sinning,” we have to actually want to “stop sinning;” we have to be willing to stop doing things with people who make “stop sinning” harder; we have to start doing things with people who make “stop sinning” easier; and we have to be willing to continuously make progress toward “stop sinning” through a genuine desire and commitment to “do better next time.”*

So, are you willing to commit to “stop sinning,” or content to comfort yourself with excuses and presumed justifications? Think again about what the Holy Spirit through Paul told the Corinthians, “*Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God, I speak this to your shame,*” 1Cor.15:34. What would the Holy Spirit have to say to you and me??? (Philip C. Strong; Viking Drive Church of Christ; 3791 Viking Drive, Bossier City, LA; online at [vikingdrivechurchofchrist.com](http://vikingdrivechurchofchrist.com); email to [mrpcstrong@hotmail.com](mailto:mrpcstrong@hotmail.com))