



The Good News

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“I’ve sinned! Now what?”

By Michael McCleary

What should we do when we find that we have committed sin? The Bible teaches us what to do, but it also teaches us that we must start with our attitude toward sin.

Our attitude: It isn’t godly or righteous to say to ourselves, “Well, I can sin now, and then I can pray for forgiveness afterward and everything will be fine.” If I choose to commit sin with the idea that God will just forgive me afterward, I am trying to take advantage of God’s grace. I’m trying to “loophole” God. I must fight the temptation, and if I fail, there are steps that must be taken. We learn in **Rom. 12:9** that we are to abhor that which is evil, which means that we will be fighting against temptation. In **Gal. 5:13** we learn that we are not to use liberty as an occasion to fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Just because we can pray to God for forgiveness does not mean that we can just do what we want and then ask forgiveness for it.

Sorrow and Repentance: In **II Cor. 7:9-10**, Paul had made the Corinthians ashamed of the sins they had committed, and they sorrowed over it and repented of their sins. Notice they weren’t just sorry and continued in their sins. Their sorrow brought about the determination to change the things they were doing so that they would no longer commit sin. I can tell God that I am sorry I did something, but if I do not have the determination to not commit the sin again, for what am I sorry? Am I sorry that I committed sin, or am I sorry that God doesn’t approve of something that I have every intention of doing again? Godly sorrow works in us to bring about repentance. Repentance means to change. I must show by my

actions that I have repented. John challenges the “brood of vipers” to “bear fruits worthy of repentance” in **Luke 3:7-8**. If I am truly sorry for something, I will no longer do it, and I will do the things that truly show my sorrow and change of heart and mind.

Be baptized (Acts 22:16, Acts 2:38, Mark 16:16, I Pet. 3:21) or **Ask forgiveness:** One of the actions that is required of one who has become a Christian is that, when they sin, they must ask God’s forgiveness. If we believed that the grace of God continually cleanses us from all sin, or that once we are saved we’re always saved, then there would be no need to ask God’s forgiveness, nor would there be a commandment for it. Yet in **I John 1:9** we learn if we confess our sins, God will forgive us, if we ask in sorrow and with repentance. We learn then that, while God does know we sin, we are required to confess it to God.

We must always ask what we must do to be well-pleasing to God. Doing these things when we sin will help us to achieve that goal...but better yet, let’s strive not to sin at all. (**I John 2:1**)