

. . . That I Might Not Sin Against You!

By Daryl Wingerd

True Christians don't want to sin against God. We want to please our Savior and Lord with our righteous conduct. We want to demonstrate our love for Him and our loyalty to Him in this way.



But how do we understand and resist the sinful passions of fallen humanity—our “flesh” as the Bible calls it? How do we even know what pleases God? How are we to know what to faithfully practice, and what to strictly avoid? Should we rely on intuition? Should we permit our gut feelings and instincts to guide us toward righteousness?

The person who wrote Psalm 119 wanted, perhaps more than anything, to avoid sinning against God—and he knew how to do it. After asking the question, “How can a young man keep his way pure?” he answers, “By keeping it according to your word” (Ps. 119:9). Two verses later, he reaffirms his desire as well as the means of achieving his goal when he writes, “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (v. 11).

Now you know how I came up with my title, and what precedes it. Now you know the means God has given you to obey Him: Study to know His will, and do it. After all, as Jesus said, it is not the one who SAYS impressive things about God, or the one who THINKS of himself as a Christian who will enter into the kingdom of heaven, “but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” will enter (Matt. 7:21). “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Matt. 5:6).

So what is God's will for you? What is His written code of conduct? What might you start storing up in your heart that will influence your conduct, sustain you in moments of temptation, and cause you to press on in your pursuit of holiness? How can *you, today*, begin to show that you belong to Christ by your righteous behavior?

Consider a few instructions found in the Bible—expectations from God. If you are one of His true followers, these will not appear to you as chains holding you back from your favorite pleasures. Instead you will see them as the means of your thirsty soul obtaining fresh water. Perhaps you will commit some of these to memory so that you may recall them throughout your day:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35).

“Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good” (Romans 12:9).

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother . . .” (Ephesians 6:1).

“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming” (Colossians 3:5-6).

“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving” (Colossians 4:2).

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality, that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5).

“Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today,’ that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end” (Hebrews 3:12-14).

“Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).

“Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have” (Hebrews 13:5).

“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct” (1 Peter 1:14-15).

“Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul” (1 Peter 2:11).

“The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling” (1 Peter 4:7-8).