

# What If I Sin Again?

*Jim Elliff*



“I felt like a load of guilt just left me,” reported a friend who had just come to Christ in the hospital chapel. He had gone there in confusion and anguish over his wife’s illness, but also because of his wife’s pleas. He didn’t know what to do. For the first time in his life, this strong man was humbled enough to cry out to God. And God met him in that awful, miserable state.

The guilt we feel before God is not merely felt — it is actually there. Thousands of wrong thoughts, words, and actions are wiped off the slate when a person is rescued from what was once sin’s never-ending and impeccably just judgment from God, the one above all whom we have sinned against. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews reminds us that the sins which were on our account are now separated from us through Christ as far as the east is from the west. God says “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” (Hebrews 10:17). By not remembering, the writer does not mean that God loses recall of our sins, but that he will not remember them against us ever again.

## ***But, we have this problem. . . . We sinned again!***

The reality that we find ourselves sinning again after coming to Christ may surprise us. Basking in the great gift of forgiveness, we might conclude at first that such a relief means that we will surely never sin again. Sadly, while we are in our bodies on this earth, that will not be the case.

We are substantially different than before, and we are truly forgiven, but not unable to sin again, nor unwilling to do so when the temptation is stronger than our maturity as a believer. Perfection isn’t promised until later, we learn. The heart is changed, true, but weakness against temptation is a sad and stubborn reality, until we are finally delivered from the power of temptation in the next world following either our own death or Christ’s return.

Look at what John tells us:

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, **we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins**, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:1-2, emphasis mine)

## **That’s Right, you have an advocate!**

I heard this morning from a woman in an awful legal case who found almost unimaginable relief when a lawyer said he would stand with her before the judge to advocate, and that there would be no charge for his services. Jesus is such an advocate for us who have believed in him. And Jesus, differently than any other advocate, is perfectly righteous. He is not only entirely righteous, but he lovingly bore the guilt of our sins on the cross. He died on our behalf, “the just [i.e. righteous] for the unjust [i.e. unrighteous].”

This substitution is called “propitiation” in the verses above, that is, the sacrifice of Christ in our place which appeases God’s righteous wrath which we deserve and brings us peace with Him.

No wonder David the king exclaimed . . .

“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.” (Romans 4:7-8)

## **Conclusion: you are as forgiven as you can be!**

There will not be another cross for Jesus to die upon. What he has done to remove the guilt and punishment of your sin is as complete as it can possibly be. It is sufficient as it stands — as sufficient today as it was the first day you believed.

It is true that you are a changed person and new desires have come into your life by the Spirit he sent to live in you. John said he was writing his letter so that the readers would not sin. Yet he clarified so that we would not forget, “... if anyone *does* sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins ...” Period.

It is like you were eating a meal in a restaurant. You ask for the bill. But the waiter says, “There isn’t going to be any charge.” “Why?” you ask. “A man paid the bill for you.” “But,” you say, “we surely *must* pay our bill.” “You can’t. It’s paid already and my boss won’t allow us to receive money for it a second time.”

That’s what Christ has done for you, and for others who believe in him around the world. Accept it. In fact, rejoice in it. And let his undeserved grace motivate you to turn from that sin and grow as a forgiven person.

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