

Purpose: to encourage you to trust and obey the risen Messiah.
“Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts...”

The Sinner’s Prayer

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What is a Sinner?

I John 3:4 gives a biblical definition of sin: “...sin is the transgression of the law.” Transgression is the crossing of a boundary line. “Crime” is the crossing of a boundary made by human government. “Sin” is the crossing of a boundary made by divine government. Divine boundaries are established by the creator of the universe (whose name is given in Scripture as “Yahweh”). Some actions are both sins and crimes.

We may agree that sin is the transgression of divine law, but it’s much more difficult to agree about what the divine law is. This is a major dispute both inside and outside the Christian church. Since the new covenant (promised in Jeremiah 31:31) awaits complete fulfillment, even Christians can’t fully agree on God’s law. For now, let’s just consider the “Ten Commandments”:

The Ten Commandments

You shall have no other gods before Me.
You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything...
You shall not misuse the name of Yahweh your mighty one...
Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy...
Honor your father and your mother...
You shall not murder.
You shall not commit adultery.
You shall not steal.
You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.



Do you see yourself as responsible for any of these behaviors?

Take Responsibility: All Have Sinned

Romans 3:23: “**For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.**” You have sinned, I have sinned—we all have sinned. That’s not so hard to admit, but the effect of sin is much harder to accept. It’s heavy: “**The wages of sin is death...**” (Romans 6:23a). Did we make God so mad that He has decided to slaughter us all? I don’t think so. Death is not “payback time”—it’s just the final breakdown for creatures that are at war with their own lives. The divine laws are the source and mechanism of all life. They are the foundations of the universe. Because people violate those laws, we’re incompatible with life and are therefore mortal. Our mortality results from the corrosive effect of sin. We can rebel against these facts, or we can accept them. If we accept them we can also take hope in the second half of Romans 6:23: “**but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.**” The “sinner’s prayer” allows a Christian to deal with his individual mortality sooner rather than later.

What is “The Sinner’s Prayer”?

The following sample prayer uses the Hebrew names of the Deity (I prefer to use the original names when I pray). Sinners who are called to Christian repentance might utter something similar: “Yahweh, I am a sinner, and by myself, I cannot live. Messiah by Himself *can* live because He never sinned. Yahshua (Jesus) chose to die in my place so that I could live. I now accept the death of Messiah as my own death, and I accept the life of Messiah as my own life. Thank You for my new life in Yahshua. Amen.” If you have never spoken such a prayer, search your inner feelings to see if you are called to repent. This is the entry point to the Christian faith.

“Go and Sin No More”

Why would Jesus instruct a new Christian to “**sin no more**”, as in John 8:11? Does my very next sin mean that Christ is unable or unwilling to help me any further? If so, this means He is limited in ability or mercy—an idea

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that is not very consistent with Scripture. Consider that every additional sin increases my shame when I finally face reality. Remember that transgression of the life giving law degrades and dissolves my life. Factor in an appreciation of the value of forgiveness. These are the best reasons why Christians wish for their sins to diminish.

For those who want to reduce the sin in their everyday lives, a “maintenance version” of the sinner's prayer can help us join (in a strange way) the only category of people who are 100% free from sin.

Think Categorically

Pause for a moment, and mentally imagine several groups of people. Sample categories might include women, Republicans, professing Christians, Ford owners, etc.

Starting down your list of categories, ask yourself, “Is this a type of people that is completely free from sin? What about this group...or that one?” I submit there is only one category of people who are totally liberated from transgression. People *who are dead* are the only ones who can never possibly sin.

Paul clearly stated this truth in Romans 6:7: “...**anyone who has died has been freed from sin.**” I do not advise anyone to hasten their actual death, but if we can mentally come to terms with that inevitability, unusual benefits can follow.

Sin Avoidance, per Romans 6

“If we have been united with Him in His death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin...In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

People who have spoken the sinner's prayer have already accepted Messiah's death as their own death, and they have accepted Messiah's new life as their own life. Here's a sample “maintenance version” of the sinner's prayer (using the original Hebrew names for the Deity). Your own prayer might be similar:

“Yahweh, thank You for forgiving my sins. Help me to avoid transgression of Your law today, and cause me to recognize my sins. Help me to find that balancing line between living and dying, so I may die to sin but live for Yahshua Messiah. Amen.”

A Practical Method for Victory

My own testimony to you is that it is helpful to recite such a prayer. I testify that it is easier to solicit help from Heaven than it is to struggle against sin on my own. I also testify that I sometimes fail to solicit such help in a timely manner, and I suffer shame, failure, and disappointment as a result.

Ideally, the sinner's prayer should be part of the morning routine upon awakening, and should also be used throughout the waking hours. Covenant with others to pray together if this is helpful. If temptations are recognizable, the wise man would quickly remind himself:

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” Galatians 2:20

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