

What Happens When Believers Sin?

Sin is anything contrary to the character of God. Sin is only secondarily something done against people. We sin against one another when we don't treat each other the way God commanded us to. But all sin is basically and ultimately against God, since He is the source of all morality. So when we sin, it affects our relationship with God.

Grieving the Holy Spirit Paul wrote, *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption* (Ephesians 4:30). Isaiah also wrote, *But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; Therefore, He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them* (Isaiah 63:10). Our sin is not just a disappointment to God, it causes Him grief. These verses prove the personality of the Holy Spirit, since He can be grieved, but it also shows how our sin pains God emotionally. So our sin not only hurts us, it hurts God in the sense that it brings Him emotional pain.

Quenching the Holy Spirit In 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22, Paul said *Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.* Paul gave us three qualifying or defining statements explaining what quenching the Spirit means. Before we list them, notice once again that the work of the Holy Spirit is quenchable. When we read of the work of God the Father, it is like a done deal. He says things like, *From ancient times I planned it. Now I have brought it to pass* (2 Kings 19:25). You and I can't hurt the works of God the Father. We can only hurt ourselves. But with the Holy Spirit, it's different. It's like He makes God's path known and available, but it's up to us to choose that path and stay on it. Now back to 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22, where Paul listed 3 ways the work of the Spirit is quenched. The first way is to despise prophetic utterances. Paul said the gift of prophecy would cease (1 Corinthians 13:8), and all mention of it ceased about halfway through the first century. Prophetic utterances seem to be replaced by the New Testament. So, by way of application, the work of the Spirit would be quenched by ignoring or disobeying the New Testament. If you believe God still gives prophetic utterances today, then be sure you follow the second point and *examine everything carefully*. But for all of us it means we should examine every teaching to see if it conforms to Scripture. Third, having examined what is being taught, Paul said we should *hold fast to that which is good*—good being determined by its conformity to the Bible.

Loss of the assurance of salvation All the elect saints chosen of God from eternity past will be with Him forever (Ephesians 1:3-11; Romans 8:28-39). The death of Christ *reconciled you to God in order to present you before Him, holy and blameless and beyond reproach* (Colossians 1:22). But how do you know if, indeed, you are one of those elect? What is the assurance that we have, indeed, received Christ through faith (John 1:12; 3:16-17; 5:24)? Paul says you can be assured of it *if indeed you continue in the faith, firmly established and steadfast* (Colossians 1:23). On the other hand, John said, *The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him* (1 John 2:4). So the *security* of salvation is determined by God from eternity past and cannot be lost (John 10:28-29). But when we sin, we lose the *assurance* that we are among the saints. Whether we are saved or not, we have no assurance that we are saved when we insist on continuing to sin.

Hindering spiritual growth Sin has consequences. Paul said in Galatians 6:7-8, *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life.* If we repent of our sin (Acts 2:38), confessing our sin to God (1 John 1:9), He promises to forgive us our sin. But forgiveness does not erase the consequences of sin. If I murder someone and then confess it to God in sincere repentance, God will forgive me. But they are still dead. The consequences of sin are not erased with forgiveness. These consequences become spiritual baggage. They create evil thoughts, bad habits, and change our life situation in such a way that spiritual growth becomes harder. For example, the biggest barriers to my spiritual growth are the sins I practiced as a teenager. And I was a Christian at the time. I thought I could change whenever I wanted. To my surprise, that was not true. Those habits remain alive and well today. There is no such thing as sowing without reaping. We are all kept from reaching the spiritual maturity we could otherwise obtain by the spiritual baggage we carry due to our sin.

For more information see study book **The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Life**
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