

LESSON 2

Why Do I Still Sin?

On the gap between who you are and how you act – and why it doesn't change your standing

Your sin does not reverse what God did. The Christ who saved you is the same Christ who holds you — and He is not finished with you yet.



WATCH BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Scan to watch the Lesson 2 teaching video – a 12-minute companion to this lesson.

CORE SCRIPTURES

For I do not understand what I am doing, because I do not practice what I want to do, but I do what I hate.

—Romans 7:15

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.

—Romans 8:1

NOBODY TELLS YOU ABOUT THE MONDAY MORNING PROBLEM.

You became a Christian. Something real happened, you know it did. Maybe you even did what we suggested last week and wrote your salvation story down. You looked at it and thought, "Yes, that's true." That happened to me.

And then, somewhere between that moment and right now, you did the thing you thought you'd left behind. Maybe it was the same old anger. The same pull toward something you knew was wrong. The same thought pattern you were sure you'd finally outrun. And the guilt wasn't just guilt, it was something worse. It was doubt.

Maybe it didn't take. Maybe I'm not actually different. Maybe I was fooling myself.

That doubt is what this lesson is about. Not the sin itself, but the doubt the sin produces. Because if you let that doubt go unanswered, it will quietly undo everything Lesson 1 put in place. So before we go any further, we need to look at it straight.

You're Not the First Person to Feel This

Here's something that should stop you cold the first time you really read it.

The apostle Paul, the man who wrote more of the New Testament than anyone else, who planted churches across the Roman world, who described himself as having been caught up into heaven itself, wrote this:

For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate... For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do what I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

— Romans 7:15, 18–19

Read that again slowly. Paul is describing the exact experience you had this week. The gap between what he wanted to do and what he did. The frustration of knowing better and still falling short. The disorienting feeling of being pulled in two directions at once.

Now here's what matters: Paul didn't bury this passage. He kept it. It ended up in the letter to the Romans, which he wrote with full intention, and the early church copied, preserved, and circulated it. He wasn't embarrassed by it. He used his own experience as evidence for something he needed his readers to understand. This conflict is part of the Christian life, not a sign that you've been disqualified from it.

There's a word worth noticing in that passage. When Paul says, "I have the desire to do what is right," the word he uses is *thelo*, which means to want, to will, or to choose toward something. Before he became a Christian, the pull toward righteousness wasn't there. Now it is. The very fact that he hates what he does proves that something changed. The new creation isn't absent. It's just not fully in control yet.

That's a harder thing to hold than it sounds. But it matters.

DISCUSSION: *Paul kept his confession in the letter; he didn't edit it out or soften it. What would it mean for you to be that honest about your own struggle with sin? What keeps most of us from talking about it that openly?*

What the Struggle Proves

Now, here's the reframe that changes everything.

The fact that you *hate* what you did, that's the new creation working.

Think about who you were before. Maybe sin felt completely normal, something you didn't think twice about. Maybe you felt guilt before, but it was vague, easy to dismiss, and gone by the next morning. The deep, specific ache you feel now, the one that makes you ask whether your conversion even worked, that ache is new. You didn't always have it. It showed up with everything else when you became a Christian.

Which means the guilt, rightly understood, isn't evidence that the conversion failed. It's evidence that it happened.

The person who feels no tension between who they are in Christ and how they lived on Thursday is not a more successful Christian. They're a less awake one. The tension you feel is your conscience doing exactly what a renewed conscience is supposed to do, pulling you toward who you actually are now, protesting when you act like who you used to be.

That doesn't mean you should feel good about sinning. Of course not. But there's a difference between guilt that leads somewhere useful and shame that just spirals. The first one is a signal, pointing you toward confession, toward change, toward the person you actually are now in Christ. That signal is useful. Follow it. The second one is a lie.

Galatians 5:17 says: the desires of the flesh and the desires of the Spirit are in conflict with each other. Paul doesn't present this conflict as a problem to be solved before you're qualified to be a Christian. He presents it as the normal interior weather of someone who is genuinely in Christ. You're not outside the faith because you feel this. You're inside it.

DISCUSSION: *The guilt you feel after sinning isn't evidence the conversion failed — it's evidence it happened. Does that reframe change anything for you? What have you been telling yourself that guilt means?*

The Verdict That Doesn't Move

Romans 8:1 is one of the most important sentences in the entire Bible. It comes immediately after Paul's raw confession in chapter 7, and the placement is deliberate.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Sit with the word *condemnation* for a moment. It's a legal word. It means a verdict, a sentence that has been handed down, a judgment that is final and binding. Paul says that for those who are in Christ, there is *none* of that.

Not: there is less condemnation if you're making progress. Not: there is no condemnation once you get your act together. Not: there is no condemnation as long as you feel sufficiently bad about your failures.

None. Now. Already. The verdict has been declared, and it is not guilty.

Here's an illustration that helps me. When a jury delivers a not guilty verdict and the judge accepts it, that verdict doesn't change based on what the defendant does afterward. If he walks out of the courtroom and trips on the steps, the verdict doesn't get revised. If he has a bad week, the record doesn't get reopened. The sentence was declared at a specific moment in a specific place, and it stands. The defendant doesn't go back on trial every time he makes a mistake.

You are not re-tried every time you sin.

Your standing before God was declared at the cross. It was applied to you at your conversion. And it does not fluctuate with your performance. That's not a loophole, *it's the entire point of what Jesus did*. If your standing depended on your behavior, you'd need a Savior who could guarantee your behavior. You don't have that Savior because you don't need one. You need one who absorbs the verdict on your behalf. And you have that one. Hebrews 7:25 describes Jesus as our high priest, puts it this way: he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him.

This is the foundation that trust is built on. Not on your own consistency, which, as you've noticed, is unreliable, but on a verdict that was handed down outside of you, that doesn't depend on you to remain true.

DISCUSSION: *The courtroom illustration says the verdict doesn't get reopened every time you fail. Be honest — do you live more like someone whose case is closed, or someone who keeps getting called back to the stand?*

This is What Trust Actually Looks Like

Most people think of trust as a feeling. You trust someone because they feel trustworthy, because something in your gut says it's safe. And there's something real in that. But trust that only works when you feel confident isn't really trust; it's just comfort. The trust that sustains a life is something more deliberate than that.

Proverbs 3:5-6 is a verse a lot of people know from childhood, but it hits differently when you're a new Christian standing in the rubble of a week that didn't go the way you planned.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Notice what that command assumes. It assumes you *will* have moments when your own understanding is all you have to lean on, and that leaning on it will be the wrong move. It assumes you'll have weeks where your experience of yourself is not particularly encouraging, where the evidence in front of you suggests the path is crooked, where your gut says *I'm not sure about this anymore*. And it says: trust anyway. Not because the feeling is there, but because the object of the trust is reliable.

This is what Hebrews 11:6 calls the shape of faith: *Without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him*. Faith isn't certainty about your own spiritual condition. *It's confidence in God's character*. You draw near not because your record is clean but because you believe he is who he says he is, and that he rewards the seeking, not just the arriving.

Trust, in other words, is practiced. It's what you do with the gap between the verdict ("no condemnation") and the experience ("I keep doing what I don't want to do"). You don't wait until you feel stable to trust him. You trust him *in order to* become stable. Faith is learned dependence . . . the slow, daily decision to lean on what God has said rather than on what your behavior tells you about yourself.

That's not passive. It's one of the hardest things you'll ever do. But it's what the Christian life is made of.

DISCUSSION: *Trust as a practice, not a feeling — "the slow, daily decision to lean on what God has said rather than on what your behavior tells you about yourself." What does your behavior tell you about yourself most often? What has God said instead?*

What You Do with the Guilt

So, here's how this plays out practically.

You sin. It happens. This week, and the week after. The honest expectation of the Christian life is not sinless perfection, but it is a genuine, measurable movement away from sin over time. 1 John 2:1 assumes as much: 'I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin,' he says, which only makes sense if not sinning is the direction of travel, not the guaranteed outcome. But in the meantime, and there will be a meantime, the question isn't whether it will happen, *it's what you do when it does*.

The works-based instinct is to perform your way back. Feel bad enough, try harder, make it up somehow. As if extra effort now could settle the account. But that's not how the account works. It was settled at the cross. You don't re-settle it with effort.

The grace-based response is simpler and harder: 1 John 1:9. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Confess it. Name it specifically, out loud if you can, to God. Not to re-earn anything, the verdict doesn't need your help, but because confession is the act of agreeing with what's true. It says: *that was wrong, I know it, and I'm not pretending otherwise.* Then receive the forgiveness that's already yours. Not as something you're hoping might be true. As something that is. And then turn back toward who you really are and keep going.

Don't let guilt become a wall you stare at. Let it be a door you walk through.

The person who keeps coming back after they fail, not because they've earned the right to, not because they've convinced themselves they're doing well enough, but because they believe the door is still open, that person is learning what trust actually looks like. Not as a feeling. As a practice.

That's where we're going. Lesson by lesson, failure by failure, one deliberate return at a time.

DISCUSSION: *What's your instinct when you sin — to perform your way back, to hide, or something else? What would it actually look like this week to confess it, receive the forgiveness, and keep going without spiraling?*

DON'T FORGET



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