



[1 Corinthians 15:55-58](#)

(55) O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? (56) The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. (57) But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (58) Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

King James Version

Is it still possible for us to [sin](#) and experience sin's sting? As long as the laws that define sin exist, the possibility of death remains because it is possible for us to break those laws. This is why verse 58 urges us so strongly to be steadfast and immovable in the work of the Lord. His work in us as individuals is to refine our character so that we never sin. We are in training to be in God's image, and [God](#) does not sin.

The term “sting” illustrates what is painful about sin. The most painful element involved in sin is death, and with death, all hope is lost. Sin kills. Do we believe that? Sin is the cause of death. The function of the laws of God is to provide knowledge of sin. God's laws give us knowledge of what to do and what not to do. Sin is still to be feared!

We must be careful, though, because our carnal nature is so deceitful that by giving us knowledge of what not to do, sin can actually play a role in arousing us to desire a taste of it, to experience its excitement. And so we can give in to sin. We must fight this desire with all our being. After God commanded her not to eat of the tree in the midst of the Garden of Eden, Eve failed to fight the intriguing desire, and she ended up sinning! God's laws have never been against us; He designed them for our good. They continue to give us guidance about what is right.

Our sins imposed the death penalty on us—and ultimately on our Savior—in the first place and still do if we continue sinning after He pays the debt. God's laws have not changed, and the penalty for breaking them remains the same despite Jesus' [merciful](#) payment on our behalf. Irrespective of the New Covenant, the laws continue to define sin. If we continue sinning, His death for our benefit is absolutely wasted. Specifically, at our [baptism](#), His death pays only for sins committed in the *past*.

Christ's death is the means, the way, that opens the door for completing the perfection of our character into His image in preparation for the [Kingdom of God](#). The [Holy Spirit](#) God gives us through the laying on of hands is the means of keeping His laws far more perfectly than before our calling. Sins committed after accepting His shed blood can put one on the road to the Lake of Fire because His death did not remove our obligation to obey the law. We must [repent](#) of sins committed following baptism so they do not produce more severe consequences.

God's laws still exist and are still in force, guiding us in living God's way.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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