

Methods for Mortifying Sin (Part 6)

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[0 : 00] We continue to find gold nuggets of Scripture but it is massively important in this ongoing battle we have with our unredeemed flesh.

It's just not thought of very often. But it is that we have to exercise self-control. Now you're going to immediately recognize that, or you should, that this one is the last in the list of the fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians chapter 5.

The two words, self-control, are one word in the Greek language, and kratia, I don't know if I did that right but neither does anyone else, which means in strength.

Self-control is an inward restraint of appetites and passions resulting in a spiritual mastery that submits consistently to the greater cause of God's will, not mankind's.

A simple definition is this. Think of self-control as living a disciplined life. The characteristic is taught many times in both the Old and the New Testaments, although often does not use those two specific words of self-control.

[2 : 06] As I noted earlier, it does show up in Galatians chapter 5 at the end of a very important list of fruit. Let me read that to you in Galatians chapter 5 verses 22 and 23.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Against such things there is no law. You can do all those things and not violate any law of God.

Now at some point in your life, in your Christian walk, you were taught the nine fruits of the Spirit.

Well, it was not until I began studying for this particular lesson last Wednesday morning at 5.30 a.m. that I came upon this truth.

And I have to admit that I have never thought of this prior to our lesson. The Apostle Paul describes these using the singular word fruit as opposed to our common description of them as fruits of the Spirit.

[3 : 26] Using a plural word there, fruits. The fruits of the Spirit. But it is singular both in Greek and in the English translations.

So why did Paul, and more importantly the Holy Spirit, the ultimate author of Scripture, do this?

Paul intended it to be understood as one fruit which manifested itself in multiple characteristics.

But it's one fruit. All of these are to be reflected in the life of the true believer at any given moment in time. We're to do all these things.

The Apostle Peter said this in 2 Peter 1, starting in verse 5. Now, for this very reason also, applying all diligence in your faith, supply moral excellence.

And in your moral excellence, knowledge. And in your knowledge, self-control. There's that word.

And in your self-control, perseverance.

[4 : 41] And in your perseverance, godliness. And in your godliness, brotherly kindness. And in your brotherly kindness, love.

When these traits are present in the life of a Christ follower, we like to say, well, that person is a godly man.

A few years ago, I received a communication from a former member of our church, a great guy. And he was in some pretty dire straits and wanted to know if I could help him.

And I could. And I did. And I get this nice letter from him. And he says, you're the most godly man I've ever known. So I immediately called him up.

I said, I appreciate that. But let me tell you something. There's two problems with that. I know me and God knows me. So that negates that.

[5 : 44] But it's still, you know, nice to hear you say that. Just don't go to the bank and try to cash a check using me as a reference. They won't do it. Paul frequently used the language of the athlete to

describe a spiritual truth.

And he was big on running and boxing and things like that. He does so in 1 Corinthians. Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize?

Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control, there's that word, in all things.

So they do it to obtain a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore, I run in such a way as to not run aimlessly.

And Paul goes on, I box in such a way as to avoid hitting air. But I strictly discipline my body and make it my slave so that after I preach to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

[7 : 12] In the New American Standard Bible, the word strictly discipline are used. In other translations, the word buffet, as in I buffet my body and make it my slave.

That's used. Buffet means literally to strike under the eye. Interesting concept because Paul is talking about boxing.

If you're going to box, you need to box to win. You need to box to win.

And you do that by hitting more than air. Hitting air won't help you. Athletes in those days disciplined their bodies because they were after a prize.

They wanted to win the prize and the prize was a perishable wreath of leaves. Can you imagine training for a year so you can get this leaf that goes on your head for a few hours and it's leaves and they've already started to die.

[8 : 23] That was the prize. Now if they were willing to go through such self-control and discipline for that kind of prize, should we not be willing to exercise similar self-control with the prospect of winning a heavenly prize which will never perish and it will remain with us for eternity.

See, there's quite a difference, isn't there? Paul wrote the little book of Titus. I'm always blessed when I read Titus.

It's packed with information. Titus has greatly blessed the church for two millennia. In the first chapter of that book, he described the qualities of elders.

For the overseer, also translated elder, must be beyond reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not overindulging in wine, not a bully, not greedy for money, but hospitable, loving what is good.

Listen to this. self-controlled, righteous, holy, disciplined, holding firmly the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching so that he will be able both to exhort and sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.

[10 : 05] It's the job of an elder. Exhort and sound doctrine and be able to refute those who contradict sound doctrine. In the larger list of the fruit of the Spirit, self-control is number nine.

And all nine are basic to the Christian life. Every single one of those I read in Galatians chapter 5. If we are to walk as Jesus walked, another way to put that, if we are to walk in the Spirit, these are the qualities to do so.

Love, joy, peace, patience, and so forth. And by the way, if you're ever sitting around at three o'clock in the morning in your living room with the lights out thinking about the Lord and I do that frequently and you wonder about the attributes or qualities of God, they are perfectly displayed by the Lord Jesus during the incarnation using that list.

He was all those things. If you want to know how Jesus loved, read 1 Corinthians 13, the great chapter on love.

That's how Jesus loves. All those were descriptions of the Lord Jesus Christ. And He displayed all of those qualities and attributes during His earthly sojourn.

[11 : 36] Now thus far, we have developed quite a list of weapons. I call them ammunition, bullets to shoot.

In our ongoing fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil, here's our list to this point. We are to abstain from fleshly lusts.

You know, here we are in the 21st century and our culture is driven by that. Madison Avenue, which writes, all the advertisement TV is driven by that.

Abstain from fleshly lusts. Flee sexual immorality. Make no provision for the flesh. Be encouraged that the old self is already dead.

Died to sin. Focus your heart on Christ. Meditate on the Word of God. And then tonight, exercise self-control.

[12:48] Now those are powerful. Those are very powerful. But tonight, we're going to have another piece of ammunition. So we're going to get into tonight. Another piece of ammunition in our arsenal to battle sin that is absolutely essential to our goal of striving for personal holiness.

And that's what we've been talking about since September. And in fact, this may be the most important characteristic. be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5.18 I love the way Paul does an analogy here. And do not get drunk with wine in which there is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit.

this is another one of those Mount Everest moments being filled with the Spirit. It would be real easy to spend a year or more on this topic and on the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Instead, we're going to spend just a few minutes here at the tail end of our study tonight. So what does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?

[14:17] In the context of Paul's statement, it means that we as followers of Christ should not be controlled by the Holy Spirit just as a drunk is controlled by the influence of intoxicating alcohol.

That's the analogy that Paul's using. I imagine there's some people alive today, particularly in the SBC, would be offended by that analogy, but it's there. It's there in Ephesians. Inspired.

Don't be controlled like a drunk is controlled by liquor. Believers are to be utterly yielded to the control of the Holy Spirit in their life.

This is true from the moment of rebirth to death. moment of rebirth, justification, being born from above until we die or taken out in the rapture.

Now, it is my personal opinion that the greatest book in the Bible is the book of Romans. It is further my opinion that within the book of Romans the greatest chapter is chapter 8.

[15:35] I might add just parenthetically it's also my belief that the greatest verse in the Bible is Romans chapter 11 verse 36, but that doesn't have anything to do with this lesson.

Paul had this to say in the great book of Romans chapter 8. Romans 8 13.

If you are living in accord with the flesh, you're going to die. Wow. Paul, can you kind of temper that a little bit or tone that down a little bit?

Not Paul. Live according to flesh, you're going to die. But if by the Spirit, and that's the Holy Spirit, not our Spirit, the Holy Spirit, you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Great verse of Scripture there. Now, we've been talking about personal holiness and striving for personal holiness since September 2021.

[16:45] we have spent many weeks on mortifying the flesh. The word mortification means to kill or to put to death.

We mortify sin by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God. It is the Holy Spirit who carries out the act of mortification.

salvation. I'm glad he's not depending on me. He does so for those believers in Christ who are living lives yielded to him.

If he's not leading your life, then you're already behind the eight ball. Having said that, we must also realize that we are not passive in this great work.

we're not the guy, remember the guy sitting out on a stump waiting to see if he's going to get saved or not, whether God would save him, finally died and went to hell. We're not passive in this great work.

[17:51] Here's another quote from Dr. Owen and I copied this one out of the old English one. He lived in the 1500s by the way. He doth not work our mortification in us as not to keep it still an act of our obedience.

He still intends it to be predicated on our obedience. The Holy Ghost works in us and upon us as we are fit to be wrought in and upon, that is, so as to preserve our own liberty and free obedience.

He works upon our understandings, wills, consciences, and affections agreeably to their own natures. He works in us and with us, not against us or without us, so that His assistance is an encouragement as to the facilitating of the work and no occasion of neglect as to the work itself.

Great passage by Dr. Owen. God is still dependent upon our obedience as we yield to the Spirit of God who is accomplishing a great work in us.

That's one of the most powerful statements uttered outside the canon of inspired Scripture. the Holy Spirit works but in such a way that this working of the Spirit and this great work is accomplished in us by our yielded obedience to Him.

[19 : 40] We yield to Him in obedience and He accomplishes this work. We do not and we cannot abandon our responsibility to sit by and wait for God to mortify our sins on our behalf.

It's not going to happen. We're in partnership if you will with the Spirit of God. He works we're working.

A Spirit-filled life is an active life. It is a life whereby as an active life it is a life that we vigorously work out our own salvation with both fear and trembling.

And I didn't make that up. Paul said this in Philippians chapter 2 verse 12. So then my beloved just as you have always obeyed not as in my presence only but now much more in my absence work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Now there you see the responsibility that all of us have. Every man's got that responsibility. That's on us.

[21 : 06] But unless we get puffed up about our working out our salvation we have the next verse of inspired scripture that will keep balance and keep us on the straight path Philippians 2.13 For it is God who is at work in you both to desire and to work for his good pleasure.

There's the divine side. You got man's side in verse 12. Divine side in verse 13. There's Bible in the New Testament filled with verses like that.

They're amazing to study and reflect upon and meditate on. The word desire in that verse also means to will.

To will. So God wills and works his good pleasure in us. God is the great molder of our will. He says that in Romans where the potter and the clay. He's molding us. He molds our will to be obedient to him. Once that is accomplished he provides the energy within us to do his good pleasure.

[22 : 26] Now there's a name for that. It's called living the spirit filled life. That's what it's called. Our list of ammunition provided by the Holy Spirit and the word of God in order to accomplish the Christian life has grown to eight characteristics.

We could actually go on for a very long time. We could uncover many more characteristics in both the Old and New Testaments and consider these items with which to battle indwelling sin and to kill it.

And we're not going to develop these any further than what I'm talking about tonight. But again it shows you how long we could continue in this. Clothe yourselves with humility.

1 Peter 5.5 You younger men likewise be subject to your elders and all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another because God is opposed to the proud but he gives grace to the humble.

So we're to clothe ourselves with humility that's ammunition to mortify sin to kill sin in your life. Next one have the mind of Christ.

[24 : 01] Another topic we could go forever. 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 16 For who has known the mind of Christ that he will instruct him but we have the mind of Christ.

And then another verse under the mind of Christ Philippians 2 5 let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

So two very important characteristics here. Humility mind of Christ. Got another one. Put away spiteful feeling toward others.

Ephesians chapter 4 verse 31 and 32. All bitterness wrath anger clamor and slander must be removed from you along with all malice.

Be kind to one another compassionate forgiving each other just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. Here's a good one.

[25 : 21] Trying to kill sin in our life. Do this every morning. Preferably before your feet hit the ground. Put on the full armor of God.

It's a great one. Put on the full armor of God. Ephesians chapter 6. Put on the full armor of God so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, therefore is there as to what I just said, therefore, take up the full armor of God so that you will be able to resist on the evil day and having done everything to stand firm.

John MacArthur's got a new book out, Stand Firm, little book, a good one. Stand firm, therefore, having belted your waist with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness and having

strapped on your feet, the preparation of the gospel of peace, in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God.

[27 : 07] One more tonight, put aside sinful attitudes. Colossians chapter 3 verses 8 and 9, but now you also rid yourselves of all of them, anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene speech from your mouth.

Do not lie to one another since you stripped off the old self with its evil practices. Now, these can be achieved, but only one way.

The only way you can achieve these is by being filled with the Holy Spirit. There's no other way.

And as we close this topic, remember, there is only one indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

That happens at the moment of salvation. the Spirit enters us, never leaves us, never forsakes us.

One indwelling, but many fillings.

Many fillings. You could even have many fillings in one day. Depends on what kind of life you're living. The Lord wants us to be filled all the time.

[28 : 30] In other words, He wants us under the control of the indwelling Holy Spirit constantly. sin can enter in. Sin can cause the Spirit to be repressed within us.

And that is why we must confess our sins daily and even hour by hour. Confession is so important. I've told you that many times. 1 John 1 9. Memorize it and live it. And I love what Dr. McBride used to tell us. Keep short accounts with God.

Keep short accounts with God. Go to Him if need be in confession. And He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Thank you.